

This Is a Story You Have to Tell:  
**Women and Girls in the Criminal Justice System**





## Dear Educator,

Welcome to Independent Television Service's (ITVS) Community Classroom, and this new resource from our Women and Girls Lead campaign called "This Is a Story You Have To Tell: Women, Girls, and the Criminal Justice System."

As you may know, Community Classroom is a film and curriculum resource series that brings to life pressing social issues using film modules from award-winning documentaries and standards-based lesson plans. The idea is simple: Combine compelling films with the tools that educators need to create a 21st-century learning experience for young and adult learners alike. This is a core part of our work at ITVS, a nonprofit that funds important social-issue documentary films, reaches audiences through public television and an online presence, and directly engages communities and classrooms for impact.

The resource you have before you is the second curriculum we've developed for Women and Girls Lead, a three-year public media initiative to raise up the voices of women and girls worldwide who are acting as leaders. Women and Girls Lead includes 50 documentary films supported by broadcast, engagement, and media tools, all committed to getting citizens involved and bringing unheard voices from every community—including your students—into the conversation. To find out more, visit [www.itvs.org/women-and-girls-lead](http://www.itvs.org/women-and-girls-lead).

Yet this Women and Girls Lead Justice curriculum is unique in its intense and specific focus on young women at high risk for contact with the U.S. criminal justice system, where the female population has grown nearly 800 percent over the last 30 years. Through a wave of global research, we know that places where women and girls thrive tend to be more prosperous, less violent, and healthier for everyone. But what are the prospects or potential for young women who live in communities where mass incarceration is an issue, or who have a parent in jail, or who have committed a crime themselves?

The fact is, just as the empowerment of women and girls is a key to breaking the cycle of poverty worldwide, evidence shows that when young American women who are at-risk find their way out of trouble, they often emerge as a transformative force in their communities, lifting up themselves, their families, and their friends. Their paths to becoming leaders is more difficult than most, but their promise is greater, too, and our society needs them more than ever.

We believe this resource will provide tools for young women to identify risks, think critically about the criminal justice system, learn about resources in their community, and become mentors to other young women. This curriculum was developed as a deep collaboration between ITVS, the filmmakers, and educators who work directly with young women at high risk for contact with the criminal justice system. It includes detailed curricula built around film modules for *Me Facing Life: Cyntoia's Story*, *Girls on the Wall*, and *Troop 1500*. We hope it helps you in your work, and we welcome your feedback, input, and support. Thank you for all you do as educators!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sally Jo Fifer', written in a cursive style.

Sally Jo Fifer, President and CEO, ITVS



# This Is a Story You Have to Tell:

## Women and Girls in the Criminal Justice System

### How to Use This Guide and These Films

This educator guide may be used to support the viewing of the documentaries *Me Facing Life: Cyntoia's Story*, *Girls on the Wall*, and *Troop 1500*, while engaging participants in discussions about the criminal justice system; factors that put teens at risk; the impact of mass incarceration on individuals, families, and communities; and effective responses to these issues. The films and educator guide lessons are built around a central question: How can women and girls impacted by the criminal justice system become leaders? At a time of great concern about the number of women and girls under the supervision of the criminal justice system, it is our hope that participants not only explore the question of leadership but take a step toward becoming leaders and mentors themselves.

**Target Audience:** These lessons target girls and young women at risk for contact with the criminal justice system and can be used in juvenile detention centers, groups that serve youth, alternative sentencing and restorative justice programs, and other community-based settings. High school and community college instructors may also find this collection useful, though it is not a standards-aligned curriculum.

**Lesson Structure:** The lessons and film modules are designed to stand alone and last 60-90 minutes, with additional time to complete assignments. The lessons can be delivered together as a unit with a culminating lesson. This unit is designed to last two weeks.

**Subject Areas for School Settings:** Life Skills, Language Arts, Social Studies, Current Events, Government/Civics, Women's Studies, Social Work

### Curricula Writer

**Meredith McMonigle** is an independent education consultant who taught middle and high school social studies, ESL and reading for eleven years. McMonigle has a background in correctional education as a teacher inside the San Francisco county jail. She is currently working on a Masters in Social Work with a focus on mass incarceration and prisoner reentry programs.



## Lessons: The lessons in this collection are presented in the following order:

### A Reminder to Facilitators and Educators

Please remember that the lessons are guidelines only. We hope that you will make the necessary adjustments to meet the needs of your setting and social environment, keeping in mind your own and your group's familiarity with the issues, the needs of your organization and community, the age of the participants, and the size and duration of the group. Research indicates that at-risk girls are more likely to have experienced childhood physical and/or sexual abuse. Several lessons deal directly with these issues and may present specific challenges. Instructors should take steps to determine how deeply to delve in these areas and what types of additional facilitation and support might be needed.

#### **Lesson 1: Portraits of Girls in the Criminal Justice System** ..... page 9

This lesson examines risk factors for contact with the criminal justice system as well as other negative outcomes such as teen pregnancy, dropping out of high school, and substance abuse, and allows students to assess their own risks.

#### **Lesson 2: "Keep Coming": How to Strengthen Resiliency** ..... page 13

This lesson highlights the qualities of resiliency needed by teens to overcome adversity and risk. Students consider their own level of resiliency and explore ways to strengthen it.

#### **Lesson 3: What to Do: The State of the Criminal Justice System** ..... page 16

This lesson provides students with an opportunity to learn more about trends in the criminal justice system in the context of an exploding prison population. They will consider restorative justice as an alternate model and its connection to stories that heal. In a letter-writing activity, students will outline the effectiveness of the criminal justice system and offer ideas for strengthening it.

#### **Lesson 4: What Is the Impact of My Decisions?** ..... page 20

This lesson asks students to reflect on decisions they have made that have negatively impacted others in order to build empathy and hold themselves accountable.

#### **Lesson 5: The Power of Expression** ..... page 23

This lesson documents the importance of opening up through storytelling and song about the things that make us hurt and angry and challenges students to tell their story.

#### **Lesson 6: Intervention: What Works** ..... page 26

This lesson looks at a successful and surprising intervention program for mothers in prison and is designed for students to further their knowledge of existing resources in their communities and to strengthen the skills needed to access them.

#### **Lesson 7: Role Models and Mentors** ..... page 29

This lesson raises the importance of having a mentor, the characteristics of a good mentor, and what possibilities exist for students themselves to inspire and motivate others. Students will be encouraged to contact a mentoring organization to find a mentor if they do not already have one.

#### **Culminating Lesson: Leadership Among Women and Girls Impacted by the Criminal Justice System**

This culminating lesson will challenge students to bring together all that they have learned and experienced working with the collection to answer the question, how can justice-involved girls be leaders? They will have the option of exploring the question in writing or choosing a digital format modeled on "coming out" videos of undocumented teens and gay teens.



## ITVS Community Classroom Film Modules

### Using Digital Media Tools

The lessons in this collection encourage participants to work in a variety of multimedia formats whenever possible—using digital storytelling, radio, website design, online presentation, and so on. The following websites offer helpful tools for doing so:

**Prezi**—online, interactive, animated presentations: [www.prezi.com](http://www.prezi.com)

**Glogster**—a site that allows users to create digital posters made of text, images, music, and video: [www.glogster.com](http://www.glogster.com)

**Flavors**—a site that allows users to create digital walls/homepages from images, text, links, and video: [www.flavors.me](http://www.flavors.me)

**Tumblr**—a multimedia blogging and social networking site: [www.tumblr.com](http://www.tumblr.com)

**Capzles**—a social media site that uses video, music, images, blogs, and documents: [www.capzles.com](http://www.capzles.com)

**Schooltube**—a site for sharing and posting student-generated video content: [www.schooltube.com](http://www.schooltube.com)

With this educator guide, you can build a unit around all three films or you can focus on one or more of the Community Classroom film modules, all available at [www.itvs.org/educators/collections/women-girls-and-the-criminal-justice-system](http://www.itvs.org/educators/collections/women-girls-and-the-criminal-justice-system). Each module runs 5-10 minutes.

### Film Module 1: Portraits of Girls in the Criminal Justice System ..... [11:10]

Each module in this two-part sequence takes a look at teen girls currently under the supervision of the criminal justice system, one serving a short sentence in an Illinois juvenile detention center and the other serving a life sentence in an adult state prison in Tennessee. Viewers get snapshots of the girls' childhoods and families and some of the adversity they faced in their lives.

### Film Module 2: Seizing Their Stories ..... [9:00]

In the first part of this module sequence we hear Cyntoia analyze and reflect on her past sexual history and victimization as well as one step she recently took in prison in response to that past. In the second part, viewers reexamine Rosa's snapshot from "Film Module 1: Portraits of Girls in the Criminal Justice System" with an eye to examples of her resiliency.

### Film Module 3: What to Do: The State of the Criminal Justice System ..... [3:19]

In this module, viewers hear from a range of people weighing in on the result of Cyntoia's case, including a court-appointed forensic psychologist, the prosecuting attorney, and members of Cyntoia's family. Questions such as whether teens should be tried as adults and what to do when teens commit serious crimes are addressed.

### Film Module 4: What Is the Impact of My Decisions? ..... [8:40]

This module details the relationships between mothers in prison and the daughters they left behind. The viewer watches as several girls visit their mothers in jail as part of a Girl Scout troop program. This module provides glimpses into the ways that families are impacted by incarceration.

### Film Module 5: The Power of Expression ..... [7:41]

This module takes a look at a drama therapy program at a juvenile detention center for girls in Illinois. Viewers watch as the girls struggle to make sense of their own stories and how they can be used collectively to tell a larger, transformative narrative.

### Film Module 6: Intervention: What Works ..... [5:54]

This module introduces the Beyond Bars program of the Girl Scouts of the USA, a program that brings together daughters with their incarcerated moms. Viewers see examples of activities that are designed to strengthen the bond between mothers and daughters even when these mothers are locked up. We hear from the warden, a social worker, the troop leader, and the program participants.

### Film Module 7: Role Models and Mentors ..... [4:16]

In this module, viewers examine the ways that individuals, even under difficult circumstances, can inspire others. We see a daughter attending her mom's high school graduation in prison and a teen girl serving a life sentence who reflects on her choices.



## Background Resources

**Bureau of Justice Statistics:**

[bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov](http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov)

**Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention:**

[www.ojjdp.gov](http://www.ojjdp.gov)

**The National Reentry Resource Center:**

[nationalreentryresourcecenter.org](http://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org)

**The Sentencing Project:**

[www.sentencingproject.org/template/index.cfm](http://www.sentencingproject.org/template/index.cfm)

**The Pew Center on the States: Corrections and Public Safety:**

[www.pewcenteronthestates.org/topic\\_category.aspx?category=528](http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/topic_category.aspx?category=528)

**Urban Institute: Justice Policy Center:**

[www.urban.org/justice/index.cfm](http://www.urban.org/justice/index.cfm)

**American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU): Safe Communities, Fair Sentences:**

[www.aclu.org/safe-communities-fair-sentences-0](http://www.aclu.org/safe-communities-fair-sentences-0)

**National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP):  
Justice:**

[www.naacp.org/programs/entry/justice](http://www.naacp.org/programs/entry/justice)

**Vera Institute of Justice: Center on Youth Justice:**

[www.vera.org/centers/center-youth-justice](http://www.vera.org/centers/center-youth-justice)

**Girls Study Group:**

[girlsstudygroup.rti.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=dsp\\_home](http://girlsstudygroup.rti.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=dsp_home)

**Restorative Justice Online:**

[www.restorativejustice.org](http://www.restorativejustice.org)

**Models for Change**

[www.modelsforchange.net/index.html](http://www.modelsforchange.net/index.html)

**Further Reading**

Mauer, Mark. *The Race to Incarcerate*. New York: The New Press, 2006.

Chesney-Lind, Meda, and Nikki Jones. *Fighting For Girls*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010.



## Getting Started

This collection raises difficult questions about people at risk for contact with the criminal justice system and the dramatic increase in the nation's prison population over the last several decades. The lessons are student-centered and interactive with a goal of full participation among participants. In that spirit and as a way to prepare to work with this challenging material, we ask that you take some time now (or before you start using this resource) to complete the following steps:

1. Make a short list of all that comes to mind when you think about prisons, jails, and crime.
2. Consider the following statistics: One in one hundred Americans is incarcerated. For black males it is 1 in 15. More than one million women are under the supervision of the criminal justice system. The U.S. houses one-fourth of the world's prison population.\*

Then, respond to the following quote from Senator Jim Webb: "With so many of our citizens in prison compared to the rest of the world, there are only two possibilities: Either we are home to the most evil people on earth or we are doing something different—and vastly counterproductive." What do you think explains the vast increase in our prison population?

