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***EVOLUTION OF A CRIMINAL PREMIERES ON INDEPENDENT LENS
IN JANUARY 2015 ON PBS***

**Autobiographical Documentary Traces Filmmaker’s Path From Honors Student to
Bank Robber and the Lasting Impact of His Actions**

“A terrific movie, as well as the birth of an artist.”
— Richard Brody, *The New Yorker*

(San Francisco, CA) — How does a 16-year-old evolve into a bank robber? In *Evolution of a Criminal*, filmmaker Darius Clark Monroe searches for the answers — about himself. Years after his release from prison, Monroe returns to his old neighborhood to speak with family and friends, along with classmates, teachers, law enforcement officials and the innocent victims in the bank on the fateful day of the robbery. An honest journey of reflection and a personal search for redemption, *Evolution of a Criminal*, executive produced by Spike Lee, premieres on *Independent Lens* in January 2015 on PBS.

A native of Houston, Texas, Monroe had a happy childhood with his mother, stepfather and close-knit extended family. However, as he grew older and saw his parents struggling to make ends meet, Monroe’s vision of the world changed: “I went from being a carefree and joyous child to becoming acutely aware of the fact that the world was not as I saw it. And the burden that my parents had was slowly trickling down to me.” Devastated after burglars made off with the family’s electronics and other possessions, Monroe stole replacement VCRs from the big-box store where he worked. As his parents’ finances continued to spiral downward, Monroe and two friends plotted and subsequently carried out an armed bank robbery.

Placing his own culpability at the heart of the story, Monroe pulls no punches, using dramatized scenes of the bank robbery to capture the tragically bad decisions he and his friends made, and to bring home the terror of those they held at gunpoint.

More than just a tale of a good kid gone wrong, *Evolution of a Criminal* is filled with compassion for human frailty and the knowledge that a person is not forever defined by their mistakes.

Participants (in alphabetical order)

Sheril D. Antonio – Associate Dean, NYU Tisch School of the Arts
Charles Blackwell – Graduate Film Professor, NYU Tisch School of the Arts
Carlos Bounds – Monroe’s aunt
Stacy L. Brownlee – Former Assistant District Attorney, Fort Bend County Juvenile Courts, and the juvenile prosecutor in Monroe’s case
Leroy “Trei” Callier III – Classmate at Willowridge High School in Houston and participant in the bank robbery
Frank Dewey – Engineer for “The Prison Show” on Houston’s KPFT Radio
Cary Dyer – Monroe’s uncle
Portland Dyer – Monroe’s aunt
Ray Hill – Host of “The Prison Show,” on Houston’s KPFT Radio
Carrie Lou Hood – Monroe’s grandmother
Virginia Lister – Monroe’s English teacher at Willowridge High School in Houston
Michael Marshall – Monroe’s stepfather
Pierre Murphy – Classmate at Willowridge High School and participant in the bank robbery
Patti Pearson – Associate Director, Special Projects, NYU Tisch School of the Arts
Pastor David Ned – Customer at the bank on the day of the robbery
Frances Plummer – Monroe’s chemistry teacher
Jonetta Roquemore – Monroe’s classmate
Sigrid Tillman – Monroe’s mother
Tai Tennessee – Monroe’s cousin
Miesha Walker – Classmate
Officer Russell Walton – Campus security officer

CREDITS

A film by	Darius Clark Monroe
Executive Producer	Spike Lee
Produced by	Jen Gatien
Co-Executive Producers	Jay Kubassek Mike Offit
Associate Producers	Tariq Holloway Daniel Patterson Donald Conley
Cinematographer	Daniel Patterson
Editor	Doug Lenox
Original Music by	T. Griffin

About the Filmmaker

Darius Clark Monroe (Director, Producer, Subject) attended Willowridge High School in Houston, where he was an honors student taking advance placement courses. In his junior year, he and two classmates robbed a Bank of America branch near their high school. Convicted of the crime, Monroe was sentenced to five years in prison; while serving time he obtained his GED and took college courses, eventually deciding that he wanted to become a filmmaker. In 2004, Monroe graduated with honors from the University of Houston with a BA in Communications: Media Production, and subsequently received an MFA from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. An award-winning filmmaker, Monroe is a National Board of Review, HBO Short Film and Urbanworld Best Screenplay award recipient. Most recently, he was selected to participate in the prestigious Screenwriters Colony and chosen as a fellow at the Sundance Institute Screenwriters Intensive. *Evolution of a Criminal* is his first feature film and is the recipient of an Austin Film Society Grant, Spike Lee Production Fellowship, Warner Bros. Film Award, Cinereach Grant, King Finishing Award, Tribeca All Access Participant, and a selectee of the IFP Documentary Lab.

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10 pm. The acclaimed series features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by Independent Television Service, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. For more information visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation at [facebook.com/independentlens](https://www.facebook.com/independentlens) and [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

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