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BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL

"Women Inside"

Executive Producer  
Executive Editor  
Producers

JOAN KONNER  
BILL MOYERS  
ELISABETH FINK BENJAMIN  
MARK BENJAMIN

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Transcript of "Women Inside"

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(Tease: Booking room.)

GUARD (fingerprinting): Now, just let your wrist go easy, just let me turn it...

VOICE OVER P.A. SYSTEM: Control, check with booking, tell them to let me know when checking...

BILL MOYERS (on camera): I'm Bill Moyers. On any one day in this country there are about 15,000 women serving time in jail. Many come from broken homes. Most started on crime when they were young, and over half are mothers -- mothers whose children are likely one day to follow them into crime and jail.

GUARD: We're going to call your husband back again, and for fifteen ...

MOYERS (over scene in booking room): This report is from one jail in Miami. The women here are either awaiting trial -- most don't have the money for bail -- serving short sentences for victimless crimes, or moving on to prison for serious crimes of violence. This is the newest women's detention center in the country. It is trying to be more than just a jail, but the odds are tough. In this hour, you will meet some of the women inside.

(BMJ opening.)

(Booking room.)

GUARD: ...with your hands against the wall. Spread your legs apart ...spread apart.

WOMAN: What are you trying to do to me?

GUARD: I have to pat you down to see you have nothing on you.

WOMAN: I have nothing on me.

GUARD: Well, I have to check, okay?

WOMAN: Can I call my husband? I'm drunk and disorderly.

GUARD: Okay.

FIRST INMATE (over scene): I don't know what you would call the crime, you know, but I did shoot a person.

SECOND INMATE: Uh, burglary.

THIRD INMATE: I came to jail for prostitution.

FOURTH INMATE: For possession of firearms and -- they say possession of heroin.

FIFTH INMATE: Thirty years. I got fifteen years for violation of probation for strong-arm robbery, and I got fifteen years for aggravated battery.

VOICE OVER P.A. SYSTEM: Officer Dooley, you have a phone call...

SIXTH INMATE: I got...arrested for, you know, shooting a police cop. By mistake, you know, but he just happened to come around the corner, and he got it.

SEVENTH INMATE: First degree murder, armed robbery, kidnapping.

EIGHTH INMATE: Well, they got me in here for armed robbery that I didn't commit, strong-arm robbery...that I didn't even commit.

NINTH INMATE: Like, when we're here, we usually kid them, you see. 'Cause well, you know, we wouldn't bring anything back, they're usually searching us for contraband.

TENTH INMATE: For some drugs or what.

NINTH INMATE: Whatever.

TENTH INMATE: Right?

NINTH INMATE: And then I tell them, you know, God, you must like this job.

TENTH INMATE: Every day the same thing.

NINTH INMATE: Well, not the same thing, she gets variety sometimes.

ELEVENTH INMATE: (Laughing.) The fucker just (unintelligible)... crazy.

VOICE OVER P.A. SYSTEM: Mrs. Spiers, Mrs. Spiers, you're needed in Social Services.

(In booking room.)

MOYERS: How many women come through here in the course of a year?

PAM DAVIS, Warden: Ten thousand.

MOYERS: Ten thousand through here?

DAVIS: Uh-huh. Through here. Between nine and ten thousand women are arrested annually in Dade County, Florida.

MOYERS: Is there a typical female offender?

DAVIS: No, there's not a typical female offender. I've done a lot of reading, you know, on the subject, and a lot of the studies since the census report in 1970, and one report'll say she's white and twenty-two

and no children; another one'll say no, she's black and eighteen and has three kids, you know. It's very different, and I think each woman has to be looked at independently and there is no "a typical female offender."

(In cell.)

JUDI: I am branded already. When a robbery in this city is committed and a white girl was involved, I'm one of the first girls that always they come and pick up, always. Always.

INTERVIEWER: They know you?

JUDI: Well, I'll tell you. I went to jail in one year seventy-seven times for loitering and prowling, which was thrown out. They can't arrest you for that. Yeah, they know me.

(Playing cards.)

INMATE: Oh, boy. I have to go in the hole? Better git it. Git it, Judi. Git it.

INMATE: Right.

INMATE: Thank you. We got it. We got it. I'm here for Mrs. Spiers, so somebody had to tell on me. If they wouldn't of told, I wouldn't have been in this son-of-a-gun. But -- I'm a good girl, too, you know? (Laughs.)

INMATE: What can you do?

INMATE: (Inaudible.)

INMATE: What?

INMATE: Cocaine. They say cocaine. I say nothin'.

JUDI: Me and a co-defendant who they haven't apprehended yet, we're supposedly have robbed a man for his glasses and his car keys in January, but they never picked me up until March. There was no warrant out, the man just was lookin' for me and contacted the police when he saw me. And that's what they call a robbery.

INTERVIEWER: That's why you're here.

JUDI: Yes. One of the reasons. The other one is a federal charge.

INTERVIEWER: Which is?

JUDI: Umm -- forgery, aiding and abetting, conspiracy.

INMATE: Like I told you, I was extradited from Toronto; they've got a treaty, the U.S. and Canada, for extradition, and they extradited me here to face the trial?

INTERVIEWER: What were your charges?

INMATE: Importing cocaine...into Florida.

JUDI: Everything that I've done wrong, or they've said I've done wrong, is all drug-orientated. None of my crimes started till I started messing with narcotics, which I never learned about until I came to jail. When I

was fourteen I had fake I.D. and I ran away and came to Miami, and I went to jail and there was two girls in there that had scars all over their arms; and I said, "Dove, why are you sick all the time, what are those scars on your arm?" They said, "We're gonna show you." When they got out, they showed me.

INTERVIEWER: What did they show you?