3. Finally, examine your notes and responses and make some objective observations about where you stand on these issues. Think about what you bring to the table as you begin this work with your group.

### Final Note

Our intention in organizing the lessons is to provide a balance between personal behaviors and accountability on the one hand, and structural factors like race, class, and legal policies on the other when thinking about the criminal justice system. This is what makes this collection unique and valuable but it is a hard balance to strike—most people emphasize some factors over others to explain our high prison population. Keep that in mind as you work through these activities with your group as a way to challenge all sides of the issue and learn from those with opposing viewpoints. Take some time to review all of the materials included and explore some of the links provided before you begin. Let us know at [classroom@itvs.org](mailto:classroom@itvs.org) what results you have from working with this collection.

### \*Source:

[www.nytimes.com/2008/02/28/us/28cnd-prison.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/28/us/28cnd-prison.html)

[www.nytimes.com/2011/11/21/us/21iht-letter21.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=a%20country%20of%20inmates&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/21/us/21iht-letter21.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=a%20country%20of%20inmates&st=cse)

[www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/womenincj\\_total.pdf](http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/womenincj_total.pdf)





## Me Facing Life: Cyntoia's Story

BY DANIEL BIRMAN

In 2004, Cyntoia Brown was arrested for murder. There was no question that a 43-year-old man was dead and that she killed him. What mystified filmmaker Daniel Birman was just how common violence among youth is, and just how rarely we stop to question our assumptions about it. He wondered in this case what led a girl—who grew up in a reasonable home environment—to this tragic end?

*Me Facing Life: Cyntoia's Story* explores Cyntoia's life. The camera first glimpses her during the week of her arrest at age 16 and follows her for nearly six years. Along the way, nationally renowned juvenile forensic psychiatrist Dr. William Bennet from Vanderbilt University assesses her situation. We meet Ellenette Brown, Cyntoia's adoptive mother, who talks about the young girl's early years. Georgina Mitchell, Cyntoia's biological mother, meets her for the first time since Georgina gave her up for adoption 14 years earlier. When we meet Cyntoia's maternal grandmother, Joan Warren, some patterns begin to come into sharp focus.

Cyntoia wrestles with her fate. She is stunningly articulate, and takes the time to put the pieces of this puzzle together with us. Cyntoia's preprison lifestyle was nearly indistinguishable from her mother's at the same age. History—predestined by biology and circumstance—is repeating down the generations in this family.

Cyntoia is tried as an adult, and the cameras are there when she is convicted and sentenced to life at the Tennessee Prison for Women. After the verdict, Cyntoia calls her adoptive mother to tell her the news. In the end, we catch up with Cyntoia as she is adjusting to prison and struggling with her identity and hope for her future.

A letter from film director Daniel Birman is available in the discussion guide found here: [www.itvs.org/films/me-facing-life/engagement-resources](http://www.itvs.org/films/me-facing-life/engagement-resources)

For more information about the film, visit the film's website at [www.itvs.org/films/me-facing-life](http://www.itvs.org/films/me-facing-life)







## Girls on the Wall

BY HEATHER ROSS

The teenage girls of Warrenville Prison are not your average delinquents. Having “graduated” from juvenile detention centers (juvie) to prison, these are the kids most likely to remain in the correctional system their whole lives. They are also some of the sharpest and most irrepressible young women you’ll ever meet. When the girls of this Heartland prison are given an unlikely shot at redemption—the chance to write and stage a musical based on their lives—they must relive their crimes, reclaim their humanity, and take a first step toward breaking free of the prison system.

Each girl in the cast must come to terms with her own darkest moments as she takes her story to the stage. Whitney uses a blend of charm and intimidation to avoid writing about her past until she’s ready to confront her infamous crime. Hot-tempered Rosa must grapple with her own abuse when a similar story shows up in the musical’s plot. And runaway Christina’s life takes its own plot twist when a sheltered suburban family offers to adopt her. As the performance unfolds, their stories give us a visceral understanding of why a girl becomes a criminal ... and how she can get back.

### Filmmaker Statement (Heather Ross)

There aren’t enough real, authentic stories about girls in this world. And there sure aren’t enough stories about girls growing up outside the mainstream. That’s one reason I made *Girls on the Wall*—I thought it was a story that both needed to be told and needed to be listened to.

*Girls on the Wall* is about how important it is to tell your own story. Taking an honest look at our experiences and telling them to other people isn’t a panacea, but it’s a step toward getting perspective on those experiences. Likewise, hearing someone tell her story honestly can be just as powerful a tool to spark a sense of shared experience or an unexpected understanding. That’s why I make films—because I believe stories can transform us.

Making *Girls on the Wall* was as much an exercise in listening as it was in storytelling. I listened as openly as I could, to allow room for each girl’s story to unfold at the time and in the way she chose. My goal was for the audience to be as moved by the stories of Rosa and all the girls at Warrenville as I was, and just as inspired to start telling their own stories, in their own voices.

For more information about the film, visit the film’s website at [www.itvs.org/films/girls-on-the-wall](http://www.itvs.org/films/girls-on-the-wall)





## Troop 1500

BY ELLEN SPIRO AND KAREN BERNSTEIN

At Hilltop Prison in Gatesville, Texas, a unique Girl Scout troop—Troop 1500—unites daughters with mothers who are serving time for serious crimes, giving them a chance to rebuild their broken bonds. Facing long sentences from the courts, the mothers struggle to mend their fractured relationships with their daughters.

*Troop 1500* follows five young Girl Scouts—sisters Caitlin and Mikaela, and Jasmine, Jessica, and Naomi—whose mothers are serving time. Once inside the prison, the girls of Troop 1500 fall into the arms of the mothers they seldom see—Kenya, Melissa, Ida, and Susan—crying and laughing while pulling out report cards and pictures and passing along hellos from grandparents and absent brothers.

Filmmakers Ellen Spiro and Karen Bernstein, who volunteered with the girls for two years before making *Troop 1500*, gained unprecedented access to Girl Scouts of the USA, Hilltop Prison in Gatesville, and the families themselves. The filmmakers trained the girls in videography so that they could conduct their own interviews and tell their own stories—asking some difficult questions and getting some tough answers.

*Troop 1500* goes beyond the girls' prison experience to show what their daily lives are like: balancing family, schoolwork, and extracurricular activities under the care of dads, friends, and grandparents. And though the girls longingly await the day when their moms are free, their problems don't always end upon their mothers' release.

The result is a sobering but hopeful look at the struggles faced by the more than 1.5 million American children who have a parent behind bars.

### Filmmaker Statement (Ellen Spiro)

I use the camera as my tool to connect with people and to share stories with audiences to promote understanding and empathy. I am very interested in girls' stories because it is hard to find authentic portrayals of girls' experiences and lives in the media or the culture. Most girls, if they just read magazines and watch TV, would find it impossible to be what the images out there are telling girls to be. Those images and information encourage girls to make themselves into something they are not, just to please someone else.

I believe that being happy is about becoming who we are, in the most authentic way we can. I am very grateful to my mother for encouraging my interests. She bought me my first camera when I was 8 years old. I have been making images ever since. I made *Troop 1500* because I wanted to share stories of girls who are struggling without their moms in their lives, who are learning—through other female role models and Girl Scout leaders—how to be independent and powerful in the world without repeating the mistakes their moms made. I was also moved by the important truth that girls need moms and they can love their moms and connect with their moms and also make their own choices in life and forge a new path for themselves.

But *Troop 1500* only told part of the story. Several years later, I am now reconnecting with the girls of Troop 1500 and am pleased to say that not a single girl has gone to prison. Sadly, all but one of the mothers are back in jail. I hope that when girls watch *Troop 1500* they understand that whatever difficult situations we find ourselves in, there are always doors into new possibilities. Sometimes they are well hidden, but if we look outward and try to connect with others, we have a better chance of making things better. When we struggle with difficulties in life, we pretty much have two choices: We can get stronger or we can get weaker. Getting stronger means reaching out to others and not being alone with our problems.

Troop 1500 is a powerful group of powerful girls. But if there is no troop at your doorstep, sometimes just one trusted friend can make a big difference. I love documentary filmmaking because it is about creating something beautiful out of the muck of life. Michelangelo said it best: "I saw an angel in the marble and I carved until I set her free." Real life is messy. Finding stories and creating ways of telling them so that people will enjoy watching is the most challenging and rewarding thing I have ever done. Sometimes I feel like I never want to make another film because it is such hard work, and then the feeling usually subsides and I am back in action!

For more information about the film, visit the film's website at: [www.itvs.org/films/troop-1500](http://www.itvs.org/films/troop-1500)



# Lesson 1:

## Portraits of Girls Impacted by the Criminal Justice System

(90 MINUTES + ASSIGNMENT)

**Essential Question:** Which factors lead girls to have contact with the criminal justice system?

Film modules and activities adapted from the films *Me Facing Life: Cyntoia's Story* and *Girls on the Wall*.

### Note to Instructors

This lesson deals with sensitive topics that students may be at risk for, such as exposure to physical and sexual abuse, child neglect, absent or incarcerated parents, and substance abuse issues. These topics may trigger strong feelings that are difficult to manage. Please consider the resources you may need to approach these topics. Invite a trained clinical counselor to the class for additional support if possible. Some useful guidelines for working with traumatized students can be found here: [teacher.scholastic.com/professional/bruceperry/working\\_children.htm](http://teacher.scholastic.com/professional/bruceperry/working_children.htm).

### Purpose of the Lesson

We know something about what puts teens at risk for incarceration and other negative outcomes like teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and dropping out of high school. But each person is unique and risk factors play out differently for different people. This lesson examines factors that can lead to contact with the criminal justice system. It allows students to look at challenges in their past and the role that those challenges play in where they are today. Students are given an opportunity to use creative expression to explore their current situation – whether they are incarcerated or in danger of incarceration.

### Objectives

- Reflect on the difficulties of opening up under challenging or stressful circumstances – e.g., in an incarcerated setting or when dealing with stress or trauma
- Identify a range of known factors that can lead to contact with the criminal justice system (using the film module, students' own experiences, and related documents)
- Analyze the severity of various risk factors and evaluate and discuss those that students consider to be the most difficult to overcome
- Debate the question of whether all risk factors can be overcome, or in the words of filmmaker Daniel Birman (*Me Facing Life: Cyntoia's Story*) whether some girls “never had a chance”

### Skills

Stating and supporting opinions in class discussions and in writing; analytical writing and viewing; note taking; interpreting information and drawing conclusions; critical thinking; identifying relationships and patterns.

### Materials

- Film module 1: Portraits of Girls in the Criminal Justice System (can be streamed or ordered on DVD for free at [itvs.org/educators](http://itvs.org/educators)) [11:10]
- Computers with internet access and/or with DVD capability
- LCD projector or DVD player
- Whiteboard/markers or chalkboard/chalk
- *Me Facing Life: Cyntoia's Story* and *Girls on the Wall* discussion guides, available here: [www.itvs.org/films/me-facing-life/engagement-resources](http://www.itvs.org/films/me-facing-life/engagement-resources)  
[www.girlsonthewallmovie.com/educational](http://www.girlsonthewallmovie.com/educational)
- Student Handout A: Portraits of Girls Impacted by the Criminal Justice System, see Appendix



1. **Introduction:** Post or project the following quote from a participant in the film *Girls on the Wall*. Have students copy the quote and write a journal reflection on what the quote means to them.

"It take a lot for me to be open, you know. And I been closed for a long time, know what I'm saying. When you finally get something out it hurts." – Rosa

Tell students that this collection of film modules and lesson plans will challenge them to open up and share their stories. This is a good time to review ground rules you may have in your class for creating a safe space for students to share personal information. One commonly used strategy is to have students themselves generate a list of guidelines and rules that they think would create a safe, supportive environment. This list can be posted and referenced throughout the curriculum. It should be clear that no one will feel pressured to share until they are ready. A good reference to get started can be found here: [www.advocatesforyouth.org/component/content/article/496-tips-and-strategies-for-creating-a-safe-space-for-glbqtq-youth](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/component/content/article/496-tips-and-strategies-for-creating-a-safe-space-for-glbqtq-youth)

2. **Think-pair-share:** Tell students that this resource is about women and girls impacted by the criminal justice system. As a way to get started, ask students individually to make a list of five things they think put teenage girls at risk for incarceration (e.g., having a parent in jail, sexual abuse, substance abuse). Have students write down the five examples on strips of paper. Have students pair up and exchange their strips with their partner. Students will read their partner's examples and put the strips in order from –in their opinion– the most- to least-serious risks. Students will go over their work with their partner, comparing and discussing their rankings.

Then, have several pairs report on their work. Ask them to share where they had consensus and where they disagreed with each other's rankings. You can use these response prompts.

