

Girl Trouble

Producer/director/cinematographers, Lexi Leban and Lidia Szajko. 2004. 74 min.

General:

1. For how many years does the film follow the lives of the three girls?
2. How old is each girl during the first year of filming?
3. What is each girl's **major** obstacle that she must overcome? What are other factors that also create obstacles for them?
4. What role does Lateefah (and the Center for Young Women's Development) play in each of the three girls' lives?
5. In the past ten years, youth crime has declined but the number of girls in the juvenile justice system has increased how much?
6. Girls are 28 percent of all juvenile arrests in the U.S. How many of them are women of color? How many report physical or sexual abuse? How much of the funding available for youth programs goes to girl-only programs?

Stephanie:

1. Why did Stephanie choose not to get an abortion?
2. What is Lateefah's explanation for Herbert's (Stephanie's boyfriend) increasing abuse of Stephanie?
3. What will happen if Stephanie is stopped by the police and they find out her real name?
4. Why does Stephanie not want to go to the hospital after she is particularly badly beaten (and...? She doesn't want to say what else) by Herbert?
5. What does Stephanie mean when she says, "You got to be a tortoise"?
6. In Year 3, Stephanie gets a job working at Tully's (café). She complains that her life is "hella routine." What does she mean by this?
7. Why is it so hard for Stephanie to break up with Herbert? What realization does she finally have that allows her to live separately from him?
8. When Stephanie is arrested (she is with Herbert when he is caught selling drugs), her attorney tells her to "be honest." This leads to what?

Sheila:

1. What is Sheila's explanation for why she sells dope?
2. The narrator of the film explains in the beginning that Sheila "had drinking and violence all around her." What does that mean exactly? Is it a fair description of Sheila's life in the Sunnydale projects?
3. Why does Lateefa fire Sheila from her job at the Center for Young Women's Development?
4. Sheila explains that after losing her job, she will have to move out of her family's apartment because her dad is getting out of jail and will beat her up when he comes home, in spite of a restraining order against him. Why does Sheila believe she will get beaten up?
5. Sheila is arrested for shooting her brother. Why is this arrest different from all the other ones before it?
6. What is so unusual about how Sheila's case (involving shooting her brother) ends up?
7. What does Sheila feel she can't leave Walden House?

Shangra:

1. Why was Shangra selling crack?
2. Why can't Shangra follow the example of her sister?
3. Shangra is given a curfew of 8 PM as part of her sentence for selling crack. Shangra violates her curfew on her 17th birthday. What does this result in?
4. Shangra is released to Walden house after she is arrested again. Why does Shangra have a difficult time leaving the first "step" of the program to go on to the next level?
5. After a time at Walden, Shangra is able to get straight As in school. What is Shangra's explanation for her success?
6. Why is Shangra afraid to leave Walden after she is there for 19 months?

Extension Activities – pedagogical options

1. JIGSAW: Divide class into small groups (3-5). Each group takes a section of the provided text and answers the question with their section. Then groups reconvene and share their answers with the larger group. General Discussion follows.

2. DEBATE: Assign half the class one position and the other half another position. Allow preparation time. **Debate rules:** Everyone must speak once before anyone can speak twice; First, each person must respond to an argument made by the opponents before he or she can present his or her own new argument; Points are given for persuasive use of factual information; Points are deducted if first two debate rules violated.

Extension Activity ONE

Below, the CYWD's explains their program and the reasoning for it. Do any parts of the film support any of the sentences below? Do any of the sentences below contradict any information in the film?

From Center for Young Women's Development website:
<http://www.cywd.org/rising.html#srcont>
Viewed January 6, 2008

OUR APPROACH --- We begin and end with the whole young woman. Traditionally, nonprofits and service providers have focused on singular categories like disease prevention, case management or advocacy. In contrast, at The Center for Young Women's Development we take a holistic approach. Recognizing the multidimensional and nuanced needs of young women in crisis, we simultaneously address the various issues young women are facing in order to maximize and sustain each young woman's wellness and empowerment.