JUDI: They showed me heroin, and -- you know, nobody forced me into doing it. I indulged my own self after seeing what the feeling was, you know?

RUBI: I mean, I did it for survival. What I did I'd rather not say, but I did it for survival. You see, now people that got houses to put up and order this thing and got something to back them, sign yourself out, it's fine. A chick comes in through customs, with her baby, shoes full of cocaine; 'cause she's married to a cop she walks out the door. Spare me. You know? That's not what's happening. So they're watching the small ones, the poors. You ain't got no money, you not goin' nowhere.

JUDI: Do you think there's many times -- unfortunately, I'm a prostitute, or have indulged in prostitution. You think there's times that policemen haven't approached me and said, "Judi, if you open up your blouse tonight, you won't have to go to jail, don't worry about a thing." Think that hasn't happened to me? I haven't had to get in the back of a police car, unfortunately, and ride to a field and stay there with a policeman for a while? There hasn't been a time that I haven't gone to a courtroom and had to go in a back room and do something? And got released? Unfortunately -- that's the truth. You know, I'm not the only one that could say this; there's others. But who's going to believe me, you know? Look at my record.

(Shots of jail monitoring system, hallways, activities.)

MOYERS (over scenes): Of the many crimes that bring women here, the majority involve prostitution or narcotics or both. Once you're hooked on the stuff, you hustle to support your habit. Usually the trip starts early.

(In cell.)

JULIE: When I was younger I always thought about it, you know, wondered what it was like, you know? And so I just went out and I tried it, and I saw that it was easy money, you know?

MOYERS: How much did you make from it?

JULIE: A night?

MOYERS: Yeah.

JULIE: I don't know, it depends on how hard you want to work, you know?

MOYERS: Give me an estimate.

JULIE: You can make anywhere from two to five, you know; it depends on how hard you want to work.

MOYERS: Two hundred to five hundred.

JULIE: Yeah.

MOYERS: Do you think prostitution should be a crime?

DIANE: Uh-uh.

MOYERS: Why?

DIANE: 'Cause everybody in the world is doin' it -- some doin' it legal and some doin' it illegal.

MOYERS: Do you think you got a bum deal?

DIANE: Yeah.

MOYERS: In what way?

DIANE: The police, they just too hard on the women out there, because -- I mean, okay, I can understand if, you know, we offered to commit to them, but half the time we don't, they pick us up for nothin'. I'm in here -- I've been picked up twenty...about twenty-three, twenty-four times, and about half of 'em ain't even real. It's just because they know what I do.

MOYERS: You just started six months ago, and you've already been picked up twenty-two times?

DIANE: (Nods.) Just because I was known as a prostitute.

(Booking room.)

GUARD: Does any of 'em have over twenty-five dollars -- over ten dollars?

DIANE (over scene in booking room): I bet you that if you was to go to any jail like this one, you would find more prostitutes than you would find anything. I mean, even if they stole somethin', they are prostitutes too.

MAN'S VOICE: Larry, are you looking for somebody...

JACKI: And when they caught up with me finally he gave me sixty days in jail for prostitution. And I wasn't even doin' nothin'. The officer solicit me, I didn't solicit him. But it's my word against his. You go to court, try to talk against a officer, the judge ain't gonna listen to you. You po' black, misused and mistreated, ain't got nobody behind you, you just part of the system, floatin'. If you got money, you can get out of trouble; you po' likeme and ain't got nothin', you gonna always be down in the gutter. You gonna get jammed one way or the other, whether you got money or whether you don't. Poor people catch hell.

JULIE: Tryin' to get it.

JACKI: Tryin' to get money and survive, and then when you go out, when you leave outa here, try to get a decent damn job.

JULIE: So what's wrong with tryin' to make a little piece of money to survive, pay my rent, pay my car an' all? You know? It's my body, you know? I can do with it, you know, as I please. There ain't nothing wrong with it; just tryin' to get some money and live, that's all.

DIANE: Maybe it's why I be out there, I can't get a job. And it's

not because of the education, because I got my education. It's just -- race. I don't want to discuss that, but...(laughing)...how it was! Okay, you can go to a job and, say, the boss, he's a white man, okay? He might not want you because of your complexion. 'Cause you can be the brightest person there, and he still won't accept you. Okay, now, I know a lot of people who've been working on one job for fifteen to twenty years, my whole lifetime, and haven't had a raise or nothin'. But they break they necks every day to get somethin'. So I say like this: I'm gonna do what I got to do to survive, and if it take me to sell my body, I'm gonna do it, if the police like it, if the mayor, the President, or anybody else. I'm gonna live.

JULIE: It's only normal for a man to date a woman, you know? If he ain't satisfied at home or somethin', you know, he sees you on the street, if it's the only way he can get you by paying for it, he gonna do it. Any man, you know? All kinds of men. I've had 'em from fifteen to, you know, ninety. You know? There's millions of 'em. You know?

JACKI: I don't see anything wrong with it.

JULIE: There's nothin' wrong with it.

JACKI: Long as somebody ain't gettin' hurt in the process, or gettin' robbed or killed like a lot of girls.

JULIE: I know, you know I'm honest about it, I don't...

(Guards gathering inmates for lunch. Radio in background.)

GUARD: Lunch, ladies!

RADIO NEWSCASTER: ...and in Miami, eighty-two degrees Fahrenheit, twenty-eight degrees Celsius.

(General commotion among inmates on the way to lunch. Radio music.)

(At lunch.)

FIRST INMATE: I was fightin', you know, so I mean we had a fight, I was goin' to her and started pullin' this officer trying to break us up, so he got cut. So I'm doin' time for that.

MOYERS: What's the worst kind of punishment you can have in here?

SECOND INMATE: Locked up.