We both included these examples: \_\_\_\_\_.

One example I didn't include but think is important is \_\_\_\_\_.

We disagreed about \_\_\_\_\_.

An interesting thing we discussed was \_\_\_\_\_.

Ask one student volunteer to track risk factors as they are mentioned on the board. When pairs are finished presenting, lead a group reflection based on these questions: What do you notice about the list of risk factors? What is surprising about the list? Is anything missing? Do you have any other observations?

Have one or more students copy the class list of risk factors onto presentation paper to post and reference in the classroom.

3. **Pass out "Student Handout A: Portraits of Girls Impacted by the Criminal Justice System", see Appendix of this guide.**

Review the "Female Juvenile Delinquency Fact Sheet" and compare it to the list that the students generated. Check in with your students about the challenging nature of these topics and make it clear to them that they will not be asked to personalize examples of these risks. If students react angrily to some of the information, challenge them to channel those feelings in productive ways that will improve their lives and the lives of others. See the notes below for more information on the most difficult of these topics to discuss in a class setting.

### Notes

#### Sexual Abuse

Research documents that prior victimization in the form of physical or sexual abuse is one of the most significant risk factors for incarceration. This is difficult terrain to navigate in the classroom. To go deeper with your students, a good place to start is the U.S. Department of Justice resource Women & Girls in the Criminal Justice System [www.ncjrs.gov/spotlight/wgcjs/summary.html](http://www.ncjrs.gov/spotlight/wgcjs/summary.html).

This organization, Generation FIVE, is creating a movement to end child sexual abuse within five generations: [www.generationfive.org/index.php](http://www.generationfive.org/index.php).

#### Overrepresentation of People of Color in the Criminal Justice System

Minorities have disproportionate contact (Disproportionate Minority Contact, or DMC) with the criminal justice system. More information about this topic can be found here: [www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/publications/jj\\_DMCfactsheet.pdf](http://www.sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/publications/jj_DMCfactsheet.pdf).

If students have internet access, they can conduct state-by-state research on DMC using this resource: [www.burnsinstitute.org/state\\_map.php](http://www.burnsinstitute.org/state_map.php).



4. **Introduce the films** *Me Facing Life: Cyntoia's Story* and *Girls on the Wall* using the "About the Films" and "Filmmaker Statement" subsections included in the "Getting Started" section. Show "Film Module 1: Portraits of Girls in the Criminal Justice System." The module includes upsetting details about physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. Prepare students for this material and talk with them about what to do if these scenes trigger difficult feelings for them.

Students will take notes on "Student Handout A" as they watch the module. Allow time to complete the handout after the module is over. Then, review students' notes and discuss the following questions:

- What risks stood out for you for Cyntoia? For Rosa?
- Are there any similarities between Cyntoia and Rosa?
- For each girl, do you think there is a core factor that puts her at risk?
- How do your notes match up with the "Female Juvenile Delinquency Fact Sheet"?
- What are your thoughts about Rosa's disclosure that she was sexually abused as a child by her cousins?
- Which girl are you drawn to or can you relate to the most?
- What more would you want to know about each of them to better understand their background and what factors led them to becoming incarcerated?

#### 5. Socratic Circles

Using the discussion guide for *Me Facing Life: Cyntoia's Story*, (<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/me-facing-life/resources/me-facing-life-discussion.pdf>) read "Cyntoia's Risk Factors: A Summary." This handout goes into greater detail about the range of risk factors Cyntoia faced. Ask students to evaluate how at-risk they believe Cyntoia was for committing violence and becoming incarcerated. Students should be prepared to give several reasons or pieces of evidence to support their ranking. Discuss how they chose their criteria for their evaluation of Cyntoia.

Divide the class up into an inner circle and outer circle to conduct a Socratic discussion. The discussion question centers on a statement made by the filmmaker of *Me Facing Life: Cyntoia's Story*. In regard to Cyntoia, he concluded, "The sad reality is that she never really had a chance." Ask students to discuss whether they think that is true, that Cyntoia never really had a chance. A related question to discuss is whether students think that some people cannot change.

The inner circle will discuss for five minutes whether they agree with the filmmaker's statement as well as with student opinions about whether people can change. Discussion can begin with the following questions: Do they think there are some girls that don't have a chance? Do they think they themselves have a chance? Then, the outer circle will report on points they heard made in the inner circle. Alternatively, students in the outer circle can be assigned a student in the inner circle to paraphrase at the end of the discussion. If time and interest permit, have the inner and outer circles switch places and repeat this exercise.

Read here for more information on conducting Socratic Circles: [www.journeytoexcellence.org/practice/instruction/theories/miscideas/socratic](http://www.journeytoexcellence.org/practice/instruction/theories/miscideas/socratic).

#### 6. Activity: Letter Writing, Video Diaries, or Audio Podcasts

Have students write a journal entry or record an audio podcast in which they compose a thank-you note to either Cyntoia or Rosa for sharing their stories. Where possible, students should also be given the option to make a video letter. Ask students to respond to these questions: What can you relate to the most in her story? What circumstances do you think were the most challenging for her? What impact did the story have on you? How is she or can she be a leader/role model for girls in similar situations?

Students who choose to do so can actually mail the letter or DVD with the audio podcast or video file to Cyntoia to the following address:

Cyntoia Brown  
#410593  
Tennessee State Prison for Women  
Unit 1 West, D-59  
3881 Stewarts Lane  
Nashville, TN 37218-3302

Alternatively, students can exchange letters and write a response as if they were Cyntoia or Rosa. Letters and responses can be presented to the class.



## 7. Assignment: Visual Self-Assessment and Reflection

Ask students to make a visual representation of the risks they have faced or are currently facing as they move forward in their lives. Students can use the metaphor of a brick wall or a wall of graffiti. They can include text on the wall that represents some of their risks. Students should add symbols or drawings to deepen the viewer's understanding. Remind students that they only have to share details about themselves that they are comfortable with.

To reflect on their artwork, have students use that information to write a poem, rap, or monologue—or another form of their choosing that could include role-play, dance, or movement—about challenges and struggles they have faced in the past. Use the examples below from *Girls on the Wall* as models.

When assignments are completed, arrange the classroom so that students can sit in a circle and share their work. Allow time for students to give positive feedback after each reading. What did they like? What could they relate to? What impressed them? Write these feedback questions on the board for students to reference.

### Rosa

You see my life started out as hell.  
My mom on crack and my dad in jail.  
All my life I rebelled  
Kept my secrets inside I chose to never tell  
I been from foster home to group home to jail  
But on these things I cannot dwell.

### Whitney

It say, broken' which many of us are  
Then I just put, 'you're an Indian Giver, dog.  
You give me money, you take it back  
That ain't cool  
You give me love, you take it back  
That ain't cool either  
You were my life, my smile  
Now all I do is think, what if you were a different man  
You could've accomplished many things  
But yet instead, you love that pipe first  
You loved your broad the same as that  
But never showed me love at all.

## Extension Activities

1. Read this article with your class about new research on the effects of childhood trauma. [www.news-medical.net/news/20110609/Children-who-experience-trauma-more-likely-to-have-behavior-and-learning-problems.aspx](http://www.news-medical.net/news/20110609/Children-who-experience-trauma-more-likely-to-have-behavior-and-learning-problems.aspx). Lead a discussion of the article around these questions:
  - What are some of the adverse childhood events described in the article? How do they compare to the risk factors discussed in lesson 1?
  - What does the article say about the impact of childhood trauma? Why do you think trauma is difficult to recover from?
  - Why is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) underdiagnosed in children?
  - What is the purpose of the Center for Youth Wellness? Do you think this will be an effective intervention for young people who experience trauma in their families and neighborhoods?
2. Research studies have documented the negative effects and risks of having an incarcerated parent. Read Project WHAT!'s Resource Guide for Teens with a Parent in Prison or Jail with students so they can learn more about how one can manage the challenge.

[www.communityworkswest.org/index.php/project-what/44](http://www.communityworkswest.org/index.php/project-what/44)

There are six sections in the guide. Break students up into six groups (if that is appropriate in your setting) and assign each group a section. Ask them to create a poster that summarizes what they think is the most helpful information in their section. Post student work and conduct a gallery walk. Students should create a note-taking chart, and take notes on what they find most helpful or interesting about each section. Then, review the charts in the assigned groups. Conclude with each group reading to the class one of the personal stories included in their assigned section.

(Tips for note-taking strategies can be found here: [www.netc.org/focus/strategies/summ.php](http://www.netc.org/focus/strategies/summ.php).)



## Lesson 2:

# Keep Coming: Strengthening Resiliency

(60-90 MINUTES + ASSIGNMENT)

### Essential Question:

How resilient am I?

Film modules and activities adapted from the films *Me Facing Life: Cyntoia's Story* and *Girls on the Wall*.

### Purpose of the Lesson:

Confronting factors that can lead to contact with the criminal justice system is daunting but all of us have personal strengths and characteristics of resiliency to confront risk. Research shows that most people are able to overcome the odds as they move into adulthood by drawing on resilient qualities. This lesson explores those qualities, allowing students to consider their strengths, evaluate their level of resiliency, and find ways to continue to build themselves up.

### Objectives

- Explore the meaning of resiliency and express that meaning in written and visual forms
- Consider personal strengths and compare them to the qualities of resiliency that can be used to overcome risk for incarceration and other negative outcomes
- Provide examples of resiliency from participants in the film modules
- Assess personal resiliency using notes and knowledge gained from lesson activities
- Create positive messages that support personal goals and motivation

### Skills

Analytical writing and viewing; note taking; interpreting information and drawing conclusions; critical thinking; identifying relationships and patterns; classifying and defining problems; synthesizing information

### Materials

- Film module 2: Seizing Their Stories [9:00]  
(can be streamed or ordered on DVD for free at [itvs.org/educators](http://itvs.org/educators))
- Equipment to show film modules
- Whiteboard/markers or chalkboard/chalk
- *Me Facing Life: Cyntoia's Story* and *Girls on the Wall* discussion guides, available here:  
[www.itvs.org/films/me-facing-life/engagement-resources](http://www.itvs.org/films/me-facing-life/engagement-resources)  
[www.girlsonthewallmovie.com/educational](http://www.girlsonthewallmovie.com/educational)
- Presentation paper
- Art supplies: markers, colored pencils, rulers



1. **Small Group Vocabulary:** Tell students that they will be working in this lesson on ways to counteract the kinds of risk factors they examined in lesson 1. Tell them that they will be looking at the concept of resiliency and how it can protect people against various risk factors. Provide students with the following definition of resiliency:

“an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change”

In small groups, have students come up with their own definition of resiliency that they think their peers would relate to. On a piece of presentation paper, groups should write their definition, give several examples of what it looks like, and add one visual image or symbol to support their definition. Have each group present their work. Use students' work to create a whole-class working definition of resiliency and post it in the classroom to reference throughout the curriculum.

2. **Reintroduce the films *Me Facing Life: Cyntoia's Story* and *Girls on the Wall*** using the “About the Films” and “Filmmaker Statement” subsections included in the “Getting Started” section. Watch “Film Module 2: Seizing Their Stories.” Have students divide their paper in half and take notes on examples of resiliency from Cyntoia and Rosa. Give them time after the module to add to their list. Note that the Rosa module is the same as the one from lesson 1. This will give students an opportunity to think about whether risk factors can also be strengths and whether adversity can bring out our best selves.
3. **Discuss the film module and review student notes using these guiding questions:**
- What examples of resiliency did you see in the film module from Cyntoia? Rosa?
  - What did Cyntoia's cutting her hair represent to her? Is this an example of resiliency?
  - Cyntoia talked about the role of “wanting to be accepted.” Do you think her ability to look back and understand her motivations increases her resiliency in the present?
  - Rosa has not shared her story of sexual abuse often. Do you think her participation in a documentary film helped her increase her resiliency? Could you imagine participating in a project like that?
  - Rosa says she hopes she doesn't “do anything stupid” when she gets out. Does she seem resilient enough to stay out of trouble?

4. **Small Group Activity: Assessing Your Resiliency**

Use the statements below, which characterize resilient qualities, and post them on butcher paper around the room. Give students sticky notes and have them post their names next to statements that apply to them. Ask them to write down these statements so they end up with a list that reflects their resilient qualities. Lead a discussion based on the group's observations of the placement of sticky notes using these guiding questions:

- Which statement applied to most students? How do you think this statement is connected to resiliency? Why do you think it's the most common one among students?
- Choose one statement that you think is the most crucial to being resilient. Explain your reasoning.
- Choose one statement that you think is difficult to achieve. Discuss solutions or strategies for achieving this resilient quality.
- Imagine you are speaking to a friend that lacks many of these resilient qualities. What would you say to her? Where should she start to work on strengthening her resiliency?