- Between 1988 and 1997, the use of detention for girls increased 65% while the use of detention for boys increased 30%.
- Girls are 30% more likely than boys to be detained for minor offenses such as public disorder, probation violations, status offenses and traffic offenses — 29% vs. 19%.
- Girls are almost 3 times as likely to be detained for probation and parole violations — 54% vs. 19%.
- Girls' rates of recidivism are lower than those of boys, but girls are more likely to be reincarcerated due to probation or parole violations.
- White girls constitute 65% of the population of at-risk girls, but whites account for only 34% of the girls in secure detention.

- African-American girls make up nearly 50% of the population of all girls in secure detention — Latinas make up 13%.
- 7 of every 10 cases involving white girls are dismissed, compared to 3 of every 10 cases for African-American girls.

We begin and end with the whole young woman — her need for political and legal education, as well as therapy and other health and wellness services; her need for employment, as well as an opportunity to resume her education; her need for a safe place to live, as well as peers who understand her crises and with whom she can build positive relations and true sisterhood.

We respond immediately to all of the needs of a young woman — emotional, economic, legal and social. We help her recognize and rely on her considerable strengths — resiliency, creativity, intelligence and social networks. We recognize and validate her life experience. We provide her with private services so she can stabilize and grow stronger, as well as public opportunities to exercise her newfound strengths.

Taking a holistic approach, we work with the young woman to develop legal and courtroom self-advocacy plans, with help from her parents or guardians, other community-based agencies, the faith-based community, the Public Defender's office and, in some cases, the District Attorney's office and the presiding judge. Our aim is always to develop a comprehensive alternative to incarceration that best serves the needs of the young woman.

While more and more research is proving that this holistic approach is the most effective way to work with at-risk young women and girls, we initially took this approach because it was what we recognized that we needed for ourselves.

Extension Activity Two

Which is the most important question asked below? What questions were not asked that needed to be asked? Which questions are not answered well by Lateefah?

Leadership for a Changing World

<http://leadershipforchange.org/talks/archive.php3?ForumID=17>

viewed January 6, 2008

Welcome to Leadership Talks with Lateefah Simon, Executive Director of the Center for Young Women's Development, and a 2001 Leadership for a Changing World award recipient.

1. What have you found helpful in dealing with young women given an alternative to incarceration (drug treatment) who choose to stay out on the streets with outstanding warrants instead?

Our experiences with girls on the run who have warrants who are still struggling with drug addiction are plenty. We deal with that every day and our approach is really developing trust in the young woman and providing an opportunity for her to begin thinking about how ultimately she's going to have to figure out to take steps to get out of the system. It requires an enormous amount of patience on our part and understanding about all the issues she's dealing with. There's no right or wrong answer to this, how you deal with this particular girl with this particular circumstance. What we know that's worked in the past is a young woman is equipped with the education and understanding about where she lies in the system and for her to develop tools to begin to get out of those circumstances.

2. Can you address what you feel are the most significant health issues faced by incarcerated young women and provide recommendations on ensuring continuity of care when they transition back to their respective communities?

For low-income young women who come into contact with the juvenile justice system there are numerous health issues that we find that, unfortunately, when the girls are detained those health issues begin to come out because they don't receive health care in their communities. So what we're really seeing as the major health issues is that young women have a huge victimization history in sexual abuse and exploitation. And then of course you have girls who have never been to the dentist, girls who are doing sex work and have never been to an OB/GYN, who have never had reproductive health opportunities, girls who have children who never received prenatal care during their pregnancies. And in our experience when the young women leave detention the work over here has been advocating community organizations to continue providing services to the young women because it's our experience that girls who are in the system don't actively seek out health care or mental health treatment because the services are usually very linked up with child protective services or the girls always say I'm going to get caught again and have a fear of being found out and fear of going back into the system. Our response to that is to work more closely with this population, increase outreach to this population.

