



FILM



FORUM

November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Guests: Marylou & Jerome Bongiorno

*Co-sponsored by the Agenda for Education in a Democracy (Center of Pedagogy, CEHS)  
The Inserra Chair in Italian and Italian American Studies,  
The Honors Program and The Montclair Film Institute*

### About **THE RULE: Filmmakers' Statement**

Our home city of Newark, New Jersey has great potential but suffers from the devastating effects of poverty. As a result, since 2007, the city has experienced increases in the murder rate - from 8th to 7th highest in the nation; unemployment - from 9.5 to 14.2%; poverty rate - from 25% to an even more appalling 32%. With a population of 278,000, this means that almost 90,000 Newarkers live in poverty! Therefore, inner city schools, unlike their higher socioeconomic counterparts, are faced with difficult challenges that necessitate providing young people with the tools that counteract the environment of poverty, in order for kids to attain maturity and educational success.

During a tour of **Revolution '67**, we met historian Dr. Tom McCabe, who introduced us to St. Benedict's Prep (SBP). In Newark, where the average high school graduation rate is abysmal, SBP is the exception — with a near 100 percent college acceptance rate for their predominantly African American and Latino young men. In our **THE RULE** feature documentary, we profile the school and the Benedictine monks of Newark Abbey to see how and why they achieve success.

Making this film we learned that, for inner city youth, cognitive skills are impeded by the dysfunctional environment caused by poverty. Inner city schools must be committed to helping students overcome this dysfunction so that the process of education can begin. At SBP, this commitment includes protracted counseling as well as a year-round residence for the most vulnerable students.

We're working with Teachers College, Columbia University to develop a study guide for policymakers and educators that uses **THE RULE** as a vehicle for urban school reform.

While **Revolution '67** explored the causes for the demise of Rust Belt cities like Newark, and **THE RULE** presents the solutions for school reform, the third in our 3Rs Trilogy of films on Urban America is **Rust**, focusing on poverty reduction.

Marylou & Jerome Bongiorno

## Filmmakers:

**Marylou & Jerome Bongiorno** are Emmy-nominated, award winning, husband-and-wife filmmakers who create cutting-edge documentary, fiction, and museum installation art films that are widely distributed.

The Bongiorno film extensively in Newark, NJ, their home city.

Their 3R's documentary trilogy began with *Revolution '67* (screening on STARZ) about the Newark riots/rebellion of 1967; current *The Rule* (released theatrically and on national PBS), tackling urban school reform; and upcoming *Rust*, focusing on solutions to poverty in Newark and other Rust Belt cities. In development are the fiction films: *Ready to Riot*, based on *Revolution '67* - Executive Produced by Spike Lee - and *Monks in the 'Hood*, based on *The Rule*, co-written with Father Albert Holtz.

Their *New Work: Newark in 3D* was installed in Newark Airport as its first art film.

The Bongornos are the recipients of major grants and fellowships and, in 2013 and 2014, were commended by the State of NJ and the City of Newark for their contributions to cinema and public knowledge.

## Panel:

**Co-moderator: Teresa Fiore** is an Associate Professor and Inserra Endowed Chair in Italian and Italian American Studies at Montclair State University. Her articles on 20th-century Italian literature and cinema, Italian American culture, and immigration in Italy have appeared in journals and edited books such as *Teaching Italian American Literature, Film, and Popular Culture* (2010), and *The Cultures of Italian Migration* (2011). On campus, she also coordinates cultural programming in Italian and Italian American Studies through interdisciplinary collaborative events that are fully integrated into the curriculum; cinema plays an important role in this programming ([www.montclair.edu/inserra](http://www.montclair.edu/inserra)).

**Co-moderator: Leslie Wilson** is a professor of American, African American and African History. He has a joint appointment in the Department of History and the Center of Pedagogy. His primary research is on aspects of residential migration and urban life. He is currently is the assistant to the dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and the director of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy, a program which involves developing a shared philosophy on the purpose of public education with current and future educators.

He has worked with the Marylou and Jerome Bongiorno on several projects including their recent Poverty Reduction Program.

**Gregory Waters** is a Professor of English at Montclair State and Director of the University Honors Program. Previously he has served as Deputy Provost, Vice President for University Advancement and Acting President. He regularly teaches classes in American literature, drama and writing on campus and occasionally at universities in China and Austria during the summer.

He graduated from Saint Benedict's in the 1960s, and attributes his interest in teaching, social justice and spiritual development to the work of the Benedictine monks in Newark.

**Fr. Albert Holtz OSB** is a Benedictine monk of Newark Abbey, Newark, NJ. He teaches New Testament in the monastery's inner-city prep school. He has served as master of novices, retreat master for Benedictine communities around the US & is currently Oblate Director. He is the author of *Downtown Monks*, *Street Wisdom*, *Pilgrim Road*, *From Holidays to Holy Days* & *Walking in Valleys of Darkness: A Benedictine Journey through Troubled Times*.

**Roberta Friedman** is an Associate Professor and Coordinator of the Film Program in the School of Communication & Media. She hosts the Film Forum every Tuesday evening inviting film professionals to present their work and talk about themselves and their films. These presentations are free and open to the public.