

## Film Review

### ***Concrete, Steel & Paint***

Reviewed by Yvonne Combs



*Concrete, Steel & Paint* begs the viewer to examine the details of institutions, interaction, identity and inequality. For a sociologist, it doesn't get much better than this. The film's focus on prison experiences underscores the imposed isolation and impact of "total institutions." Its examination of the transition from captivity to freedom suggests an important concern with social justice

In *Concrete, Steel & Paint* community members who were victims of crime come together with prison inmates to create a mural that tells the story of prisoners and their victims. As a result of their different experiences and, therefore, perspectives, they agree that a single mural cannot tell both stories accurately. Both groups ultimately agree to create separate murals representing their opposing realities. Throughout these negotiations, offenders and victims begin to create a dialogue that, in part, transcends their respective positions. As one prisoner notes, "We are all human beings."

As the group comprised of "victims" begin the search for a wall to display their separate mural, they create a new identity being referred to as "wall hunters." Again identity becomes a key focus of this experience. Both groups seek to define themselves independent of one another. Their universal purpose is to create the mural for the community and transcend the boundaries of everyday life in prison. For some, there is a hope that they might make some degree of restitution for their crime, usually murder. For them, the mural "is a way to give back." From the standpoint of the victims, there is the expectation that the mural project will help them "heal" from the chaos and pain created as a result of the prisoners' crimes. The filmmakers' detailed account of the murals' construction process portrays them as a bridge between offender and victim; between the lived sociology of incarceration and freedom of movement experienced by the victims.

While every sociologist interested in redemption, social justice and prison reform will be glad to add *Concrete, Steel & Paint* to their film library all sociologists no matter their perspective will find the film useful. The film can be used as an excellent tool to teach the recurrent themes of institutions, interaction, identity and inequality. In this respect, the film has a universal and sociological appeal to even the most skeptical social science scholar.

You can learn more about *Concrete, Steel & Paint* at <http://concretefilm.org/>

## News & Announcements

### **ASA Pre-Conference Seminar**

The 2012 ASA Section on Teaching and Learning Pre-Conference Workshop, "**The Art at the Heart of Learner-Centered Teaching**", will be held from 8:00am to 5:00pm on Thursday August 16, 2012 in Denver, Colorado.

Through engagement with experienced colleagues and with each other, keynotes, panels, discussions, roundtables and networking are designed to provide an integrated learning experience grounded in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

We invite colleagues at the earlier stages of their teaching careers who are particularly dedicated to the science and art of teaching sociology to become part of this community of scholarly teachers.

Acceptances are made on a rolling basis but we would appreciate applications and registration fees no later than June 15, 2012; space is limited to 40 participants but a waiting list will be maintained. A non-refundable \$60 registration fee covers conference materials, programming, and meals. Participants are expected to be Section members of the ASA Section on Teaching and Learning which sponsors this workshop. Early application is appreciated and ensures that there is space for you. The application form is available here.

A separate process for travel grants sponsored by Sage/Pine Forge Press is also available, and information is posted on the Section website and at [www.sage.com](http://www.sage.com). The deadline for travel applications is March 1st, 2012. For information on the travel grants, you may also contact Keith Roberts <[robertsk@hanover.edu](mailto:robertsk@hanover.edu)>

AKD, The International Sociology Honor society also provides travel grants to members. The award covers up to \$1,000 in travel expenses; a maximum of five awards will be made. This award is intended to advance the quality of teaching in the discipline of sociology. It is available to AKD members only and the selection committee will give the highest priority to AKD chapter representatives, especially those who are early in their careers (i.e., untenured assistant professors).

Graduate students who are ABD and within a year of entering the job market are encouraged to apply as well. For more information go to: <http://sites.google.com/site/alphakappadeltainternational/Home/asa-pre-conference-workshop>

Please contact the workshop organizer, Melinda Messineo, [mmessineo@bsu.edu](mailto:mmessineo@bsu.edu) for any additional information.  
We hope you can join us!