

Movies for Race, Gender and Crime Courses



General Movies/Documentaries

Mississippi Burning*

Director: Alan Parker

Writer: Chris Gerolmo

Summary: Two FBI agents investigating the murder of civil rights workers during the 60's seek to breach the conspiracy of silence in a small Southern town where segregation divides black and white.

Crash*

Director: Paul Haggis

Writer: Paul Haggis

Summary: Several stories interweave during two days in Los Angeles involving a collection of inter-related characters, a police detective with a drugged out mother and a thieving younger brother, two car thieves who are constantly theorizing on society and race, the white district attorney and his irritated, pampered and prejudiced wife, a racist white veteran cop (caring for a sick father at home) who disgusts his more idealistic younger partner, a successful Hollywood director and his wife who must deal with the racist cop, a Persian-immigrant father who buys a gun to protect his shop, Hispanic locksmith and his young daughter, and more.

Hip Hop: Beyond Beats & Rhymes-

Director: Byron Hurt

Writer: Byron Hurt

Summary: Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats & Rhymes provides a riveting examination of manhood, sexism, and homophobia in hip-hop culture. Director Byron Hurt, former star college quarterback, longtime hip-hop fan, and gender violence prevention educator, conceived the documentary as a "loving critique" of a number of disturbing trends in the world of rap music. He pays tribute to hip-hop while challenging the rap music industry to take responsibility for glamorizing destructive, deeply conservative stereotypes of manhood. The documentary features revealing interviews about masculinity and sexism with rappers such as Mos Def, Fat Joe, Chuck D, Jadakiss, and Busta Rhymes, hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons, and cultural commentators such as Michael Eric Dyson and Beverly Guy-Shetfall. Critically acclaimed for its fearless engagement with issues of race, gender violence, and the corporate exploitation of youth culture.

American History X*-

Director: Tony Kaye

Writer: David McKenna

Summary: This flashback-laden film delves into the world of a former neo-NAZI and shows how his hatred spawned itself in his younger brother. After Derek's father is killed in the line of duty by a minority, his view of mankind was tainted. However, after committing a brutal assault and being sent to prison, he discovers that there is good and bad in every race. There he sees that all humans have potential and all life should be respected. With his life turned around, and back out on the streets, he tries to cure his brother of the same disease that took him.

Ghosts of Rwanda-

Director: Greg Barker

Writer: Greg Barker

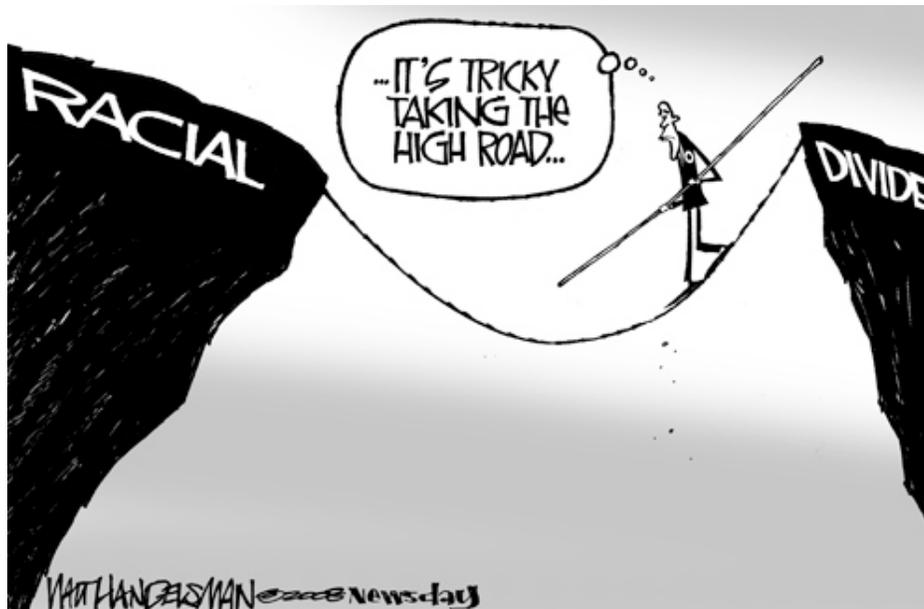
Summary: Ghosts of Rwanda marks the 10th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide with a documentary chronicling one of the worst atrocities of the 20th century. In addition to interviews with key government officials and diplomats, this documentary offers eyewitness accounts of the genocide from those who experienced it firsthand. FRONTLINE illustrates the failures that enabled the slaughter of 800,000 people to occur unchallenged by the global community.

Higher Learning*-

Director: John Singleton

Writer: John Singleton

Summary: This drama examines the personal, political, and racial dilemmas facing a group of college freshmen as they begin their first semester at Columbus University. Students, already under pressure to perform in the classroom, on the track, or in front of their friends, are strained to the breaking point by prejudice, inexperience, and misunderstanding. All coming from different countries, races, and social backgrounds, each of the characters struggle with their own personal issues while simultaneously fighting the affects of racism.



Topic: Race & Prison

Supermax: Life in a Super-maximum security prison-

Director:

Writer:

Summary:

Hard Time-

Director:

Writer:

Summary:

Topic: Race and the Courts

Two Towns of Jasper-

Director: Whitney Dow
Marco Williams

Summary: Using two separate filmmaking teams (an all-white crew filming white residents and an all-black camera crew filming black residents), Two Towns of Jasper captures very different racial views by townsfolk in Jasper, Texas, the location for a racially motivated murder of an African American in 1998.

