

LIFE AFTER LIFE

a film by Tamara Perkins

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE GUIDE

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A Letter from the Director

Several incidents and experiences led me to creating *Life After Life*. Perhaps more poignant than others was living through the experience of looking into the barrel of a gun three times before I turned 18. Every day I am thankful that when the young man held a gun to my head he had not yet come to the point where he could easily pull the trigger. Today he is in Joliet State Prison, serving life for first-degree murder. Looking back I often wish that I had been able to say or do something to change his path.

A few years later my young cousin, who I loved dearly, killed herself. That was the most devastating day of my life. Her death led me to work with Kara Grief Support where I changed my career from the corporate world to nonprofit and community development, including filmmaking, teaching Yoga and meditation, grief support counseling, and eventually working with the men in San Quentin State Prison who asked me to tell their stories.

The delicate nature of our place in the world became most apparent to me after I joined the ranks of the 1-in-4 women who have an incarcerated family member. This story became personal to me in a way that I could previously only imagine. The men that I have met through my work in San Quentin State Prison have inspired me and given me hope. Harrison and Noel who worked tirelessly to transform their own lives in spite of their incarceration, are incredible role models as healed people, who heal people.

Our goal has always been to create a compelling, honest, and inspirational film that will become a vehicle for catalyzing grassroots, statewide, and national advocacy movements while generating a national dialogue about the net effects of a corrections system that doesn't put healing people and communities first. I truly believe that our stories matter.

Sincerely,

Tamara Perkins
Director, *Life After Life*

About *Life After Life* Educational Outreach Project

Over the past 30 years, hundreds of districts throughout the American school system has migrated their approach to discipline towards a “zero tolerance” stance - a stance that encourages teachers to refer students who misbehave outside of the classroom for punishment. Students who are referred out are disproportionately children of color, and when they are pulled out of class they become disproportionately more likely to be introduced into our criminal justice system - creating a multi-generational, biased cycle of profiling, incarceration, and trauma. The most effective way to interrupt this “school to prison pipeline” is to enable classroom educators to rethink their approach to discipline, rethink their relationships with their “problem” students, and be empowered to - even if it’s on a case by case basis - “reroute the pipeline.”

The *Life After Life* Educational Outreach Project is a programmatic outreach campaign whose goal is to engage as many people as possible with the stories and lessons represented in the film *Life After Life*, and to build on this engagement with the tools they need to interrupt this cycle. This Guide, which serves as the curricular cornerstone of the Educational Outreach Project, is meant to mobilize stakeholders in the educational community and in communities at large to think differently about the cycles, experiences, policies, and measures that disproportionately affect underserved communities and communities of color, and the ways in which we as a society can provide prevention, support, and healing to these communities and to the individuals and families around the country who are justice impacted.

To meet these objectives, we are organizing screenings, professional development opportunities, and other programs for communities, professionals, and schools around the country.

For more information on this campaign, including how to host a screening:

VISIT: www.lifeafterlifemovie.com

EMAIL US: tamara@lifeafterlifemovie.com

About the Film

Apple of Discord Productions' (AODP) feature length documentary *Life After Life* has been created specifically to humanize the men, women, and children caught in the prison system and reframe public perception in favor of much needed reform.

Life After Life is a tool and resource for those interested in justice system reform. In addition to being able to screen the film, there is an accompanying viewing guide and educational curriculum. With a holistic approach we can engage on local and national levels and within verticals of the movement from mass incarceration to juvenile incarceration and generational family trauma.

The documentary follows the stories of Harrison, Noel, and Chris as they return home from San Quentin State Prison. After spending most of their lives incarcerated, they are forced to reconcile their perception of themselves with a reality they are unprepared for.

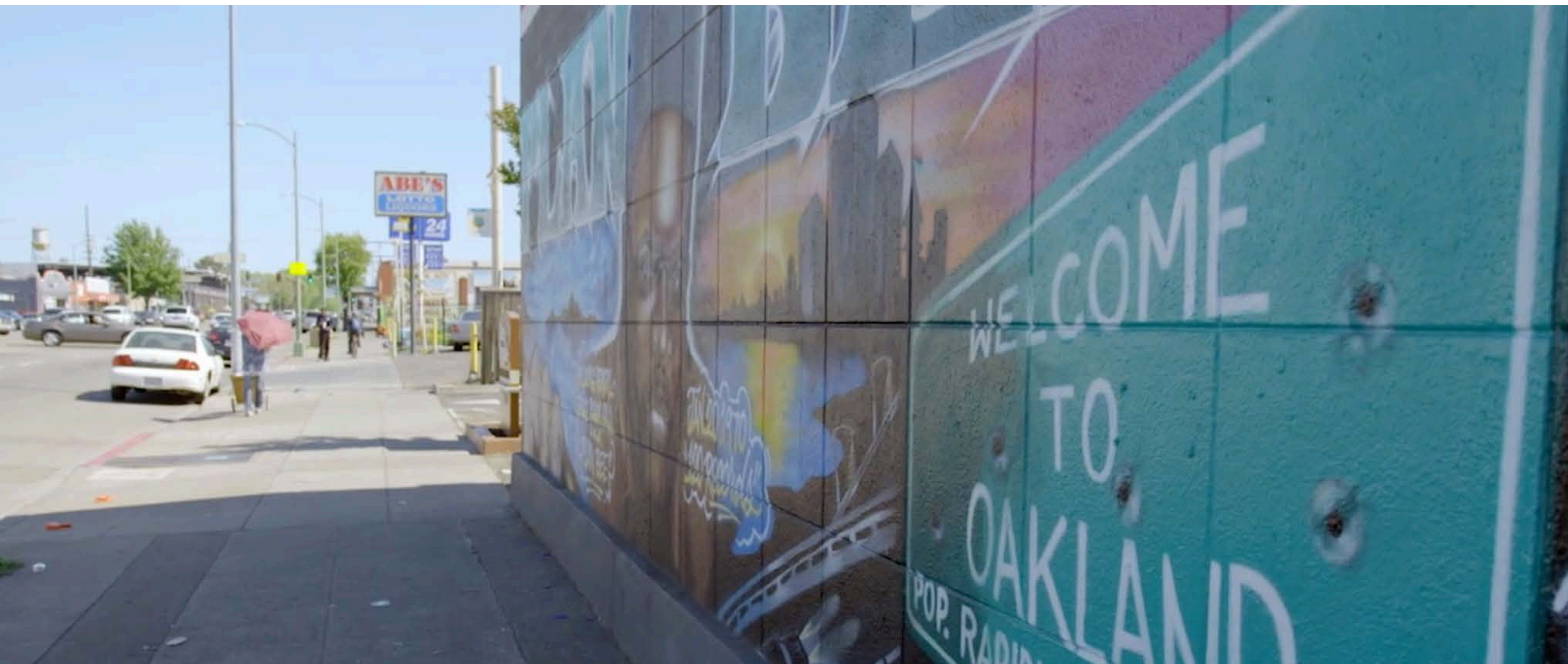


Life After Life began in 2007 when the participants in the film approached Tamara Perkins to tell their story. As members of Perkins' yoga class at San Quentin State Prison and with Perkins' own experience as a crime survivor and justice impacted family member they felt she could facilitate an insider's perspective. The film is praised by both the community at large and justice impacted individuals, family members and loved ones.

About the Film (cont.)

Through 30+ screenings, panels, and healing circles the movement has reached over 6000 people in 13 states and counting – including California, Florida, Michigan, New York, Texas, and more. These inclusive gatherings bring justice impacted communities, individuals, and family members together with those who may believe they are not impacted and allow a space for dialogue that promotes understanding, healing, and action. Our national community continues to expand through academic and engagement partners such as ACLU of Florida, Alliance for Higher Education in Prison, Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC), Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ), National Parks Service, Positive Youth Justice Initiative, the Schools Not Prisons Initiative, SFFILM, universities, schools, community, faith, and advocacy agencies around the country.

