

COLLEGE BEHIND BARS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

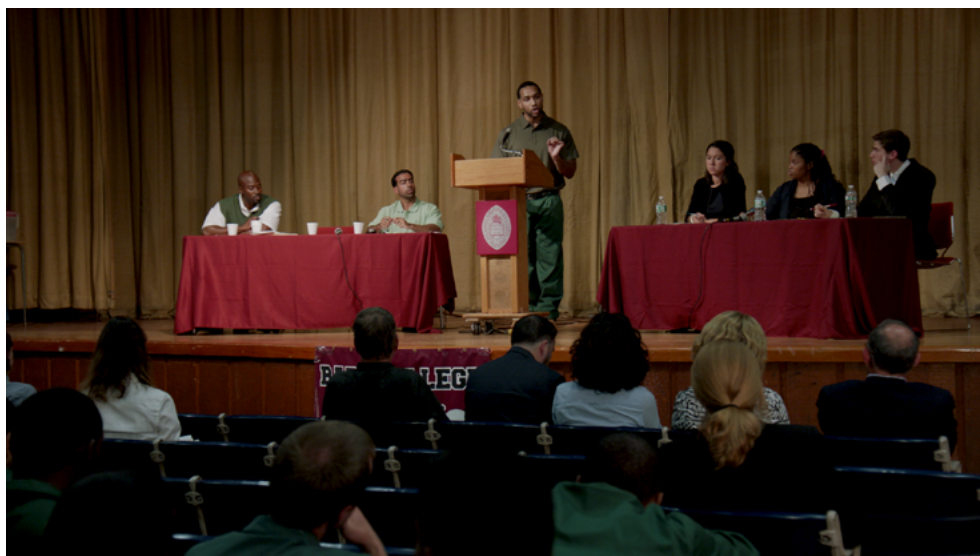


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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The goal of this guide is to help facilitate deeper conversations around COLLEGE BEHIND BARS and can be used in informal educational settings like reentry programs, community screenings and events, restorative justice programs, workshops, after-school programs, community education programs, or training sessions - as well as in the classroom.



Harvard debate

We hope this guide will help you engage your community and plan a thoughtful event, with activities that can be performed in a group or individually before watching the film, while watching it, and afterwards, to provide an opportunity for analysis and making connections. Whether you are hosting a private screening, or a large public event, we hope that this guide prepares you to spark deep conversations and connect with your audience.

A Note About Context: the history, implications, problems and potential solutions surrounding criminal justice, educational access, and representation in this country are complex and nuanced, and have been studied, written about, and explored by many academics, policy makers, and experts alike. This film, and this guide, do NOT endeavor to do the same; rather, they shed an intimate light on how these issues have affected the individuals featured in the film, their families, and communities, and how they found healing, rehabilitation, and a new way of being in the world through access to education. Many of the people featured in this film were negatively affected by

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systemic issues such as poverty, racism, violence, “zero tolerance” policies, and the systemic lack of access to social supports and interventions – all of which led them – and their families – to become justice impacted. By learning more about these factors, hearing these powerful personal stories, and connecting with the people in the film, we hope to change the conversation about criminal justice reform, education, and the importance of equal access.

It is impossible to summarize these issues in any meaningful way without simplifying, minimizing, or overlooking important information. For this reason, we encourage educators use this film as one resource in a larger study, and to provide context so that students can get a full understanding of the stories the film explores. More comprehensive background information can be found by exploring the organizations and websites listed the Additional Resources section of this guide.

A Note About Language: Many of the terms that have been traditionally used when discussing the criminal justice system can be dehumanizing for justice-impacted individuals. For this reason, we encourage open dialogue with all participants to establish a “shared vocabulary” when using this resource. Whenever possible, try to use “person-first” language - for example, instead of using words like “felon, convict, prisoner, offender” we suggest using terms such as “individual who is incarcerated, or individual who has been convicted of a crime.”

ABOUT THE FILM

SERIES DESCRIPTION

COLLEGE BEHIND BARS, a four-part documentary film series directed by award-winning filmmaker Lynn Novick, produced by Sarah Botstein, and executive produced by Ken Burns, tells the story of a small group of incarcerated men and women struggling to earn college degrees and turn their lives around in one of the most rigorous and effective prison education programs in the United States – the Bard Prison Initiative.

Shot over four years in maximum and medium security prisons in New York State, the four-hour film takes viewers on a stark and intimate journey into one of the most pressing issues of our time – our failure to provide meaningful rehabilitation for the over two million Americans living behind bars. Through the personal stories of the students and their families, the film reveals the transformative power of higher education and puts a human face on America's criminal justice crisis. It raises questions we urgently need to address: What is prison for? Who has access to educational opportunity? Who among us is capable of academic excellence? How can we have justice without redemption?

Series Episode Synopsis

Episode 1: “No One Ever Taught Me Any of That.” (Full Length 57m 53s)

Incarcerated men and women in New York State are admitted to the Bard Prison Initiative (BPI), one of the most rigorous college programs in America. As they begin their studies at Eastern and Taconic Correctional facilities, they discover that they will be held to the same high standards as Bard College students on the main campus in Annandale-on-Hudson.

