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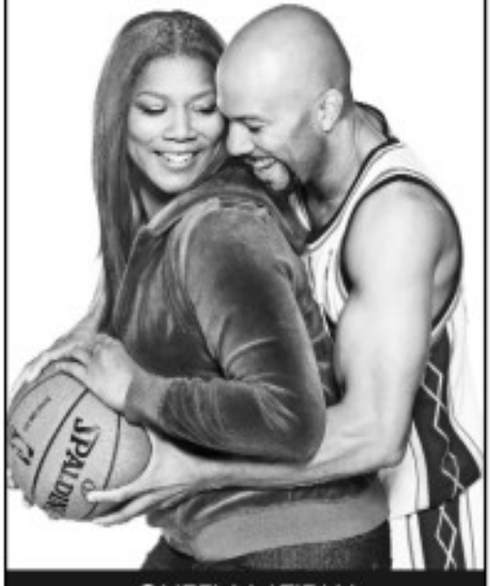

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IN THEATRES FRIDAY, MAY 14!

The Farm: An Inmate's Redemption Song

Pictured (left to right) Jonalyn Cain, Warden Burl Cain, Mara-Michele Batlin, David Deniger, Jonathan Stack and Leah Klein

By Kamra Bourgeois
Contributing Writer

Passion is a trait that unites all of mankind. The documentary *The Farm: 10 Down*, produced by Mara-Michele Batlin and David B. Deniger of Highest Common Denominator Media Fund, shows how the passion of change is used to transform the lives of the victims and the inmates of Angola Prison in Louisiana. Labeled the "The Farm," Angola is a maximum security prison that was once deemed "the bloodiest prison in the South," but has reformed to a prison that uses religion to change the spirits of the inmates that are incarcerated in Angola. The Angola Prison uses religion to overcome any negativity that may come into play of the prisoners and anyone that they are associated with.

The documentary follows the lives of five inmates and their journey to competence. Ashanti Winterspoon, a former inmate of Angola, was sentenced in 1972 to seventy- five years of hard labor for armed robbery. Yet, through the use of religion at Angola, he was able to acknowledge his wrongs and hope for a better future. Ashanti states, "You can't allow the situations in the world around you to influence you in any kind of negative way because if you do, the only person who is going to lose is you." After many years of attempts, he was paroled in 1999 and is now the director of community outreach for a Louisiana halfway house. He is the walking truth of the importance of moral rehabilitation.

Mara-Michele Batlin one of the producers states, "By humanizing the characters makes it possible for the idea of redemption." The Warden of the institution makes the entire documentary come into full circle. Warden Burl Cain, an ex high school teacher, understand the challenges that faces inmates. Yet, through the use of rehabilitation, he is able to teach men how to grow to their full potential. Cain states, "I felt compelled to try to make this a normal place to live and do your time."

The Farm: 10 Down shows inmates in a more individual and humanized light. Batlin states, "We are more similar to one another than we are different." The passion to change and to be an improved individual is a task that is frequent among all of mankind. The African American community, where households are commonly broken due to fathers being incarcerated, shows that the past of an individual is not the predication of their future.

Statistics state that children with fathers that are incarcerated are seven times more likely to go to jail. Warden Cain works effortlessly hard to prove that statistic incorrect. Angola is a prison with long-term prisoners dedicated to learning and self-improvement. The documentary displays how humanizing the individual personally and not by a serial number displays how we are all able to change and grow to a higher person.

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