Scottsboro: An American Tragedy-

Director: Daniel Anker
Barak Goodman

Writer: Barak Goodman

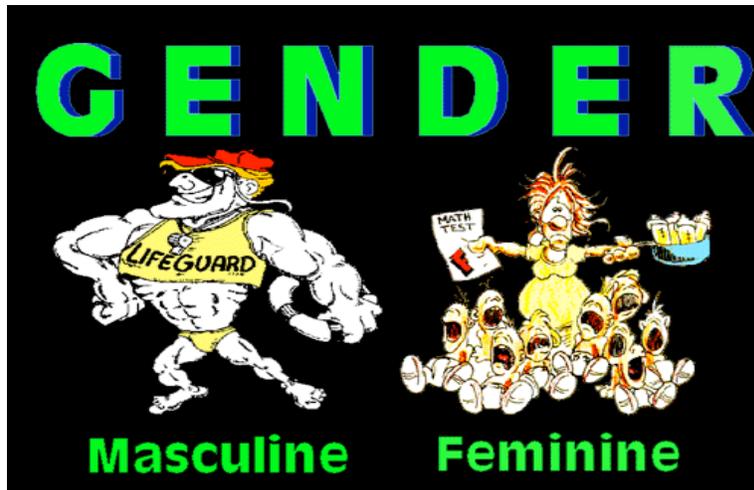
Summary: A look at the infamous "Scottsboro Boys" case that occurred in Alabama in 1931, in which nine young black men were arrested, tried and quickly convicted in the rape of two white women, despite overwhelming evidence that showed their accusers had falsely accused them and the fact that one of the women later admitted that no rape had in fact occurred (although both had had sexual relations with their boyfriends on the day prior to the "rape"). The case was one of the first that shined a spotlight on what many called the "legal lynchings" that occurred in the South whenever blacks were accused of crimes, especially against whites and most especially against white women.

Topic: Race and Police

Tulia, Texas-

Director: Cassandra Herrman
Kelly Whalen

Summary: This striking documentary looks at the investigation behind the massive 1999 Tulia, Texas drug bust, and the aftermath, which resulted in the arrest of 46 people, 39 of whom were African American. The picture features many of the people that played a central role in the story.



Topic: Hate Crimes/Sexual Identity

Not in This Town-

Director: Donald Wrye

Writer: Adam Gilad

Summary: Local aryan-type thugs, financed by an outside racist, attempt to create an atmosphere of fear in a small Montana community by intimidating black churchgoers, as well as Native American and Jewish residents. Through the efforts of a crusading woman, her Jewish Physician husband, and backed by the towns Police Chief, the entire community mobilizes to thwart the plans of these hoodlums.

In the Heat of the Night-

Director: Norman Jewison

Writer: Stirling Silliphant

Summary: After a wealthy northern factory owner is murdered, racist Mississippi cops accuse African American Virgil Tibbs (Sidney Poitier) of the crime. Once they learn that he is a renowned Philadelphia homicide detective, they reluctantly seek his help. As Tibbs displays his skills as a detective, he begins to win the respect, protection, and ultimately friendship of the Police Chief Bill Gillepsie (Rod Steiger).

Boys Don't Cry*-

Director: Kimberly Peirce

Writer: Kimberly Peirce
Andy Bienen

Summary: Based on actual events. Brandon Teena is the popular new guy in a tiny Nebraska town. He hangs out with the guys, drinking, cussing, and bumper surfing, and he charms the young women, who've never met a more sensitive and considerate young man. Life is good for Brandon, now that he's one of the guys and dating hometown beauty Lana. However, he's forgotten to mention one important detail. It's not that he's wanted in another town for GTA and other assorted crimes, but that Brandon Teena was actually born a woman named Teena Brandon. When his best friends make this discovery, Brandon's life is ripped apart.

Brandon Teena Story-

Director: Susan Muska
Gréta Olafsdóttir

Writer: Susan Muska
Gréta Olafsdóttir

Summary: Documentary about Brandon Teena (aka Teena Brandon), a transgendered person, who was murdered along with two others in 1993 in rural Nebraska. The story is told through interviews with people who knew Brandon, recorded interrogation and trial transcripts, and photographs and film footage.

Who Killed Vincent Chin?-

Director: Christine Choy
Renee Tajima-Pena

Summary: This film recounts the murder of Vincent Chin, an automotive engineer mistaken as Japanese who was slain by an assembly line worker who blamed him for the competition by the Japanese auto makers that were threatening his job. It then recounts how that murderer escaped justice in the court system.

Topic: Women and Crime

Violence By and Against Latinos-

Director:

Writer:

Summary:

Absolutely Safe-

Director: Carol Ciancutti-Levy

Summary: The story of ABSOLUTELY SAFE always returns to the women and girls who stand front and center—both willingly and unwillingly—in the traffic jam of beauty, media, risk, and “choice.” The quest for physical perfection leads the film’s characters to operating rooms, support groups, hospital beds, and public hearings. In a plastic surgeon’s waiting room, a patient is both enthusiastic about her own silicone implants and also shocked by tales of family friends with implant ruptures and sickness. At a support group of breast cancer survivors with failed breast implants, group leader and photographer Anne Stansell reveals that she never had the option to live without implants after mastectomy—her implants were presented as a given part of her treatment package. At a discussion with 8 year-old girls, the pre-teens flip through magazines rating beauty and breasts with sharp, judgmental tongue. Shockingly, the quest to be the “ideal beauty” begins long before breasts grow.

Topic: Women & Prison

Girlhood-

Director: Liz Garbus

Summary: Girlhood is a documentary by Liz Garbus that focuses on several girls that she encountered at the Waxter Juvenile Facility in Baltimore while making a television documentary about the boys incarcerated there. Garbus examines the disparate fates of these girls and their very different treatment at the hands of the juvenile justice system.

*The star indicates a Hollywood movie (could be entirely fictional or based off a real story).