#### Statements to Post

I am a good problem solver and I communicate well.

I am a social butterfly.

I bounce back easily from drama.

I feel like I belong in my community.

I feel supported by my family.

I have friends who support me with a positive attitude.

I have other caring and supportive adults in my life besides my parents.

My parents or guardians set fair rules and expectations for me.

I show up for school and I'm doing well in school.

I'm in activities that make me feel good about myself.

I am smart.

I get good grades.

I can talk to my parents or guardians about problems.

I find strength in my values and beliefs.

I avoid dangerous situations.

I spend a lot of time with my family.





### 5. Assignment: Visual Road Map of My Life

Students should create a visual road map of their lives which includes obstacles they have encountered and overcome, examples of achievements and milestones, and people who have played an important role along the way. Assign all students a positive end point connected with your group's setting. For example, an end point might be "Participation in a Boys and Girls Club group." This will emphasize that no matter what students have gone through, they are currently in a positive place.

Students can draw on the work they have done on their risk and resiliency factors for details to include. Pair students up and give them time to exchange road maps and compare and discuss them. Then, with student permission, post road maps around the room and conduct a gallery walk. Give students sticky notes so they can share positive feedback about each other's work as they conduct the walk.

Wrap up the lesson by having students share their observations about the road maps, using these guiding questions:

- What stood out for you? What patterns or trends did you see?
- How can you use past experiences to increase your resiliency?
- How confident do you feel that you and your peers can overcome obstacles and challenges that you face now and expect to face in the future?
- What qualities of resiliency would you like to work on or improve as you think about your goals and things you'd like to accomplish in the future? What are some ways you can do this?

### Extension Activities

1. In small groups, have students create several realistic role-play scenarios that might lead a teen girl into trouble. Then role-play the scenario using one or more resiliency characteristics to resolve the conflict. Ask the audience to guess which characteristics of resiliency were used in the role-play.
2. Listen to one of the stories in the series *Against the Odds*—[elliscope.com/against-the-odds](http://elliscope.com/against-the-odds)—and have students take notes on the strategies people used to overcome obstacles. Students should write a short one-page response that includes the ways they might use some of these strategies in their own lives when confronted with adversity.
3. **Resiliency Slogans: Keep Coming**  
Resiliency requires an inner drive that for many people revolves around a core motivational message or slogan. Working in pairs or groups, students will create their own motivational slogan. Students should represent the slogan in a medium of their choice—a T-shirt, poster, podcast, video, public service announcement, and so on and present it to the class to be used as ongoing positive reinforcement throughout the curriculum. Another lens for the lesson is to give students the option to write a letter or digitally record a message of resiliency to a friend or peer going through the same struggles or to girls that may one day be in the same position.

To prepare students for creating their slogan, listen to a short clip from the News and Notes radio story "Great Expectations: Rising Above Low Expectations." In the clip, Judge Toler of Divorce Court discusses resiliency with someone who overcame adversity: [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=17994090](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=17994090). It is a one-minute clip that starts at 4:29. The transcript follows if you are unable to present audio files in class:

CHIDEYA: Yeah. Well, you know, Judge Toler, how—a lot of people who are in the sciences talk about resilience in this very specific way, having to do with the ability not just to overcome but to keep overcoming. What does resilience say to you about how people achieve including people like yourself who may get punched down and knocked down and knocked down but still stand up?

Judge TOLER: My mother's favorite phrase is keep coming. My mother was a woman who knew how to grind things out. She didn't have extraordinary talent. She didn't have an extraordinary intellect—she says this so herself, so I'm not speaking ill of her. But she has the ability to keep coming. And she taught me that despite whatever fears I might have which was my great challenge, is that you get up the next day and you keep coming. And eventually, either opportunity will arise or you create one of your own—just sheer effort.



## Lesson 3:

# The State of the Criminal Justice System

(90 MINUTES + ASSIGNMENT)

**Essential Question:** How effective is our criminal justice system?

Film modules and activities adapted from the film *Me Facing Life: Cyntoia's Story*

### Note to Instructors

Through the previous film modules, students have been introduced to teen girls that are in the criminal justice system. Chances are, your students may have had contact with the criminal justice system directly or indirectly through incarcerated friends or family members. For that reason, bringing up “the system” can be a challenge. Tell students that this lesson may make them angry or upset but to think about how they can use those feelings constructively. You may let them know that others share those feelings and are doing something about it. Refer to resources at the end of the lesson. We believe that, ultimately, having knowledge of this big-picture understanding of the criminal justice system is empowering and essential for those affected by it.

### Purpose of the Lesson

The prison population has exploded in the United States over the last several decades. One in one hundred Americans—2.3 million people—are currently in jail or prison. The female prison population has increased eight hundred percent in the same period. Approximately 1 in 43 young people (and 1 in 15 African American youth) has an incarcerated parent. These numbers, combined with high recidivism rates and shrinking state budgets, are leading people to consider reforms and other criminal justice models. In this lesson, students will look at restorative justice as a competing model, learn more about the state of the criminal justice system, and express their opinions about the topic to an elected leader.

### Objectives

- Analyze trends in the prison population and public policy approaches to it
- Examine restorative justice as an alternate criminal justice model
- Reflect on the personal impact of incarceration
- Identify examples of bipartisanship in the area of prison reform
- Write a letter to an elected official that outlines ways to make the criminal justice system more effective

### Skills

Stating and supporting opinions in class discussion and in writing; critical reading and viewing; research; writing; note taking; oral presentation

### Materials

- Film module 3: What to Do: The State of the Criminal Justice System (can be streamed or ordered on DVD for free at [itvs.org/educators](http://itvs.org/educators)) [3:19]
- Equipment to show film modules
- Whiteboard/markers or chalkboard/chalk
- Paper and art supplies
- *Me Facing Life: Cyntoia's Story* discussion guide, available here: [www.itvs.org/films/me-facing-life/engagement-resources](http://www.itvs.org/films/me-facing-life/engagement-resources)
- Student Handout B: Mythbusters, see Appendix



1. **Share with students the statistics in the “Purpose of the Lesson” section and ask for their response.** Why do they think the numbers are so high? What do they think should be done about it? How have their families and their communities been impacted by incarceration? What do they think should be done when a juvenile commits a serious crime like murder? After the discussion, tell students that a consensus is emerging to improve the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

## 2. Activity: Mythbusting

In this activity, students will be asked to consider their opinions about common myths and misconceptions of the criminal justice system. Part of the objective is for students to identify examples of both negative and positive trends so that they are prepared to more objectively evaluate the effectiveness of the system.

Label two areas of the classroom as “True” and “False,” leaving an area labeled “Not Sure” in the middle. Pass out “Student Handout B: Mythbusters” on Appendix of this guide and read the first statement. Allow students to move to the area of the class that reflects their position on the statement. Each time students move, take the time to have at least one person at each position voice why they are standing there. Then give students the correct answer and allow them time to write the answer on their handout. Repeat these steps for each statement. Use these materials as references:

[www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/five-myths-about-incarceration/2011/06/13/AGflWvYH\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/five-myths-about-incarceration/2011/06/13/AGflWvYH_story.html)

and

[sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/publications/inc\\_factsAboutPrisons\\_Jan2012.pdf](http://sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/publications/inc_factsAboutPrisons_Jan2012.pdf).

1. California spends more on higher education (UC and Cal State systems) than on prisons. (False—It spends 10 percent on prisons and 7 percent on higher education. Source: Prison Policy Initiative)
2. Nearly one in four of all prisoners worldwide are incarcerated in America. (True—Source: *Mother Jones*)
3. Texas is leading the way in reducing the prison population, recently closing a 1,100-bed facility. (True—Source: *The New York Times*)
4. Juvenile offenders can receive a sentence of life without the possibility of parole for nonviolent offenses. (False—This is due to the recent Supreme Court ruling in *Graham v. Florida*. Source: Equal Justice Initiative)
5. Approximately 65 percent of female prisoners were convicted of nonviolent crimes, including 29 percent convicted of drug offenses. (True—Source: The Sentencing Project)
6. Drug courts are more effective than incarceration at reducing recidivism for drug offenses. (True—Source: *Right on Crime*)
7. Approximately fifty thousand youth are discharged from the criminal justice system every year. (False—The number is one hundred thousand. Source: The Sentencing Project)
8. When you include people on probation and parole, the adult prison population rises to 3 million people. (False—The number is 7.2 million. Source: The Sentencing Project)
9. More than 4 out of 10 offenders nationwide return to state prison within three years of release. (True—Source: The Pew Center on the States)
10. Congress appropriated \$83 million for reentry programs in fiscal year 2011, slightly less than \$120 per released prisoner. (True—Source: *The Washington Post*)
11. Budget cuts are forcing states to explore ways to reduce their prison population. (True—Source: *The New York Times*)
12. About 50 percent of all women entering state prisons are mothers. (False—The number is 66 percent. Source: The Sentencing Project)
13. Prison reform, or making changes that reduce the number of people in prison, is supported by members of both the Democratic and Republican Parties. (True—Source: *The Daily Beast*)

When all of the statements have been read, ask students to choose the one they think most indicates the ineffectiveness of the system. Ask them to write a brief explanation for their choice on their handout, then ask several students to share their responses.

3. **Review information about the film *Me Facing Life: Cyntoia’s Story* again with students.** Tell students that in this module, they will be looking at whether Cyntoia should be tried as an adult and what should be done when juveniles commit serious crimes like murder. Watch “Film Module 3: What to Do: The State of the Criminal Justice System.” Students should take notes on how the criminal justice system handled Cyntoia’s case. After the module, review student notes and make it clear that:
  - a) Cyntoia was tried as an adult, b) she was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison, and c) she is not eligible for parole until she serves 53 years of her sentence.



#### 4. Lead a discussion based on the following questions:

- Cyntoia's mom, Georgina, says she feels responsible for the fact that Cyntoia is in prison. Do you agree? Who do you think is responsible for Cyntoia's crime?
- Dr. Bennet asks the question: "What is the right thing to do when a teenager commits this kind of crime?" What do you think should be done?
- Many states throughout the country try juveniles as adults, especially for serious crimes. Do you agree with this policy?
- Dr. Bennet said that he doesn't think teens should be given life sentences. Do you agree or disagree?
- The prosecutor, Jeff Burks, asks where do we draw the line between rehabilitating a juvenile and locking them up. Where do you think that line should be drawn?
- What do you think Cyntoia can do with her life to make up for the harm she has caused?

#### 5. Activity: Restorative Justice Artwork

There is an alternative model for dealing with crime, called restorative justice. While it emphasizes dialogue and healing instead of focusing on punishment, restorative justice is not synonymous with forgiveness. Forgiveness can come out of a restorative justice process, but does not necessarily. This is an important distinction because the false expectation of forgiveness can actually be harmful to someone on their healing journey, as it can create pressure to forgive, and then guilt if that doesn't actually happen.

Restorative justice is usually achieved through victim offender mediation. In the restorative justice program Bridges to Life, victims tell inmates their stories as a way to build empathy and accountability, with the hope that this will reduce future crimes. Have students listen to and view images of this program here: [www.texasmonthly.com/multimedia/slideshow/8229](http://www.texasmonthly.com/multimedia/slideshow/8229). Lead a discussion based on these questions:

- How is restorative justice different from the traditional criminal justice system?
- What advantages and disadvantages do you think it has over the traditional model?
- Like many juvenile offenders, Cyntoia is both a victim and an offender. What might applying a restorative justice model look like in her case?
- How do victims use restorative justice as a way to heal?
- Would you be willing to participate in a restorative justice program either by telling your story as a victim or, if you have committed a crime, by meeting with the victim of the crime? What would the challenges of participating in such a program be?

Restorative justice is rooted in peace and reconciliation. Ask

students to think about what those words mean to them. They should brainstorm visual images that represent their ideas. Provide paper and art supplies and have students create a visual piece of artwork about restorative justice. Students can use these questions to guide their work: What is reconciliation? Is reconciliation necessary to achieve peace in a community where there is violence? Is reconciliation always possible? What is the difference between reconciliation and forgiveness? Is there someone in our life who we have not forgiven? What would that person need to do to receive our forgiveness? When assignments are completed, encourage students to present their work and post drawings around the room to create a collage or mural. If cameras are available, students can also create short videos about restorative justice.

#### 6. Assignment: Letter Writing

Have students write to an elected official about incarceration rates, restorative justice, and the state of the criminal justice system, and in the letter address the question, how effective is our criminal justice system? They should refer to the "Mythbusters" handout for facts and figures and conduct additional research if the setting permits.