Told in an unadorned vérité style, we experience the precarious nature of freedom after incarceration in America.



Recommended Audiences

The main message of *Life After Life* is one of hope, resilience, connection, and healing. However, because the film uses tough language and explores very difficult issues, including domestic abuse, gang violence, substance abuse, and gun violence, it might not be appropriate for all audiences. The men who share their stories in *Life After Life* do so in order to humanize a national policy crisis. Therefore, this is an ideal film to begin an informed dialogue about the multigenerational cycles that feed into the dysfunction of the United States' criminal justice system. This includes the systemic mass incarceration of people of color and the criminalization of in-school discipline that has, over the past 40+ years, created a school-to-prison pipeline, the impact of intergenerational trauma, the challenges facing formerly incarcerated individuals who are trying to re enter society after release, and the many ways that these factors affect our society and economy as a whole.



In addition the film, when paired with the lessons in this guide, provides an opportunity for classroom and community educators to explore all of these issues in the context of a number of educational standards, including civics, language arts, world history, art, media studies and media literacy, and social studies, just to name a few.

How to Use This Guide



This Educational Resource Guide was created with educators in mind and can be used in a variety of ways in the classroom as well as in more informal educational settings such as healing circles, restorative justice programs, workshops, after-school programs, community education programs, or training sessions.

The history, implications, problems and potential solutions surrounding criminal justice in this country are complex and nuanced, and have been studied, written about, and explored by many academics, policy makers, and experts alike. This guide does NOT endeavor to do the same; rather, we hope to shed a light on how these issues affect individuals and communities by learning about them through the lens of real people. Because the stories in the film cannot be fully understood without context, a Brief History of the Criminal Justice System is included - but more comprehensive background information can be found by exploring the organizations and websites listed the Additional Resources section of this guide.

Additionally, the Screening Guidelines section provides activities that can be performed in a group or individually before watching the film, while watching it, and afterwards, to provide an opportunity for analysis and making connections. The subsequent lesson plan provides teachers with specific procedures that drill down into some of the important themes and topics that the film presents, making connections to national curriculum standards in a variety of courses, formatted for classroom use. And because one of the main messages of the film is the importance of activism, there is a comprehensive section of social action project prompts that provide educators and students opportunities to deepen their exploration of the topics that the film and this guide raise, and turn their understanding into action – both locally and nationally.

How to Use This Guide (cont.)

The three men in *Life After Life* have fallen prey to the interwoven factors of poverty, violence, "zero tolerance" laws and policies, and the systemic lack of access to social supports and interventions - all of which led them - and their families - to become justice impacted. By learning more about these factors, hearing these powerful personal stories, and connecting with the people in the film, we hope to foster productive dialogues around the country that can lead to real and sustainable change.

About the People in the Film



Noel, aged 47 at the time of filming, was arrested for murder when he was 17. He served 30 years of his life sentence, during which he was denied parole 11 times. He litigated his own case, winning his release and then paroled to his sister's house in Stockton, CA.



Harrison, aged 37 at the time of filming, was arrested for murder when he was 17. At 14, he went to juvenile hall, which he says, "prepared him for" rather than "prevented him from" prison. After serving 21 years of his life sentence, Harrison was released and paroled to a halfway house in Oakland, CA.



Chris, aged 27 at the time of filming, was arrested at 16 for armed robbery, then again at 22 for drug possession with a firearm, at a total of 10 years of imprisonment. Chris paroled to his girlfriend Veronica's house in Oakland.

A Brief Introduction to the History of Mass Incarceration and Justice Reform in the US

The United States has the world's largest prison population with 2.3 million people— a 500% increase over the last forty years. Examining the racial breakdown of the people who are held in our prisons is perhaps even more troubling: more than 60% of the people in prison today are people of color. Black men are nearly six times as likely to be incarcerated as white men and Hispanic men are 2.3 times as likely. Black men and women make up 40% of the incarcerated population, despite representing only 13% of U.S residents.



Yet while our prisons are growing, our crime rate is not - an incongruity that can be explained by biased and politically motivated sentencing laws and policies, not changes in crime. In 1865, the 13th Amendment formally ended slavery in the United States. However, while the 13th Amendment could make slave ownership Constitutionally illegal, it could not end the bigotry and racism that continues to be institutionalized throughout all levels of American society, especially in our approach to criminal justice. Jim Crow Laws, housing biases and ambiguities, voting loopholes, years of federal and state policies targeting Black communities, inequity in the educational and school system, and continuous, virulent, and shifting racism and xenophobia all helped to create today's biased justice system -- a system that unfairly targets low income communities and communities of color.

A Brief Introduction to the History of Mass Incarceration and Justice Reform in the US (cont.)

The prison system in the United States isn't about crime, it's about money. Many of our states' imprisonment rates rank comparatively to countries like Russia, Rwanda, Turkmenistan, and Thailand - all countries with oppressive authoritarian regimes. Likewise, countries such as Brazil, Russia, El Salvador, and Costa Rica have murder rates double that of the United States', but all have lower imprisonment rates.

The War on Drugs in the 1980s targeted Black and minority communities with mandatory minimums, policies, and the militarization of school discipline strategies and community police forces. Further, for individuals who have been justice impacted, reintegration into society is made much more difficult by the various laws and policies that restrict their social, economic, and political freedom. For example, 6.1 million Americans are denied their voting rights. Post-release harsh laws and policies affect all the members of justice impacted communities - from individuals, to families, spouses, and children, presenting obstacles to employment, housing, public assistance, education, and family reunification.

Organizations such as the Innocence Project and the Southern Poverty Law Center are fighting an uphill battle, using litigation and advocacy to change many unjust policies and prejudiced trends, to root out racial discrimination in the system, and to ensure humane, constitutional standards for justice impacted individuals. But our existing laws and systems create a cycle of poverty and imprisonment for our communities of color, much like the chains of slavery, that are almost impossible to break.

Hosting a Community, Classroom, or Campus Viewing of *Life After Life*

Hosting a viewing of *Life After Life* is a great way to initiate a compassionate, action-focused dialogue about the centuries old, systemic influences that have shaped the current criminal justice system in the United States, how flaws in this system disproportionately affect people of color, how those who get pulled into the system and released, then struggle to reintegrate, and how these struggles can affect extended families for generations. Your viewing might take place in a middle or high school classroom or auditorium, in your local public library, or as part of an afterschool or peer-to-peer program, on a university campus, at home, as part of a professional development workshop, as a kickoff for ongoing community dialogue or another setting. Whatever the occasion, this guide will serve as a roadmap for fruitful, healing, and comprehensive conversations about the film and the issues it raises.

Life After Life can be viewed in a variety of settings, with more or less facilitation, depending on your objectives, time frame, and audience. With larger groups, consider having a moderator. Your discussion might also benefit from including local experts, such as licensed therapists, formerly incarcerated members of the community, corrections officers, police officers, social workers, family members of incarcerated individuals, or other community stakeholders to supplement the video content and address audience questions. Other activities to consider might include: a separate follow-up session for participants to create community engagement agendas; a workshop for a longer, more in-depth and participatory experience; piggybacking on a larger community event, or a formal classroom activity that spans multiple class periods. The following tips can help in the planning of a screening event.

When you decide what is right for you, we'd love to hear about it. Please share anecdotes, pictures, and/or videos from your event with us and we may showcase them on our website.

Send your viewing stories to: tamara@lifeafterlifemovie.com

Tips for Hosting a Screening



PICK THE TONE

Your event can be anything you wish - from a campus-wide educational program, to a classroom assignment, to a public education event at a community center, church or synagogue. It can be a call to action for your community, or an educational “salon” that can start a meaningful conversation. Be creative, and don’t be afraid to customize your approach to fit your group of peers, neighbors, or colleagues.