THIRD INMATE: No, safety cell. They got a safety cell, and you don't got no clothes, no nothin'.

MOYERS: A safety cell.

THIRD INMATE: Yes.

SECOND INMATE: Third floor.

THIRD INMATE: Don't take no bath but once a week.

MOYERS: And they put you in there for two weeks?

SECOND INMATE: Yeah. After that the girl went to prison. She was



still in there.

MOYERS: You've been in here a year?

SECOND INMATE: A year -- going on a year. Thirteen months now.

MOYERS: How long are you going to be here?

SECOND INMATE: I don't know, I don't have no time yet.

MOYERS: What's the charge?

FIRST INMATE: Murder.

MOYERS: Murder? First degree?

SECOND INMATE: It was, and then they dropped it to second.

MOYERS: How old are you?

SECOND INMATE: Twenty-one. See, I got cuts and scars (unintelligible). I was defendin' me.

MOYERS: You were pregnant in jail.

FOURTH INMATE: I was pregnant in jail, that was the second time I had been in jail. See, I had thirty-three counts of worthless checks, because I was a heroin junkie and I supported my second husband's habit also. And I was writing -- it started out the checks were covered, but then, to a certain point...after that, you know, we didn't have funds in the bank to cover 'em. And since I was an addict, I just -- wrote checks.

(Separate interview.)

MOYERS: Tell me, what kind of conditions did you live in?

DOROTHEA: I was just a rotten egg, you know? My parents did everything they -- they could for me. There was a lot of hostility in my family. My mother and father argued quite a bit. More than quite a bit.

MOYERS: How'd you get started?

DOROTHEA: Think I stole something. Yeah, that's my problem, I can't keep my hands off of other people's stuff. I don't know, I seem to feel that if you have money and you get caught stealing, they say that you're a kleptomaniac; if you're poor, you're a thief. I mean, that's how I feel, you know.

MOYERS: How many children do you have?

DOROTHEA: Eight.

MOYERS: Eight kids?

DOROTHEA: Yeah.

MOYERS: Who's taking care of them?

DOROTHEA: Protective Services has two of them, and my oldest son, he takes care of the rest of them.

MOYERS: How old is he?

DOROTHEA: Fourteen.

MOYERS: And the others range down from fourteen.

DOROTHEA: Yeah, down from fourteen.

MOYERS: Is there an adult in the house with them?

DOROTHEA: No.

MOYERS: They're by themselves?

DOROTHEA: Well, like I say, my oldest son is there -- my oldest son, he got, I guess, by me being in and out of jail most of his early life, he ...forgot to be a little boy, he just came from infant to -- you may as well say adulthood. I mean, well, I guess with a mother who's been in and out of jail he had to, you know? And I'm proud of him for that.

MOYERS: What -- is it likely that they'll...they'll wind up here?

DOROTHEA: Uh -- with my fourteen-year-old it's hard to say. I don't think he'll ever turn to drugs, because he...he hates the idea that I've been on drugs. He...he knows what it can do to a family, you know? Like it's turned my whole life upside down. It's taken my family away from me.

MOYERS: Well, how do you stop the cycle of crime? How do you stop doing what you're doing?

DOROTHEA: It depends upon how early in a person's life you catch them. A hard-core junkie like they say I am -- I've been on drugs for fifteen years -- it's hard to stop. It's -- it's easy for a person who's never been on drugs to say, "Hey, that's it, you know, let's stop." But if that person has never went through withdrawals, if that person has never cold-turkeyed, felt it, it's a feeling no one can explain. You know, you can read about it, yeah, but reading about it is one thing and experiencing it is another. That's the hard part. You have -- oh, my mother, my father, my kids have always: "Momma, stop, please stop." "Yeah, okay, that's it." I'd swear off. Ten minutes later I'm somewhere with a spike in my arm, you know? You have to want to stop.

MOYERS (over sequence showing inmates going to work on landscaping): While serving time, trusted inmates are permitted to work on county landscaping. They are paid the minimum wage. For some of them, it is their first real job.

DOROTHEA: I never -- I don't like to take orders, for one thing, and whenever someone told me something to do, I did just the opposite. But what I am telling myself is that even though stealing is fast money, the consequences if I get caught -- and eventually you will get caught -- is jail. What they're trying to do here is prepare you for work on the outside. And on a legitimate job the money may be slow, but I got my freedom and I've learned to value my freedom a hell of a lot.

MOYERS: Out here.

DOROTHEA: Out here, yeah.

MOYERS: How do you like this kind of work?

DOROTHEA: I -- it gets me out of the facility, so I like it. I like -- it gives me a better sense of freedom. The jail gives me a sense of freedom where, you know, there's no bars, you know. Even though you know you're locked up, you can't go out the front door when you're ready, you don't feel so closed in where bars and more -- or less lenient restrictions, you know? I feel -- well, in my particular case I see girls coming in and out for grand larceny or grand theft and they're sentenced to sixty days. I got sentenced with petty larceny to a year. At the time I think the judge felt that he was right. I think he did what he thought he had to do. I had an extensive past, but I don't think you should be sentenced on your past, you know? I did that, I paid for it, that should be it, you know? All of us at one time or another have did things that we don't want to hang on the line and let the neighbors or someone else see, we don't want to air these things out. Unfortunately, there are some people who think that your past should be strapped on your back and always be a part of you. I don't think that; I don't think so.

MOYERS: Can you go straight?

DOROTHEA: It's easy to say yeah, but it's hard to do it. I want to go straight; I know I have the ability, the initiative to go straight, but ...I'm going to try, that's all. I don't like to make promises that I can't keep.

(In cell. Inmates watching TV.)

FIRST INMATE: It's gonna be a boring weekend, ain't it?

SECOND INMATE: Yeah.

THIRD INMATE: Yeah. They'll be here all weekend.