When answering the question, allow students to write as themselves or to choose one of the following roles:

- The mother of a child who has committed a crime
- The child of a mother who has committed a crime
- A victim of a crime
- A member of the community where a crime has been committed

In the letter, the writer can also weigh in on pending legislation relating to criminal justice at both the state and national levels. Alternatively, they can model their piece on KQED's Perspectives series and do an audio recording of their assignment. Learn more about the Perspectives series here: [www.kqed.org/radio/programs/perspectives/youthradio.jsp](http://www.kqed.org/radio/programs/perspectives/youthradio.jsp).

At the federal level, students can weigh in on the National Criminal Justice Commission Act: [webb.senate.gov/issuesandlegislation/criminaljusticeandlawenforcement/Criminal\\_Justice\\_Banner.cfm](http://webb.senate.gov/issuesandlegislation/criminaljusticeandlawenforcement/Criminal_Justice_Banner.cfm).

At the state level, this resource provides updates on pending legislation: [www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/CFYJ\\_State\\_Trends\\_Report.pdf](http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/documents/CFYJ_State_Trends_Report.pdf).

Resources for the conservative position on prison reform and restorative justice can be found here: [www.rightoncrime.com/](http://www.rightoncrime.com/), [www.prisonfellowship.org/prison-fellowship-home](http://www.prisonfellowship.org/prison-fellowship-home), and [www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/07/03/gop-leaders-warm-up-to-prison-reform.html](http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/07/03/gop-leaders-warm-up-to-prison-reform.html).



**Extension Activities**

1. Read the following article about the Lipscomb Initiative For Education (LIFE) program and Cyntoia's participation: [www.lipscomb.edu/news/Filter/Item/0/19246](http://www.lipscomb.edu/news/Filter/Item/0/19246)

Discuss the article with the class using these guiding questions:

- Do you think the LIFE program has restorative justice features?
  - What impact does the class have on students?
  - What impact did the class have on Professor Shipp?
  - Does participating in this program allow Cyntoia to repair some of the harm she has caused?
2. Use this link to allow students to respond to the question of whether they think minors should be tried as adults: [www.pbs.org/independentlens/me-facing-life](http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/me-facing-life).

Furthermore, they can learn more about the perspective of victims by visiting the National Center for Victims of Crime here: [www.ncvc.org/ncvc/Main.aspx](http://www.ncvc.org/ncvc/Main.aspx).

3. If students are in a juvenile detention center, they undoubtedly have questions about their particular cases. Work with them to create a class guide or fact sheet about more generally navigating the legal system and related legal resources. Students should conduct further research to gather information. Where possible, access prison legal services to assist with this project.

**Note**

To see what it would look like to teach restorative justice principles in-depth to those affected by incarceration, review the curriculum from the organization Community Works, available here: <http://communityworkswest.org/index.php/women-rising-voices>

**Criminal Justice Action Resources**

- 1) Prison Activist Resource Center: [www.prisonactivist.org](http://www.prisonactivist.org)
- 2) The Real Cost of Prisons Project: [www.realcostofprisons.org](http://www.realcostofprisons.org)
- 3) The National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated at Family & Corrections Network: [fcnetwork.org](http://fcnetwork.org)



## Lesson 4:

# What Is the Impact of My Decisions?

(90 MINUTES + ASSIGNMENT)

**Essential Question:** How have your decisions impacted others?

Film modules and activities adapted from the film *Troop 1500*

### Note to Instructors

Students will need a lot of support in this lesson when they reflect on decisions they have made that have harmed someone. It will be helpful to remind them that everyone makes mistakes, that we are all human, and the important thing is how we handle our mistakes. We don't want students to feel guilty. We want them to see the opportunity they have to repair harm and grow from these experiences.

### Purpose of the Lesson

Successful violence prevention and restorative justice programs aim to help people acknowledge the harm they have done to others. This helps build empathy, an essential quality needed to reach one's full potential. In this lesson, students will be asked to consider how some of their decisions have negatively impacted others.

### Objectives

- Examine the impact that crime and negative behaviors have on others
- Analyze decisions that had a positive impact and those that had a negative impact on someone
- Write from another perspective to explore the impact our decisions have on others
- Practice using a formal decision-making process for making important personal decisions

### Skills

Stating and supporting opinions in class discussion and in writing; critical listening and viewing; role-playing; writing; systematic decision making; note taking; oral presentation

### Materials

- Film module 4: What Is the Impact of My Decisions? [8:30] (can be streamed or ordered on DVD for free at [itvs.org/educators](http://itvs.org/educators))
- Equipment to show film modules
- Whiteboard/markers or chalkboard/chalk
- *Troop 1500* discussion guide, available here: [www.itvs.org/films/troop-1500/engagement-resources](http://www.itvs.org/films/troop-1500/engagement-resources)
- Sheet of paper
- Student Handout C: Decision-Making Worksheet, see Appendix
- Download of audio file of the National Public Radio (NPR) story "The Teen Brain: It's Just Not Grown Up Yet" and computer to play audio file
- Download of transcript from the NPR story "The Teen Brain: It's Just Not Grown Up Yet"



1. **Students should divide a piece of paper in half and use these titles: “Positive Impact” and “Negative Impact.”** Ask them to give an example of a decision they made that had a positive impact on someone else and do the same for the negative impact. Remind students that they don’t have to pick the biggest, most important decisions. They can pick smaller ones and this may be an easier way for them to start looking at impact. Have students share their examples when they are finished.
2. **Show “Film Module 4: What Is the Impact of My Decisions?”** Introduce the film *Troop 1500* using the “About the Films” and “Filmmaker Statement” subsections included in the “Getting Started” section. Ask students to take notes on examples of harm caused by the incarcerated mothers. Give students time after viewing the modules to complete their notes. Review and discuss their notes using these guiding questions:
  - Why do you think Jessica says that her mom is in Vegas?
  - What types of living situations are the various girls in while their moms are in prison?
  - How do the various mothers (Kenya, Ida, Melissa, and Susan) feel about being away from their kids?
  - How would you describe the relationships between the mothers and daughters based on what you saw in the module?
  - Respond to the statement Kenya’s daughter Caitlin makes when she says, “Sometimes I think that your mistakes are kinda becoming a habit. Do you ever think about that and how I feel?”
  - You may now or one day be a mother. What impact does this film have on your ideas about motherhood?
3. **Activity: Dramatizing Impact**  
In this activity, students will more fully explore a decision they made which had a negative impact on someone else. Ask students to return to the example in step 1 that they gave of a decision that had a negative impact (or they can choose another decision to work with). Remind them to start small—they don’t need to examine a decision that had major harmful effects. With the example in mind, students (working alone or in pairs) will choose one of the following:
  - Option 1: Write a scene where you speak to the person who was negatively impacted by your decision. The dialogue should bring to life the situation and the impact of the decision from the point of view of both participants. The dialogue should be one to two pages long. Consider having students pair up and perform the script for the class.
  - Option 2: Write a letter, a poem, or a monologue to yourself from the perspective of the person harmed by your decision. Put yourself in that person’s shoes—what do you think that person would want to say to you, would want you to know?
4. **There is a lot of recent research about the development of the teen brain and implications for decision making.** Justice Kennedy cited this research in his justification for eliminating life without the possibility of parole for juveniles convicted of nonviolent offenses in the landmark *Graham v. Florida* decision in 2010. Listen to the following five-minute NPR story about adolescent brains:
 

“The Teen Brain: It’s Just Not Grown Up Yet”  
[www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=124119468](http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=124119468).

Print out the transcript below and distribute to students working in pairs. Have the pairs review the transcript and highlight what they consider to be the three most interesting parts. Ask several pairs to share their responses: [www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=124119468](http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=124119468).

To wrap up the discussion, end with these guiding questions:

  - How does information on teen brain development help you understand yourself and your decisions?
  - Adolescent development is characterized by taking risks and seeking out new experiences. How might these traits be riskier for teens with adverse backgrounds—for example, teens living in poverty, teens with a parent that has a substance abuse problem, or a homeless teen.
  - How can you use this information to make better decisions?
5. **Activity: Role-play: Dealing with Anger**  
Learning to control anger is crucial to making good decisions. Review these techniques for managing anger with your students:
 

[www.mayoclinic.com/health/anger-management/MH00102](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/anger-management/MH00102).

Print out the article and cut the 10 steps into strips. Divide the class into pairs and assign one step to each pair. Have students write a scenario that might lead to anger that their peers will recognize (examples include being fired from a job, being expelled from school, a partner canceling an important date, and a friend violating your trust). Role-play the scenario in two ways—the first culminating in anger and lack of resolution and the second using the assigned anger management technique. Ask a student to take notes in two columns in front of the class on what works and what doesn’t in dealing with anger based on feedback the audience gives from watching the role-plays.



## 6. Assignment: Making Good Decisions

This lesson illustrates the importance of having a solid process for making good decisions. In this assignment, students will be asked to contemplate an upcoming decision they need to make and use a decision-making process to work through the decision. The class can create a list of steps they believe are important to making a good decision or they can use “Student Handout C.” Have students present their decisions in small groups with group members giving positive feedback. Have a volunteer from each group give a summary of the group’s work.

Several frameworks for making good decisions can be found here:

[www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/framework.html](http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/framework.html), and [www.wikihow.com/Make-Decisions](http://www.wikihow.com/Make-Decisions).

After all groups have presented, ask the class the following questions: What connections can you make from the decision you explored in step 3 to the upcoming decision you will be making? What will you do if one of the steps of your decision plan fails? How confident do you feel about succeeding with your upcoming decision?

Wrap up the assignment with a decision-making pledge. Ask the class to write the pledge together. It should include a vow to make the best decisions possible, where students recognize that they will make mistakes and promise to take responsibility for the outcomes of their decisions. Post the pledge in the classroom as a reference.

## Extension Activities

1. Many teens find themselves with an unwanted pregnancy. Have students visit the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy to contemplate the consequences of decision making regarding sex:

[www.thenationalcampaign.org/national/default.aspx](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/national/default.aspx).

Read about recent trends in teen pregnancy rates. Take the National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy quiz at [www.stayteen.org/quiz](http://www.stayteen.org/quiz) and play the “Myth Monsters” game at [www.stayteen.org/myth-monsters](http://www.stayteen.org/myth-monsters).

Ask students to write a short review of the websites and the tools included. Conduct a read-around where students sit in a circle and read their reviews.





## Lesson 5:

# The Power of Expression

(60-90 MINUTES + ASSIGNMENT)

**Essential Question:** Why should we tell our stories?

Film modules and activities adapted from the film *Girls on the Wall*

### Purpose of the Lesson

Meade Palidofsky, director of the Fabulous Females workshop featured in *Girls on the Wall*, expresses a common sentiment when she says, “One thing that’s dangerous with kids that are being locked up is that they’ll suck it all up and wait until they get out and they will have solved nothing. I think that the girls really still need to seize their stories.” In this lesson, students will be asked why they should tell their stories and how they can do so when there may be so much fear and risk involved.

### Objectives

- Discuss the importance of telling one’s story, why it can be so hard to do so and what it takes to open up
- Respond to a quote about using your past to “build you up”
- Participate in role-plays or narrative formats to prepare to present a personal story
- Present a personal story as a way to gain strength from it and move forward in your life
- Reflect on the value of telling one’s story and how to continue the personal storytelling process

### Skills

Stating and supporting opinions in class discussion and in writing; critical listening and viewing; role-playing; writing; note taking; oral presentation

### Materials

- Film module 5: The Power of Expression [7:41]  
(can be streamed or ordered on DVD for free at [itvs.org/educators](http://itvs.org/educators))
- Equipment to show film modules
- Whiteboard/markers or chalkboard/chalk
- *Girls on the Wall* discussion guide, available here: [www.girlsonthewallmovie.com/educational](http://www.girlsonthewallmovie.com/educational)
- Lined paper for student writing



**1. Project on the wall or pass out the following quote from an unidentified participant in *Girls on the Wall*:**

"I'm not saying to forget the past  
But let it build you up, not make you sad.  
Tell the truth, because it needs to be said  
Testify for every tear  
You shed."

Students should copy the quote and complete a journal response where they focus on what they think the quote means and ways they can relate to it. Have students in groups of three stand up together and read their responses to the class.

**2. Why Should We Tell Our Stories?:** Ask students to write down the above question. Reintroduce the film *Girls on the Wall* using the "About the Films" and "Filmmaker Statement" subsections included in the "Getting Started" section. Watch "Film Module 5: "The Power of Expression." Students should take notes that relate to the question. Give students time after viewing the module to complete their notes. Pass out sticky notes and have students choose and transcribe what they think are several of their best notes. Have them post the notes at the front of the classroom. Give students time to walk around the room and read the responses. Wrap up the discussion with the following guiding questions:

- Mrs. Palidofsky mentions that there are risks in telling one's story. What do you think are some of those risks? How do you think we can overcome those risks?
- What did you think about their performance? What impact did it have on you? Would you participate in a program like that?
- What does Rosa say about why she tells her story?
- If you told your story, what impact would you want it to have on the audience?