3. Your work is not what America would define as glamorous--especially by standards held by youth. How do you get young people engaged in your work for the long haul?

The CYWD challenge is to develop a movement of young women who have been previously incarcerated to speak up and to make change in their communities. So in terms of developing a base it hasn't been very hard for us because there haven't been safe spaces for girls who have been thrown away by so many institutions to develop their power. Our methodology is also focused on providing economic opportunities for young women so that they can become truly engaged in the work. We provide jobs for girls. Girls run our organization. And we are a 501-C-3 organization, we raise our own money, and that, again, is done by girls who have been in the system. And the work is exciting, challenging, but for young women who have lived these experiences it's their reality.

4. I am from a very small town in the country. There are a lot of teenagers here with low self-esteem and high pregnancy rate. What are the steps or format did you use to help develop your center for young women and what advice or help could you give to develop a program here?

My advice would be to get the young women from your community together and sit back and listen to the things they want to do, what they want to create, what will change their communities. Your duty would then be to galvanize the forces to make their ideas become a reality. The CYWD began in 1992 very similarly. There were issues that girls were facing on the streets, a lack of employment opportunities, a lack of real leadership opportunities for girls in the system. And our founder, Rachel Pfiffer, basically she did exactly that, she got girls together, figured out what was needed, and created an organization which she then transferred to those young women in 1997. So to us we really believe that young women must be the ones to create the actual programs. You will have a better success rate than if you were to sit alone and develop what you think girls needs.

5. Being a young woman, do people ever question your leadership abilities because of your age? How do you deal with that?

We are all questioned on our leadership abilities for one reason or another. I have experienced more racism than ageism. You'd be surprised by the comments that I get from well-intentioned folks. Each day I, along with my colleagues, just work harder to show the community that our work is real, honest and valuable. CYWD is very lucky in that San Francisco has been good to us. For the most part, we are respected as a viable component in the movement to create a more just society.

6. What would you say is the defining characteristic of young women social change makers? ANSWER: Young women who are tired of being tired.

8. Who have you looked up to throughout your development as a leader?

I look up to so many people. You have to be able to look at everyone you encounter as a teacher. I mean everyone. The names are too numerous to count. I must say that Dr. Angela Davis is pretty high on that names list, but our heroes are all around us. They are the mothers who grieve over their dead sons and daughters, they are the women who stand in welfare lines with their heads held high, the ones who struggle in their own battles with addiction, and they are the children who live on resiliency alone.

9. Have there been experiences with the young women you've worked with feeling alienated once reaching adulthood? How do you deal with these issues of age-appropriation in your line of youth-working? What do you suggest to youth service providers, youth workers, as well as former youth-workers who have aged out?

Although we struggle with the issue of aging out, we have come to the conclusion that knowledge and experience should be honored. And for girls who are 18 and become 19 and who are growing that's actually an asset to us. For a long time I thought personally that I needed to leave this organization because I was growing up. And having been here since I was 17, now being 26, I thought that I had done all that I needed to do. And it was the young women who really convinced me and other "elders" here in the organization that our knowledge was important and that if we were going to become a force in the world that knowledge and the experiences needed to stay in the community that we're creating. Although we provide spaces for girls who are not "youths" anymore it is vital that the younger women have the opportunity to develop their skills, to have decision-making power, so that they have a vested interest in seeing the agency on after those of us leave. So in a sense we continue to train a cadre of girls to do this work.

10. What other organizations out there in California and the country are doing projects which are similar to the work you have done in SF?

The CYWD is a part of a national network called the Community Justice Network for Youth that brings together organizations who are working with kids of color in the system. With over 80 member organizations we've been able to find organizations that both we can learn from and give information to. Every organization is different and must employ different strategies based on the dynamics of their communities and the needs of their communities. However, we have two sister organizations, one in Oakland, Young Women United for Oakland, and one in Brooklyn called Sister Outsider that have very similar models. The Community Justice Network for Youth, they can be contacted at Burnsinstitute.org.