SECOND INMATE: I'll be here tomorrow.

MARTHA: I say whenever I come to jail and I know I have to stay, I try to get involved with another woman.

TELESA: But nine out of ten, you could tell the ones that really want to get involved, because even when they come to jail, it could be their first time, you could tell. You know, nobody's crazy. You could tell if they want to be bothered. And then you could tell if you don't, and then a lot of them is very outspoken like we are, they tell you from jump what it is, and they never have been here before. But it's nothin' that nobody make you do or nothin' like that, you have to -- that have to come from you.

MARTHA: And I'm not gonna let the time do me, and I'm gonna do the time. And I'm gonna make my environment as pleasant to me as possible, you know? Because I got -- you know, I only have so much control over what happens to me while I'm in here. So the little things that I can do to satisfy my personal needs, I'm gonna do them. I'm not gonna force myself on anybody, and I don't want anyone to fear me because I am bisexual. You know? But I enjoy myself as much as possible and whenever possible, without bein' caught. You know? But if I should get caught, I just hope that they don't stop me before I reach my climax.

(Laughter.)

TELESA: If two women get caught in the act, what do they do, the officers here? You go to the safety cell, and then you go to the disciplinary hearin' they have downstairs, which is a little kangaroo court, and they determine the time that you stay in the safety cell. And then there's sometimes, it all depends on who the officer is that catches you. Sometimes she don't even...report it -- huh? (Laughs.)

(In Social Services.)

TELESA: You're a damn liar! (Crying.) You're talking about what Miss Milton probably told you! And you goin' for what she told you, you wouldn't even let me come and hear what was goin' on!

MRS. CASTELLANOS: Yes, I did.

TELESA: No you didn't! I set right there and asked!

CASTELLANOS: You were outside when I called Miss Milton.

TELESA: I was sittin' right down, said, Miss Christie, can I go in there and hear what they got to say!

CASTELLANOS: No one told me that you wanted to go in.

TELESA: Yeah, well, nobody never do nothin' when it's us!

CASTELLANOS: That's not the truth, Telesa. We all...

TELESA: She heard me, this lady heard me when I asked could I come in there.

CASTELLANOS: No one went in there and told me that you wanted to get in.

TELESA: I asked Miss Christie right there, didn't I? I said, Could I go in and see what they have to say, she said, Let me ask Miss Castellanos. Well, that's not my fault, I asked!

CASTELLANOS: No, I did not hear her. Miss Milton said that she was standing by the door. You said that she was watching TV.

STAFF MEMBER: Did you let her read that?

CASTELLANOS: Yeah.

STAFF MEMBER: The statement?

CASTELLANOS: You bet, and she said the nurse did curse at her before, that the...

TELESA: And this is not our first time even gettin' into it together, me and Miss Pruitt. Why all of a sudden she want to write me up? (Crying.) I'm sick of these stupid damn jail (unintelligible), I don't need the law or Miss Pruitt or nobody else!

MISS MILTON (reading report): "Nurse Pruitt reported to Sergeant Dillon when she went to pod 2A1 Inmate Moore asked her for APC medication. When told by Nurse Pruitt that it was not carried on medical cart, gave Moore two Tylenol tablets, Moore became -- began using obscene language and grabbed the Tylenol from Nurse Pruitt's hand with such force that

Moore broke a fingernail on the nurse's hand."

TELESA: She tellin' a damn lie.

MILTON: "Until a disciplinary hearing can be held, Moore is placed on a complete cell restriction, with a recommendation that she remain on complete cell restriction for a period of one week." Okay, here's the report from the nurse which says the same thing. You want me to read that one?

TELESA: Well, why she didn't put down what she said to me before I said something to her, and this is not our first time gettin' into it. Why she just now write it up? And they came back to ask me was my hand scratched, Miss Milton did. If I was gonna do somethin' to her, I woulda went on and knocked her in her mouth.

CASTELLANOS: Okay, well, I have to call some of the witnesses in here first, okay?

TELESA: It don't make no diff-- anything I do I'll admit to it; yes, I did curse her out, and yes I did snatch the Tylenols. And she made the remark to me first.

(Moyers and Davis walking in hallways of jail.)

MOYERS: A lot of people would like to put these women out of sight, out of mind.

DAVIS: Um-hm. And you can't, because they keep coming back, and they keep, you know, putting fences against you, and you just can't forget them, they're there. And you need to deal with them and you need to open your eyes to it and we need to start saying, well, what can we do to turn that around, to change that? When you build a facility like this, you take the philosophy of rehabilitation in that you can work with a person that they, yes, they can change and that they can improve their sense of self-worth. By and large we find in many of our offenders, the women in particular, have a very low self-concept. You can work on that. You can say, Yes, you're a worthwhile person, yes, you can do something.

(In classroom.)

BRENNA: So, it is right there, you know, and this will pacify my need for right now.

JUNE, Staff Member: You are, whatever, involved in crime because of a need that arose? Is that what everybody's saying?

IRENE: That's where my conflict was, because I couldn't hang out with the 'telligent people because half of the time I didn't understand their vocabulary, you know? So I just -- finally I found the group that would accept me, so I went to them. That's how I got into gettin' high. Then of course, like she said, one thing led to another. Before I knew it I was out rippin' and stealin' for everything I could get. In the long run you lose.

ISABELLE: You know, when I was through ripping somebody off that I knew had a lot of money, I felt good about it, I really did. I felt, you know, they got more than they can handle, they're not going to care, you know. They'll write it off as an insurance loss, and what's the big deal? You know, my mother's never forgiven me; she used to collect laces, you

know, back in Cuba. Here it's a hard thing to collect, you know? And... I ripped them all off, and sold them all to this lady. And you know, to her that really hurt her, but it just -- for some reason, at that point in my life -- you know, now I feel really guilty about it and I, you know, would do anything to get them back -- but at that point it was like, you know...here's a stab in the back for you for the way you've been stabbing me in the back. Whether you meant to or not, you did, and I'm hurt and I'm suffering because of it. So here's one for you.

