THREE SHORT FILMS THAT ACCOMPANY THE 2020 DOCUMENTARY JUVENILE

Scheduled for release in 2020, the documentary film Juvenile “explores how communities across the country are breaking and remaking their justice systems. Driven by the personal stories of five youth who were justice-involved as teens, the film traces their pathways into the system and their journeys of trauma and healing.”

Right now, you can view 3 related short films featuring an incarcerated youth, a public defender, and a mother. Below are links to those films and discussion questions that can facilitate conversation:


- Did Robert make the right decision to testify against his co-defendants?
- Robert’s story opens with his description of a childhood in a neighborhood where it was “kill or be killed”; should this traumatic upbringing have been considered before transferring him to adult court?
- Why do you think the judge who transferred him to adult court thought he was “unsalvageable”?
- In what ways did Robert benefit from available programming while in prison?


- What does her story of the case of the 12-year-old boy tell you about the importance of good legal representation? What do you think would have happened had he not had good representation?
- In what ways does she support her clients, beyond arguing in court?
- Barbara Deans speaks of her role in a “path” that her clients are on; who else in their lives is positioned to help children find the right path?
- Barbara Deans speaks of how her work can “get to you” and discusses challenges both at and outside of work; what can we do to help make work for people like her a little less challenging?

Viola – https://www.juvenilefilm.com/films/viola

- This story has a “happy ending” according to Viola; does it feel happy to you?
- What do you think it means when Viola says her son is about the only one who “survived” juvenile court?
- This story sits at the nexus of poverty, trauma, and mental health; what should have been in place to make things less difficult for Viola?

All Three videos - https://www.juvenilefilm.com/films

- What common threads run through all three of these stories?
- What do you think of the different perspectives on the justice system between Robert, Viola, and Barbara?
- What policies should be put in place to prevent these kinds of stories from being repeated?