Common Good Atlanta: Breaking Down the Walls of Mass Incarceration with the Liberal Arts

Moderated by Hal Jacobs, a Decatur-based documentary filmmaker
March 3, 10, 17, & 24 from 6:30pm - 8pm

This Georgia Seminar will take a behind-the-scenes look at the nationally recognized prison education program, Common Good Atlanta (CGA), founded by Sarah Higinbotham of Oxford College and Bill Taft. Since 2008, an all-volunteer consortium of 70 faculty from six universities have taught the liberal arts in four prisons, plus a downtown course for prison-impacted people. The program received a 2019 Governor’s Award for the Arts & Humanities and was a 2019 finalist for the American Civic Collaboration Awards, which highlight outstanding initiatives working to collaborate across divides at the national, local and youth levels. At the heart of the program’s mission is that broad, democratic access to higher education for people affected by incarceration strengthens the common good of our communities.

The documentary film Common Good Atlanta: Breaking Down the Walls of Mass Incarceration, by Hal Jacobs, looks at the impact of the program on both students and instructors. Incarcerated students find an intellectual freedom that encourages growth and dignity, while instructors find an environment for the liberal arts that is stimulating and transformative.

The seminar will bring together the CGA founders, alumni, and instructors to share their experiences and the program’s impact on the community. The following topics are ripe for discussion: Efforts of those in higher education to reach across the community, the detrimental effects of mass incarceration on the community, an American penal system that is more focused on retributive justice than restorative justice, and how scholarly learning can take a rigorous and creative approach to reaching nontraditional students.

March 3: Public screening & Talkback of “Common Good Atlanta (CGA)” film at Decatur First Baptist Church
March 10: “Behind the Scenes of CGA I” with Alumni
March 17: “Behind the Scenes of CGA II” with CGA Founder Sarah Higinbotham (Oxford College), Bill Taft, Jamil Zainaldin and Emory faculty
March 24: “Behind the Scenes of CGA III” with CGA faculty (Morehouse, GSU, and GaTech) and alumni

Following the week of the screening, this seminar will meet from 6:30pm - 8pm for three sessions at the Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry at Emory University on the following Thursday evenings: March 3, 10, 17 and 24. The Fox Center is located at 1635 N. Decatur Road, across from Glenn Memorial Church. Seminar participant size is limited and reserved on a first come basis. To reserve a seat, please email the Fox Center at foxcenter@emory.edu or call 404.727.6424.

Please note that we adhere to Emory University’s COVID-19 Event and Gathering Policy: Any gathering must adhere to current Emory health and safety protocols. Indoor dining is not permitted for events or gatherings. Masks are still required in all indoor public and common spaces on campus and are strongly encouraged outdoors when in groups. The university may revert to a more restrictive operating status should future conditions warrant.