BRENNA: It was -- my thing was selling drugs, okay? I had to feed me, okay? My mother took care of my child for me, she always have. But I felt I was grown, right? and I wanted a job on my own. Okay, but I didn't have, you know, the skills and whatever that they needed, okay? I could do a job, okay? but right then the need was: All right, you sign out an application, I'll call you tomorrow. Okay? All right, but then I have to eat then. I'm hungry then. Okay? My thing is, hey, if I take this dope bag and put it in my hand, you know, God, I'm gonna have this money to feed me from now on.

JUNE: When you're on the streets with this knowledge that police know you and they know your past and they're always going to assume that you've, like Sally said, either got a gun or got some dope, how do you handle that? I mean, what do you do? Are they looking for you? Are they trying to bust you?

BRENNA: Man, you know, they might as well give you, say, hey, I'm sentencin' you for life, 'cause it's gonna follow you for that long.

(Separate interview.)

MOYERS: How many times have you been here?

BRENNA: Three times.

MOYERS: When was the first time? How old were you the first time?

BRENNA: I had just had my baby, I was -- eighteen. I was eighteen. My mother was the sole provider, and she has nine girls. You know, one bedroom, two bedrooms like little sweatboxes full of people livin', tryin' to work, everybody stayin' about eight or nine in one room...each tryin' to see that the other eat, sleep and is warm; you know. You know, it's just that environment, and everyone is tryin' to make it one way or another. Everyone is tryin' to survive.

MOYERS: The first time you were here for an accessory to robbery. What brought you back the second time?

BRENNA: Heroin.

MOYERS: Were you hooked yourself?

BRENNA: Yeah, at the time, yeah.

MOYERS: How long?

BRENNA: I stayed on drugs for four years.

MOYERS: How long has it been since you had a....

BRENNA: Two. And if you add that up, that's six years, and Ernie's only seven.

MOYERS: Six years of his life out of seven...

BRENNA: Right.

MOYERS: He's had a mother who's been....

BRENNA: He had a mother he only knew by name.

MOYERS: What chance is there for him?

BRENNA: A very slim chance.

(At gate.)

GUARD: Who do you want to visit?

VISITOR: Brenna Gordon.

GUARD (on two-way radio): Control? Are they ready for contact visiting?

VOICE ON RADIO: Let me check.

(Inside.)

WOMAN: Go on now...turn around there. Go on.

BRENNA: Okay, Ernie, gimme a kiss. When they ask you where I'm at, what do you tell them?

ERNIE: Like a jailhouse.

BRENNA: You don't like to hear 'em say I'm in jail? How that make you feel?

ERNIE: Sad.

BRENNA: Sad? You don't want me to be in jail? I'm not gonna be in jail for long, and I'm gonna come back for a long time, okay? Now, I want you to stop lookin' at me as your sister and look at me as your mommy. I am your mommy, you know. Ernest?

ERNIE: Hm.

BRENNA: You do know that, don't you? You look just like me. I want you to be with me, Ernie, I love you.

(With Moyers.)

BRENNA: I just pray that I can some way relate to him and let him know, you know, why I did some of the things that I did, and why he was always pushed off on my mom to take care of him and why I was always locked up.

MOYERS: When you got pregnant with Ernie, did you want to?

BRENNA: When I got pregnant with Ernie? No. (Laughs.) It just happened. And...it was nothin' I could do, it happened, and I tried to

evade the issue for a long time that I was pregnant, and, you know, hid it from my mom. It's like you don't think that far ahead, you know. For that moment is for that moment, you know. You live for that moment and then all of a sudden here's a child and you don't know what to do. I was in a dream where, you know, I was gonna buy me a business and then I was just gonna stop livin' in the streets, and that was gonna be it, I was gonna live happily ever after. Hmph.

MOYERS: What happened?

BRENNA: My balloon got popped, that's what happened. It's just that ...in order to make that easy money you put yourself in a lot of danger. You end up comin' to jail, and you end up gettin' tagged for life.

(Shots of closed circuit monitors, staff and inmate activity around jail.)

RADIO ANNOUNCER (over scenes): The Disco 15 weather forecast for today is sunny, highs in the upper 70s and lows in the upper 60s. More music with Disco 15. (Music.)

SKYJACKER (with Moyers): I was arrested in Jamaica about...four months ago, I've been here for four months, on a 1972 warrant for air piracy and kidnapping.

MOYERS: Hijacking?

SKYJACKER: Yeah.

MOYERS: It could be up to fifteen years, though, couldn't it?

SKYJACKER: Well, yes it -- well, I've taken a plea of guilty, and I would be given no more than a maximum of ten years, due to the circumstances surrounding my particular case. They do believe that a maximum sentence is not necessary, so I can't get more than ten years.

MOYERS: You had a child in prison.

SKYJACKER: Yes, I did. My daughter's cared for by some people that I know here in Miami, and it's extremely hard to have a child in prison. I don't think -- I don't think a woman should be forced to go through it, I think there should be some sort of alternative, some sort of alternative to the jail environment.

MOYERS: What is likely to happen to that child?

SKYJACKER: Well, the future is really vague, her future. Being in jail or having been in jail is a social stigma. It's something that's going to be brought out to her at a later date in a number of circumstances. She's well aware of it now; she's only five, she's intelligent and she's perceptive, like most children are. She knows perfectly well where I am, and -- I don't think she's too clear on why I'm here, but she does know where I am. And I can tell that it's affecting her now.