CONSIDER TIMING & AGENDA

This film can be used in a variety of settings, depending on your own needs and restrictions. Time is one of the most important considerations. The film itself is approximately 72 minutes, and for an effective event, you need to add at least 30 minutes before the film to set the tone, and a minimum of 45 minutes after the film for a follow-up discussion and dialogue. If a 2- or 3 - hour event feels overwhelming, you might consider a series of two or three meetings, which would allow more time for an in-depth follow-up, or for the group to develop a community engagement plan or participate in a community healing circle. As you begin to envision your event, you should set the agenda and format depending on your desired outcomes.

Tips for Hosting a Screening (cont.)



IDENTIFY AND CONTACT PANEL PARTICIPANTS

To assist with the post-film discussion, you might consider inviting a moderator, or assembling a panel of local experts or stakeholders. Local options include as licensed therapists and/or social workers, formerly incarcerated individuals and /or their families, or corrections and/or police officers. If your school or organization would like to host the filmmaker or one of the people featured in the film, please contact Tamara Perkins at tamara@lifeafterlifemovie.com for details on our speaking circuit, and how we can help support your programming.



CHOOSE A DATE

When picking the date and time for your screening, consider the academic calendar, holidays, and local events, as well as the general preferences of your invitees. A weeknight evening is often a good time to host an adults-only event, as it allows professionals to come straight from work and does not conflict with major weekend plans. But if you are considering a youth-friendly event, a weekend afternoon might be best. If you are choosing between days, do not hesitate to ask an expert, such as a local campus or community organizer, when they've had the most success with attendance.

Plan the Event

4wk FOUR WEEKS PRIOR

- ✓ Put together your invitation or mailing list.
- ✓ Design and mail or email your flyer, announcement, or invitation. Make sure you outline all the details of your event including the name of the film, and a description of the activities you have planned (panel discussion, moderated Q&A, open group dialogue, small group activities, etc.). If you are planning a potluck event, make sure you detail this expectation in your invitation as well.

3wk THREE WEEKS PRIOR

- ✓ Plan the food and drinks if you are serving them. Will you serve drinks and light snacks? A full buffet meal? Do you need to rent tables, chairs, plates, glasses, and utensils, or purchase disposable ones?
- ✓ Prepare an agenda for your event. This can be as formal or as informal as you wish, but you should decide on the timing for arrivals, introductions, starting the film, and starting the post-film discussion or supplemental activities. Be sure to allow time for a bathroom and refreshment break after the film ends. This guide provides questions and discussion prompts for creating a unique, dynamic dialogue.

2wk TWO WEEKS PRIOR

- ✓ Send out a reminder to those guests who have RSVP'd yes, or not RSVP'd at all.
- ✓ Consider providing RSVP'd guests with links to the film's website, the film's official Facebook (www.facebook.com/LifeAfter.docfilm) or Twitter (@LifeAfter_movie) to set the tone, garner involvement in the issues, and get your guests excited about your event.
- ✓ If your event is happening in a school or classroom setting, prescreen the film with teachers and counselors. Discuss ways in which you will use the film to promote talk about mental health, and develop a plan for meeting the needs of students who seek help.

Plan the Event (cont.)

1wk ONE WEEK PRIOR

- ✓ Purchase food, drinks, and other supplies as necessary.
- ✓ Set up your technology - whether it is a projector and screen or a simple TV and DVD player, you want to ensure you have it up and running before the day of the screening. You should also play through the entire DVD at least one time before your event to make sure there are no jumps, snags or scratches. If you're streaming the film, check your bandwidth and streaming capabilities onsite ahead of time to avoid any buffering issues the day of your event.
- ✓ Confirm with your invited guests one more time, resend your announcement, and consider re-sending links to any late RSVPs, if you're collecting them.
- ✓ Prepare and practice an introduction to the film and a welcome to your event.
- ✓ Think through ways to best facilitate a productive dialogue around the film - including what your objectives for the conversation will be. Refer to the Screening Guidelines section of this guide for tips on how to prepare.
- ✓ Create a short, online evaluation form so you can collect feedback on your event. Sites such as Survey Monkey are great for simple, customized questionnaires.

Plan the Event (cont.)

Day Of THE DAY OF THE EVENT

- ✓ Test the tech before guests arrive. Give yourself ample time to test the DVD player, streaming bandwidth, projector, and/or sound equipment to make sure everything will run smoothly.
- ✓ Arrange your space to accommodate your guests, and to create a welcoming space for a meaningful event and discussion.
- ✓ Don't forget your agenda. Make the most out of your time by following the agenda you created. Introduce the film and explain why you are bringing it to the group. Before the film starts, let your guests know that there will be a short discussion, panel discussion, or activities in small breakout groups afterwards.
- ✓ Distribute a handout with the list of local or national resources that individuals can contact if they need support or wish to get involved, including phone numbers and email addresses.

After THE DAY AFTER

- ✓ Send a thank-you to all your guests and encourage them to continue the discussion and/or the action plan that was started at your event. If your event was not an invitation-only screening, consider posting a thank you to social media, or blasting to your mailing list.
- ✓ Send a link to your online evaluation form to collect feedback from your guests.
- ✓ Send a link to a list of resources where individuals can get support if needed.

Circles: Additional Tips for Hosting *Life After Life* in a Therapeutic Setting



TALKING OR HEALING CIRCLES

Restorative justice is an alternative approach to corrections, a “pulling in” approach rather than “pushing out.” The restorative justice approach is often seen as a way to interrupt a destructive cycle of punitive discipline by creating a safe, communal space to address issues as they arise, or infractions as they are committed. Because *Life After Life* explores the personal stories of individuals, families, and communities whose lives have been profoundly justice impacted, some big and painful feelings may arise in dialogue. Facilitating a talking or healing circle creates safe spaces that focus on trust, acceptance, healing and appreciation of others, where people can share their thoughts and feelings, particularly when there are no right or wrong answers, or when there’s a chance that emotions could run strong. Conducting your screening as part of a talking or healing circle, or integrating circle strategies into your event can help to ensure that your screening is impactful, safe, supportive, and productive, and creates a seamless opportunity for schools, communities or organizations who wish to begin incorporating restorative justice practices into their discipline or corrections. The following guidelines can be used to incorporate a healing, talking, learning, or sharing circle as part of your event.

Circles: Additional Tips for Hosting *Life After Life* in a Therapeutic Setting (cont.)

ASSIGN ROLES TO FACILITATE YOUR CIRCLE

- Identify a host who convenes the circle, ensures the timely flow, and concludes the circle when the time is right.
- Identify a timekeeper or guardian who watches time and ensures that all members of the circle uphold the ground rules.
- Identify a secretary or recorder, if desired, who can take notes.
- Concur that every member of the circle has an equal voice and is responsible for the leadership of their own healing.

SET GROUND RULES WITH ALL MEMBERS OF YOUR CIRCLE

- Identify some common language to avoid misunderstandings.
- Treat everyone with kindness and respect.
- Listen with compassion, attention, and an open mind.
- Respect each other's feelings, always be kind, and avoid trying to "fix" each other.
- Honor confidentiality to foster trust.
- Speak with intention, and do not fear silence as a means of communication and connection.

SET THE TONE FOR YOUR CIRCLE

- Provide music and refreshments to create a calm, connected tone.
- Create a welcoming physical space, with a center that holds some type of communal item (candle, flowers, talking stick, symbolic object).
- Allow free time for members to chat and socialize before and after the circle, to reduce stress.

Circles: Additional Tips for Hosting *Life After Life* in a Therapeutic Setting (cont.)

SAMPLE AGENDA

for a healing or learning circle after a screening of *Life After Life*

- Start with free time for members to chat and socialize.
- Convene the circle with a symbolic gesture: a recitation, lighting a candle, a moment of silence, a song or performance, even the replay of a short scene from the film to set the tone and spark connection.
- Take a moment to allow everyone to check in - a brief share of their preliminary feelings after seeing the film. Consider using a talking stick to ensure that everyone has a turn.
- Set aside time for learning. Choose a discussion prompt or question from the Questions for Further Discussion section of this Guide, and allow the members of the circle to learn from the collective wisdom in the room.
- Allow more time for cross-talk, personal reflection, and response. Ensure that everyone has ample time to share, process, reflect, and listen.
- Close the circle with a symbolic gesture: a recitation, blowing out the candle, a moment of silence, a song or performance, even the replay of a short scene from the film.
- Conclude with free time for members to chat and socialize

Screening Guidelines

While the experience, prior knowledge, and existing biases of each screening group will be different, the conversation around criminal justice and the many political, social, racial, and economic factors that have combined to create the system we have today tends to be almost universally perplexing and polarizing. Be sensitive to the level of exposure, knowledge, and experience of your audience and structure your discussion and activities to reflect that particular group.



Screening Guidelines (cont.)

PREVIEWING GUIDELINES

1. Before the group views the film, provide a brief introduction based on your objectives. Refer to the About This Film section of this Guide for a general description, and the Brief History section for an abbreviated look at how the American criminal justice system has evolved into the machine it is today. Then write the following quote on the board, chart paper, or read it aloud to the group:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

~ The US Declaration of Independence

2. Ask the group to take a moment to consider, afresh, what these words mean. Participants may do so in a notebook or journal, or aloud in a whole-group discussion. Use the following prompts to guide their thinking:
 - Consider this phrase - which is part of the foundation of our governmental philosophy - within the context of our history of unfairly and prosecuting, convicting, and incarcerating underrepresented populations (and overwhelmingly people of color). How can we, as a society, reconcile this foundational and guiding principal of our democracy with what we see happening in the policing of underrepresented communities of color around the country?
 - As you consider this quote, what do you see as the true purpose of a criminal justice system?
 - Why does a country need a criminal justice system, and what is its ultimate objective?

Screening Guidelines (cont.)

PREVIEWING GUIDELINES (cont.)

2. (cont.) Ask the group to take a moment to consider, afresh, what these words mean. Participants may do so in a notebook or journal, or aloud in a whole-group discussion. Use the following prompts to guide their thinking:
 - How might one assess whether or not a criminal justice system is successful?
 - What do you see as some of the challenges that are facing the system, that make it hard for it to function successfully? What are some of the societal biases and ingrained prejudices that get in the way of true justice in this country?
3. Conduct a short, whole-group discussion using some or all of the following questions as a guide:
 - What is the meaning of the phrase “school to prison pipeline?” What is the meaning of the phrase “zero tolerance policy?” What are some of the negative implications of a school or society adopting a “zero tolerance” policy, and how might this create a “school to prison pipeline?”
 - Imagine a scenario where a 17-year-old commits an armed robbery of a convenience store.
 - a. If the community is functioning under a punitive, “zero tolerance” policy, what consequences might this 17-year-old face as a result of their crime?
 - c. If the community is functioning under a more rehabilitative, restorative justice model, what might the consequences be?
 - e. What are the various outcomes of both of these approaches?
 - g. In reality, how might this scenario change depending on the 17 year old’s race, gender, or economic status? Why is this the case?

Screening Guidelines (cont.)

PREVIEWING GUIDELINES (cont.)

3. (cont.) Conduct a short, whole-group discussion using some or all of the following questions as a guide:

- What is the meaning of the phrase “school to prison pipeline?” What is the meaning of the phrase “zero tolerance policy?” What are some of the negative implications of a school or society adopting a “zero tolerance” policy, and how might it create a “school to prison pipeline?”
- What is your definition of justice?
- What do you know about the support and reintegration services offered to justice impacted individuals, families, and communities in this country?
- What do you know about the criminal justice systems in other countries, for example, Norway or Sweden? How do these systems differ from the United States?
- Why is it important for a society to support and care for all their members equally, including their most vulnerable members? Why is it important for a society to support and rehabilitate all its members equally, including the members who have been justice impacted?
- How can a society protect its citizens’ right to the pursuit of happiness?



Screening Guidelines (cont.)

POST SCREENING GUIDELINES

As you begin the discussion, start out with positive and open-ended questions, so that no member of the audience feels shut down by detractors. Use some or all of the following questions as a guide.

- Can you share a moment in the film or a character that particularly stood out for you? Why did it/ he particularly resonate with you?
- What did you learn about the criminal justice system in our country by watching this film? Based on this film, what are 2-3 of our country's failures in dealing with justice impacted communities?
- What was something that Chris, Noel, and Harrison all had in common? What was something that was unique to each of them? How did these commonalities and differences affect the path their lives took?
- How might Chris, Noel, and Harrison have been helped as young people, to avoid going to prison? In this way, how did our society fail these young men?
- Describe how you felt after watching *Life After Life*. What was the main message you took away from the film? What was something new you learned? What in the film made you hopeful? What in the film made you want to take action?
- How did the stories in this film reflect your understanding of the social and cultural inequities that plague our society? How do these stories - and these inequities - relate to the dysfunctions surrounding our justice system?

Note: For prompts to encourage a deeper exploration of the film and the themes and topics it contains, refer to the Questions for Further Discussion section of this Guide.

Classroom Lesson

ABOUT THIS LESSON

This lesson will use the film *Life After Life* to help participants understand the far-reaching impact that generational trauma, socioeconomic inequality, and a dysfunctional criminal justice system can have on individuals, families, communities, and society at large. This lesson will encourage participants to be critical thinkers by facilitating empathetic connections, and then, by providing ways to apply this understanding, to inspire their own active involvement in the issues. The lesson is geared towards participants aged 13-18 but can be modified for other age groups.

TECHNIQUES AND SKILLS

Vocabulary building, large group discussion, small group work, critical and analytical thinking, supporting ideas with examples, comparing and contrasting information sources, listening skills, expository, creative, and responsive writing.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

This lesson fits in perfectly with units that address curriculum standards in language arts, social studies, American history, civics, thinking and reasoning, film studies, media literacy, conflict mediation and resolution, expository and creative writing, and service learning.

REQUIREMENTS

MATERIALS

- Whiteboard and markers, chalkboard and chalk, or chart paper and markers
- Monitor/ projector, DVD player, or computer with internet access
- Notebook paper
- Student Handouts

TIME – 4 class periods

Classroom Lesson (cont.)

SAMPLE STANDARDS ALIGNMENTS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Classroom Lesson (cont.)

SAMPLE STANDARDS ALIGNMENTS (cont.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.B

Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.EA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Classroom Lesson (cont.)

LESSON PREPARATION

- Prepare a DVD player, television set or monitor, and a DVD of the film *Life After Life*.
- Prepare copies of Student Handouts for distribution.

KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

Criminal Justice, Justice Reform, Incarceration, Parole, Discrimination, Justice Warrior, Systematic, Life Sentence, Zero Tolerance, Drug Offense, Racial Disparities

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Students will establish a basic understanding of how criminal justice works in the United States, and the many, intergenerational, far-reaching implications of this system on communities of color, through the lens of the film *Life After Life*.
- Students will analyze the many factors that feed into an individual becoming involved with the criminal justice system, specifically racism, classism, and targeting of people and communities of color, through the lens of the film *Life After Life*.
- Students will analyze multiple civic topics such as institutionalized racism, classism, political criminalization, incarceration, release and rehabilitation through multiple lenses.
- Students will analyze multiple sociological and psychological themes such as generational trauma, domestic abuse, breakdown of community, and addiction through multiple lenses.
- Students will integrate information from a media source into their own thoughts and ideas.
- Students will communicate their opinions to the class, using information collected from the film.
- Students will discuss, negotiate, and advocate for their positions and ideas.

Classroom Lesson Procedures

DAY ONE

1. Before class begins, write the following on the chalk board, white board, or on chart paper.

“Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.”

— James Baldwin

2. Allow 10 minutes for students to free write in their journals or notebooks using this quote as a thought prompt.
 - Encourage students to think about a time when they made the same choices as their elders, even when they suspected it wasn't the best choice.
 - When they look back at their community's history, does it repeat itself? How, and why?
 - Ask them to examine some of the choices that have been made in their family or community over and over. Were these really "choices?" Are they the result of circumstances beyond their control? Or a combination of the two?
 - How hard is it to break a generational cycle? Why is it hard?
3. When the freewrite is concluded, conduct a short, whole group discussion, allowing time for students to share their reflections on the quote. Use some or all of the following questions to guide the discussion:
 - Do you agree or disagree with the quote? Why?
 - If children's lives often imitate their elders, what impact does history have on the current generation? If a family's ancestors were forced into slavery or servitude, for example, how might that impact the perceived choices or behaviors of their future generations? Alternatively, if a family's ancestors were given prioritized status, how might THAT affect the choices and behaviors of their future generations?

Classroom Lesson Procedures

DAY ONE (cont.)

- When have you felt yourself imitating your elders? What was the context?
 - It is often said by parents and caregivers that children “don’t do what we say, they do what we do.” Relate this to the quote above. Why might it be it hard to listen to what our elders say, and ignore what they do?
4. Explain to the class that they are about to meet three people and hear their stories. Through the lens of these 3 personal narratives, they will be learning a little bit about the impact of criminal justice system and how this system acts like a pebble tossed into the center of our society: a pebble whose ripple can be felt throughout communities, and for generations.
 5. Distribute Student Handout: Viewing Chart/ Graphic Organizer to the class.
 6. Explain that they will be taking notes on this chart over the course of the next few days as they watch the film. Explain that four of the recurring themes in the film are listed in the first column, and the 3 main characters in the film are listed in the top row. As they watch, they should take note of moments, examples, and circumstances that relate the characters to these themes - and instruct them to note them in the corresponding box. If they begin to notice another recurring theme that is not listed in the first column, encourage them to write it in the last row and take notes on that theme as well, as instructed.

Note: Encourage students to utilize their handouts, as the notes they take on that chart will inform classroom discussion over the course of the next few days.

7. Screen the first 20 minutes of the film, ending at timecode 20:11.
8. For homework, students should complete Student Handout: Belonging.

Classroom Lesson Procedures

DAY TWO

1. As students arrive and are seated, instruct them to take out their graphic organizer handouts from the class prior. Allow a few minutes for students to review their notes to re-familiarize themselves with the 20-minute clip they watched in the preceding class.
2. Conduct a whole-group discussion using the following questions as a guide:
 - How has being in prison affected Chris, Noel, and Harrison's sense of belonging?
 - How has Noel's incarceration affected Noel Jr and Raquel's sense of belonging?
 - Why did Harrison say that walking to the corner with a cup of coffee would be his ultimate test to know where he belonged?
 - When Chris drove through his neighborhood, he pointed out a park saying, "I went from playing here to selling crack here." How would you describe his sense of belonging, or of community, based on that statement?
 - In this clip, how does each person's sense of belonging or isolation relate to their relationships to their elders? How does it relate to their behaviors - before, during, and after their incarceration?
 - According to Harrison, what are the pluses and minuses of paroling to a halfway house vs. a family member's house? How do these different locations relate to a person's sense of belonging?
 - Identify specific moments - with quotes if possible -- from the film where each of these three men communicated the sense that, as Sartre said, "my place is nowhere."

Classroom Lesson Procedures

DAY TWO (cont.)

3. Tell the students that they will be watching more of the film in today's class. They should continue taking notes on their graphic organizer as they watch.

Note: It might be necessary to distribute another class set (or have additional copies available, or, alternatively, allow time for students to recreate the chart in their notebooks or on notepaper) as some students might have already filled up their charts during the previous class.

4. Screen the next 23 minutes of the film, to timecode 43:06.
5. For homework, ask students to write a one-page, research-based opinion paper using the following sentence as their thesis statement:

Our country's history of criminalizing people of color has created a cycle of mass incarceration that as a result disproportionately affects communities of color.

Classroom Lesson Procedures

DAY THREE

1. Break the class into 4 groups. Assign 2 of the groups the "pro" argument, and two the "con" argument.
2. Before starting the activity, allow time for the group to debrief about last night's homework in their small groups, comparing notes and discussing findings.
3. Once the class has discussed their homework, write the following discussion prompt on the chalkboard, white board, or on chart paper in the front of the room:

Our country's history of criminalizing people of color has created a cycle of mass incarceration that disproportionately affects communities of color. Our history of slavery, Jim Crow, institutionalized racism, xenophobia, and the current trend of "zero tolerance" has created a cycle of incarceration that has developed a momentum all of its own.

4. Tell the class that they will have 15 minutes to work in their small groups. The "pro" groups must develop an argument that proves the statement on the board to be true. The "con" groups must develop an argument that proves the statement false. They should use examples from the film, and from last night's homework, to support their arguments. All 4 groups must also develop 4-5 strategies for addressing the issues of trauma, violence, and incarceration that are represented in the film.
5. Explain that after 15 minutes, they will reconvene as a large group to debate the discussion prompt.
6. While the groups are working, tape a piece of paper that says "AGREE" on one wall of the classroom. On the opposite wall, post a piece of paper that says "DISAGREE."

Classroom Lesson Procedures

DAY THREE (cont.)

7. After groups have had time to prepare their arguments, come back together as a class.
8. Tell the students that each group will have a chance to share their arguments with the class. As each argument is being shared, the 3 groups who are listening should get up from their desks and stand beside the sign that best represents their reaction. If they disagree with the speaker, they should stand next to the "Disagree" sign. If they agree, they should stand across the room at the "Agree" sign.
9. Ask for one of the "pro" groups to begin the debate. Allow 2-4 minutes for the first group to make their case. As the student / small group argues, encourage the rest of the class to stand and pick a side.
10. Once the first group is finished, ask for a "con" group to provide a counter argument. Again, encourage students to move as their opinions shift.
11. Repeat these steps, encouraging a healthy debate among the students. As the counter arguments progress, students may wish to argue another side, or switch to a group from the other side of the debate. Alternatively, the groups can "jigsaw" so that students are shuffled in order to give them an opportunity to argue both sides of the debate.

Note: At any point during this exercise, it might be beneficial to take a break and check in with the group. Group debate and dialogue are almost always activating, but when emotional topics or personal experiences come into play, they can be triggering. For this reason, a strong focus on support and inclusion are key.

Classroom Lesson Procedures

DAY THREE (cont.)

12. After a few rounds of debate, see where the class ends up – pro or con. Conduct a short, whole group debrief. The following comprehension questions about the film can be used as a guide:

- What are some of the factors that tempt Noel, Chris, and Harrison back to a life of using or selling drugs? How are these factors unique to their particular communities? How are these factors a result of other social forces?
- What was the turning point that Chris points to, where he shifted from an “innocent” to a “survivor?” How was this moment in time a result of some of the societal factors addressed in the ACE study?
- How does the inter-generational pattern of trauma manifest in Chris’s family, based on the interviews with him and his mom?
- How does the intergenerational pattern of trauma, poverty, and / or violence manifest in Harrison’s family? How does it manifest in Noel’s family?
- Why did Harrison feel powerless as a child? How did this feeling of powerlessness manifest in his high-risk choices as a teenager? Why did Harrison call his gang his “new family?”
- Why did Harrison feel that juvenile hall “prepared” him for prison?
- What social influences shaped Noel into a “scary kid?”
- How did the neighborhoods where Chris, Noel, and Harrison lived shape their choices and their expectations for themselves?

Classroom Lesson Procedures

DAY FOUR

1. Write the following quote on the chalkboard, white board, or a piece of chart paper:

"I couldn't process it. As a kid, it wasn't real to me. I couldn't comprehend the impact of one decision, one action, and how it affects so many people. The guilt used to be really difficult to process, and for the first couple of hearings it was really difficult to ask that I be let go, knowing what I was responsible for."

2. Remind the class that these words were spoken by Harrison at the end of the last segment they watched from *Life After Life*. Ask the class: knowing what you now know about adverse childhood experiences, and the cycle of violence that was perpetrated by people in power generations ago, and which continue to be perpetuated, particularly in low income communities and communities of color, how could this moment be seen as a turning point for Harrison? How does this statement show that he has begun to break the cycle of violence, break free from the confines of his own ACEs, and create a new cycle of healing and compassion?
3. Tell the class that they'll be screening the conclusion of the film, and that this section of the film explores how Chris, Noel, and Harrison begin to examine their choices and their circumstances, and focus on healing and recovery.
4. Distribute Student Handout: Graphic Organizer - Resilience. Instruct students to take notes on this chart as they watch.

Note: While this graphic organizer is similar to the one used for the first two thirds of the film, this one utilizes new themes that focus more on resilience and healing, mirroring the narrative arc of this final third of the film.

5. Screen the remaining (approximately) 25 minutes of the film, from timecode 43:06 to the end of the film (timecode 1:11:33).

Classroom Lesson Procedures

DAY FOUR (cont.)

6. After the film concludes, if time permits, lead a whole group discussion, using some or all of the following questions as a guide. Alternatively, choose one or more questions to be answered in writing as a concluding homework assignment.
 - What sort of an impact does Deidre have on Noel? What impact does Noel have on Deidre?
 - How does Deidre symbolize a new beginning for Noel? How does Noel facilitate a new beginning for Deidre?
 - Deidre works with high risk youth, and she sees them as having the most potential for growth and change. How might she serve as an agent of change for kids just like Noel once was?
 - How does acceptance -and attendance at San Francisco State affect Harrison? What fears and insecurities does it raise for him? How does it make him more confident and capable?
 - Chris, Harrison and Noel all experience challenges - Chris is arrested, Noel's father dies, his parole comes into question, and Harrison struggles with the pressure of school and is the victim of a crime when his bike is stolen. How do these setbacks manifest for each of them? What old feelings and insecurities do these setbacks bring up, and what opportunities for new perspectives, change, and growth do they present?
 - How do each of the men reflect on these challenges?
 - How does Harrison reflect on fear as both a destructive and empowering force? How was he taught to view fear as a boy, and how is he reenvisioning fear as an adult?
 - How does Noel reflect on new beginnings with the birth of his son? How is he embracing this new phase of his life as an opportunity to break the cycles of violence he once fell victim to?

Classroom Lesson Procedures

DAY FOUR (cont.)

6. (cont.) After the film concludes, if time permits, lead a whole group discussion, using some or all of the following questions as a guide. Alternatively, choose one or more questions to be answered in writing as a concluding homework assignment.
 - When Chris is arrested, he admits that he “made a conscious decision to take a route that [he is] used to, but never should have done. Something ... familiar ... but never should have done.” What life experiences did Chris miss out on because of this choice? What psychological forces might have influenced Chris to make that choice?
 - At the end of the film Harrison says “I had a problem with protecting the possibilities in my life so all I knew what was in front of me. What your mind can do, what you can convince yourself to do and what you can overcome -- now I know there is unlimited space towards possibility.” How does this stand in direct contrast to the cycle of violence that he was once ensnared in?
7. Concluding Extensions - Optional Prompts for Extended Learning
 - Instruct students to write a 2-page research essay using the Mandela quote as a thesis statement. Students should research statistics, narrative data, and other sources that describe our prison system, and then extrapolate what they think this information says about our nation and our society as a whole. They should include at least one paragraph that explains their own personal opinion on the subject, and their ideas for reform, change, or improvement to the penal system - and the societal dynamic that feeds into, and comes out of it -- as it exists today.

Classroom Lesson Procedures

DAY FOUR (cont.)

7. (cont.) Concluding Extensions - Optional Prompts for Extended Learning

- Instruct students to compile one page of research on reentry programs for formerly incarcerated individuals in their city, state, and/or nationwide. What programs, resources, support, and other help is available to people who have served time in prison? Who provides these services (government organizations, non profits, private companies or corporate entities, etc.) How do individuals find out about, and access these programs?
- Instruct students to research the school to prison pipeline. What is it, how does it manifest? Who is affected by the school to prison pipeline, and what are some ideas for eradicating it? How can educators, students, families, law enforcement, and community health providers work together to eliminate the school to prison pipeline in their communities?

Classroom Lesson Procedures

OPTIONAL EXERCISE: ACE Study

Note: This activity may be triggering for some students. Working with counselors is advised. The following activity contains information that may be emotionally activating for some students.

The classwork explores the CDC's ACE Study (the United States' Centers for Disease Control's Adverse Childhood Experiences Study), which looks at the possible impact of childhood traumas on adult outcomes. Exploring this content could be potentially harmful without context, trigger warnings and wraparound support, especially for those students who might have experienced some of the traumas listed in the quiz.

The purpose of utilizing this quiz in the context of these lessons is to explore how societal issues, family issues, and generational traumas can create often-inescapable circumstances that could cause a young person to become justice impacted.

This is an alternative narrative to the narrative that is often adapted by the general population - that justice impacted individuals are inherently flawed.

Learn more about the ACE Study and the qualifications around its implications at:

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/03/02/387007941/take-the-ace-quiz-and-learn-what-it-does-and-doesn't-mean>

Classroom Lesson Procedures

OPTIONAL EXERCISE: ACE Study (cont.)

1. Distribute Student Handout: ACE Quiz. Allow time for students to complete Page 1 of the handout.
2. After they've completed Page 1, allow time for the group to debrief and to share their reactions to the ACE Study.

Note: Refer to the Circles: Additional Tips for Hosting Life After Life in a Therapeutic Setting section of this Guide for ideas and suggestions for ways to create a safe space for dialogue about emotionally charged and potentially difficult topics. Have the name, telephone number and email address of a social worker, mental health counselor, or other resource for individuals who may need additional support.

3. Use the questions on Page 2 of the Handout to lead a discussion about ACEs and their impact on individuals and society at large. Options for this discussion might be:
 - Use the questions as a guide for a whole-group discussion.
 - Break the students into small groups or pairs and assign one or more of the questions to each group to discuss. Reconvene as a whole group and have small groups report their findings.
 - Allow independent work time for students to answer the questions in their notebooks or on notepaper. Then, break them into pairs for a "pair share." Reconvene as a whole group to debrief.

Student Handout Graphic Organizer – Struggle

DIRECTIONS: Utilize this chart as a viewing log, filling in examples from the film as you watch. When you notice an example of one of the main characters in the film experiencing something that relates to one of the themes listed on the left, make a note of it in the corresponding square.

	HARRISON	NOEL	CHRIS
Here or there - where do I belong?			
Parents, caregivers, role models - intergenerational impacts			
Trauma, violence, addiction, abuse - adverse childhood experiences			
Cultural pressures, expectations, social norms - life in the community			

Student Handout **Belonging**

DIRECTIONS: Compare and contrast the following quotes in a 1-2 page expository essay. In addition to a literary analysis of the quotes, use examples from the film *Life After Life* to support your exposition. How is the sense of “belonging” central to human happiness? What undermines our sense of belonging? What enhances it? What are the long term effects of feeling displaced? How does a sense of belonging help to stave off other potential threats to well being?

“He found himself exhilarated by simply walking the earth. Walking it like he belonged on it; like his legs were stalks, tree trunks, a part of his body that extended down down down into the rock and soil, and were comfortable there--on the earth and on the place where he walked. And he did not limp.”

– Toni Morrison

“I want to leave, to go somewhere where I should be really in my place, where I would fit in . . . but my place is nowhere; I am unwanted.”

– Jean-Paul Sartre

Student Handout Two Reflections on Prison as Portrayed in *Life After Life*

DIRECTIONS: Write a 1 or 2-page personal response essay exploring the representations of our criminal justice system, our prison system, and our society as a whole in *Life After Life*. What are your thoughts on this connection, based on what you've seen of the film, and our classroom conversations thus far? What lessons does *Life After Life* offer in terms of reforming our prison system? What are your thoughts on solutions to the problems we are facing in the area of criminal justice, based on your viewing and your dialogue around the film, and the experiences of Harrison, Noel, and Chris? How have your opinions on the subject evolved during these classroom exchanges? How might your cultural, ethnic, racial, or economic background, and that of your parents and grandparents, affect your perspective? Use the quotes below as thought prompts as you write.

"I guess the question is, what is prison supposed to do? People are being warehoused... and then being sent out into their communities. You look at prisons, you have to look at color lines, the race issue. You can't avoid it. The reality is -- you walk into a prison -- look at the people you see. Does that reflect America? You walk there, you walk out here, you will not see the same numbers. The expectation for children - especially children of color -- that prison is almost unavoidable in their life -- is ridiculous."

– Harrison Seuga

"It is said that no one truly knows a nation until it has been inside its jails."

– Nelson Mandela

Student Handout Graphic Organizer – Resilience

DIRECTIONS: Utilize this chart as a concluding viewing log, filling in examples from the last half hour of the film as you watch. When you notice an example of one of the main characters in the film experiencing something that relates to one of the themes listed on the left, make a note of it in the corresponding square.

	HARRISON	NOEL	CHRIS
Family, Friends, Belonging			
Self reflection, learning, breaking the cycle			
Success, perseverance, accomplishment			
New beginnings, new experiences, new life			

Student Handout

ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences*) Quiz – Page 1

DIRECTIONS: The ACE Quiz is an assessment that was created as part of a landmark study by the CDC (Center for Disease Control). Complete the ACE Quiz **based on Harrison, Chris, and Noel's childhoods, as shared in the film *Life After Life***. Then, answer the questions on Page 2 of this handout.

Prior to [his] 18th birthday:

Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Swear at [him], insult [him], put him down, or humiliate [him], or act in a way that made [him] afraid that [he] might be physically hurt?

No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___

Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Push, grab, slap, or throw something at [him], or ever hit [him] so hard that [he] had marks or were injured?

No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___

Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than [he] ever... Touch or fondle [him] or have [him] touch their body in a sexual way, or attempt or actually have oral or anal intercourse with [him]?

No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___

Did [he] often or very often feel that ... No one in [his] family loved [him] or thought [he] was important or special, or [his] family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?

No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___

Did [he] often or very often feel that ... [he] didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect [him], or [his] parents were too drunk or high to take care of [him] or take [him] to the doctor if [he] needed it?

No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___

Were [his] parents ever separated or divorced?

No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___

Was [his] mother or stepmother often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? Or Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? Or ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?

No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___

Did [he] live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?

No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___

Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?

No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___

Did a household member go to prison?

No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___

Now add up the "Yes" answers. This is [his] ACE Score: _____

Student Handout

ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences*) Quiz – Page 2

DIRECTIONS: Reflect on the implications of your responses to the questions on Page 1 of this handout.

1. How many “yes’s” do you think Chris, Noel, and Harrison might receive on this quiz?
2. Individuals with a score of “4” or more show a marked increase in social, emotional, and health issues over the course of their lifetimes. Included in this is a higher level of at-risk or violent behavior. Knowing this, what role might childhood trauma, experiences that happened to Chris, Noel, and Harrison when they were children, which were completely out of their control, have played in their past behaviors - including those that lead to their incarceration?
3. Social stressors such as poverty, institutionalized bigotry, exclusion, and isolation are triggers for many of the conditions listed in the ACE quiz, including aggression, depression, drug use, neglect, and others. In this way, how might communities of color, immigrant communities, and poor communities be at a higher risk for the multi-generational cycle of high ACE scores?
4. If an individual suffers two or more ACEs, they are more likely to begin acting out in school, and display cognitive issues that could cause them to struggle with their studies. As more and more schools begin to criminalize negative behavior and utilize punitive approaches to discipline that mimic our criminal justice system (rather than restorative approaches) how do ACEs fuel the school to prison pipeline?
5. Many of the questions in the quiz have to do with the behaviors and mental health of a child’s parents, including drug use, domestic violence, and incarceration. If having a parent who was abused, addicted, or incarcerated increases an individual’s ACE score, how does this study prove the impact of intergenerational trauma - meaning - the carry over of trauma from one generation to the next?
6. If an individual suffers two or more ACEs, they are more likely to reenact their experiences with their own children, which perpetuates the cycle of children being born into high risk environments, and in turn, creating high risk environments for their own children. How do you see this cycle manifesting in communities around the country? How do you see this cycle represented in the media?

** The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACE Study) is a research study conducted by the Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The study has demonstrated an association of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) with health and social problems across a person’s life, including emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and physical health issues. The ACE Quiz is an assessment that was created as part of that landmark study. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/CDCACEStudy> or <http://bit.ly/NPRACEStudy> Exploring this content could be potentially harmful without context, trigger warnings and wraparound support, especially for those students who might have experienced some of the traumas listed in the quiz.*

Questions for Further Discussion

- When we first meet Harrison, we learn that he first went into juvenile hall at 14, and has been at San Quentin for 21 years. He describes prison as a “groundhog day,” preparing for a “war” that never came. What does this tell us about the culture and mindset that he has been living with for most of his life?
- What did family visits, or conjugal visits, provide to Noel, that he lost when his marriage ended?
- What do Noel and Harrison discuss as they anticipate release? What are their fears, expectations, hopes for their next stage of life?
- When Noel actually leaves prison, what brings tears to his eyes? What does this tell us about Noel, and his psyche at this time?
- When Noel recalls his teenage self, he says “everything was violence.” What does this tell you about the culture in which he grew up? How might this culture have shaped his coping mechanisms, communication mechanisms, and interpersonal relationships as a young person?
- How would you describe Noel’s relationship to his children, and their relationship to him? How do you think this relationship has affected the emotional development of his kids - as adults, and in Raquel’s case, as a parent herself?
- How does Noel Jr describe his relationship with his dad? When he says that it is as if “he is there but he isn’t” what does he mean?
- When Raquel says about her father - “he’s needed. He’s been needed.” What does she mean?
- What are some of the daily challenges that Harrison faces immediately upon release? How does he deal with these challenges? What support is made available to him to work through these challenges?

Questions for Further Discussion (cont.)

- Why do you think Harrison is so anxious standing on the corner with a cup of coffee?
- Why do you think Harrison is so preoccupied with how other people perceive him? He often says that he feels like everyone is watching, staring - as if a spotlight is shining on him. Where do you think this comes from, and what is the bigger importance of these feelings for him?
- How do you think Chris feels about showing the places he used to sell drugs - the crack house he used to run, his past behaviors with guns and women? What do you think his relationship is with his past, and how do you think this reflects on his present and future?
- How would you describe Chris as a father? How does his approach to being a dad relate to his experience as a son?
- What does Chris tell us about the typical male figure in his neighborhood? How do you imagine this has impacted him?
- When Chris says "parole is not hard" do you believe him?
- When Chris says "a person who gets out of prison they have to switch their mind" and "change their thinking" - what do you think he means, specifically?
- How would you describe the reunion scene between Harrison and Noel? What do you think their friendship means to one another?
- Harrison says that being paroled to a family member's house would be hard. What do you think are the pluses and minuses of being paroled to a halfway house vs. a family member's house?
- What changes for Noel and his family when his mother dies? What does her death seem to signify for Noel?

Questions for Further Discussion (cont.)

- What are some of the logistical, day to day challenges that each man faces upon release? What are some of the relational or interpersonal challenges that each man faces? How do you see each of them meeting these new challenges?
- Why do Noel and Harrison feel a pressure to move faster, accomplish more?
- According to Noel, Chris, and Harrison, how is life in prison easier than life on the outside?
- What are some of the unique pressures that Chris is dealing with, that do not affect Noel and Harrison?
- How are the different ways that substance abuse, street drugs, and addiction factor into each man's life story?
- How does the following quote, spoken by Chris, shed light upon the stories of all 3 men in *Life After Life*, and explain how growing up in an environment full of poverty and violence can create a "pipeline" to prison? "I have a theory that every child is born innocent until something occurs, so that innocence gets broken. Something happened in my life, and after that happened, I became a survivor. I wasn't innocent no more. When you become a survivor, you do whatever it takes to not feel that way no more."
- How do you feel listening to Chris's mother tell her story? What feelings do you think she has, when she recounts the story of her assault, subsequent struggle with addiction, and the impact those two things had on her children? How will Chris's life choices affect his children? How do you see intergenerational trauma manifested in Chris's family?
- Why do you think Chris did not have access to mental health services after he was traumatized at the age of 5?
- What is prison supposed to do?

Questions for Further Discussion (cont.)

- In what way do the traditionally patriarchal structures in Latino and Samoan cultures impact Harrison and Noel? Inversely how might the traditionally matriarchal African American culture affect Chris?
- What was Noel's childhood like? What does he remember about his childhood experience?
- Noel and Harrison both recount volunteering to get involved in the incidents that lead to their arrest and eventual incarceration. Why is this significant?
- Noel and Harrison both recount the violence they perpetrated as instantaneous and shocking. How does the availability of guns in underserved communities create opportunity for more violent crime? How might it have been different if Harrison and Noel had a knife in their hand? Why?
- Chris, Noel, and Harrison all recount feeling powerless, weak, vulnerable, and scared in their childhoods. Why might this feeling of helplessness be more prevalent in underserved communities and communities of color? How did the feeling of helplessness lead to their increasingly high-risk behaviors?
- How does Harrison's father's abusive behavior directly relate to Harrison's choices as a teenager, and his eventual incarceration? How does Harrison process and work through some of these memories after he is released, and how does this work allow him to truly rehabilitate?
- How did economic factors render Chris, Harrison, and Noel more vulnerable to the lure of lawlessness as young people? How did psychological factors render them more vulnerable?
- Why does Deidre call Noel her "angel?" How do Deidre and Noel help each other to be better people?
- How does Deidre's career relate to Noel's life story?

Questions for Further Discussion (cont.)

- Compare the role that college plays in Harrison's life to the role that Deidre plays in Noel's.
- How does Harrison hope to make a difference in the world?
- What are some of the differences you notice between Chris's attitudes, behaviors, and situation, and Harrison and Noel's? Why do you think Chris is less successful in his attempt to reenter society than Harrison and Noel?
- How does Noel process the challenge of having his parole reexamined? How does he process the possibility of going back to prison? How do these challenges affect his relationship with Deidre?
- How might the experience of being incarcerated affect a person's ability to commit to meaningful intimate relationships - with partners, children, and others?
- How does the experience of having his bike stolen throw everything into question for Harrison? Why is that experience so profound for him?
- How does Noel's victory in court pave the way for his marriage to Deidre?
- To what factors does Chris attribute his recidivism? What sort of support or intervention might he have received, that could have prevented him from re-offending?
- Discuss Harrison's claim that "When the kids accept you, you know you've made it, you know you fit in."
- Compare the difference between the birth and babyhood of Chris's baby and the birth and babyhood of Noel's.
- How have Noel and Harrison successfully broken the patterns that affected their families?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Advancement Project

<https://advancementproject.org/>

Children's Defense Fund

<http://www.childrensdefense.org/>

Dignity in Schools

<https://dignityinschools.org/>

Anti-Recidivism Coalition

<http://www.antirecidivism.org/>

Youth First Initiative

<http://www.youthfirstinitiative.org/>

Racial Intelligence Training and Engagement: RITE

<http://riteacademy.com/>

Center for Human Diversity

<http://www.centerforhumandiversity.org/aboutUs.php>

Stand Up for Kids

<http://www.standupforkids.org/>

Mentoring Youth

<https://youthmentoring.org/>

Bridges to Life

<http://www.bridgestolife.org/>

Southern Christian Leadership Conference

<http://nationalsclc.org/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (cont.)

American Civil Liberties Union

<https://www.aclu.org/>

Black Lives Matter

<https://blacklivesmatter.com/>

Brennan Center for Justice

<https://www.brennancenter.org/>

Californians to Amend the Three Strike Law: CATS

<http://www.catslaw.org/>

Center for American Progress

<https://www.americanprogress.org/>

Homeboy Industries

<https://www.homeboyindustries.org/>

DrugSense

<http://www.drugsense.org/cms/>

Families Against Mandatory Minimums

<https://famm.org/>

Law Enforcement Action Partnership

<https://lawenforcementactionpartnership.org/>

Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

<https://lawyerscommittee.org/>

NAACP

<https://www.naACP.org/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (cont.)

National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice

<https://www.nabcj.org/>

National Urban League

<http://nul.iamempowered.com/>

National Police Accountability Project

<https://www.nlg-npap.org/>

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

<https://www.ojjdp.gov/>

Open Society Foundations

<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/>

Prison Studies Project

<http://prisonstudiesproject.org/>

The Free Thought Project

<https://thefreethoughtproject.com/>

University Beyond Bars

<http://www.universitybeyondbars.org/>

The Sentencing Project

<https://www.sentencingproject.org/>

US Conference of Mayors

<https://www.usmayors.org/>

Sierra Health Foundation's Positive Youth Justice Initiative

<https://www.shfcenter.org/positive-youth-justice-initiative>

California Endowment

<http://www.calendow.org/>

ABOUT APPLE OF DISCORD

<http://www.appleofdiscordproductions.com/>

Apple of Discord Productions develops thoughtful community inspired documentaries and programs such as *Life After Life*, and the acclaimed Wisdom Project and San Quentin Media Project's that train at-risk youth and incarcerated men in filmmaking as a tool for transformation. Partnering with local and national agencies and organizations, our media is paired with programming that supports education, healing and action. Our documentaries and media empower and uplift vulnerable communities while staying rooted in stories that reflect our own experiences.

ABOUT THE SIERRA HEALTH FOUNDATION

<https://www.sierrahealth.org/>

Sierra Health Foundation is a private philanthropy that forges new paths to promote health and racial equity in partnership with communities, organizations and leaders. We are committed to reducing health disparities through convening, educating and strategic grantmaking.

ABOUT BIG PICTURE EDUCATIONAL CONSULTING

<https://www.bigpictureeducational.com/>

Big Picture is a leader in the fields of film education and media literacy, specializing in resource development and educational outreach for film and media projects of all kinds. We leverage film as a powerful educational tool to enlighten audiences, spark engagement, inspire social change, and cultivate new generations of filmgoers and filmmakers. Big Picture's specialized audience consists of stakeholders in the educational sector, and we are able to raise awareness about, and foster the use of, our clients' projects within this audience. We see educational opportunities everywhere—from K-12 schools and universities to continuing education for adult professionals, to festivals, campus and house parties, or community events. Our leadership shares over 40 years of experience in film, media literacy, curriculum development, community organizing, and education, and we bring this experience to bear for our clients, using their films to teach and edify complex and inspiring issues inside and beyond the classroom in savvy, substantive ways.

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Tamara Perkins and the Life After Life Family

LIFE AFTER LIFE

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