



Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign www.reentrymediaoutreach.org

**E-Newsletter
Volume II, Issue II – April 2004**

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Next up in the Reentry Campaign's broadcast pipeline is **EVERY CHILD IS BORN A POET: *The Life & Work of Piri Thomas***, an incendiary mix of documentary, poetry, storytelling, drama, and performance. The one-hour film examines the creative talents of Piri Thomas through his books, poetry, spoken word interpretations and archival footage. This seminal artist is the Afro-Cuban-Puerto Rican author of the classic autobiographical novel *Down These Mean Streets* (1967). **EVERY CHILD IS BORN A POET** traces key events in Thomas' youth and early adulthood and explores the impact of these influences. The film culminates in depictions of Thomas' work with incarcerated young men in a workshop designed to let them express their deepest feelings through writing and oral presentations.



You can catch **EVERY CHILD IS BORN A POET** on **April 6, 2004** on PBS (check your local listings for confirmation of date and time). For more information on **EVERY CHILD IS BORN A POET**, and ways to use it in Reentry settings, visit the Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign Web site (<http://www.reentrymediaoutreach.org/ec.htm>). A downloadable discussion guide is available free!

The discussion guide for youth audiences offers an excellent springboard for self-reflection and inquiry. The guide is especially designed to help you use **EVERY CHILD IS BORN A POET** to engage youth who are facing challenges related to incarceration. It contains suggestions for ways to help young people think more deeply about the issues raised in the film, and to use the film to help young people think more deeply about their own lives. Sample questions in the discussion guide include:

- Name one thing from the film that spoke truth to you. Name one thing said in the film with which you really disagreed.
- How did viewing the film make you feel? How did the various visual styles and genres used by the filmmaker influence how you felt?

- A month from now, what do you think you will remember most from this film and why?

Produced and directed by Jonathan Robinson, When in Doubt Productions, Inc., in association with the Independent Television Service (ITVS) and Latino Public Broadcasting (LPB), with major funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

Additional resources for **EVERY CHILD IS BORN A POET**

- The Official Piri Thomas Web Site -- <http://www.cheverote.com/>
- Independent Lens -- <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/everychildisbornapoet/index.html>
- Books by Piri Thomas on Amazon.com -- <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/search-handle-form/104-4361031-4956707>

MANHOOD AND VIOLENCE: FATAL PERIL, distributed through American Public Television (APT) quickly follows as the next Reentry Campaign offering on May 2, 2004. (Again, check local listings of your PBS station.) FATAL PERIL is a documentary about a violence prevention project in the San Francisco County Jail in which 80% of its graduates do not get rearrested for violent crimes after only four months of intense immersion.



Twelve hours a day, six days a week, men who are violent offenders are involved in what is said to be the first restorative justice project of its kind -- **RSVP: Resolve to Stop the Violence Project**. The documentary focuses on nine men of diverse ethnicities as they engage one another in deeply emotional encounter groups, including one following a Victim Impact session, and then follows the men when they return to their communities. MANHOOD AND VIOLENCE: FATAL PERIL is produced by Hudson River Film & Video.

Writer Jan Goodwin examines the **RSVP** program in an article on restorative justice in the April 2004 issue of **O Magazine**. Dr. Mark Umbreit, executive director of the Center for Restorative Justice and Peacemaking says, "Research on RJ shows that after going through the program, victims are significantly less fearful of being revictimized. They are able to stop demonizing the offender, and as a result, the terror they feel is frequently eased." The article goes on to report that offenders also benefit. Restorative justice helps keep formerly incarcerated men from returning to crime. Pick up a copy of **O Magazine** to read the complete piece.

For more on MANHOOD AND VIOLENCE: FATAL PERIL, visit the Reentry Web Site (<http://www.reentrymediaoutreach.org/mvfp.htm>) and download the free discussion guide.

Reentry Campaign Activity Heats Up!

Community screenings, panel discussions, town hall meetings, and other activities are spreading across the country as public television stations, law enforcement agencies, faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and other local groups organize effective outreach efforts around the Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign. A sample of these activities is outlined below. For more campaign activity, visit the Reentry Web site (<http://www.reentrymediaoutreach.org/activity.htm>).