ABOUT THE FILM

Episode 2: “I’m Trying to Get Home to My Family, Too.” (Full Length 56m 52s)

Sebastian, Dyjuan and Tamara reflect on the difficult circumstances of their childhood, while the debate team prepares to face the University of Vermont. Shawnta, Tamika and Tamara make great strides academically, only to discover that BPI keeps raising the bar. Brian and Rodney are accused of breaking prison rules and sent to the solitary housing unit, SHU, their education in serious jeopardy.

Episode 3: “Every Single Word Matters” (Full Length 57m 33s)

The debate union faces their rival across the river, West Point. Rodney, Sebastian and Giovannie embark on yearlong senior projects. Newly released from federal prison, Dyjuan’s younger brother, Kanan, comes for a visit, as does Rodney’s sister, Elitha. Tamara receives devastating news from home, and Shawnta reckons with her own path to prison. In New York City, Jule struggles to find work.

Episode 4: “Home is a Work in Progress” (Full Length 57m 29s)

The debate union faces Harvard. While Rodney and Sebastian complete their 100-page senior projects and present them to faculty, Giovannie gets into trouble and is sent to SHU, not able to complete his project before being released. At graduation at Taconic, Tamara, Tamika and Shawnta receive associate degrees, while at Eastern, Rodney and Sebastian receive bachelor’s degrees.

HOST A SCREENING

HOSTING A COMMUNITY, CLASSROOM, OR CAMPUS SCREENING OF COLLEGE BEHIND BARS

RECOMMENDED AUDIENCES FOR YOUR SCREENING

The main message of COLLEGE BEHIND BARS is one of resilience, connection, healing, and the transformative power of education. However, because the film explores some difficult issues, including domestic abuse, gang violence, substance abuse, and gun violence, it might not be appropriate for all audiences. The men and women who shared their stories in COLLEGE BEHIND BARS did so in order to help humanize a national policy crisis and to hopefully use their experiences to help begin an informed dialogue about the multigenerational cycles of access and representation (and lack thereof) that have created so much dysfunction in the United States' criminal justice system, and the many ways that these issues affect our society and economy as a whole.

CHOOSE A FORMAT: IN-PERSON OR VIRTUAL

Virtual events are a fantastic way to host a screening when finances, time, or gatherings are limited. Schools, nonprofits, and community organizations have had a lot of success using online formats. Hosting a live screening, facilitating post viewing panel discussions and Q&A's, and even intimate break out rooms are all possible via many virtual platforms.

ESTABLISH OBJECTIVES FOR YOUR SCREENING

Hosting a viewing of COLLEGE BEHIND BARS is a great way to initiate a compassionate, action-focused dialogue about the centuries old, systemic influences that have shaped the current criminal justice system in the United States, and how access to a quality education can interrupt the cycle of

HOST A SCREENING

incarceration and recidivism that disproportionately affect people of color. Your viewing might take place at a university, faith based organization, nonprofit, governmental organization, or corrections facility, in a middle or high school classroom or auditorium, or at your local public library. It could be part of an afterschool or peer-to-peer program, a college course, with your family at home, as part of a professional development workshop, as a kickoff for ongoing community dialogue or any number of other settings. Whatever the occasion, this guide will serve as a roadmap for fruitful and comprehensive conversations about the film and the issues it raises.

COLLEGE BEHIND BARS can be viewed in a variety of settings, with more or less facilitation, depending on your objectives, time frame, and audience. With larger groups, consider having a moderator. Your discussion might also benefit from including local experts, such as licensed therapists, members of the community who were formerly incarcerated, corrections officers, police officers, social workers, members of justice impacted families, teachers who have worked with students who are incarcerated, or other community stakeholders to supplement the video content and address audience questions. Other activities to consider might include: a separate follow-up session for participants to create community engagement agendas; a workshop for a longer, more in-depth and participatory experience; piggybacking on a larger community event, or a formal classroom activity that spans multiple class periods. The following tips can help in the planning of a screening event.

And when you decide what is right for you, we'd love to hear about it. Please share anecdotes, pictures, and/or videos from your event with us and we may showcase them on our website. Send your stories to info@skiffmountainfilms.com.

HOST A SCREENING

TIPS FOR HOSTING A SCREENING

If you're interested in screening the film and you're not sure where to start, we can walk you through the process. We can help support your programming in a variety of ways, including, helping to identify the right film clips, film episode, or shorter film reels that will work best for your screening. If your school or organization would like to host the filmmaker or one of the BPI alumni featured in the film, we can provide details on our speaking circuit. For all of these questions and any others you might have regarding how to screen COLLEGE BEHIND BARS, please contact us at info@skiffmountainfilms.com and we'll be happy to assist!

Pick the Tone

Your event can be anything you wish – from a campus-wide educational program, to a classroom assignment, to a public education event at a community center, governmental organization, correctional facility, church or synagogue. It can be a call to action for your community, or an educational 'salon' that can start a meaningful conversation. Be creative, and don't be afraid to customize your approach to fit your group of peers, neighbors, or colleagues.

Consider Timing and Agenda

This film can be used in a variety of settings, depending on your own needs and restrictions. Time is one of the most important considerations. The film itself is delivered in four 1-hour episodes. You can screen one episode, all four episodes, a shorter 1-hour or 30 minute film reel, or specific clips. Big Picture Ed can help you determine the best film selection for your program. For an effective event, you need to add at least 30 minutes before the film to set the tone, and a minimum of 45 minutes after the film for a follow-up discussion and dialogue. If a 2- or 3 - hour event feels overwhelming, you might consider a series of two or three meetings, which would allow more time for an in-depth follow-up, or for the group to develop a community engagement plan or participate in a community healing circle. As you begin to envision your event, you should set the agenda and format depending on your desired outcomes.

