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Program companion website:
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GIRL TROUBLE TO PREMIERE ON PBS'S *INDEPENDENT LENS* HOSTED BY EDIE FALCO

ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, AT 10 PM (CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS)

ENGROSSING DOCUMENTARY FOLLOWS FOUR YEARS IN THE LIVES OF THREE TEENAGED GIRLS CAUGHT UP IN SAN FRANCISCO'S JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Cycles of Violence, Drugs and Hopelessness Are Broken When Girls Find Work at a Center for Young Women's Development

(San Francisco)—Although the youth crime rate in San Francisco declined in the past decade, the number of girls in the juvenile justice system doubled. Shot over the course of four years, *GIRL TROUBLE* tells the compelling personal stories of three of those young girls, each of whom has grown up in a harsh world defined by neglectful or abusive family members, drug use, early pregnancy, homelessness, and poverty. A film by Bay Area filmmakers Lexi Leban and Lidia Szajko, *GIRL TROUBLE* will air nationally on the Emmy Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Edie Falco, on Tuesday, January 17, 2006, at 10 PM (check local listings).

At the heart of *GIRL TROUBLE* are Stephanie, Shangra and Sheila, three unforgettable teenage girls who have become ensnared in San Francisco's complex juvenile justice system. Trying to find a way out of their legal messes and avoid jail time, each of the girls gets a break—a job at the innovative Center for Young Women's Development (CYWD). Run by young women who have faced similar challenges, the CYWD's mission is to empower and inspire young women who have been involved with the juvenile justice system and/or the underground street economy so as to create positive change in their lives and communities. As the girls deal with their troubles with the law, family, boyfriends and school as well as the everyday challenges of survival—often on the streets—the CYWD's dynamic 20-something executive director, Lateefah Simon, is often their only support. Angry, tough and wary, the girls initially struggle with life at the center, but come to accept and appreciate the offer of a second chance.

GIRL TROUBLE documents the girls' remarkable successes and heartbreaking setbacks over the course of four years as they are transformed from cocky teenagers into wiser young women. As we get to know the girls and watch them mature, we see them cope with seemingly insurmountable problems that would break the spirit of most adults. Gradually they gain confidence and strength and find a way, at least for now, out of the cycle of violence, poverty and hopelessness that so many of their peers still face.

The *GIRL TROUBLE* interactive companion website (www.pbs.org/independentlens/girltrouble) features detailed information on the film, including an interview with the filmmakers and links and resources pertaining to the film's subject matter. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film, and more.





The Center for Young Women's Development (<http://www.cywd.org>) is one of the first non-profit organizations in the United States run and led entirely by young women. The CYWD has organized young women who were the most marginalized in San Francisco—those in the street economies and the juvenile justice system—to design and deliver peer-to-peer education and support. The goal was to create a citywide environment in which young women were involved in all major decisions that impact their lives, using their ideas to find new solutions to old problems. This model meant that young women who were formerly incarcerated or working in the street economies had the support to become leaders, policy-makers, researchers, employers and activists.

There is very little research available on the issue of girls in the juvenile justice system because there is a cultural assumption that boys commit more crime and are incarcerated in much greater numbers than girls. In the past decade, as the overall crime rate declined across the United States, the incarceration rate for girls grew at a much faster rate than it did for boys, in all categories of crimes.

Over the same period of time in San Francisco, the overall youth crime rate declined while the number of girls in the juvenile justice system more than doubled. Although girls now represent 28 percent of the U.S. juvenile detention population, they receive only 2 percent of delinquency services.

Statistics:

- Between 1988 and 1997, the use of detention for girls increased 65 percent as compared with a 30 percent increase for boys.
- The rate of recidivism among girls is lower than that of boys, but girls are more likely to be reincarcerated because of probation or parole violations; 72 percent of girls versus 49 percent of boys who return to detention three times within one year do so for probation violations or failure to meet program expectations.
- African American girls make up nearly half of all those in secure detention, and Latinas constitute 13 percent.
- Seven of every 10 cases involving white girls are dismissed, compared with three of every 10 cases involving African American girls.
- Of the limited programs that currently exist for girls, most are modeled after programs that serve males.
- Although most delinquent girls have abused substances, been victimized, are behind in school and need safe housing, community-based delinquency programs typically are not designed to provide treatment to address these problems.

SOURCE: American Bar Association and National Bar Association, "Justice by Gender: The Lack of Appropriate Prevention, Diversion and Treatment Alternatives for Girls in the Justice System" (report published May 1, 2001).

The images found in this release are available to the press as high resolution downloadable photos with captions at www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos/

PAGE 1:
Left: Community leader and youth-activist, Lateefah Simon.
Photo: Helga Sigvaldadóttir/ITVS
Center: Stephanie, one of the girls trying to stay out of trouble.
Photo: Helga Sigvaldadóttir/ITVS
Right: Sheila Pasene in court with her attorney Ira Barg.
Photo: Helga Sigvaldadóttir/ITVS

PAGE 2:
Left: Shangra Rogers visiting with her attorney.
Photo: Helga Sigvaldadóttir/ITVS
Center: Sheila Pasene in San Francisco.
Photo: Helga Sigvaldadóttir/ITVS
Right: Directors of GIRL TROUBLE, Lexi Leban and Lidia Szajko.
Photo: Helga Sigvaldadóttir/ITVS