11. How do you sustain yourself and your staff while working on such difficult social issues?

Our work is difficult. The poverty is real, the violence is chronic, yet there is still hope. In my 9 years here, there have been so many times where I've wanted to just stop and move on, maybe finish college, but the Center is my home.

Our staff are working together all day everyday to keep our vision and inspiration fresh. Just being together, taking walks, taking a day off now and then helps me develop a prospective. I am learning that burn out is a result of exclusion. I am trying to not hide my challenges anymore. I am asking for help. I cry when I want to now. I am learning how to model real self-care.

Extension Activity Three

In the excerpt below, do any of the paragraphs describe the Center for Women's Development, which is a nonprofit organization dependent on foundation and government grants for its existence? Do you think any of the arguments or information below might explain why so many girls and boys continue to be "in trouble"?

The Revolution Will not Be Funded

by Andrea del Moral

04.04.05

http://www.lipmagazine.org/articles/featdelmoral_nonprofit.htm

viewed on January 6, 2008

\$1.3 trillion, the US nonprofit sector is the seventh largest economy in the world. Employing 10% of the US workforce, the NPS—aka the NonProfit Industrial Complex. . . . What these 1.5 million organizations DO share is their state-assigned tax status as 501©(3) institutions. . . . Named for the section of the tax code that regulates their existence, this uneasy band of organizations do not pay income tax—all individual donations are tax-deductible—and they have access to grants from foundations, corporations and the government. . . . This structure has allowed some organizers a stable work environment complete with the corporate benefits of salaries, health care and retirement plans. But at what cost? For those of us seeking fundamental, revolutionary change, the nonprofit glut has cost us our broad-based social movements.

. . . . The reality is that many problems we work to uproot will not be eradicated in the near future. . . . for social justice advocates of working within the nonprofit structure. . . you need to work in a way that promotes longevity, skill building, social networks, and organizational stability, so that the movement grows and people don't burn out. Depending on immediate but precarious sources of money, such as foundation grants available through nonprofit status, does not do this. . .

. . . . Fundraising from the grassroots means raising money from individuals with whom your organization or cause already has a connection: throwing parties, sending letters, making phone calls. It is fundamentally different from seeking government or foundation money in that donors are directly affected by the group's work—at the very least, they have a personal interest in it. It is different from seeking funding from a wealthy patron (although such people are often part of a grassroots fundraising strategy), because the grassroots strategy draws from a wide base of supporters; no one donor could cripple the organization by pulling out. . . .

The corporate nonprofit structure encouraged by tax law doesn't just promote financial short-sightedness through its focus on grants [grants usually only last 3 years]. This corporate structure is an intrinsic part of existing oppression, so it also inhibits the most radical aspects of our work. Suzanne Pharr... asserts [the nonprofit industrial complex] has given us more government and corporate money, less autonomy from those sources

of money, less community membership and involvement in organizations, more corporate mimicry, and more professionalization of roles within grassroots movements. The effects of all this? Organizations are no longer places where money and leadership are controlled by their constituents. Instead, leadership jobs go to those from the outside: people with degrees in social work, accounting and nonprofit management. With fewer people involved in organizations and with money coming from the nation's financially powerful, the direction of nonprofit work veers away from the struggles of the people in whose name those organizations often operate. The money covers financial reports, professional grantwriters' salaries and strategies for meeting funders'—not organizations', let alone movements'—goals. As a result, organizations that began as radical grassroots associations of individuals become corporations that largely copy the mainstream economy. They are professional, though not educated on the ground about the actual issues; organized, but not effective; compliant with tax laws, but not responsive or accountable to community needs.

through charity and dependence on outside resources [the nonprofit industrial complex] has failed to fundamentally change the problems that much of this sector addresses. Some people point out that this was never the NPS's objective: It began as philanthropic charity "based on wealthy people donating at leisure to 'worthwhile' causes," as Jess Klatzker explains in *The Question of Youth Empowerment in the Nonprofit Sector* (unpublished, Hampshire College, 1999). In the late 19th century, Christian industrial barons John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie created charity organizations to help the poor—who were poor because of the very same economic system that made those men rich. Instead of working to restructure that system, they skimmed a bit off the top of their overfull cups and dripped it down to the most needy through philanthropic charity organizations. These charities provided immediate relief: soup kitchens, clothing, orphanages. But they did nothing to address the sources of poverty. . . .