HOST A SCREENING

Identify and Contact Panel Participants

To assist with the post-film discussion, you might consider inviting a host or moderator who can facilitate an interesting and respectful discussion after the screening, drawing out answers from the panel that are suitable for the audience. Your host need not be an expert in the field, but rather someone who can facilitate discussion. A good host or moderator should plan on previewing the screener or full film in advance to prepare. Local reporters and journalists are often the best moderators. They are experts at interviewing diverse subjects, connecting with audiences, and keeping conversations focused and on track. Also consider assembling a panel of local experts or stakeholders to participate in a discussion about social justice and criminal justice reform. Local options might include: licensed therapists and/or social workers, formerly incarcerated individuals and/or their families, educators, legislators, the district attorney, or corrections and/or police officers. Remember to reflect diversity when selecting panelists.

Choose a Date

When picking the date and time for your screening, consider the academic calendar, holidays, and local events, as well as the general preferences of your invitees. A weeknight evening is often a good time to host an adults-only event, as it allows professionals to come straight from work and does not conflict with major weekend plans. But if you are considering a youth-friendly event, a weekend afternoon might be best. If you are choosing between days, do not hesitate to ask an expert, such as a local campus or community organizer, when they've had the most success with attendance.

HOST A SCREENING

Plan the Event

- ✓ Put together your invitation or mailing list.
- ✓ Prepare an agenda for your event. This can be as formal or as informal as you wish, but you should decide on the timing for arrivals, introductions, starting the film, and starting the post-film discussion or supplemental activities. This guide provides questions and discussion prompts for creating a unique, dynamic dialogue.
- ✓ Use the right language. In general, when describing individuals who are currently or formerly incarcerated, it is important to avoid any labeling terms like: prisoner, offender, inmate, felon, convict, or criminal. Instead, it is more meaningful to use humanizing terms like: persons who are incarcerated, men and women experiencing incarceration, individuals in prison, justice impacted individuals, men and women who are in prison, or students trying to earn college degrees while incarcerated.
- ✓ Send out a reminder to those guests who have RSVP'd yes, or not RSVP'd at all.
- ✓ Consider providing RSVP'd guests with links to the film's website, the film's official Facebook or Twitter to set the tone, garner involvement in the issues, and get your guests excited about your event.
- ✓ If your event is happening in a school or classroom setting, prescreen the film with teachers and counselors. Discuss ways in which you will use the film to promote talk about mental health, and develop a plan for meeting the needs of students who seek help.
- ✓ Set up your technology – whether it is a projector and screen or a simple TV and DVD player, you want to ensure you have it up and running before the day of the screening. If you're streaming the film, check your bandwidth and streaming capabilities onsite ahead of time to avoid any buffering issues the day of your event.

HOST A SCREENING

- ✓ Prepare and practice an introduction to the film and a welcome to your event.
- ✓ Think through ways to best facilitate a productive dialogue around the film – including what your objectives for the conversation will be. Refer to the Screening Guidelines section of this guide for tips on how to prepare.
- ✓ Allow for informal post-screening discourse. Allow time for audience members to mingle after the screening, to informally continue the conversation and connect with each other.
- ✓ Create a short, online evaluation form so you can collect feedback on your event. Sites such as Survey Monkey are great for simple, customized questionnaires.
- ✓ Distribute a handout with the list of local or national resources that individuals can contact if they need support or wish to get involved, including phone numbers and email addresses.
- ✓ Send a thank-you to all your guests and encourage them to continue the discussion and/or the action plan that was started at your event.

SCREENING GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES FOR FACILITATING

While the experience, prior knowledge, and existing biases of each screening group will be different, the conversation around criminal justice and the many political, social, racial, and economic factors, among others, that have combined to create the system we have today, tends to be almost universally perplexing and polarizing. Be sensitive to the level of exposure, knowledge, and experience of your audience and structure your discussion and activities to reflect that particular group.

Previewing: Preparing to Screen the Film

1. Before the group views the film or film clips, provide a brief introduction based on your objectives. Refer to the *About This Film* section of this Guide for a general description. Then write the following quote on the board, chart paper, or read it aloud to the group:

“What happens when we provide the kinds of education that typically in the United States are only afforded to the children of the lucky or the entitled or the rich, to others ... when [all students] are educated in a way that’s meaningful to them?”

2. Ask the group to take a moment to consider this question. Participants may do so in a notebook or journal, or aloud in a whole-group discussion.
3. Conduct a short, whole-group discussion using some or all of the following questions as a guide:
 - How might access to a quality education be considered a basic human right?
 - What is the “kind of education that is normally afforded to the children of the lucky or the entitled or the rich”? What other kinds of education are there?
 - How are education and justice related in American society?
 - What does education represent to you? How has this changed over the

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course of your lifetime?