MOYERS: It is affecting her. How?

SKYJACKER: Um -- it's funny. She's a strong little girl, and you can only see it in her eyes. She doesn't cry when she leaves me. She tends to look away, rather, and I can tell that she's built up a whole



bunch of defense mechanisms just in these past few months. She realizes that I'm in a really negative situation, and she sees me in a jail environment.

MOYERS: Did all of this occur to you at the time, in 1972, when you took part in the hijacking?

SKYJACKER: Well, I didn't have a daughter at that time, and I really can't explain that without going into all the circumstances of my case, which we don't want here. Um...

MOYERS: But did it occur to you, then, when you got pregnant?

SKYJACKER: Well, that's another thing...that was really unavoidable at the time. Like I say, we can't go into that, but my pregnancy was an unavoidable thing due to where I was and the fact that there weren't any contraceptives and, you know, basic things like that.

MOYERS: It happened in jail, in prison.

SKYJACKER: Right, right.

MOYERS: In Cuba.

SKYJACKER: Yes, it was the first visit that I had had for eight months. I had had no communication with the outside world, was never given a lawyer, did not know the time I was going to be in jail, did not know where my ex-husband I divorced was, had not received a letter for eight months, and I was allowed a visit with him.

(Inmates and visitors talking through glass windows.)  
FIRST INMATE: Yeah, man -- ohh.

SECOND INMATE: Stephanie, you miss me?

FIRST VISITOR: Say bye-bye. Tell her bye-bye. Bye-bye.

SECOND INMATE: See? See?

INMATE (over scene in visiting room): Nobody likes to do time. I'll never get used to doin' time. I hate it. I don't be-- I don't belong here. You know? I'm not the type of person, I'm all right. I don't... need this, man, it's a drag. See my old man, think about, wow, if I woulda did this instead of that I wouldna been here.

VOICE OVER P.A. SYSTEM: The following residents will be eligible for visitation from three to four this afternoon: Tammy McCowan, Letricia Mc-Birney, Gloria Martinez, Maria Medina...

SECOND VISITOR: Hey. I'm goin' over to the bank to get you \$200 to get you a lawyer.

THIRD VISITOR: He went to get you a lawyer.

SECOND VISITOR: I -- when you say you need a lawyer, that's when I go to the bank and get \$200. You know what happened. I didn't go to get it, I went to get you \$200 to get you a lawyer 'cause you said you wanted one.

THIRD VISITOR: He say he be back down here Monday.

INMATE: Huh?

THIRD VISITOR: He say he gonna come back down here Monday.

INMATE: Huh?

THIRD VISITOR: He say he gonna come back down here Monday.

INMATE: Bea, I'll see you, baby.

THIRD VISITOR: Yeah, I'll see you Monday.

INMATE: Okay, you be good now. Bye.

(Over visiting room scene.)

MOYERS: What goes through your mind?

INMATE: Home -- think about the kids, think about my man. You know, just wantin' to be free, because being in jail is not -- you know, it's no fun, being locked up. But you try to do the best with what you, you know, what you have. So I just lie there and think, a lotta nights I just lay awake; you know, when it's raining, that's the time I like to look out the window, so I think, you know, wow, I wish I was home, I didn't have to be here.

MOYERS (with Davis): Tell me what you saw the first day you came to the old facility.

DAVIS: (Laughing.) Well, the old facility was long hallways with bars going down the hallways. And the captain -- Captain Gallagher happened to be his name -- met me on the first day at work and showed me through the place. And all I can remember is walking down these gray, dingy halls, solid wall along this side, bars along this side, and all these arms coming out of the bars, like this -- "Captain, Captain Gallagher, can I have a cigarette?" Just, you know, like being in a zoo with caged animals that were just thriving for -- you know, the foodkeeper was there with the food. It was just...the kind of sight you don't want to see people in, you know. It's not the kind of values about human beings that you want to treat them like they're animals in a zoo and...

MOYERS: Even criminals.

DAVIS: Even criminals, you know. And I don't care what kind of offense they've committed.

(Jacki singing, over shot of safety cell.)

JACKI: Trouble of this world,  
Soon my Lord's comin'  
To this trouble of this world.  
I'm goin' home to live  
With the Lord.

There will be no weepin' or wailing,  
There will be no weepin' or wailing,  
Weepin' or wailing.  
I'm goin' home to live  
With the Lord.

I want to see, to see my mother.  
I want to see, to see my mother.  
Lord, I just want to see my mother,  
I want to go home to live, to live  
With my dear Lord.

INMATE: Praise the Lord! Give her a hand! (Applause from others.)

(Evangelical service.)

EVANGELIST: You may get a high offa cocaine or heroin, but honey, you gonna come down after a while! (Applause from congregation.) Hallelujah! But the blood that Jesus shed on Calvary reaches to the highest mountain and it flows to the lowest valley! (Clapping, singing.) Oh, do you know...

ALL: Oh, do you know...

EVANGELIST: Oh, do you know...

ALL: Oh, do you know...

EVANGELIST: Who Jesus is...

ALL: Who Jesus is...

EVANGELIST: Who Jesus is...

ALL: Who Jesus is. Oh, he's the man that (inaudible) ten thousand, that's why everybody ought to know.

EVANGELIST: ...praise the Lord!

ALL: Praise the Lord.

EVANGELIST: Praise the Lord!

ALL: Praise the Lord.

EVANGELIST: Halleluja! Renew that mind, my God. Regenerate, my God! In the name of Jesus. Don't let her go outa here the same person, my God! But all sin out, my God! With a new mind, my God! With a new heart, oh, God! To do Thy will, in Jesus' name. Halleluja! Oh, dear God, in the precious name of Jesus, look on this young woman, Lord. We thank you for her, Lord God, we want you to look on her, Lord, we want you to stir her, my God (inaudible). Whatever her reason is, Lord, stir up that spirit that is within her. (Girl falls on floor.) Thank you, Master.