. . . .The grassroots was a different way of organizing change. It allowed people from across the political spectrum to initiate causes that were of personal interest and concern. Grassroots activity isn't unconditionally humanitarian or dedicated to social justice—NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard)-motivated groups seeking to block drug treatment centers, religious schools and small scale capitalists are all grassroots. But the idea did create space for people to approach the problems of need and oppression from a different angle than philanthropy and charity. The radical grassroots strove to improve the whole of a person, not simply the basic materials of food, clothing and shelter. It also created space for issues that are less urgent to industrial workers like environmental integrity and human rights of others. The concept of community, not only worker, empowerment was able to grow from this new space of activism. Early grassroots leaders like Myles Horton, Dolores Huerta and Martin Luther King, Jr. were the pioneers of broad-based social movements in the United States. They, along with many more whose names did not make it into history as heroes or leaders, drew from the strengths of the labor movement of the 1930s, and expanded them to ignite the civil rights movement, gay liberation, and Second Wave feminism. . . .

. . . . Foundations and the grants they give are a byproduct of a tax scheme that keeps the rich rich. It begins with the estate tax (which, though it is currently being phased out, has had and continues to have a tremendous influence over the workings of the NPS). When a rich person dies, 50 % of their "large estate" goes to the government. Or that person can create a foundation and give away 5% of the money each year to whomever they want. That "giving away" of money includes operating costs, which means paying members of the board of trustees and, often, holding swank meetings in remote locales—which, in turn, keeps much of the money in wealthy hands. The Duke Endowment, for instance, which funds hospitals, children's homes, and rural United Methodist churches in North and South Carolina, paid each of its 15 trustees \$150,189 in 2000. Consider that foundation trustees are 77% male and 96% white, and you can see where all this U.S. tax money—supposedly wealthy people's money donated "at leisure to 'worthwhile' causes"—is going, or, rather, staying. (In contrast, the thousands of board members for nonprofit organizations—including many more people of color and individuals who are working class or poor and not male—sit in unpaid positions.) From the 5% mandatory payout at a foundation, there are first the decadent trustee fees and operating costs. Much of the money that's left goes to right-wing think tanks, conservative law firms, and other counterrevolutionary endeavors whose mission is entrenching and worsening the status quo. Not including trustee fees and other operating costs, what remains of the 5% payout money is distributed like this: 2.9% to organizations serving the disabled, 1.7% to social change organizations, 1% to the homeless, 0.1% to single parents, and a few other tiny slices of the pie to groups that some still insist on calling "minorities" (1.9% African American, 1.1% Latino, 1% Native American, 0.4% Asian and Pacific Islander, and 0.1% queer).

Yes, less than 2% of less than 5% of foundation money is dedicated to social change organizing in the United States. Most of the rest of that 99.915% of the money is sitting in investments, supporting right-wing politics and funding ruling-class agendas. By funding the institutions that preserve, promote and enforce neo-conservative policy, many foundations—Heritage, Bradley, and Carthage, to name a few—in fact exist to counteract social change. It isn't just chance that the money stacks higher on the other side. Wealth is an economic conclusion of capitalism. Those who have it are mostly friendly to the rules that granted them their power, security and comfort. They fund right-wing think tanks and cultivate capitalist leadership as self-preservation. They promote free market ideas and corporate subsidies over social safety nets. That's money busy keeping inequality and injustice in place. . . .

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