



FRAMING INNOCENCE:

Storytelling and Wrongful Convictions

Northwestern | PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAM

FRAMING INNOCENCE:

Storytelling and Wrongful Convictions

Friday, January 23, 2026 • 6 P.M.
McCormick Foundation Center, 1870 Campus Drive, Evanston

Welcome

Jennifer Lackey

Introduction to Documenting Carceral Injustice Program

Brent Huffman

Documentaries

“Hey Hugo” (16 minutes)

“Jeffery, Come Home” (21 minutes)

“Oliver” (12 minutes)

“Until You Come Home” (22 minutes)

Music and Animation

“Runaway” (3 minutes, 41 seconds)

“The Injustice of Justice” (6 minutes, 51 seconds)

Panel Discussion

Oliver Crite III

Andrea Lewis Hartung

Brent Huffman

Keith LaMar

Karl Leonard

Anthony Ortega

Ysa Quiballo

James Soto

Moderated by Jennifer Lackey



DOCUMENTING CARCERAL INJUSTICE DOCUMENTARIES



“Hey Hugo” (16 minutes)

Directed by Ysa Quiballo and Annie Xia

Description: A film about a son who loves his mom, and the family who wants him to come home.

- Official Selection at the 2025 American Documentary and Animation Film Festival – Academy Award qualifying festival
- Best Documentary at the 2025 CineYouth Festival
- Official Selection at the 2025 Middlebury New Filmmakers Festival
- Screening at Life Within the Lens event for Hispanic Heritage Month at the Music Box Chicago
- Audience Choice Award at the 2025 Cariño Film Festival
- Daily article: <https://dailynorthwestern.com/2025/10/07/campus/medill-students-incarcerated-classmates-collaborate-on-award-winning-hey-hugo-documentary/>
- NPEP article: <https://sites.northwestern.edu/npep/2025/04/25/npep-documenting-carceral-injustice-program-empowerment-through-storytelling/>



DOCUMENTING CARCERAL INJUSTICE DOCUMENTARIES



“Jeffery, Come Home” (21 minutes)

Directed by Esther Lim and Jankhna Sura

Description: A film about one man’s love for his family and his ongoing journey back home.

- Chi-Town Multicultural Film Festival | Winner: Best Short Documentary
- Double Exposure Investigative Film Festival in Washington, DC
- March On Film Festival | Shortlist: Best Student Documentary
- American Documentary and Animation Film Festival – An Academy Award qualifying film festival



DOCUMENTING CARCERAL INJUSTICE DOCUMENTARIES



“Oliver” (12 minutes)

Directed by Caroline Bombback and Daniela Lubezki

Description: A loving family fighting to overturn a wrongful conviction.

- American Documentary and Animation Film Festival – An Academy Award qualifying film festival
- WTTW story: <https://news.wttw.com/2024/10/14/northwestern-students-create-documentaries-during-journalism-class-connecting-evanston>



DOCUMENTING CARCERAL INJUSTICE DOCUMENTARIES



“Until You Come Home” (22 minutes)

Directed by Sophia Jackson and Zella Milfred

Description: A documentary about Michael Ortega’s wrongful incarceration and the impact that this unjust physical absence has had on his family.

- American Documentary and Animation Film Festival – An Academy Award qualifying film festival



MUSIC AND ANIMATION



“Runaway” (3 minutes, 41 seconds)

An original song written and produced by Demetrius Cunningham that melodically documents his juvenile wrongful conviction. From Demetrius: “I want to give a special thanks to my mother and father for the fuel to run, to the incomparable Professor Jennifer Lackey, and the incredible production team of Antony Ablan and Rashad Husan of the Stateville Rebirth of Sound Studio.”



MUSIC AND ANIMATION



“The Injustice of Justice” (6 minutes, 51 seconds)

Keith LaMar, a wrongfully-convicted Black man in the United States, teams up with world-renowned artist Molly Crabapple to share the story of how he was framed and sentenced to death following the Lucasville Prison Uprising at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility in 1993. “The Injustice of Justice” has received recognition at a number of film festivals, including as a selected finalist at the San Quentin Film Festival in October.