**3. Discussion Circle**

Arrange seats so that students are sitting in a circle. Write the following question on the board: "How can we use stories of our past to build us up?" Go around the circle, allowing each student in the circle an opportunity to respond. This discussion format allows more students to participate and for more equal participation. Consider passing a special object around to signify whose turn it is to speak.

**4. Activity: Improv Theater**

In this activity, students will examine the challenges of opening up and telling one's story. Whitney says in the film: "Most of my thoughts just stay in my head." Students will practice what it takes to get thoughts out of their heads and share them with a wider audience in this fun activity.

Give a small group of students a set of role-play cards for scenario 1 included in "Teacher Handout A" or make up your own scenarios. Have students start the role-play. After a minute or so, have two students "tag out" and bring in two other audience members to improvise the scene. This format will allow more students to work through the role-plays more quickly and will tap into the spontaneity of their thoughts and actions. Afterwards, discuss the challenges of opening up and what strategies worked and didn't work to do so. Repeat the directions for scenarios 2 and 3, working in as many students as possible for each scenario. Consider generating your own scenarios with your class to match their needs and backgrounds.

**5. Assignment: Sharing Your Story**

In this assignment students will be challenged to write about a difficult aspect of their upbringing as a way to experience the healing power of telling one's story.

Review Meade's quote from the film, where she says, "I think that once you put your story out in public, you're able to give it to other people, you're able to share it with them and eventually you're able to let it go."

Discuss with students whether they are ready to do this. Remind them to start small. They should push themselves but also feel comfortable with what they are prepared to share with others. Allow students to brainstorm, make outlines, and work in various writing formats like a letter, a song, a diary entry, and the like.

To help students get started, here are several writing prompts:

- What was a pivotal turning point in your life? (Students can refer to their visual road map if they completed that assignment.)
- What are some of the biggest challenges you have faced?
- What is something that happened to you in the past that you still think about today?



**Note to Instructors**

Students are likely to need support and encouragement in completing this assignment. Monitor their work and give positive feedback as they are developing their stories. Monitor content and make sure that it will be appropriate for your class setting. When assignments are completed, issue a class challenge to have one hundred percent participation in sharing student stories. Brainstorm ways the class can support reluctant students and prepare students to give positive feedback for each story. Organize some type of small celebration at the end to honor and celebrate the work students shared.

**Extension Activities**

1. Listen to Ayesha Walker of Youth Radio share an essay about growing up in a violent section of Richmond, California: [www.npr.org/blogs/bryantpark/2007/11/living\\_leaving\\_dying\\_staying\\_r.html](http://www.npr.org/blogs/bryantpark/2007/11/living_leaving_dying_staying_r.html).

Have students visit the Youth Radio website: [www.youthradio.org](http://www.youthradio.org) to learn more about their work. In small groups have students research and brainstorm ways to get their stories out into their community. If possible, make a plan to publicly present the class's stories in some way.



## Lesson 6:

# Intervention: What Works

(90 MINUTES + ASSIGNMENT)

### Essential Question:

What resources can you use to support your goals?

Film modules and activities adapted from the film *Troop 1500*

### Purpose of the Lesson

Teens in need struggle to access available resources, or those resources they do connect with are not adequate to meet their needs. Often there is a genuine lack of resources. In some cases, they may not be aware of or have enough confidence to take the initiative to reach out for help. The benefits of the Troop 1500 program as an example of successful intervention will be more deeply examined. Students will also examine another cutting-edge intervention model targeting teens at high risk for contact with the criminal justice system. This lesson is designed to help students further their knowledge of existing resources in their communities and strengthen the skills needed to connect with them.

### Objectives

- Identify and articulate several personal goals
- Examine services offered by two intervention programs—one for incarcerated mothers and their daughters and one for at-risk girls
- Role-play and practice the steps (both logistical and personal) needed to access needed resources
- Make a personal plan that includes key goals and identifies available resources to support the goals

### Skills

Stating and supporting opinions in class discussion and in writing, critical listening and viewing, role-playing, writing, note taking and oral presentation, identifying resources

### Materials

- Film Module 6: Intervention: What Works. [5:54]  
(can be streamed or ordered on DVD for free at [itvs.org/educators](http://itvs.org/educators))
- Equipment to show film modules
- Whiteboard/markers or chalkboard/chalk
- *Troop 1500* discussion guide, available here:  
[www.itvs.org/films/troop-1500/engagement-resources](http://www.itvs.org/films/troop-1500/engagement-resources)
- Download of the video file “Sisters Rising 9 month Program” from the Center for Young Women’s Development and computer and projector
- Student Handout D: Achieving Your Goals, see Appendix



### 1. Think-pair-share

Have students make a list of five goals they want to achieve in the next two years. Have students pair up with another student and share their lists. Students should ask questions about the goals and give some positive feedback. Have several students (or all students if there is time and interest) share their goals or create a class list in front of the classroom.

### 2. Discuss

Discuss with students the importance of resources and support for achieving goals. Introduce the idea that there are many organizations that may provide them with helpful services. Ask students to share any experiences they have had or programs they have participated in that have helped them reach their potential or helped them through a crisis. Allow them to discuss any negative experiences or programs that didn't meet their needs. Finally, ask them to describe an ideal program to support people impacted by the criminal justice system.

### 3. Reintroduce the film *Troop 1500* using the "About the Films" and "Filmmaker Statement" subsections included in the "Getting Started" section and tell students that they will learn about the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program. Ask students to divide their notepaper in half and use these titles: "How the Program Helps Moms" and "How the Program Helps Daughters." Watch "Film Module 6: Intervention: What Works." Give students time after viewing to complete their notes. Review the students' notes and go deeper with these guiding questions:

- What type of support does the Troop 1500 program give the mothers? The kids?
- Why is trust such a big issue? In what ways does the program help build trust? Is there an adult in your life that you have a trusting relationship with?
- How does the program help strengthen the bond between mothers and daughters? Why do you think it's important for that bond to be strong?
- If you could add another feature or component to the program what would it be?
- Do you think a program like this will reduce recidivism, meaning that it will reduce the chance that the mothers will return to prison once they are released?
- Would you be willing to participate in this type of program or refer someone you know who could benefit from it?

### 4. Students will now have an opportunity to look at another program designed to support girls like them. Watch the video "Sisters Rising 9 month Program," which is about the work of the Center for Young Women's Development, a peer-to-peer education and support program for at-risk girls in San Francisco: [www.cywd.org](http://www.cywd.org). Discuss the video with students using these guiding questions:

- What type of program is Sisters Rising? What did you like about the program?
- The video talks about the trauma that participants experience. What are some examples? What is the reality of trauma for participants?
- Melanie, the project coordinator, talks about the distinction in how we deal with trauma. How does she suggest we deal with trauma? Do you agree?
- What impact does the program seem to be having on participants? Would you be willing to participate in this type of program?

### 5. Activity: Phone call role-play

Accessing resources often means making phone calls to get more information and to make an appointment. Sometimes this step alone is an obstacle for teens who may fear public speaking and new situations or who have trouble taking the extra steps needed to accomplish a goal.

In this activity, students will work in pairs and role-play such a phone call. One student will play the director of a known local program and the other student will play a teen interested in learning more about the program. As students are performing, make notes on the board about what works and what doesn't in terms of an effective phone call. Encourage students playing the director to offer challenges such as putting the student on hold, sounding like she doesn't have much time, being unfriendly, or putting the student on the spot. After all role-plays are complete, review the notes on the board and praise students for participating in what might have been a challenging activity.



**6. Assignment: Resource Fair: Matching Goals to Resources**

There are a plethora of programs and resources for teens at the local as well as at the state and national levels. If anything, the challenge is to navigate that world and find the most appropriate resources.

In this assignment, students will return to the goals they listed above and match them with available resources at a class resource fair using “Student Handout D: Achieving Your Goals.” This will likely require the instructor to provide outside materials on known programs and resources for teens. Students with internet access can conduct research themselves. It may be possible to invite people to come to class and make presentations about their programs. Students may also be invited to share knowledge they have about resources. Wrap up the assignment by having students attend a “resource mixer” where they meet and greet other students and share some of their goals and resources.

To get students started, here is a list of national programs:

- Boys & Girls Clubs of America:  
[www.bgca.org/Pages/index.aspx](http://www.bgca.org/Pages/index.aspx)
- United Way:  
[liveunited.org/content/splash](http://liveunited.org/content/splash)
- Jack and Jill of America, Incorporated:  
[jack-and-jill.org](http://jack-and-jill.org)
- YWCA:  
[www.ywca.org/site/c.cuIRJ7NtKrLaG/b.7515807/k.BE84/Home.htm](http://www.ywca.org/site/c.cuIRJ7NtKrLaG/b.7515807/k.BE84/Home.htm)

**Extension Activities**

1. Have students design their own intervention program and accompanying program brochure or website. Students with internet access can use a digital media site like Flavors ([flavors.me](http://flavors.me)) to create a website. Their design should include the following information: who they are trying to reach, what their program offers, what advantages their program has over others, what participants can expect to get out of their program, etc. Bring in examples of program brochures for students to reference. Remind them that some of the most successful programs started out small. Encourage them to think outside of the box to offer a unique program. For inspiration, students can check out these programs:
  - The Posse Foundation, Inc.:  
[www.possefoundation.org/about-posse](http://www.possefoundation.org/about-posse)
  - Youth Speaks Inc.:  
[youthspeaks.org/voice](http://youthspeaks.org/voice)
  - Youth UpRising:  
[www.youthuprising.org](http://www.youthuprising.org)



## Lesson 7:

# Role Models and Mentors

(60-90 MINUTES + ASSIGNMENT)

**Essential Question:** What makes a role model and a good mentor?

Film modules and activities adapted from the films *Me Facing Life: Cyntoia's Story* and *Troop 1500*

### Purpose of the Lesson

The value of mentoring is emerging as a major, if not crucial, advantage in overcoming adversity and reaching one's full potential. Mentoring organizations are expanding their reach throughout the country with the support of major foundations and the federal government. In this lesson, students consider what a good mentor looks like and what possibilities exist for themselves and other at-risk girls to be role models. At the end of the lesson, they will be asked to find a mentor.

### Objectives

- Analyze the ability of women and girls in the criminal justice system to be mentors
- Examine resources for securing a mentor
- Explore ways to be mentors or role models for younger girls
- Write a letter to and contact a prospective mentor

### Skills

Stating and supporting opinions in class discussion and in writing; critical listening, reading and viewing; writing; note taking and oral presentation; identifying resources

### Materials

- Film module 7: "Role Models and Mentors" [4:16]  
(can be streamed or ordered on DVD for free at [itvs.org/educators](http://itvs.org/educators))
- Equipment to show film module
- Whiteboard/markers or chalkboard/chalk
- *Me Facing Life: Cyntoia's Story* and *Troop 1500* discussion guides, available here:  
[www.itvs.org/films/me-facing-life/engagement-resources](http://www.itvs.org/films/me-facing-life/engagement-resources)  
[www.itvs.org/films/troop-1500/engagement-resources](http://www.itvs.org/films/troop-1500/engagement-resources)
- Download of News and Notes story "Rising Above Low Expectations"
- Copies of the article "The Value of Mentoring"



1. **Have students write a brief description of someone they know and admire.** Include details like the person's personality, background, accomplishments, and the student's connection to him or her. Post descriptions around the room and have students circulate and read them.
2. **Tell students that this lesson is about the importance of having a mentor.** They will now listen to a story titled "Rising Above Low Expectations," which has a section about how to choose a mentor. Ask students to take notes on the suggestions given for finding a mentor. Review students' notes after the story and ask students what other suggestions they would add to the list: [www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=17994090&m=17994081](http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=17994090&m=17994081).
3. **Give students an opportunity to talk about the mentors in their lives:** Who are they? How did the students meet them? What qualities do they have? How have they mentored the students?
4. **Watch "Film Module 7: Role Models and Mentors"**  
Reintroduce the films *Me Facing Life: Cyntoia's Story* and *Troop 1500* using the "About the Films" and "Filmmaker Statement" subsections included in the "Getting Started" section. Students should take notes on leadership and mentor qualities they see in Cyntoia and in the mothers of the girls in *Troop 1500*. Review students' notes after viewing the module and use these questions for further discussion:
  - Tell students that Cyntoia attends college classes and responds to the letters of young girls who have seen the film. Ask the class what other opportunities Cyntoia may have to mentor girls in similar situations.
  - Cyntoia is serving a life sentence and will not be eligible for parole for 53 years. How would you describe her spirit and attitude at the end of the module when she reflects on her situation?
  - Ida gets her GED and it's a pretty big deal. Why do you think that is? What impact might it have on her daughter, Jessica?
  - Is Ida a good role model for Jessica? What more can she do as a role model for her daughter and for other women in her situation?
  - What potential do you have to be a role model and inspiration for someone else?
5. **Activity: Read the article "The Value of Mentoring" with your class:** [www.mentoring.org/about\\_mentor/value\\_of\\_mentoring](http://www.mentoring.org/about_mentor/value_of_mentoring).  
**Discuss the following questions:**
  - The article talks about a range of benefits of mentoring. Which benefits do you think are the most significant or most applicable to your life?
  - The article says about kids aged 9 to 15 that "this is also the age bracket during which preventative intervention is most successful and youth are most capable of envisioning a positive future and plotting the steps they need to take to reach their goals." Is that true in your experience? Do you think there's an age when it's too late to change?
  - The article references a study that shows that kids who are mentored are 52 percent less likely to miss a day of school. Why do you think that is?
  - Use this link with students to find mentors in your area: [www.mentorpro.org/vrs/default.aspx](http://www.mentorpro.org/vrs/default.aspx). You may want to print out the results and copy them for students.
6. **Assignment: Find a Mentor**  
Choose four student volunteers to read the stories about the experience of mentoring: [www.mentoring.org/get\\_involved/mentor\\_mentee\\_stories](http://www.mentoring.org/get_involved/mentor_mentee_stories).  
  
