

FRONTLINE

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Pregnancy & Motherhood Behind Bars: "Tutwiler," a New Documentary Short from FRONTLINE (PBS) & The Marshall Project, Streams Online Starting May 6

The newest documentary short from Academy Award-nominated director Elaine McMillion Sheldon will be released online May 6, and will air on WORLD Channel's America Reframed May 19

Tutwiler

Streaming online beginning Wednesday, May 6, 2020 at 7/6c

Broadcasting on WORLD Channel on Tuesday, May 19, 2020 at 8/7c

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What is it like to give birth — and then be forced to say goodbye to your baby 24 hours later?

To most mothers, it's a scenario that's unimaginable. But it's exactly what's facing the dozens of pregnant women behind bars in any given year at Alabama's notorious Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women, most of whom are locked up for drug-related offenses.

Tutwiler, a new documentary short directed by Academy Award-nominated filmmaker Elaine McMillion Sheldon (*Heroin(e)*, *Recovery Boys*) and reported and produced by The Marshall Project's Alysia Santo, offers an unforgettable window into the lives of incarcerated pregnant women — and what happens to their newborns.

Tutwiler will be available to stream digitally on FRONTLINE (PBS) and The Marshall Project's online platforms, on the PBS Video App and on YouTube beginning Wednesday, May 6, in time for Mother's Day. The film will also be broadcast on PBS's *America ReFramed* on May 19 at 8/7c on WORLD Channel.

"At one time we had three generations of women at Tutwiler that were from the same family," Wendy Williams, Ph. D., Deputy Commissioner of Women's Services at Tutwiler said. "And of course we have that concern every time a woman comes to us pregnant: Is this going to be another cycle?"

As the film explores, it's a cycle that the prison, with the help of local non-profits, is trying to break. Long regarded as one of the worst women's prisons in the U.S., Tutwiler is now making changes — including working with the Alabama Prison Birth Project to provide pregnant inmates with support and resources.

"In America, people who are in prison are invisible," says Santo. "Pregnant women who are incarcerated are potentially the most overlooked group of people.... one of the issues that gets overlooked is that when you have women entering prison, what happens to their children or their unborn children?"

Many of these women are survivors of domestic violence and have struggled with substance abuse issues and addiction disorders. Working with a group of doulas, they attend parenting classes, dream up names for their babies, and plan for how they'll maintain their sobriety once they've served their time.

But still, nothing can fully prepare them for what's to come: Once they're taken to a nearby hospital to give birth, they typically get 24 hours with their newborn before being sent back to prison.

As one incarcerated woman says, "When you were locked up your whole pregnancy and it was just you and that baby, and then to walk away from the person that's been there with you, it makes the strongest person break."

As women are now the fastest growing incarcerated population in the U.S., *Tutwiler* is a powerful lens into the reality of pregnancy and parenthood behind bars.

"What we found was much more complex than a black-and-white, good-and-bad story," says Sheldon. "I think it's in many ways the story that other Southern prisons, and prisons across the United States, need to see."

Tutwiler won the audience award at the 2019 [New Orleans Film Festival](#), had its world premiere at [Hot Springs Film Festival](#) in October 2019, and has been chosen for this year's [Full Frame Documentary Film Festival](#).

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Credits

Tutwiler is a WGBH/Frontline Production with The Marshall Project and Requisite Media. The director is Elaine McMillion Sheldon. The reporter and producer is Alysia Santo, The Marshall Project. Edited by Chad Ervin, Elaine McMillion Sheldon. The Executive Producer of Frontline is Raney Aronson-Rath. Frontline is an investigative documentary series on PBS. The Marshall Project is a nonprofit newsroom covering the U.S. criminal justice system.

About Frontline

Frontline, U.S. television's longest running investigative documentary series, explores the issues of our times through powerful storytelling. Frontline has won every major journalism and broadcasting award, including 91 Emmy Awards and 22 Peabody Awards. Visit pbs.org/frontline and follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [Tumblr](#) and [Google+](#) to learn more. Frontline is produced by WGBH Boston and is broadcast nationwide on PBS. Funding for Frontline is provided through the support of PBS viewers and by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Major funding for Frontline is provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Ford Foundation. Additional funding is provided by the Abrams Foundation, the Park Foundation, the John and Helen Glessner Family Trust, and the Frontline Journalism Fund with major support from Jon and Jo Ann Hagler on behalf of the Jon L. Hagler Foundation. Funding for *Tutwiler* is provided in part by the Lisa and Douglas Goldman Fund.

About The Marshall Project

The Marshall Project is a nonpartisan, nonprofit news organization that seeks to create and sustain a sense of national urgency about the U.S. criminal justice system. We achieve this through award-winning journalism, partnerships with other news outlets and public forums. In all of our work we strive to educate and enlarge the audience of people who care about the state of criminal justice.

About *America ReFramed*

America ReFramed is a co-production of the WORLD Channel and American Documentary, Inc. The series curates a diverse selection of independent documentaries that brings to national audiences compelling stories which illuminate the changing contours of our ever-evolving country. Viewers will be immersed in stories that span the spectrum of American life, from the streets of towns big and small to its exurbs and country roads. The documentary series presents an array of personal voices and experiences through which we learn from our past, understand our present and are challenged to seek new frameworks for America's future. *America ReFramed* is the recipient of a Peabody Award and an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award for broadcast journalism. The series has earned several Christopher, GRACIE, Telly and Cine Golden Eagle Awards, as well as multiple nominations for Emmy, Independent Documentary Association and Imagen Awards.

***America ReFramed* Co-Producers**

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia arts organization dedicated to creating, identifying and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream media outlets. AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture, developing collaborative strategic engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, online and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback to educational opportunities and community participation. AmDoc is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. For more information, visit: www.amdoc.org

About WORLD Channel

WORLD shares the best of public media in news, documentaries, and fact-based informational programming that helps us understand conflicts, movements and cultures that may be distinct from our own. WORLD's original content examines issues too often ignored by mainstream media by telling stories for and with a diversity of voices. WORLD has won a Peabody Award, an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia Award, a National News and Documentary Emmy Award and numerous national honors—including 1st and 2nd place Native Media Awards, an RTNDA Kaleidoscope Award, a Media for a Just Society Award, two Lesbian & Gay Journalist Awards, a Gracie, and an Asian American Journalists Award. WORLD is a growing platform carried by 174 partner stations in markets representing more than 70% of US TV households. It is also available on WORLDChannel.org and social media platforms. Funding for World Channel is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Wyncote Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. WORLD Channel is produced by WGBH with the support of WNET and is distributed by American Public Television (APT).

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