I...

ALL: I...

EVANGELIST: ...was the vessel...

ALL: ...was the vessel...

EVANGELIST: I prayed...

ALL: I prayed...

EVANGELIST: I said, Lord...

ALL: I said, Lord...

EVANGELIST: ...you are the Potter...

ALL: ...you are the Potter...

EVANGELIST: I'm the clay.

ALL: I'm the clay.

EVANGELIST: Make me over, Jesus.

ALL: Make me over, Jesus.

EVANGELIST: Make me over, Jesus!

ALL: Make me over, Jesus.

EVANGELIST: Lord, do it today.

ALL: Lord, do it today.

EVANGELIST: God bless you, God love you.

(Staff member pushing drug wagon through hallway.)

INMATE (from cell): Fuck you, you goddam son of a motherfuckin' (inaudible) son of a bitch. You're goddam right. Ease up. God (inaudible). Fuck you. More power. More power to the Black Panthers, you goddam blue-eyed son of a motherfuckin'...

GUARD: Arlene? Sabrina! Anybody else?

SECOND INMATE: Nurse? I need somethin' to put me to sleep.

GUARD: I'm sorry, darling. Here's five milligrams of sleepin' medicine. (Laughs.) You got your water?

SECOND INMATE: Yeah.

GUARD: Okay.

INMATE (from cell): I want my sixty-eight dollars for that, you goddam Jewfish! Fuck you! You goddam blue-eyed green-eyed son of a mother...

VOICE OVER P.A. SYSTEM: Control, we have Miss Grimes ready at the (inaudible) lobby.

SECOND VOICE: Right. There's someone coming up now, to the second floor office to try to get her on up to three. (Paging): Second floor?

THIRD VOICE: Second floor.

SECOND VOICE: I'm coming up the B elevator for you. Send Miss Dinggell on up to three.

(Scenes of rehab program -- sewing, typing, exercise, volleyball.)

MOYERS (over scenes): One of your main purposes here is to rehabilitate.

DAVIS: Yes, we like to think that. (Laughs.) Again, there's a whole value about rehabilitation, and often the public says, well, rehabilitation doesn't work.

MOYERS: That's the cliché you hear.

DAVIS: And people say, well, you can't -- you know, it's not worth your time and effort to provide programs for people while they're in jail. Why not? You've got them, why let them waste months of their lives just sitting and rotting?

MOYERS: And that's why you try to make this as pleasant an environment as possible.

DAVIS: Well, it's a pleasant environment because, you know, you don't treat people as animals and, you know, throw 'em in a hole and forget about 'em. So yes, it's pleasant in that, but they're still isolated. You know, they're still incarcerated, they're still kept away from their families and their friends and their ability to go downtown and see the movie on Saturday night. So they are locked up, and that's an ever-present awareness here, that this is an institution. No matter how nice of an institution, it is an institution.

MOYERS: And they've still lost their freedom.

DAVIS: And they've still lost their freedom, and they're still locked away. But while they are locked away we should do something with 'em and for them.

TUTOR (in math class): Three into three?

INMATE: One, ten, one.

TUTOR: All right. Both factors that was in our parentheses here. All right. One times one is what?

INMATE: One.

TUTOR: Times three. See our sign here? Our multiplication sign, our raised dot?

MOYERS (over rehab program shots): This jail does try. Of forty-four women who have finished one of its special rehabilitation programs, only three have returned to jail. Much of the effort is basic -- reading, writing and 'rithmetic.

EXERCISE INSTRUCTOR: Three...four...five...

MOYERS (over scenes): All these efforts are unusual. Most women offenders who are held in jails in this country receive no education, no vocational training, little recreation, and no services for greater self-dependence on release.

(Volleyball scene.)

(Cosmetology class. Radio music in background.)

DEBORA: Well, from here I go to prison for eighteen months. Why? Oh, attempted burglary, possession of burglary tools and burglary. (Pause.)

Well, I can't say I'm really guilty, and I can't say I'm innocent. But for the charges they have me now, I feel like I was innocent, but the way I got my eighteen months, I plea-bargained for 'em. They wanted to give me five years on one of my cases, five on the other and fifteen maximum if I would have took it to trial. So bein' as my husband is locked up right now, couldn't have got no lawyer, you know, a good lawyer, so I had a P.D. If I would have took it to trial, even though if it would have came out as me bein' innocent, it's...it's really up to the judge, state attorney, it ain't, you know, whether you're innocent or not. If they want -- they don't go by what you were arrested, what you are bein' charged for, what you are bein' tried for, they go by your prior record. So I think they -- you know, like it's a sayin', you know, if you got money, money talks an' bullshit walks. So if you ain't got no money, I feel like you... you're up the creek. If you ain't got no damn money, you just -- fucked up, you know, bein' in here, till these people decide to let you go or whatever they decide to do with you.

I don't think I'm gonna be able to get no job, with a record that I've been to prison before. And I'm only nineteen, and I've been to prison twice. So I don't think that's gonna be no big help. I don't think these eighteen months is gonna slow me down. When I get out again I'm gonna be just as wide open as I was when I came in here. This is how I feel now, you know. Can't predict the future, I don't know how I'll feel when I do get out. But the way I feel now, if they was to let me out the door right now, I'd go right to the grove and get high.

(Booking room.)

INMATE: Debora, tell Val I'm goin' to BCI.

DEBORA: Okay. Right.

GUARD (to inmate being handcuffed): Now, the only thing about that is, try not to pull on 'em too much, 'cause...

