

Contact: Lara Davis  
Email: [info@visionaryjusticestorylab.org](mailto:info@visionaryjusticestorylab.org)  
Website: [www.grrrljusticefilm.com](http://www.grrrljusticefilm.com)

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**Visionary Justice Storylab launches  
*Grrrl Justice Film Community Engagement Series***

Atlanta, GA - Visionary Justice Storylab launches a national screening and community engagement series for its film ***Grrrl Justice***. An experimental narrative short by filmmaker Shontina Vernon, ***Grrrl Justice*** explores the rising rates of girls and queer youth of color in the juvenile justice system applying the lenses of gender and sexuality. It seeks to use the power of media and story to build solidarity and support communities in engaging in deeper dialogue. The series launches February 21st, with screenings taking place throughout 2020. Screening partners include:

Detroit Area Youth Uniting Michigan (Detroit, MI)  
University of Wisconsin Milwaukee LGBT Resource Center (Milwaukee, WI)  
Southern Fried Queer Pride (Atlanta, GA)  
Arkansas Transgender Equality Coalition (Little Rock, AR)  
Margaret Walker Center @ Jackson State University (Jackson, MS)  
Kansas City Center for Inclusion (Kansas City, MO)  
Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies (New Orleans, LA)  
Sexual Trauma Awareness and Response (Baton Rouge, LA)  
Sanitary Tortilla Factory (Albuquerque, NM)  
CHOICES Center for Reproductive Health (Memphis, TN)  
We Are Family (Charleston, SC)  
Diversity Center of Oklahoma (Oklahoma City, OK)  
Youth Empowerment Performance Project (Chicago, IL)  
Pride Center of San Antonio (San Antonio, TX)

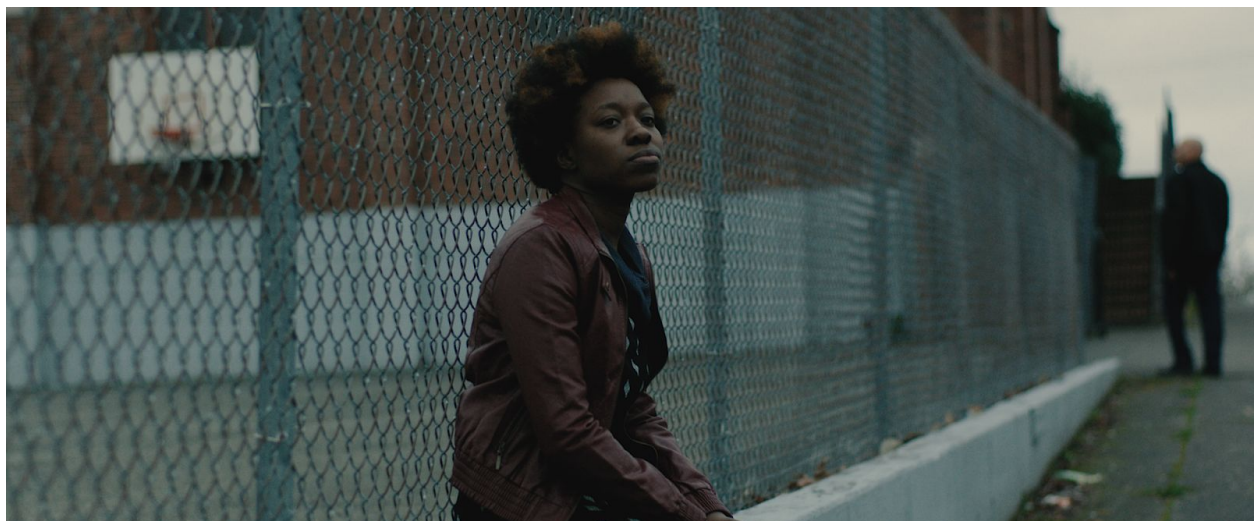
A powerful triptych, ***Grrrl Justice*** follows the stories of three characters - one being released from juvenile detention, another being exploited by a sex trafficker, and one navigating the school to prison pipeline. The film examines how traumatic backgrounds including family

violence, racism, poverty, sexual abuse, homophobia and transphobia attach young people to systems that criminalize them, rather than alleviate the impacts of systemic oppression in their lives. It also takes an honest look at how these youth are employing their agency, body autonomy, and healthy resistance in pursuit of their own liberation.

At this critical moment in criminal justice reform, girls and queer youth of color are largely being left out of the broader public conversation - even as they have the fastest rising rates of incarceration. Among girls involved in the juvenile justice system, African-American, Native American and Latina youth are vastly over-represented and face harsher sentences and outcomes.<sup>1</sup> 40% of girls in the juvenile justice system identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning or gender non-conforming, and 85% of LGBTQ incarcerated youth are youth of color.<sup>2</sup> ***Grrrl Justice*** centers this reality while asking its audience members to consider their role in supporting the conditions for healthy girlhood.

***Grrrl Justice*** is produced by the Visionary Justice StoryLab with support from the Right of Return Fellowship. The national community engagement series and additional media is made possible by the generous support of individual donors and the NOVO Foundation.

For a more detailed roster of screening and coalition partners visit [www.grrrljusticefilm.com](http://www.grrrljusticefilm.com).



Shontina Vernon is the writer/director of the film, creating ***Grrrl Justice*** as part of her Right of Return Fellowship through the Soze Agency. The Right of Return Fellowship invests in formerly incarcerated artists to create original works that further criminal justice reform in partnership with

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/10/girls-make-ever-growing-proportion-kids-juvenile-justice-system/>

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/why-reforming-the-juvenile-justice-system-is-an-lgbt\\_us\\_594d35c3e4b0326c0a8d07c3](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/why-reforming-the-juvenile-justice-system-is-an-lgbt_us_594d35c3e4b0326c0a8d07c3)

advocates and organizers. Vernon is a long-time advocate of arts access as both prevention and alternative to incarceration. For the past decade, the multidisciplinary artist has worked using multimedia, music, and performance to explore black cultural histories, intergenerational legacies around trauma, and queerness. She is a 2019 recipient of a Creative Capital Award and a Robert Rauschenberg “Artist as Activist” Fellow.



Photo Credit: Joanna Degeneres

In 2016, Vernon was awarded the Robert Rauschenberg "Artist as Activist" Fellowship to establish the Visionary Justice StoryLab, a multi year media art project that brings together interdisciplinary artists, media makers, and cultural workers evolving story and new media to advance racial, reproductive, gender and environmental justice for communities of color and the organizations that serve them.