Ask students to write a letter to a prospective mentor about who they are and what they would like to get out of a mentoring relationship. Have students pair up to read and edit each other's letters. Using the information you provided above as well as the following additional resources, have students contact mentoring organizations in their communities.  
  
Big Brothers Big Sisters:  
[www.bbbs.org/site/c.9iilI3NGKhK6F/b.5962335/k.BE16/Home.htm](http://www.bbbs.org/site/c.9iilI3NGKhK6F/b.5962335/k.BE16/Home.htm)  
  
Boys & Girls Clubs of America:  
[www.bgca.org/Pages/index.aspx](http://www.bgca.org/Pages/index.aspx)





### Extension Activities

1. Watch the film *Racing for Time*, a true story about a girls' track team in a juvenile facility in Texas. Information on the film can be found here: <http://www.mylifetime.com/movies/racing-time>.

#### Discuss the film using these guiding prompts:

- Identify moments in the film that were turning points for the girls.
- How can sports increase resiliency?
- Describe the coach, Cleveland “Stack” Stackhouse, as a mentor.
- Listen to Charles S. Dutton, director and star of the film, on why he made the movie and his story of being incarcerated as a youth: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vAWUZL85J4&feature=relate](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vAWUZL85J4&feature=relate).

2. Read “Teens Run DC Mentoring Program Perseveres at Cardozo High” in *The Washington Post* with your students: [www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/teens-run-dc-mentoring-program-perseveres-at-cardozo-high/2011/04/08/AGIOBPIH\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/teens-run-dc-mentoring-program-perseveres-at-cardozo-high/2011/04/08/AGIOBPIH_story.html).

In small groups, have students identify what they consider to be the five most important points of the article. Use those points to create discussion questions for the class. Lead a discussion of the article using one or more discussion questions from each group.

3. Learn about the mentoring program Friends of the Children NY by using the resources below. Make a list of the things that make this different from most mentoring programs. Discuss and debate whether this paid model is more effective than traditional volunteer models like Big Brothers Big Sisters.

[friendsofthechildrenny.org](http://friendsofthechildrenny.org)

[opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/10/06/for-children-at-risk-mentors-who-stay/?scp=10&sq=fixes&st=Search](http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/10/06/for-children-at-risk-mentors-who-stay/?scp=10&sq=fixes&st=Search)

[opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/10/11/forging-a-life-changing-bond/?scp=5&sq=fixes&st=Search](http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/10/11/forging-a-life-changing-bond/?scp=5&sq=fixes&st=Search)

### Culminating Lesson: Leadership Among Women and Girls Impacted by the Criminal Justice System

#### Directions

In previous lessons, students have considered a range of issues relating to women and girls impacted by the criminal justice system. In the culminating lesson, they have an opportunity to pull together their knowledge and apply it to the larger questions of leadership and empowerment. Students should choose one of the options below to complete. The class can then choose a variety of ways to “publish” their work, from creating editorials in a class newspaper to a performance of the pieces to a wider audience. One online example can be found at PBS NewsHour: [www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/assignment.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/assignment.html).

#### Option 1

Students will write a persuasive essay (or another type of piece such as a skit, a public service announcement, a short radio piece, or a poem) responding to the guiding question: “How can girls impacted by the criminal justice system be leaders?” They will be required to draw on evidence from the preceding lessons, including their own personal experiences, those of their classmates, and those of the participants in the film. Teachers can then choose a variety of ways to “publish” the essays, from creating editorials in a class newspaper to a performance of the pieces to a wider audience.

#### Option 2

Profile or interview someone in your community who has overcome difficult odds and is now a leader or role model. Chronicle how this person was able to turn her life around and what she is doing now to make a difference. Profiles can be posted at [mobilize.org/blog](http://mobilize.org/blog) or other websites to share with others.

#### Option 3

There is a stigma associated with being a “troubled teen,” an “at-risk teen,” or a “juvenile delinquent.” The prison population explosion has created a whole new subset of people living in the shadows, living with the shame (and the barriers) that come with being associated with the criminal justice system. Taking a cue from other marginalized groups like illegal immigrants, gays, and people with autism, students will create a “coming out” piece to counter the negative images associated with their status. The piece should be one to two written pages and if possible, digitally recorded.

See these resources for examples and inspiration:

1. Coming Out: Audio, Photos, Stories of Gay Teens: [www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/05/23/us/20110523-coming-out.html?hp?src=ISMR\\_HP\\_LO\\_MST\\_FB](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/05/23/us/20110523-coming-out.html?hp?src=ISMR_HP_LO_MST_FB)
2. Cristina and Monica: a lesbian couple facing deportation: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5cZnGID-vE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5cZnGID-vE)
3. “Article: ‘Illegal Immigrant Youth, Like Journalist Vargas, ‘Come Out’ in Reform Push’”: [www.denverpost.com/breakingnews/ci\\_18339986?source=pkg](http://www.denverpost.com/breakingnews/ci_18339986?source=pkg)
4. Girls with Asperger’s syndrome speak out on the condition: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eh5uuth5k-Y&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eh5uuth5k-Y&feature=related) and [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ek5ZC9cCjYU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ek5ZC9cCjYU)



## Culminating Lesson:

# Leadership Among Women and Girls Impacted by the Criminal Justice System

### Directions

In previous lessons, students have considered a range of issues relating to women and girls impacted by the criminal justice system. In the culminating lesson, they have an opportunity to pull together their knowledge and apply it to the larger questions of leadership and empowerment. Students should choose one of the options below to complete. The class can then choose a variety of ways to “publish” their work, from creating editorials in a class newspaper to a performance of the pieces to a wider audience. One online example can be found at PBS NewsHour: [www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/assignment.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/assignment.html).

### Option 1

Students will write a persuasive essay (or another type of piece such as a skit, a public service announcement, a short radio piece, or a poem) responding to the guiding question: “How can girls impacted by the criminal justice system be leaders?” They will be required to draw on evidence from the preceding lessons, including their own personal experiences, those of their classmates, and those of the participants in the film. Teachers can then choose a variety of ways to “publish” the essays, from creating editorials in a class newspaper to a performance of the pieces to a wider audience.

### Option 2

Profile or interview someone in your community who has overcome difficult odds and is now a leader or role model. Chronicle how this person was able to turn her life around and what she is doing now to make a difference. Profiles can be posted at [mobilize.org/blog](http://mobilize.org/blog) or other websites to share with others.

### Option 3

There is a stigma associated with being a “troubled teen,” an “at-risk teen,” or a “juvenile delinquent.” The prison population explosion has created a whole new subset of people living in the shadows, living with the shame (and the barriers) that come with being associated with the criminal justice system. Taking a cue from other marginalized groups like illegal immigrants, gays, and people with autism, students will create a “coming out” piece to counter the negative images associated with their status. The piece should be one to two written pages and if possible, digitally recorded.

See these resources for examples and inspiration:

1. Coming Out: Audio, Photos, Stories of Gay Teens:  
[www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/05/23/us/20110523-coming-out.html?hp?src=ISMR\\_HP\\_LO\\_MST\\_FB](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/05/23/us/20110523-coming-out.html?hp?src=ISMR_HP_LO_MST_FB)
2. Cristina and Monica: a lesbian couple facing deportation:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5cZnGID-vE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5cZnGID-vE)
3. “Article: ‘Illegal Immigrant Youth, Like Journalist Vargas, ‘Come Out’ in Reform Push’:  
[www.denverpost.com/breakingnews/ci\\_18339986?source=pkg](http://www.denverpost.com/breakingnews/ci_18339986?source=pkg)
4. Girls with Asperger’s syndrome speak out on the condition:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eh5uuth5k-Y&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eh5uuth5k-Y&feature=related)  
and  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ek5ZC9cCjYU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ek5ZC9cCjYU)



## Guide Credits

### ITVS Community Classroom Team

#### National advisors

**Tamera Bogusky:** PBS Teachers

**Wendell Bourne:** National Council for the Social Studies

**Kara Clayton:** National Association for Media Literacy

**Patti Duncan:** National Women's Studies Association

**Maxine Einhorn:** KQED Education Network

**Joe Fatheree:** National State Teachers of the Year

**John Golden:** National Council of Teachers of English

**Carole Lester:** American Association of Community Colleges

**Amy Puffenberger:** National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good, Ann Arbor

#### Consultants:

**Belia Mayeno Saavedra:** Youth Radio

**Manijeh Fata:** Community Works West

**David Maduli:** Educator

### ITVS Staff

**Associate Director of Engagement & Education**

Duong-Chi Do

**National Community Engagement and Education Manager**

Annelise Wunderlich

**National Community Engagement Coordinator**

Sara Brissenden-Smith

**Engagement & Education Assistant**

Nallaly Jimenez

**Series Production Coordinator**

Kristina Motwani

**Senior Designer**

Michael Silva

### About ITVS:

The Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web and the Emmy Award-winning weekly series Independent Lens on Thursday nights at 10 PM on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by media activists, citizens and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing TV audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans. More information about ITVS can be obtained by visiting [itvs.org](http://itvs.org). ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people. Learn more: [www.itvs.org](http://www.itvs.org)

### About Women and Girls Lead:

Women and Girls Lead is a strategic public media initiative to support and sustain a growing international movement to empower women and girls, their communities, and future generations. Learn more: [www.itvs.org/women-and-girls-lead](http://www.itvs.org/women-and-girls-lead)

### About Community Classroom:

Community Classroom is an innovative and free resource for educators, offering short-form film modules adapted from ITVS's award-winning documentaries and standards-based lesson plans for high school and community colleges, NGOs, and youth organizations.

Learn more: [www.itvs.org/educators](http://www.itvs.org/educators)

### About PBS:

PBS is a media enterprise that serves 354 public noncommercial television stations and reaches almost 90 million people each week through on-air and online content. Bringing diverse viewpoints to television and the Internet, PBS provides high-quality documentary and dramatic entertainment, and consistently dominates the most prestigious award competitions. PBS is a leading provider of educational materials for K-12 teachers, and offers a broad array of other educational services. PBS' premier kids' TV programming and Web site, PBS KIDS Online ([pbskids.org](http://pbskids.org)), continue to be parents' and teachers' most trusted learning environments for children. More information about PBS is available at [pbs.org](http://pbs.org), one of the leading dot-org Web sites on the Internet.

### About Girl Scouts of the USA:

This resource was developed in partnership with Girl Scouts of the USA. Girl Scouts Beyond Bars provides girls with opportunities to visit their incarcerated mothers and participate in mother/daughter Girl Scout troops. Girl Scouting in Detention Centers serves girls who have been adjudicated, are wards of the court, or are court-referred delinquents.



### Student Handout A:

#### Portraits of Girls Impacted by the Criminal Justice System

##### Female Juvenile Delinquency Fact Sheet

Females—both adults and juveniles—involved in the criminal justice system share many of the same characteristics. Most are poor, undereducated, unskilled, and are disproportionately women and girls of color. Many come from impoverished urban environments, have been raised by single mothers, or have been in foster care. A profile of at-risk adolescent females identifies common characteristics including histories of victimization, unstable family life, school failure, repeated status offenses, and mental health and substance abuse problems.