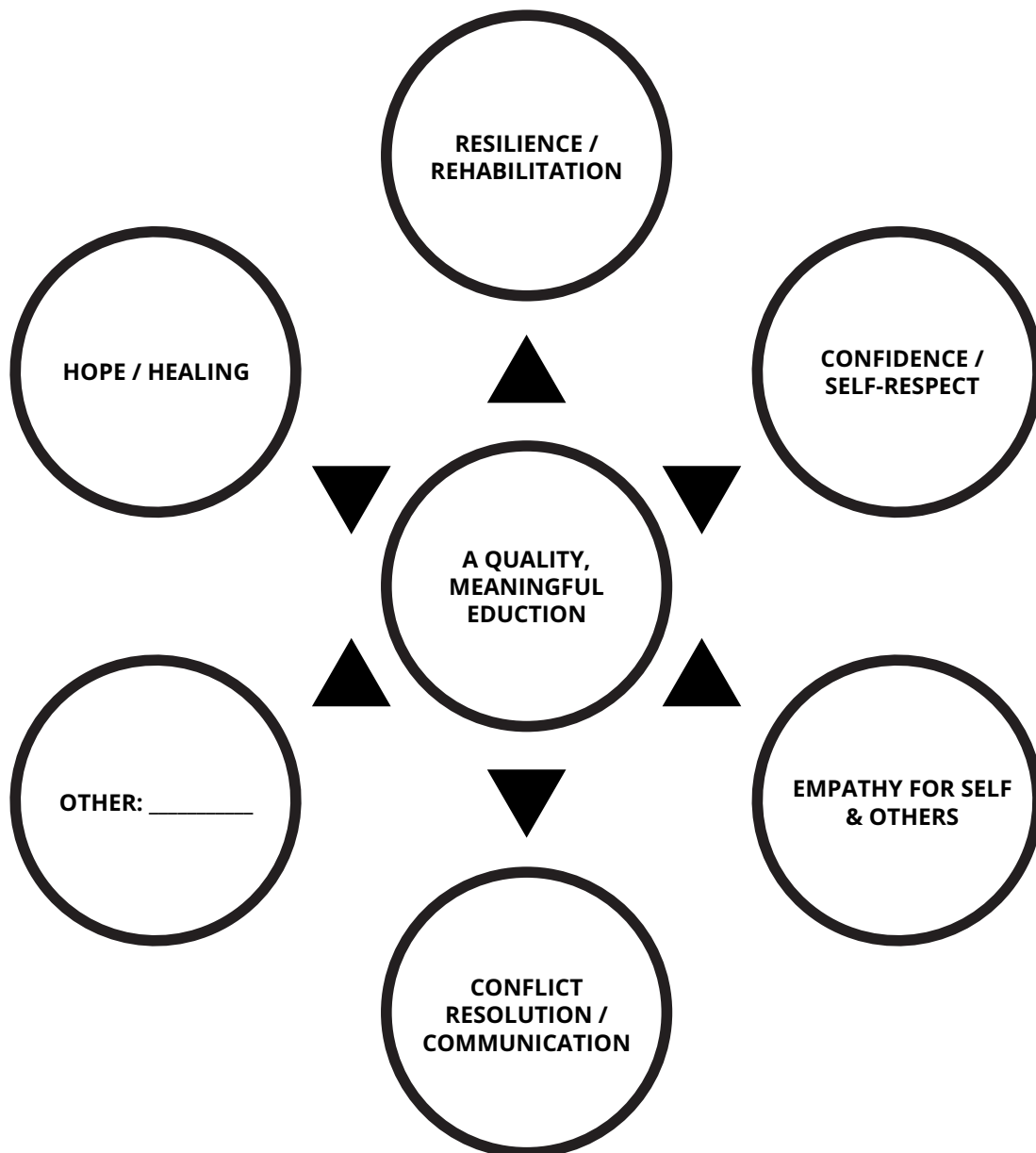
- If you're an educator, what does education represent to your students?
- What is the school to prison pipeline, and how does this quote relate to that phenomenon?
- As you consider this quote, what do you see as the true purpose of a quality education?
- What do you see as some of the challenges that are facing our educational system, that make it hard for it to function successfully? What are some of the societal biases and ingrained prejudices that get in the way of true justice and equity in this country?
- What do you know about the support, rehabilitation, and reintegration services offered to justice impacted individuals, families, and communities in this country?
- Why is it important for a society to support and care for all their members equally, including their most vulnerable members? Why is it important for a society to support and rehabilitate all its members equally, including the members who have been justice impacted?

While Viewing: Graphic Organizer/ Thought Catcher

Because COLLEGE BEHIND BARS is a long film, and features so many important and compelling moments, people, and issues throughout, it might aid some viewers to have a "thought catcher" where they can take notes and organize their thoughts while they watch, in order to retain information for a post-viewing discussion. We have created one here, but depending on the focus or objectives of your screening, you could recreate this graphic organizer with other prompts in each bubble. To aid in retention, comprehension, and analysis, viewers should take notes as they watch COLLEGE BEHIND BARS by filling each bubble with moments from the film, quotes, characters, and/or their

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own thoughts and reactions that relate to the topic. Viewers may add their own topic in the bubble labeled “other,” or use that bubble as a space for miscellaneous notes.



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Post Viewing: Debrief Discussion Guidelines

After screening the film, take time for the group to process and debrief. As you begin the discussion, start out with positive and open-ended questions, so that no member of the audience feels shut down by detractors. Use some or all of the following questions as a guide.

