



## Films For All

### Film series continues with The Rule

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On Sunday, February 2, 2014 Kean Stage Productions presented *The Rule* as part of their 2014 film series. The Jules Schwartz Lecture Hall located in the New Jersey Center for Science Technology and Mathematics Building (STEM), had a great turnout for viewing the Newark-based documentary.



*The Rule* is an eye opening documentary that gives the audience an inside look at how St. Benedict's Prep, an all-boys high school, has grown to have so much success within the city of Newark, New Jersey. The monks of New Jersey's Newark Abbey have taken their model from their religious beliefs known as "The Rule" and have applied it to their high school. Due to this film, their recipe for success has gotten the attention of the Teachers College at Columbia University and will hopefully serve as a model nationwide.

Why does St. Benedict's Prep deserve to be highlighted? Newark public schools have a high school graduation rate of only 22%, while St. Benedict's Prep has a 100% college acceptance rate. Set in a city with high poverty and even higher crime, *The Rule* showcases the amazing success of some of America's most vulnerable youth: inner city Latino males and African Americans.

Graduate student and mother of a current freshman that attends St. Benedict's Prep, Donna White commented on the movie saying, "The movie displays a solution for troubled children. But not all the kids that go there come from troubled or unstable homes... Other than that I think the movie was great."

The film making couple Marylou and Jerome Bongiorno, natives of Newark, wanted to create a film that brought attention to this serious issue. The spiral effect of growing up in poverty creates higher crime rates and students who are less focused on their education. The films website further explains the couple's background in their pursuit of creating the message they wanted to convey. "We spent a year filming at the school, learning that for inner city youth, cognitive skills are impeded by the dysfunctional environment caused by poverty...therefore inner city schools must be committed to helping students overcome this dysfunction so that the process of education can begin." The Monks at St. Benedicts Prep are committed to doing exactly that. Their approach with their students is very unique but not hard to replicate at all. They offer student counseling, an on-campus residence is also available to those who need a more structured living environment.

Current Kean University student Akeem Miller, a sophomore international political science major, was one of the main characters in *The Rule*. As senior class leader, he was in charge of running St. Benedict's Prep on a daily bases with a group of other senior students as well. Miller was chosen for this position, based on many leadership characteristics that he continues to portray. After the showing of the film there was a question and answer session with Miller and the Bongiorno couple. Miller expressed to an audience member, "Had I not gone to St. Benedicts I would have just been a number in another public school." When asked why he decided to attend Kean University, Miller confidently replied, "I chose Kean because I wanted to stay in New Jersey and keep my connections close."

*The Rule* is slated to be televised nationally on PBS sometime in September, 2014 which is just considered another great feat for the film making duo. The film series at Kean University will return again on Sunday, March 30, 2014 at 3p.m. with the showing of *Pictures from Hiroshima School Yard*. For more information about the film series, please visit

[KeanStage.com/seasontickets/international-film.asp](http://KeanStage.com/seasontickets/international-film.asp).