Outreach Extensions Offers Community Pre-Screening Tapes

In early March, Outreach Extensions extended a special opportunity to community organizations around the nation to host pre-broadcast screening activities for **EVERY CHILD IS BORN A POET** and **MANHOOD AND VIOLENCE: FATAL PERIL**. To date, over 40 local organizations have applied for this opportunity by submitting proposals outlining their intended activities. The recipients ranged from colleges and universities who will use the films in classroom and training settings, to churches using the tapes in specific ministries, to activist organizations wishing to inform public policy. *Look for additional pre-screening opportunities in future Reentry e-newsletters.*

Here's a sample of community screening activities:

El Centro de la Raza, Seattle

El Centro de La Raza will conduct a series of screenings of **EVERY CHILD IS BORN A POET**. Its director believes the film will be a great resource to engage and inspire high school students in twice-weekly poetry classes with different youth. Each year, El Centro serves almost 10,000 youth, ages 12 to 17. Activities began in early March and will continue through May 2004.

KQED, San Francisco

EastSide Arts Alliance premieres its **FINAL FRIDAY'S VIDEO SERIES** with a KQED Education Network sponsored screening of **EVERY CHILD IS BORN A POET: The Life and Work of Piri Thomas**. Held on March 26, 2004, 7:00 – 9:00 pm, the video screening was followed by a musical performance featuring Avotcha, poet and multi-percussionist Francis Wong on saxophone and John Santos on percussion. Special Puerto Rican delicacies were provided by Rico Pabon and desserts by the Sankofa Kitchen students.

The Mankind Project, San Diego

The Mankind Project is hosting four community meetings to screen **MANHOOD AND VIOLENCE: FATAL PERIL** in April. The events are designed to encourage direct discussion of processes for prison group work with men and to recruit men to plan support groups with local jails and prisons.

Cook County Sheriff's Office, Department of Women's Justice Services, Chicago, IL

Through looking at the life and work of Piri Thomas in **EVERY CHILD IS BORN A POET**, detained female offenders in the Department of Women's Justice Services' Gender and Culturally Responsive Program will seek their own creative voices. The audience will be female offenders charged with nonviolent offenses who have substance abuse problems. The purpose of the screening is to illustrate ways in which women can learn to express their emotions and feelings through art, whether in written word or artistic drawings; to stimulate women in recovery to look for healthy lifestyles; and to demonstrate that pathways to recovery are a process for each individual and that the journey is different for each individual.

PRISON LULLABIES will be part of the AIM 2004 Rountable

Aid to Children of Imprisoned Mothers, Inc. (AIM), a private nonprofit Atlanta-based agency, deals with the critical needs of children of incarcerated mothers and their families. Created in 1987, AIM seeks to diminish the

impact of the mother's incarceration on family relationships through a variety of support services to the children and other family members. These include after-school programming, summer camp, and Saturday programs for the children, transportation of children for prison visits, emergency aid for families, and information and referral for mothers and caregivers. AIM also provides consultation to legislators, judges, and other professionals on child custody issues.

On July 17 – 20, 2004, AIM is hosting the 11th National Roundtable for Women in Prison in Atlanta. First organized in New York in 1985, the Roundtable is a project of the National Network for Women in Prison. The goal of this Network is to reduce the incarceration of women and girls through effective alternatives to incarceration, to end the violation of human rights of women and girls in correctional facilities, and to promote quality services including health care, mental health care, prenatal care, and substance abuse treatment, as well as education and vocational training." The Roundtable supports this agenda through information sharing and community building.

Added this year is a screening of the Reentry Campaign documentary, **PRISON LULLABIES**, the story of women in New York's medium-security Taconic Correctional Facility, who are able to keep their babies with them in prison.



Resources:

- Read more about PRISON LULLABIES on the Reentry Web Site (<http://www.reentrymediaoutreach.org/pl.htm>).
- Aid to Incarcerated Mothers is profiled on the Reentry Web Site (http://www.reentrymediaoutreach.org/sp_family_aim.htm)
- Information on the 2004 Roundtable can be found at <http://www.takingaim.net/2004roundtable>.

THIS ISSUE'S REENTRY PROGRAM PROFILE is the **Court Services & Offender Supervision Agency** (CSOSA) in Washington, DC. According to CSCOA, 70 percent of convicted offenders serve all or part of their sentence in the community in which they lived. As a result, effective service to the courts and supervision of pretrial defendants and convicted offenders is critical to public safety for those communities. CSOSA works to create safe community environments, while working with incarcerated men and women until their release from prison. The process is carried out by a number of discrete but related entities that work together to enforce the rule of law while ensuring the justice system is accessible and fair to all. Law enforcement, the courts, corrections, and parole authorities each have a leadership role to play in controlling crime and ensuring public safety. The Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency coordinates closely with these entities and fulfills its role in the criminal justice process by:

- Providing supervisory and treatment services to over 26,000 individuals on pretrial release, probation, and parole; and
- Assisting federal and local courts in determining eligibility for release.