These shared characteristics of at-risk adolescent females are identified as follows:

- Aged 13 to 18 years
- History of victimization, especially physical, sexual, and emotional abuse
- Academic failure, truancy, and dropout
- Repeated status offenses, especially running away
- Unstable family life, including family involvement in the criminal justice system, lack of connectedness, social isolation
- History of unhealthy dependent relationships, especially with older males
- Mental health issues, including history of substance abuse
- Overrepresentation among communities of color

**Source:** *Effective Gender-Responsive Interventions in Juvenile Justice: Addressing the Lives of Delinquent Girls*  
by Stephanie Covington & Barbara Bloom



**Student Handout A:**

Film Notes: Tracking Risk Factors

**Directions:** As you watch each film module, take notes on risk factors for Cyntoia and Rosa.

Cyntoia	Rosa



### Student Handout B: Mythbusters

**Directions:** When each statement is read, move to the area of the room that reflects your opinion. Be prepared to discuss your opinion. Fill in the answers when your instructor gives them.

1. California spends more on higher education (UC and Cal State systems) than on prisons.
2. Nearly one in four of all prisoners worldwide is incarcerated in America.
3. Texas is leading the way in reducing the prison population, recently closing a 1,100-bed facility.
4. Juvenile offenders can receive a sentence of life without the possibility of parole for nonviolent offenses.
5. Approximately 65 percent of female prisoners were convicted of nonviolent crimes, including 29 percent convicted of drug offenses.
6. Drug courts are more effective than incarceration at reducing recidivism for drug offenses.
7. Approximately fifty thousand youth are discharged from the criminal justice system every year.
8. When you include people on probation and parole, the adult prison population rises to 3 million people.
9. More than 4 out of 10 offenders nationwide return to state prison within three years of release.
10. Congress appropriated \$83 million for reentry programs in fiscal year 2011, slightly less than \$120 per released prisoner.
11. Budget cuts are forcing states to explore ways to reduce their prison population.
12. About 50 percent of all women entering state prisons are mothers.
13. Prison reform, or making changes that reduce the number of people in prison, is supported by members of both the Democratic and Republican Parties.



### Student Handout C: Decision-Making Worksheet

**Directions:** Complete these steps on a separate piece of paper to think through an important decision you need to make.

#### Step 1: State your decision

A decision must have at least two different choices that could be made. Examples might include the following: Should I go back to school? How can I support my family? Where will I live? What should I do with my free time? Should I stay in my relationship?

#### Step 2: Brainstorm

Brainstorm all possible options for your decision. Think outside of the box and include choices you may not even think are possible. Try to make a list of at least 10 choices for making your decision. When your list is completed, review and choose what you think are the top 3 best options.

#### Step 3: Pros and Cons

Working with your short list of options, add several pros and cons for each.

#### Step 4: Research

What additional information is needed for each option in order to make a good decision? Make a list of the information you need and where you can get it.

#### Step 5: Impact

What impact is my decision likely to have on myself and others?

#### Step 6: Feedback

Discuss your choices with someone you respect, preferably a mentor or trusted friend, family member, or teacher.

#### Step 7: Decide and Act

Based on the work you've done, make a choice from your list of options. Act on your decision. This is a crucial step. People often make choices and then do not act on them. Tell people about your choice as a way to increase your accountability to the decision.

#### Step 8: Evaluate

Go back over your decision and reflect on the outcome. Think about what changes may need to be made to improve the decision. If you are struggling and things are not turning out as expected, seek the advice of a mentor.



## Student Handout D: Achieving Your Goals

**Directions:** Use the chart below to list your top goals and resources available in your community to support you in reaching your goals.

Goals	Resources
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	





# APPENDIX: STUDENT AND INSTRUCTORS HANDOUTS

## Teacher Handout A: Lesson 5: Role-Play Cards

<p><b>SCENARIO 1</b></p> <p><b>Card #1: Reyna</b> You're hanging out with your friend Sherrita and you can tell she's down. But she won't tell you what's going on. You are determined to get her to open up.</p>	<p><b>SCENARIO 2</b></p> <p><b>Card #2: LaToya</b> You know something is bothering your friend Mona but she won't talk about it. You're busy taking care of your cousins because their mom is working two jobs. You want to go to community college and become a nurse. You want Mona to come to community college with you, so you have to figure out what's bothering her.</p>
<p><b>SCENARIO 1</b></p> <p><b>Card #2: Sherrita</b> You just found out your boyfriend was arrested for violating his probation. Your father has been in and out of jail your whole life though no one knows that. You're embarrassed, don't know what to do and don't want anyone to know what's going on.</p>	<p><b>SCENARIO 2</b></p> <p><b>Card #3: Erica</b> You are hanging out with LaToya and Mona. You are a teen mom. You just dropped out of high school to take care of your baby. You're worried about how you will support your baby, so other people's problems get on your nerves.</p>
<p><b>SCENARIO 1</b></p> <p><b>Card #3: Sondra, Reyna's older sister</b> You just got off work at Target and you go to Reyna's room to hang out. As an older sibling, you feel responsible for supporting and giving advice to your younger sister and her friends.</p>	<p><b>SCENARIO 3</b></p> <p><b>Card #1: Moniqua</b> You are locked up in a juvenile detention center for running away from a group home. All you really want to do is live with your mom but she's not stable. There was a lot of drama in your childhood but you will never talk about it because people can't be trusted.</p>
<p><b>SCENARIO 2</b></p> <p><b>Card #1: Mona</b> You're 16 and you have a boyfriend. He's doing well in school and wants to go to college. But he doesn't think birth control is a big deal and he wants you to stop nagging him about it. You really don't want to talk about it because he said not to talk about issues concerning the two of you. You are loyal to your mom but she had you when she was 16 and you're scared to repeat the cycle. Bad things happened to you when you were a kid that you don't want to happen to your own kids.</p>	<p><b>SCENARIO 3</b></p> <p><b>Card #2: Ms. Powell, Moniqua's teacher</b> You see a lot of potential in Moniqua. She's very bright and funny. But she's also very shut down and guarded about her personal life. You worry that if she keeps everything in, she will just explode or do something she'll regret.</p> <p><b>SCENARIO 3</b></p> <p><b>Card #3: Antoinette</b> You were crazy when you were a teenager and got into a lot of trouble. You turned your life around when you were 20 and now you come to the detention center to work with girls. You just met Moniqua who seems like she needs help.</p>



## Teacher Handout B: Film Quotes

### *Me Facing Life—Cyntoia's Story*

1. I never think about the consequences of my actions, you know. I just get myself in these dangerous situations. I mean, I can tell you a lot of stories of where I've been in very dangerous situations, but somehow I just always seem to make it out alive. (Cyntoia)
2. Having a newborn, and I was a child myself, I couldn't handle it. So I would escape to the bottle. I drank for about eight months of her life and the eighth month, that's when I was introduced to crack cocaine. (Cyntoia's mom, Gina)
3. I just watched the pornos and seen when men came up to girls and started taking off the girl's clothes, the girl just lays there and does whatever. Screams and all that stuff. And that's what I figured was supposed to happen so anybody, anytime that wanted to have sex with me I just did it. I felt like obligated, like that's what I was supposed to do. You know what I mean? (Cyntoia)
4. Her Pavlovian response to what has been happening to her since she was ten is to give herself up. So she has no value, so she's not going to do something to protect herself. (Dr. Heger referring to Cyntoia's history of sexual abuse)
5. No she wasn't, and because of that look at all the stuff I've gone through, look at where I'm at because of it. Because it fucks the child up in the head... I mean it messes up the child in the head. If I wouldn't been here then a lot of stuff wouldn't have happened. All the people who I've cause to hurt, my parents, other people's... Johnny's family, they wouldn't have been hurt like that. So it's not only hurting a baby, you're hurting whoever that baby hurts when it turns into the terror that it's gonna turn into. (Cyntoia on her mom's pregnancy)
6. What's the right thing to do when teenagers get in this kind of trouble? I don't think it makes sense just to throw them away. I don't think it makes sense to give a life sentence to a teenager who has committed a crime. (Dr. Bennett)
7. It is depressing, but there are juveniles from whom society, and this community, has to be protected. We all have our own opinions, I think, of where that line is drawn. Where we stop trying to treat and rehabilitate this child and start imprisoning this child. Where's that line to be drawn? Sometimes it's a tough call. (Jeff Burks—DA)

8. As a young girl, I never knew the depth and strength of the power within me, and as a young woman, I know of my power, and also of my ability to utilize it to gain success in whatever I pursue in life. (Cyntoia)
9. I think growing up to me would've been different had I allowed my mom to be more active in my life. I never had any guidance because I never allowed her in. Secrecy was a code I crafted for my life. I regret that to this day. (Cyntoia)

### *Girls on the Wall*

1. Most of my thoughts just stay in my head. I'm sayin', I think about a lot of stuff. (Whitney)
2. I think that once you put your story out in public, you're able to give it to other people, you're able to share it with them and eventually you're able to let it go. (Meade Palidofsky)
3. I think it's important for you to tell your stories. Maybe you've not written all that much, or maybe you've never read your own writing out loud. So that's a risk, isn't it? But it's important that we share the stories of how we lived. (Meade Palidofsky)
4. I don't know, I'm the kind of person that's got to fight all the time. I gotta grow out of that. But with people it's like, basically call me out. Call me like, you know, like I'm a bitch and I be like, I want to fight all the time cause of that. (Rosa)
5. You see my life started out as hell.  
My mom on crack and my dad in jail.  
All my life I rebelled  
Kept my secrets inside I chose to never tell  
I been from foster home to group home to jail  
But on these things I cannot dwell. (Rosa)
6. My mom's a crackhead. She was in my life until I was 12. Then she just started disappearing for weekends, to weeks to months. DCFS they used to try and come to the door and knock on the door cause our neighbors were reporting that there was no sign of an adult anywhere. But I didn't want to go into a foster home, so I would run away to go see my mom because I would be worried about her, worried sick. So I've been locked up 9 times before for contempt of court, and that was just for running away. (Christina)



## APPENDIX: STUDENT AND INSTRUCTORS HANDOUTS

---

7. Whitney's really interesting because she doesn't share herself and her story with a lot of other girls. The staff had told me that she never let down her guard in front of anybody. So I wanted to spend some time getting her ideas without anybody else there. (Meade Palidofsky)
8. It say, broken' which many of us are  
Then I just put, 'you're an Indian Giver, dog.  
You give me money, you take it back  
That ain't cool  
You give me love, you take it back  
That ain't cool either  
You were my life, my smile  
Now all I do is think, what if you were a different man  
You could've accomplished many things  
But yet instead, you love that pipe first  
You loved your broad the same as that  
But never showed me love at all (Whitney)
9. One thing that's dangerous with kids that are being locked up is that they'll suck it all up and wait until they get out and they will have solved nothing. I think that the girls really still need to seize their stories. (Meade Palidofsky)
10. My whole stay here I've seen girls coming in and out. In and out! But time be running out. The older you get, I mean, it's just gonna get bad for you. You're gonna leave Warrentonville and go straight to Grown Up Prison. Time don't wait on nobody, time don't wait for nobody. (Whitney)
11. Not all of us are performers. But what I see Whitney doing is stepping up. Whitney needs to be pushed, and she needs to take a leadership role. (Meade Palidofsky)
12. It take a lot for me to be open, you know. And I been closed for a long time, know what I'm saying. When you finally get something out it hurts. (Rosa)
13. I'm not saying to forget the past  
But let it build you up, not make you sad.  
Tell the truth, because it needs to be said  
Testify for every tear  
You shed. (unidentified girl)
14. It's not about shining, but what I want to do is show people that I can do better than what I have been, know what I'm sayin'? Yeah, people change. (Whitney)

### *Troop 1500*

1. Your mom gives you a sense of self. We're not there for that. They're getting that from somebody else. I don't want to hurt 'em again. They're so precious. (Kenya – mom)
2. The major goal of *Troop 1500* is to strengthen the bond between mother and daughter in order to break the cycle of crime. (Julia – social worker)
3. The meetings out at the prison do provide the girls with an opportunity to create memories with their mothers. And remember that this was a snapshot of my life where my mom and I really loved each other and trusted each other. And it was safe. (Julia – social worker)
4. These girls have to be very strong, cause as hard as it is for them when their mothers are in jail, it's almost even harder when their moms are out of jail. (Julia – social worker)
5. I'm 40 years old but I actually passed my GED before my 40th birthday (Ida – mom)
6. You know, we all need encouragement and we all need support. And the best place you can find it is in the small group somewhere that will help you and assist you in your life. (Minister)

