THE ALABAMA SOLUTION

In 2019, filmmakers Andrew Jarecki and Charlotte Kaufman (HBO's *The Jinx*) visited an Alabama prison, where, off camera, incarcerated men whispered a message: terrible things are going on and being kept secret. This reveal sparked an immersive six-year investigation to discover the reality behind one of the nation's deadliest prison systems. With unprecedented access and video shot on contraband cell phones, the directors learn of a suspicious and violent death, which wasn't an isolated incident – and that the official version appears far from the truth. A shocking story of brutality, corruption, and a system in collapse, *The Alabama Solution* shines a light on the incarcerated people fighting for their survival who, against all odds, embark on a powerful campaign of resistance.

MASS INCARCERATION
A SHORT CURRICULUM

The Alabama Solution offers a view inside America's incarceration crisis unlike anything before it and could not come at a more critical time, as criminalization and detention of all kinds rise across the country. From Border Patrol violence on streets across America to highly publicized prison deaths in New York, to massive settlements stemming from sexual abuse in Los Angeles' youth facilities, the public is watching and listening with concern. There is growing understanding that something is deeply wrong with America's approach to criminalization, enforcement, and incarceration.

There is a wealth of information and storytelling about the American experience of incarceration, much of it from those who have directly faced the harms of imprisonment. Below is just a small selection of works to guide audiences looking to understand more about how mass incarceration came to be, what purpose it really serves, and the powers and politics it perpetuates. As importantly, these works can offer a starting point for those in search of the tools and the courage to resist incarceration and embrace the transformative solutions we really need.

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AN INTRODUCTION TO MASS INCARCERATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Understanding the basics of what incarceration and criminalization look like in this country, how they operate and the impact they have on people's lives.

READ

An American Marriage, Tayari Jones

— Winner, 2019 NAACP Image Awards, Fiction

"I Have Been Here Too Long": Letters from the Children Detained at ICE's Dilley Facility

Listening to Taylor Swift in Prison, Joe Garcia, *The New Yorker*

The New Jim Crow, Michelle Alexander

— Winner, 2011 NAACP Image Awards, Outstanding Non-fiction

She Ate a Poppy Seed Salad Just Before Giving Birth. Then They Took Her Baby Away, Shoshana Walter, published in collaboration with Reveal, Mother Jones, USA Today, and the Marshall Project

— Winner, 2025 Institute for Nonprofit News Best Investigative Journalism Award

WATCH

We Need to Talk About Injustice, Bryan Stevenson, TED

A Formerly Incarcerated Father Opens Up to His Daughter, produced by The Skin Deep

LISTEN

Chenjerai Kumanyika's interview of Ruth Wilson Gilmore on abolition, The Intercept

TAKE ACTION

Courtwatch

How Community Transforms the Courts, Raj Jayadev

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TRANSPARENCY: TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT MASS INCARCERATION

Moving into prison journalism, incarcerated writing, firsthand testimony, and the politics of visibility.

READ

Freedom Writers, an *Inquest* collection of essays about mass incarceration by incarcerated and formerly incarcerated writers

— Finalist for 2025 National Magazine Awards in General Excellence

Felon, Dwayne Betts

— Winner, 2020 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work - Poetry; 2020 American Book Award

American Prison Newspapers, 1800s-present: Voices from the Inside, Reveal Digital

Why We Need Prison Journalism More Than Ever, Chris Blackwell and Emily Nonko, *The Nation*

When Reporting is a Crime, Andrew Crespo and Corinne Shanahan

— Part of a multi-essay series on Defending Prison Journalism

How prisons suppress prison journalism, Brian Nam-Sonenstein, Prison Policy Initiative

A Lethal Upbringing, Robert Lee Williams

— Stillwater Awards 2026 Finalist for Best Feature

Hell Is Real and It Is Beige, Vic Liu

— Selected for inclusion in B*est American Essays 2025*

WATCH

TIME, the story of Fox and Rob Richardson, directed by Garrett Bradley

— Winner, 2020 Sundance Film Festival U.S. Documentary Competition Award, Directing; Peabody Awards Documentary honoree; Nominee, 2021 Academy Award, Best Documentary Feature

Inside Story video series, co-created by Lawrence Bartley and Donald Washington Jr., VICE Media and the Marshall Project

— Winner, National Press Photographers Association contest on visual journalism, Team Video - Portfolio

The Visiting Room Project, Marcus Kondkar

LISTEN

Ear Hustle, Season 1, created by Nigel Poor, Earlonne Woods and Antwan Williams

— Winner, Webby Awards, 2018 Best Documentary

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THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF MASS INCARCERATION

Diving deeper into the mechanisms of the system and beginning to envision what ending mass incarceration might mean.

READ

We Do This Til We Free Us, Mariame Kaba

Policing the Crisis, Stuart Hall (Chapters 1-3)

Copaganda, Alec Karakatsanis

The Collapse of American Criminal Justice, William Stuntz

Mauled: when police dogs are weapons, Invisible Institute and the Marshall Project

— Winner, 2021 Pulitzer Prize, National Reporting; 2021 White House Correspondents' Association Katharine Graham Award for Courage and Accountability, 2021 Al Neuharth Innovation in Investigative Journalism Award

Dismantling Mass Incarceration: A Handbook for Change, James Forman, Jr, Maria Hawilo, Premal Dharia

Uprooting Violence, Phillip Vance Smith II

— Best Reported Essay, 2025 Stillwater Awards

WATCH

Philly D.A., directed by Ted Passon, Yoni Brook, and Nicole Salazar

The House I Live In, directed by Eugene Jarecki

— 2012: Sundance Film Festival, Grand Jury Prize: Documentary; 2014 Peabody Award

LISTEN

In the Dark, Season Two, hosted by Madeleine Baran

— Winner, 2016 Peabody Award

Serial, Season Three, hosted by Sarah Koenig

— Winner, 2014 Peabody Award; 2019 Webby Awards, Best Series

TAKE ACTION

Plan a trip with friends or family to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama

Host a book club with the material from this curriculum!

If you would like to host a screening or contact us, please email film@thealabamasolution.com.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the film and Alabama's ongoing prison crisis.