- Can you share a moment in the film or a character that particularly stood out for you? Why did that moment or person particularly resonate with you?
- What did you learn about the criminal justice system in our country by watching this film? Based on this film, what are 2-3 of our country's failures in dealing with justice impacted communities?
- What did you learn about the education system in our country by watching this film? Based on this film, what are 2-3 of our country's failures in educating ALL of our children?
- How does your attitude towards your own education compare to that of the people in this film? Why might this be so?
- Have you ever experienced a personal connection with a particular text, class, or educator that has transformed your attitude or behavior? Explain.
- What challenges, structures, or external forces might make your own goals challenging to achieve? How might your challenges be different from the people in this film? Why?
- Considering any challenges you may have identified above, what can you do/ how can you strategize to help counter those challenges and achieve your goals?
- How might the men and women in this film have been helped as young people, to avoid going to prison? In this way, how did our society fail these individuals?
- Describe how you felt after watching COLLEGE BEHIND BARS. What was the

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main message you took away from the film? What was something new you learned? What in the film made you hopeful? What in the film made you want to take action?

- How did the stories in this film reflect your understanding of the social and cultural inequities that plague our society? How do these stories – and these inequities – relate to the dysfunctions surrounding our justice system?

Note: For prompts to encourage a deeper exploration of the film and the themes and topics it contains, refer to the **Questions for Further Discussion** section of this Guide.



FURTHER DISCUSSION

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Choose from the following list of guiding questions to facilitate an in-depth conversation, panel discussion, or Q&A. If you only used clips or a short screener, choose questions that relate to what you watched, or choose questions that pertain to the specific issues or themes you want to highlight for your audience. Ideally, the questions you select will be relevant and build connections to your local community. Of course, feel free to use your own—these are some suggested questions that can act as a starting point to engage panels and participants.

The following questions are arranged by **topic and theme**, to facilitate a **general audience and/or classroom discussion** around the topics, issues, and people featured in COLLEGE BEHIND BARS.

Education

1. Is education a civic responsibility?
2. Do you think everyone deserves access to an education? Why? Why not?
3. What do you feel is the inherent value in education?
4. What is the benefit of a well-educated citizenry?
5. What is the role of education in a democratic society?
6. What does your education mean to you? How did it serve you?
7. Is education about personal transformation, or about opportunity? Explain.
8. What did you think about the courses and classwork shown in the film? What about the student's level of engagement?
9. What happens when access to quality education is opened up to people who society might typically underestimate?

FURTHER DISCUSSION

Prison and Criminal Justice

1. What do you think prison is for? How do you think a judge, police officer, or other professional in the criminal justice system might answer this question? Has your answer to this question changed now that you've seen COLLEGE BEHIND BARS? Explain.
2. How did seeing a group of incarcerated students engaged in civic discourse change your perception of people in prison?
3. Traditionally, prisons are said to have 4 main functions: punishment/retribution; rehabilitation; incapacitation; and deterrence. Do any of these functions work in the way society imagines or expects them to? Do any of these functions have value to society? What is the distance between the imagined ideal and the reality?
4. How might prisons cause more harm than good?
5. What do you want prisons to do? What should the function of a prison be in society?
6. How might we reimagine justice?

Release, Reunification, and Reentry

1. How can we better prepare individuals who have received educational programming in prison for a smooth reentry after they are released?
2. What is the role of family and community support in an individual's successful reentry?
3. What do successful reentry plans have in common? How do they draw upon various supports, including, but not limited to: family involvement, housing assistance, educational access, and employment support?
4. What can the community provide to assist with successful release and reentry experiences for individuals returning home? What can the community provide to help with successful

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family reunification?

5. Why is reentry support for formerly incarcerated individuals an important endeavor for the whole community?
6. What is the role of faith-based organizations in reentry and reunification?
7. What sorts of support might be needed for the other members of a justice-impacted family when an individual is released - for example their children, parents and/or spouse?
8. How does the school system support justice-impacted families and children when an individual in the family is released and reunified?

Redemption, Opportunity, Community, and Society

1. What's the value or role of redemption? Is redemption the right framework for thinking about prison?
2. If you had/have a family member in prison would you want them to have access to higher education? How would you want them to be using their time?
3. What about a neighbor or community member or stranger?
4. What if they were someone who harmed you or your loved one?
5. Why should society pay for college in prison?
6. How does society benefit from expanding access to higher education?
7. According to recent meta analysis from Rand Corp, college in prison programs actually save taxpayer dollars. How does the economic benefit of college in prison impact your viewpoint on the issue?
8. What would be the best public investments society could make in criminal justice?

FURTHER DISCUSSION

Media Literacy

1. How did this film change your assumptions about prison, about college in prison, and people in prison?
2. What questions do you have about the making of this film?
3. What did you notice about the camera work and cinematography? What choices did the filmmakers make?
4. What did you notice about the music in the film? How did the score add to the film itself?
5. How did the filmmakers use art to create emotion in the film? What did you notice about when you were feeling emotional?
6. How did the filmmakers communicate the passage of time in this film?

The following questions are arranged by **panel participant**, to facilitate a **panel Q&A discussion** after a screening of COLLEGE BEHIND BARS.