CSOSA celebrated its second year as a new independent federal agency on August 4, 2002. CSOSA was created by the National Capital Revitalization and Self-Government Improvement Act of 1997. CSOSA acquired the operational responsibilities for the former District agencies in charge of Probation and Parole and houses the Pretrial Services Agency within its framework. The District of Columbia Public Defender Service also submits its Budget Request through the Director of CSOSA.

The mission of CSOSA is to increase public safety, prevent crime, reduce recidivism, and support the fair administration of justice in close collaboration with the community. CSOSA's Community Partnerships program helps to ensure the agency's mission through the development of programs for supervision, intervention, and community services. Specific activities undertaken by this agency function include:

- Building Partnerships with Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement
- Partnering with City Agencies, Social Services Providers, and Key Stakeholders
- Establishing and Maintaining Quality Assurance Mechanisms for Programs
- Building Community Justice Advisory Networks
- Developing Innovative Offender Reintegration Programs
- Partnership with the Metropolitan Police Department
- Connect for Kids

CSOSA is currently using the *Outside the Walls* videotape to conduct screening and discussion opportunities for its staff and community partners. For more information, contact Leonard A. Sipes, Jr., Public Affairs Specialist, Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) for the District of Columbia, 633 Indiana Ave., NW, Suite 1263, Washington, DC 20004, 202.220.5616 (office), leonard.sipes@csosa.gov or visit the Web site at www.csosa.gov.

Small Bites – Reentry Work Around the Nation

Post your choices of nominees for the **World's Children's Prize** for the Rights of the Child for their work on behalf of children of prisoners. The Prize is awarded based on votes -- half a million children in 45 countries will participate in a Global Vote between now and April 10. Because this vote provides an extraordinary opportunity to educate young people about how America's incarceration policies affect children and families, the World's Children's Prize is seeking schools, classrooms, and youth-serving programs that are interested in holding a vote.

The World's Children's Prize is the world's largest democracy education program for children, and the youth who participate will learn not only about children of prisoners, but about other nominees who struggle on behalf of the rights of children throughout the world. To learn more, visit www.childrensworld.org.

Web Site Alert: The Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign was featured on Thursday, February 26, 2004 on the home page of the **Foundation Center's** Web site as its "Fact of the Day" (<http://fdncenter.org/fact/fact.html?id=/fact/200401903.xml>). The Foundation Center's Web site is the premier gateway for information on philanthropy and the nonprofit sector, logging an average of 30,000 visits daily. Its "Fact of the Day" feature is one of the ways it communicate important new initiatives to assist nonprofits with their work.

Ohio's Reentry Court model offers a unified and comprehensive approach to managing offenders from the court, to incarceration, and back into the community. The Reentry Court targets all felony offenders originally sentenced to prison by the Richland County Common Pleas Court. After assessing the effects of the offense on the victim and community, the court develops a reentry plan that identifies the issues an offender must address to enhance his or her eligibility for release and to enable his or her successful adjustment to the community.

Through partnerships with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections, the reentry plan expedites the offender's processing into the prison system and places the offender into institutions in or near Richland County to begin social and educational programming outlined in the reentry plan. Coordination continues among the institution, the court, and the parole and probation systems in the planning for release back into the community. This coordinated release addresses the core issues of the reentry plan, which still need to be met upon release to make the offender's adjustment to community reintegration more successful.

Collaborations among the criminal justice, law enforcement, and social services agencies, the treatment community, and citizen organizations aid in this process. After release, an offender must report to a joint court/parole authority for a formal monthly review of the offender's progress for up to one year.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) is supporting the **Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign** as part of the Making Connections Media Outreach Initiative (MCMOI), which is designed and managed by Outreach Extensions. The purpose of this vital outreach effort is to link public television stations to local stakeholders, which serve various constituencies, as a means to strengthen youth and families and build effective communities.



The Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Making Connections Media Outreach Initiative offers media support to local coalitions that are part of AECF's *Making Connections*, a multi-faceted, long-term effort to improve the life chances of vulnerable children by helping to strengthen their families and neighborhoods. The Foundation's intent is to stimulate and support a local movement that engages residents, civic groups, political leaders, grassroots groups, public and private sector leadership, and faith-based organizations in an effort to help transform tough neighborhoods into family-supportive environments.

This E-Newsletter is an electronic publication intended to keep you informed about news and events relating to the Reentry National Media Outreach Campaign. **Please let us know how we're doing through the feedback form on the Reentry Web site (<http://www.reentrymediaoutreach.org/contactus.htm>).** For more information, please contact:

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We welcome the names/e-mail addresses of your colleagues so that we can send copies of this E-Newsletter to them as well.

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