PANELISTS



Oliver Crite III

My name is Oliver Crite III, father of Oliver Crawford. My son has been incarcerated for 21 of a 40-year sentence but wrongfully convicted. When my boy was born, the movie/miniseries *Roots*, came out. I went outside and held him up to the sky and recited words from the movie: "Behold the only thing greater than yourself." And from that point it was him and me. Everything I did he did, marking me. Taking him everywhere I went. If I tried to walk away to be with friends and family, he'd grab my legs and hold on for dear life. We worked, played, danced, just everything together. Then he was taken away from me and the family. He was around 28 and I was going on 50. Now he's going on 50.... About me: I'm 71 years old, a multimedia artist, I've been in some movies (small parts), Disc Jockey, love working out, and I love people and cultural places. When my son comes home we have a lot of stuff planned. Thanks so much for this opportunity. And most of all, thank you Professor Jennifer Lackey. Sincerely, Oliver Crite III



PANELISTS



Andrea Lewis Hartung

Andrea Lewis Hartung is a Clinical Professor of Law at Northwestern Pritzker School of Law and the Director of the Center on Wrongful Convictions within the Bluhm Legal Clinic. In this position, she focuses on post-conviction relief in the form of exoneration for those who were convicted of crimes they did not commit, and sentence reductions for individuals who were over-charged or given extreme sentences. She also teaches a clinical course and seminar on wrongful convictions. As part of the clinical course, students represent live clients and learn firsthand both the mechanisms for relief after a wrongful conviction, and the structural issues that lead to wrongful convictions.

Andrea previously worked in the Center as a Clinical Associate Professor of Law, where she built and directed the Center's Women's Defense Initiative. The Women's Defense Initiative seeks post-conviction sentencing relief for women who are serving extreme sentences notwithstanding gender-focused mitigating factors that contributed to their cases. Immediately before assuming the role of Legal Director, Andrea worked as an Appellate Attorney in the Supreme Court and Appellate Program of the Roderick & Solange MacArthur Justice Center, where she implemented a project to craft and advance state constitutional arguments to challenge extreme criminal penalties on appeal. She has authored or co-authored numerous amicus curia briefs submitted in the U.S. Supreme Courts and various state courts. She has written and presented across the country on wrongful convictions, gender, and extreme sentencing. She has also worked as an associate in the labor and employment group at a Chicago-based law firm.



PANELISTS



Brent E. Huffman

Brent E. Huffman is a professor and Director of Documentary Journalism at Medill as well as a working documentary filmmaker, director of long-form television programs, and photojournalist. At Medill, Huffman teaches documentary theory and production as well as long-form video storytelling in the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Huffman is passionate about international issues involving human rights and social justice. Huffman has directed, produced, written, shot, and edited documentaries and long-form videos for a variety of outlets, including The New York Times, National Geographic Channel, VICE News, Discovery Channel, Netflix, CNN, TIME, PBS, Al Jazeera, and the China Exploration and Research Society.

Professor Huffman created the Documenting Carceral Injustice program with Professor Jennifer Lackey in 2023. The program aims to empower incarcerated students with the opportunity to tell their own story through documentary video in collaboration with Medill School of Journalism undergraduate students. The class is supported by Dean Charles Whitaker and Associate Dean Beth Bennett.

<https://www.medilldocumentary.com/dci>

Documentaries made in his classes have gone on to win major industry awards such as National College Emmys, Student Academy Awards, International Documentary Association Awards, Chicago College Emmys, Illinois Press Association Awards, etc. Student documentaries have premiered on PBS, in film festivals like Cannes, SXSW, and Tribeca, and online in outlets like The New York Times, The Atlantic, Business Insider, National Geographic, TIME, and NPR.



Huffman has been making documentaries examining life within China and China's recent push into Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. "Saving Mes Aynak," his recent documentary, is about an ancient archaeological site in Afghanistan threatened by a Chinese state-owned copper mine. "Saving Mes Aynak" has won over 30 major awards and has been broadcast on television in over 50 countries. Huffman is currently making a documentary in Yemen about Yemeni women working to save threatened world heritage during the war.

Huffman's documentary films have gone on to win numerous awards including a Primetime Emmy, Best Feature News Award - Rory Peck Awards, Best Documentary in the Arts and Humanities at the Chicago International Film Festival Television Awards, Best Film at CinemAmbiente International Environmental Film Festival, Grand Prize and Audience Award at Arkhaio Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Festival, Green Spark Award from the American Conservation Film Festival and a Grand Jury Award at American Film Institute's SILVERDOCS.

Most recently, Huffman was awarded the Alumnae of Northwestern Teaching Professorship from Northwestern University.