Questions Specifically for BPI Alums or Other Incarcerated Students

1. Describe what coming out of prison and returning to the community was like for you? What was easy and what was challenging?
2. What were the biggest challenges for you in your reentry? How did you adapt?
3. How did receiving a higher education while incarcerated help with your reentry?
4. What reentry programs and/or services did you receive prior to your release? After your return home?

FURTHER DISCUSSION

5. What do you want your community to know about how important support and opportunities are for people who have recently returned home?
6. Have there been challenges with adapting to the pace of life on the outside or to feeling comfortable in the various environments in which you now live, work and study? How do you address those challenges?
7. What kind of preparation did you receive before you were released in terms of continuing your education?
8. What help did you get to prepare you to adjust to new technologies, the internet and cell phones?
9. Does the reentry program at your college include access to a peer network of others on campus who are also formerly incarcerated students?
10. What was missing from your reentry assistance and programs?

Questions Specifically for Family Members of BPI Students or Other Incarcerated Students

1. Talk about what it has meant for your family that your family member became a BPI student. How has that affected your experience of their incarceration, and how has it affected them?
2. Why did you want to be part of the film, tell your family's story? What kind of response have you seen so far to the film, to your family member?
3. What do you say to people who don't think it's fair for people who are incarcerated to have access to college education while behind bars?

Questions Specifically for Politicians or Governmental Officials (Policy Makers)

1. Can you give us the lay of the land on the policy and political front around education in prisons?

FURTHER DISCUSSION

2. Even though programs that provide education to those incarcerated - like BPI - may sound fairly new to many of us, they aren't. In fact, this used to be somewhat of the norm in our prison system. Can you give us a bit of a history of education in prisons?
3. What do you consider to be the highest priorities or biggest challenges in Criminal Justice Reform moving forward?

Questions Specifically Teachers/ Educators

1. How would you describe the representation of educators in this film? How did this depiction make you feel about your profession?
2. As an educator, how did this film affect how you view your students, and your role in their lives?
3. After viewing this film, what are your thoughts on the importance of an education for every child?
4. How did this film make you think about educational access and equity?
5. Have you ever taught in a correctional facility?
6. What do you teach now, that you think has the power to transform a student? Why?
7. How will you use this film in your classroom? How will this film inform your approach to teaching?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: LINKS AND READINGS

Important Links

- College Behind Bars Website: <https://www.skiffmountainfilms.com/>
- Official PBS Webpage: [PBS.org/collegebehindbars](https://www.pbs.org/collegebehindbars)
- Bard Prison Initiative <https://bpi.bard.edu/>
- To request a screener, organize an event, or with questions on engagement, please reach out to info@skiffmountainfilms.com

Readings By Topic

The Purpose of Prisons

- Alexander, Michelle (2010). *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*
- Currie, Elliott (2013) *Crime and Punishment in America* (second ed)
- Cole, David (1999) *No Equal Justice*
- Davis, Angela (2003). *Are Prisons Obsolete?*
- Gilmore, Ruth Wilson (2007). *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*
- Gottschalk, Marie *Caught: The Prison State and the Lockdown of American Politics*
- Hinton, Elizabeth, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*
- Kohler-Hausmann, Julilly (2017) *Getting Tough: Welfare and Imprisonment in 1970s America*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Mauer, Marc, (2006 updated) Race to Incarcerate
- Morris, Norval and Rothman, David (eds)
- The Oxford History of the Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society
- Muhammad, Khalil Gibran, (2010) The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America
- Parenti, Christian (2008, new edition). Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis
- Perkinson, Robert (2010). Texas Tough: The Rise of America's Prison Empire
- Pfaff, John (2017) Locked In: The True Causes of Mass Incarceration and How to Achieve Real Reform
- Platt, Tony, (2018) Beyond These Walls: Rethinking Crime and Punishment in the United States
- Rothman, David (2002) The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic (New Lines in Criminology Series) 2nd Edition
- Sered, Danielle (2019) Until We Reckon: Violence, Mass Incarceration, and a Road to Repair
- Suddler, Carl, (2019) Presumed Criminal: Black Youth and the Justice System in Postwar New York
- Western, Bruce (2006) Punishment and Inequality in America
- Western, Bruce (2018) Homeward: Life in the Year After Prison

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Educational Access

- For the Common Good: A New History of Higher Education in America (American Institutions and Society) Hardcover – June 6, 2017 by Charles Dorn (Author)
- Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities Paperback – September 2, 2014 by Craig Steven Wilder
- Ghosts in the Schoolyard: Racism and School Closings on Chicago's South Side Hardcover – October 5, 2018 by Eve L. Ewing
- A Political Education: Black Politics and Education Reform in Chicago since the 1960s (Justice, Power, and Politics) Paperback – October 22, 2018 by Todd-Breland
- Why Busing Failed: Race, Media, and the National Resistance to School Desegregation (American Crossroads) First Edition by Matthew F. Delmont (Author)
- When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America Reprint Edition by Ira Katznelson (Author)
- The Schoolhouse Gate: Public Education, the Supreme Court, and the Battle for the American Mind by Justin Driver
- The Black Revolution on Campus Mar 21, 2014 by Martha Biondi
- The Price of Admission: How America's Ruling Class Buys Its Way into Elite Colleges--and Who Gets Left Outside the Gates Paperback – September 25, 2007 by Daniel Golden (Author)
- The Qualified Student: A History of Selective College Admission in America 1st Edition by Harold S. Wechsler (Author)
- Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America Fifth Edition by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (Author)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- The Freedom Schools: Student Activists in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement Kindle Edition by Jon Hale (Author)
- College in Prison: Reading in an Age of Mass Incarceration Kindle Edition by Daniel Karpowitz (Author)
- Liberating Minds: The Case for College in Prison Kindle Edition by Ellen Condliffe Lagemann (Author)
- Making the Unequal Metropolis: School Desegregation and Its Limits (Historical Studies of Urban America) Kindle Edition by Ansley T. Erickson (Author)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: ORGANIZATIONS

Prison Education Organizations

The Alliance for Higher Education in Prison is an excellent resource for learning about prison educational programs throughout the United States. The National Directory of Higher Education in Prison Programs is a comprehensive directory updated through an Annual Survey of Higher Education in Prison Programs. The directory and more information can be found at: <https://www.higheredinprison.org/national-directory>

BPI Consortium - <https://bpi.bard.edu/our-work/national-engagement/>

In 2009, BPI established the Consortium for the Liberal Arts in Prison to facilitate the further establishment of college-in-prison nationwide, calling for those programs to be of the highest quality, ambition, and rigor. The programs that make up the Consortium represent fourteen colleges and universities and stretch across ten states. All partners make a fundamental commitment to liberal arts learning that aims to transform individual lives by putting academics first.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Consortium Members as of Summer 2021:

- Wesleyan University Center for Prison Education (CT)
- Grinnell College, Liberal Arts in Prison Program (IA)
- Goucher College Prison Education Partnership (MD)
- Notre Dame & Holy Cross Moreau College Initiative (IN)
- Freedom Education Project of Puget Sound (WA)
- Washington University in St. Louis Prison Education Project (MO)
- Bennington College Prison Education Initiative (VT/NY)
- University of Vermont Liberal Arts in Prison Program (VT)
- The Yale Prison Education Initiative at Dwight Hall (CT)
- Emerson College Prison Initiative (MA)
- Villanova University (PA)
- Boston College Prison Education Program (MA)
- Marian University (IN)

Other Prison College/University Programs

Below is a sample list of just a few of the other college-in-prison programs in the U.S. Many of them have additional resources on their websites.

- Alabama Prison Arts & Education Project (AL)
- Bedford Hills College Program (women) (NY)
- Education Justice Project, The College of Education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (IL)
- Evergreen College (WA)
- Georgetown Prison Outreach (DC)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison (NY)
- Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program at Temple University (PA)
- NYU Prison Education Program (NY)
- Northwestern Prison Education Program (IL)
- Prison Studies Project (MA)
- The Prison University Project (CA)
- The University of Maine at Augusta Prison Education Project (ME)
- The University of Southern California Dornslife Prison Education Project (CA)

Reentry

Reentry programs are intended to help returning citizens successfully reenter society after their incarceration. Reentry is a complex process and involves many issues, such as: family reintegration, housing, employment readiness, workforce development, completing education, financial understanding and planning, healthcare needs, substance abuse treatment, trauma treatment and mental health services. For more information about reentry please visit The National Reentry Resource Center at: <https://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/>

Children with Parents who are Incarcerated

As a result of the United States' record high prison population, there is a growing number of children with one or more incarcerated parents. The National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated (NRCCFI) at Rutgers University is an excellent resource for anyone who is interested in learning more about programs and resources for children and families of the incarcerated community. The available material includes information on college scholarships to help encourage higher education. For more information please visit: <https://nrccfi.camden.rutgers.edu/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional Organizations

There are hundreds of advocacy, activism and volunteer organizations that are doing important work on the issues that COLLEGE BEHIND BARS explores, including, but not limited to: educational access, support for justice impacted individuals, families and communities, and criminal justice reform. Below is a list of some of these organizations. Many more can be found online or in your local community.

- A New Way of Life (CA) -- <http://anewwayoflife.org/>
- All Of Us Or None (National) -- <https://www.prisonerswithchildren.org>
- Brennan Center for Justice (NY) -- <https://www.brennancenter.org/>
- Center for American Progress (DC) -- <https://www.americanprogress.org/>
- College & Community Fellowship (NY) -- <https://collegeandcommunity.org/>
- Communities in School -- <https://www.communitiesinschools.org/>
- Critical Resistance (CA) -- <http://criticalresistance.org/>
- Ella Baker Center (CA) -- <https://ellabakercenter.org/>
- Families Against Mandatory Minimums (National) -- <https://famm.org/>
- Free Minds Book Club (DC) -- <https://freemindsbookclub.org/>
- Just Leadership USA (National) -- <https://jlusa.org/>
- Justice Mapping Center (National) -- <https://www.justicemapping.org/>
- Justice Policy Institute (National) -- <http://www.justicepolicy.org/>
- The Petey Greene Program -- <https://www.peteygreene.org/>
- Prison Fellowship -- <https://www.prisonfellowship.org/>
- Prison Policy Initiative (National) -- <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/>
- Sentencing Project (National) -- <https://www.sentencingproject.org/>
- The Real Cost of Prisons Project (National) -- <http://www.realcostofprisons.org/>
- Vera Institute of Justice (National) -- <https://www.vera.org/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Take Action

This section provides viewers with specific, hands-on ways to get involved in the issues that are explored in COLLEGE BEHIND BARS. From educational equity and socio-economic access and representation; to systemic bias and the flaws in our criminal justice system, each of the actions listed below highlight a user-friendly way to make a difference in the landscape of criminal justice reform.

