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JACOB BURNS FILM CENTER PREMIERES FILM PROJECT CREATED BY INMATES AT WESTCHESTER COUNTY JAIL

**Final Film Project from DIGITAL JOURNALISM pilot program in County Jail
To be Screened at Film Center and Web Simulcast in the Jail**

Pleasantville, NY – March 2, 2009 – The Jacob Burns Film Center (JBFC), a cultural arts institution with a dual mission of film and education, announced today the premiere screening of a film project created through a pilot filmmaking program the JBFC offered at the Westchester County Jail in partnership with Westchester County Government's Department of Corrections. The film *Judgement*, created through the DIGITAL JOURNALISM program, will have its premiere on Monday, March 9 at 7:00 pm. This screening is free and open to the public.



The students and teachers of the Digital Journalism program, piloted at the Westchester County Jail. (Photo Credit: Ed Cody)

This film was created by eight young men from the county jail through the BOCES Incarcerated Youth Program. There will be a web simulcast of the premiere so the students still incarcerated at the jail will have the opportunity to see the audience screening their film at the JBFC. A Q&A will follow the film with Commissioner of Corrections Joseph K. Spano, BOCES Principal Donnie Simmons, program instructors Mike Kraus and Sean Weiner, and Rory Rohan and Dekwan Clark, two of the former inmates in the class. Westchester County Executive Andy Spano will make opening remarks before the program begins. This pilot program was made possible by a grant from The Elias Foundation and was not funded with taxpayer dollars.

“Since film has such a profound effect on people’s life these days, we asked Jacob Burns if they could

bring this program to our jail,” said Spano. “We wanted to give these young men an opportunity to use their personal experiences to create something lasting and positive. They learned a new skill and expressed themselves in a way they never had before – something we hope will help them in the future.”

DIGITAL JOURNALISM was piloted in the Westchester County Jail in the fall of 2008. “The program integrates core literacy skills with 21st century digital media tools to give students the opportunity for self-expression, communication, and tools to navigate today’s workplace,” said JBFC Director of Education Programs Emily Keating. “We are very proud of the work produced by these students and we look forward to screening their work at the Film Center.”

To view the promotional trailer please visit <http://www.burnsfilmcenter.org/education/screening-room>.

The pilot class was integrated with the inmates’ full-day BOCES program including literacy for nonreaders, high school academics, GED preparation, life skills, career development and computer skills – all intended to help them function more productively during incarceration and after release. Digital filmmaking programs are also offered at JBFC’s Media Arts Lab, a 21st century state-of-the-art media education center located down the street from the Film Center.

The students met for two hours a week over the course of 12 weeks. They completed one collaborative 10-minute film and each student created a 1-minute individual piece. The group film is on the subject of judgment. Through a documentary-style approach, the filmmakers reflect on their own experiences being judged and judging others. The individual projects are brief first-person introductions. The students gained experience with digital video cameras, sound kits, conducting interviews, and editing with Final Cut Pro Express, the industry standard editing software.

The program was developed and taught by Mike Kraus, curriculum designer, independent video journalism trainer and freelancer. He has developed several video journalism programs with students, including *X Marks the Spot*, a project for teenagers from an under-resourced community in England. He also worked as a video journalist for BBC. With video journalists now employed in all its regional offices, BBC is a leader in this growing movement.

The premiere will be held at Jacob Burns Film Center, 364 Manville Road in Pleasantville. Those interested in attending should RSVP to JBFC Director of Education Programs Emily Keating at 914.773.7663, ext. 417 or ekeating@burnsfilmcenter.org.

Founded in 1999, The Elias Foundation seeks to promote a more equitable and progressive society by supporting projects that mobilize community leadership and create networks for community change. The foundation is committed to organizations that amplify the voices of community members and initiatives that are grounded in and led by the communities they serve with particular interest in organizations that connect their issues to a broader political, economic and social justice agenda.

The Jacob Burns Film Center is a not-for-profit cultural arts organization in Pleasantville, New York dedicated to: presenting the best of independent, documentary and world cinema; promoting visual literacy and making film a vibrant part of the community. Located on a 47,500-sq.-foot, three-building campus in the center of Pleasantville, the JBFC is just 30 miles outside of New York City. The programs are inspired by the power of film to challenge, educate, and inspire; to transport us to worlds beyond our own; and to create community through shared dialogue and cultural experience. Since the opening in 2001, over 1,000,000 people have seen over 3,000 films from more than 40 countries. The JBFC campus includes the 27,000-sq.-foot Media Arts Lab, equipped with 16 editing suites, a recording studio, a soundstage, a 60-seat screening room, an animation studio, a large Center Studio, and 4 small studios. To learn more about the Jacob Burns Film Center, visit www.burnsfilmcenter.org. To view a selection of work in various JBFC education programs visit www.youtube.com/burnsfilmcenter.

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