PANELISTS



Keith LaMar

Keith LaMar is an award-winning author, artist, teacher, poet, and activist who has spent the past 32 years fighting a wrongful conviction to death row stemming from the 1993 Lucasville (Ohio) Prison Uprising. He has been held in permanent solitary confinement for over three decades. On January 13, 2027, the State of Ohio intends to execute Keith, in spite of his innocence. This is the second date they've set (previously it was November 16, 2023). Keith's bogus conviction rests solely on the uncorroborated and paid testimony of jailhouse informants who received early paroles and/or dropped charges in exchange for their cooperation; withheld evidence that proves his innocence, including a confession of an actual perpetrator to a murder for which Keith faces execution; and an all-white jury in a strategically-chosen and highly racist, rural county in southern Ohio. No forensic evidence connects Keith to any crime whatsoever. His entire ordeal is laid out in his beautiful memoir, *Condemned* (keithlamar.org/condemned).

In spite of the torture he's had to endure, Keith makes living with purpose his primary focus. He encourages people to try to leave the world a better, more beautiful place than they found it. His literacy work with at-risk youth and public high school students (nativesonsliteracy.org) allows Keith to be who he was always meant to be: a generous teacher and loving mentor. Working with young people has been a powerful source of healing and redemption.



Keith's jazz project, Freedom First, the first-ever album released from death row, followed by LIVE from Death Row in 2025, has brought Keith into contact with people in venues all around the world. As an artist, he has been painting a series of portraits of people whose work have been inspiring. Limited-edition giclée prints on museum-quality linen paper are available to help Keith raise support in his fight for his freedom.

To learn more about Keith's story and join us in support, go to keithlamar.org.



PANELISTS



Karl Leonard

Karl Leonard is a Staff Attorney with the Exoneration Project and a Lecturer in Law at the University of Chicago Law School. He represents innocent individuals seeking to undo their wrongful convictions. His clients' cases frequently involve newly discovered evidence of innocence, police and prosecutorial misconduct, constitutional violations, and other systemic issues affecting the criminal legal system. He has represented clients in state trial and appellate courts, in federal court, before the Illinois Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission, before the Illinois Prisoner Review Board, and in other forums.

Karl is a 2009 graduate of the University of Chicago Law School, where he was a clinic student in the Exoneration Project. After graduation, he spent several years at Winston & Strawn LLP, where his pro bono practice centered on post-conviction and innocence-related litigation.

Since joining the Exoneration Project clinic as a Lecturer, Karl has worked with student teams at all stages of post-conviction litigation, including investigation, drafting pleadings, in-court litigation, and appeals. These student-driven teams have secured exonérations, certificates of innocence, and other forms of post-conviction relief for many wrongfully convicted individuals.

Karl received his undergraduate degree from the University of California, Berkeley.



PANELISTS



Anthony Ortega

Anthony Ortega is the son of Northwestern Prison Education Program student, Michael Ortega, who is featured in “Until You Come Home.”



PANELISTS



Ysa Quiballo

Ysa Quiballo is the co-director of the award-winning short film “Hey Hugo.” She works as a video editor and camera operator at the Chicago-based production company Truth & Documentary. She graduated from Northwestern in 2025 with a degree in journalism and a minor in art theory and practice.



PANELISTS



James "Jimmy" Soto

James "Jimmy" Soto is a community organizer, artist, prisoner advocate, writer, graduate of the Northwestern Prison Education Program, and future JD candidate. He is the longest wrongfully incarcerated person in the state of Illinois and was released from the Illinois Department of Corrections after 42 years in December of 2023. He is a paralegal at Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law in the Community Justice and Civil Rights Clinic. He is a Community Justice Fellow and Practitioner at the University of Chicago's Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture. He volunteers for Parole Illinois, Walls Turned Sideways, and is the founder and director of a Campaign called #Build Communities Not Prisons which aims to close prisons and advocate for early release initiatives.



PANEL MODERATOR



Jennifer Lackey

Jennifer Lackey is the Wayne and Elizabeth Jones Professor of Philosophy and Professor of Law (courtesy) at Northwestern University, Founding Director of the Northwestern Prison Education Program, and Senior Research Associate at the African Centre for Epistemology and Philosophy of Science at the University of Johannesburg.

Lackey's research is in social epistemology with a focus on epistemological issues within the American criminal legal system. She is the author of over 60 articles and four books, including her recent *Criminal Testimonial Injustice*, which won the 2024 North American Society for Social Philosophy Book Award. She is also the editor or co-editor of six volumes and Editor-in-Chief of *Philosophical Studies* and *Episteme*.

Lackey was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2025, is the winner of the 2024 Humanitas Award, 2023 Horace Mann Medal, and the Lebowitz Prize for Philosophical Achievement and Contribution. She was elected President of the American Philosophical Association's Central Division from 2021–2022, was named the 2025 holder of the Spinoza Chair at the University of Amsterdam, and has received grants and fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.



Northwestern | PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAM