

## **PRESS RELEASE**

For immediate release

April 16, 2010

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## **UA STUDENT FILMS ON JUSTICE & INJUSTICE IN ALABAMA TO DEBUT APRIL 27**

*Fourth Annual Documenting Justice screening features five films, is culmination of year-long project*

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. – The Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility at the University of Alabama and the UA Department of Telecommunication & Film will host the Fourth Annual Documenting Justice film screening April 27 at 7 p.m. at the Bama Theatre in downtown Tuscaloosa. The screening is free and open to the public.

The short documentaries that will premiere at the event were created by non-film majors who dedicated a year to learning how to document and analyze culture and social experience – and communicate about issues of justice and injustice in Alabama – through videography.

The screening will consist of five films exploring:

- Circumstances surrounding the sentencing of juvenile offenders to life without parole, and the question of whether punishment ever goes too far;
- A small community in rural Alabama where 10 individuals rethink the American Dream and find just what they need for a life well-lived;
- Perceptions of safety, community and development in two neighborhoods living side by side, but separated by a barbed-wire fence;
- The small town of Brilliant, Alabama, where two high-school seniors think about the future and whether they will stay or leave their hometown;
- The physician shortage in rural Alabama and difficulties in doctor recruitment, specifically in Wilcox County, where there is one physician for every 4,667 people.

Working in pairs, 10 undergraduate and graduate students produced the documentaries as part of a nationally unique, two-semester course taught by an award-winning group of filmmakers. The University of Alabama has offered the Documenting Justice course since 2006. “Each year we have an exceptional crop of students, and I’m continuously impressed with their abilities, their wide ranging topic ideas and interests, and their commitment to storytelling,” said Andy Grace, director of Documenting Justice. “This is the fourth year of the class, and I feel like we haven’t even scratched the surface of all the important, interesting and unique stories throughout Alabama.”

Documenting Justice is a signature initiative of the UA Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility, which established university-wide programming supporting the development of projects that nurture social responsibility and reflective, thoughtful citizenship.

“Ethical citizenship requires a strong sense of empathy and compassion,” said UA Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility Director Stephen Black. “Developing such qualities requires the ability to imagine what others see, feel and experience. A central focus of CESR, therefore, is the development of courses such as Documenting Justice in which students learn the personal stories of people outside their immediate sphere.”

Past Documenting Justice films have been featured in film festivals, and several have won awards. “Storybook” a film by 2007-2008 students Kristian Collins and Stephen Lovell that examined the challenges of parenting from prison, was selected for inclusion in the 2009 Undergraduate Ethics Symposium held at DePauw University.

During the 2009-2010 academic year, CESR launched a new Documenting Justice course – Documenting Justice: Law – which is open to second- and third-year law students. The inaugural Documenting Justice: Law film screening will be held April 28 at 5:30 p.m. at the Carver Theatre in downtown Birmingham.

Learn more about Documenting Justice and other CESR initiatives at [cesr.ua.edu](http://cesr.ua.edu).

### **About the UA Center for Ethics & Social Responsibility**

Created in 2005, CESR established university-wide programming supporting the development of projects that nurture social responsibility and reflective, thoughtful citizenship. The University of Alabama’s strong commitment to civic engagement and its history of community-university partnerships also serve as a foundation for the Center. CESR staff develop – and assist faculty members in developing – service-learning courses that engage community organizations in partnerships designed to both enhance academic goals and apply scholarly learning to salient community issues. The service experiences are integrated into the students’ academic curriculum, providing structured time for students to think, talk and write about what they did and observed.