DEBORA (over scene): What did I want to do? Have money. Hustle. It wasn't for kicks, it was for money. Yeah, you take a risk. In other words, you're throwin' bricks at the penitentiary, that's what I feel like. Yeah, well, it's a gamble. Every day you wake up in the mornin', life is a gamble. You know you gonna gamble somethin'.

(In dining room.)

SERGEANT DILLON, Correctional Officer: Miami is a high crime rate area. We get all the narcotics pouring into Miami from, oh, South America. You, you have the same faces coming in all the time, year in, year out, year in. Doesn't bother them.

MOYERS: You got any answers? You've been at this longer than anybody I've talked to.

DILLON: Yes. I think they should build more prisons and put your career criminal into jail. Your repeated felony offender. Put them in to jail. Put them in there for five years, ten years. These are felons, they're robbers, armed robbery.

MOYERS: What about the argument that is often made, Officer, that prisons don't heal, prisons don't change, prisons...

DILLON: What are you going to do, keep six and seven locks on your doors when they put these people out in the streets again?

MOYERS: Is there hope for rehabilitation?

DILLON: They change some, but when they get out in ten months and go back to the same environment, they go back into narcotics, crime, and so forth.

MOYERS: So you could paint the walls here and feed them well for ten months, but out there it's what they had before.

DILLON: That's right.

MOYERS: I know a lot of people out there are getting tired of crime, scared.

DILLON: Tired of crime, why I never -- a country like America! You have to put six locks on your doors, you can't go out in the afternoon, you're afraid. And at night it's a jungle, you can't go anywhere. What's the government doing about it?

MOYERS: What should the government do?

DILLON: I think the government should build more prisons, as I say, for the career felony criminal. Take 'em off the streets, maybe we can take one or two locks off our doors.

MOYERS: Would you put 'em in prisons like this?

DILLON: Yes, I think everybody deserves a decent, humane place to live.

MOYERS: Even a criminal.

DILLON: Even a criminal. We had to come out of the dungeons.

MOYERS: This is certainly out of the dungeons.

DILLON: Yes it is. A far cry.

(In hallways.)

DAVIS: We're just absolutely one link in the chain and it's the kind of commitment that the community needs to make to their local jails and to their institutions and then to the people who they turn out.

MOYERS: But community after community is saying: We don't have the money. We can't afford it.

DAVIS: What do you mean they can't -- they can't afford not to. You know, you just cannot afford not to do something for these people and provide them some opportunities to express this. Otherwise they're going to go back and your crime is going to continue.

MOYERS: But the critics say they're going back anyway.

DAVIS: But they're not necessarily. You haven't hired them, you haven't trained them and you haven't given them the opportunity, you know? That's that philosophy again that they're not worthwhile. They are.

(In cell. Inmates looking in newspaper.)

IRENE: You know, like I'm gonna go to that unemployment place, and

they said that they have a federal program that'll -- that'll bond me. You know, make me bonded so I can work with the money or whatever's involved with the case. Man, you wouldn't believe how many jobs are in the paper. This is just insurance.

BRENNNA: They always be in the paper when you locked up. (Laughing.)

IRENE: Well, that's just the first page, and I've got two more pages to look through. I'm gonna have to tell them that I've been incarcerated and all that, but -- got a lot of people backin' me up. But you know, if they give me a chance to prove myself, that's the whole thing.

(Booking room. General confusion of activity.)

MOYERS: What are you in for?

NEW INMATE: Hm?

MOYERS: What have they got you for?

INMATE: Violation of probation.

MOYERS: Have you been here before?

INMATE: Yes.

MOYERS: How many times?

INMATE: How many times have I been arrested, or how many times have I been here?

MOYERS: Both.

INMATE: Well, I've been arrested a total of forty-three times. I was doin' time on this job -- I did a year here.

MOYERS: A year. And you're back.

INMATE: Yes, I'm back. I have five years now.

MOYERS: Need a match? (To other person): Got a match? (To inmate): What were you arrested for?

INMATE: For armed robbery...auto theft...forgery.

MOYERS: Why did you do those?

INMATE: Why did I do it? Money. And I like the excitement; it's exciting, you know, if you get away. When you get away it's exciting, but when you get caught it's....

MOYERS: You've been caught now forty-three times.

INMATE: Well. But I don't have convictions for forty-three times.

MOYERS: How many times convicted?

INMATE: Four. It's not bad.



MOYERS: What's it like, coming back here?

INMATE: What's it like, you mean, how you feel?

MOYERS: Yeah. Routine?

INMATE: Yeah.

MOYERS: In other words, no surprises this time.

INMATE: No.

MOYERS: How long do you think you'll stay?

INMATE: In jail? Oh, about nine months.

MOYERS: And then?

INMATE: Home.

MOYERS: And then?

INMATE: School.

MOYERS: And then?

INMATE: Street.

(Freeze frame of inmate.)

MOYERS (on camera): When the producers Benjamin and I set out on this project, we discovered that almost no film has been done on the subject. Women in prison haven't been a great priority. And now, given our fear, frustration and anger about crime, they're in for more neglect. But even in visiting a good jail -- if there really is such a thing -- you have to ask if all these women should be inside. Most of them are here for nonviolent crimes, and jails don't cure drug addicts of their sickness or prostitutes of their enterprise. Neither do they keep women from repeating, or their children from imitating, their mistakes. The rest of us don't seem to learn much from jails, either. Where is the early warning system that would help us to detect young people in trouble and come to their aid before they come here? Who pays attention? Why do we have to wait for the same class of people to commit crimes over and over again? Where's the system for dealing with their children? Why are most of the women who come here poor? And who cares, anyway?

Difficult questions. But surely a civilized society will keep pressing for the answers until it finds a better alternative than jail, for the children left waiting, and for the women inside. I'm Bill Moyers.