Donate your time

Throughout the US, as well as in the UK and Canada there are many organizations working to support quality educational programs for students who are incarcerated. Use the “Additional Resources” section of this guide to find an organization – or look for one in your local community. Volunteer to teach, tutor, or mentor an incarcerated student, or do similar work with children in justice impacted families.

Host a Backpack Drive

Many of the people in COLLEGE BEHIND BARS spoke of their educational experiences prior to incarceration, and they were able to make connections between their lack of access to quality education and the subsequent experiences that led to prison. Help support an underserved school, or a justice-impacted student, by holding a “backpack drive.” Collect new or gently used backpacks and fill them up with school supplies: pencils, paper, notebooks, pens. Stick a note inside each backpack with words of encouragement for students who might need to hear them. Donate the backpacks to a local organization working with underrepresented schools, or to an organization that supports justice impacted students.

TAKE ACTION

Be a Resource for Reentry

One of the biggest challenges that formerly incarcerated people experience is reentry. Without support, encouragement and guidance, many people struggle to acclimate to life on the outside after experiencing incarceration. Find a local organization that supports people during reentry and donate time, money, or other resources to support their clients. For a person at one of the most vulnerable points in their journey of rehabilitation, a mentor can make all the difference.

Host a Book Drive

At the core of all learning is information, and since many institutions limit internet access, books take on even more importance for research, learning, and access to information. Host a book drive and collect fiction, nonfiction, and reference books to donate to a school, community organization or institution that might need them. Collect books for different age groups and support all the members of justice impacted communities.

Provide Supportive Programming

The students in COLLEGE BEHIND BARS often speak of the “invasiveness” of prison life – how it can take over a person’s mind and emotional state – and how school can be a buffer between their thoughts and their circumstances. There are many organizations doing great work in prisons and other institutions that help individuals build emotional stamina to stay positive and focused. From meditation programs to creative arts, these programs can provide additional support to help stave off the stress and anxiety that comes with living in an institution and working towards a college degree. Support an organization such as the Prison Mindfulness Institute, Heart to Heart, or the Lionheart Foundation, or work to establish a wellness, mindfulness, or arts program in an institution that does not yet have access to such programming.

TAKE ACTION

Donate Funds

One of the quickest and easiest ways we can show our support for educational equity is by donating to existing organizations who are doing this important work. Choose one from the organizations listed in the “Additional Resources” section – or find a local organization – and make a donation so that they can continue making meaningful differences in the lives of individuals and families who are justice impacted.

Use Your Voice

One of the best ways we can effect change is to contact our governmental representatives and demand equity and access for all citizens. Go to <https://house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative> and identify your Congresspeople. Then take a few minutes to write a letter, an email, or even a text to let them know that you think our criminal justice system is broken. Policy organizations such as The Brennan Center (<https://www.brennancenter.org>) can help you find wording that will communicate the exact concerns that you wish to convey.

Give a Job

If you're in a position to hire an employee or intern, consider offering the position to a formerly incarcerated applicant. As depicted in COLLEGE BEHIND BARS, many formerly incarcerated individuals struggle to find meaningful work, even when they are qualified – or overqualified. Giving a justice impacted person the opportunity to work, learn, and grow professionally can make their experience of reentry so much easier – and could truly be a life changing opportunity.

CONTRIBUTORS

About the Filmmakers

COLLEGE BEHIND BARS is a production of Skiff Mountain Films and WETA, Washington D.C. In association with Florentine Films. It is directed and produced by Lynn Novick; produced by Sarah Botstein; and executive produced by Ken Burns. Edited by Tricia Reidy, ACE produced by Salimah El-Amin & Mariah Doran, Cinematography by Buddy Squires, ASC & Nadia Hallgren. Original music by Jongnic Bontemps; assistant editor Charles Horton; associate producer Stephen Sowers; post-production supervisor Megan Ruffe; research/production associate Jonah Velasco.

About the Funders

Funding Credits Funding for COLLEGE BEHIND BARS was provided Bank of America and by members of The Better Angels Society: John & Catherine Debs, The Cousins Foundation, Inc., Abrams Foundation, Schwartz/Reisman Foundation, Ted Dintersmith & Elizabeth Hazard, McCloskey Family Charitable Trust, and Donna & Dick Strong. Funding was also provided by Ford Foundation / JustFilms; National Endowment for the Humanities; Meg & Tomas Bergstrand; Regina K. Scully; The Lise Strickler & Mark Gallogly Charitable Fund, a fund at The New York Community Trust; Patty Quillin through the Meadow Fund at Silicon Valley Community Foundation; Barbara & Richard Novick; Chicken & Egg Pictures; The William H. Donner Foundation; Hartley Film Foundation; Bertha Foundation; The Harnisch Foundation; Compton Foundation; Lisa Philp; and the Public Broadcasting Service.

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF EDUCATION



K E N B U R N S P R E S E N T S

COLLEGE BEHIND BARS

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