

Strategic Communications Laboratories, and its American offshoot Cambridge Analytica, which developed incredibly detailed personality profiles of voters who could be targeted for last-minute disinformation ads in states like Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, where modest changes in the vote totals could tip the electoral college in Trump's favor. Huchon argues that the plan worked, and thus it was Mercer's manipulation, rather than Putin's machinations, that determined the outcome. *Trumping Democracy's* conspiratorial tone is somewhat of a mirror image of the technique Huchon deplors on the other side, but its tabloid approach—complete with striking graphics—makes for a provocative, if debatable, cinematic harangue. A strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

The Winds of Downhill ★★★

(2017) 21 min. DVD: \$99 (\$199 w/PPR). DRA. Juno Films.

Adding to the numerous documentaries that have been made about the homeless, *The Winds of Downhill* is a short film that centers on seven interesting individuals who viewers get to know a bit before learning that they actually have no roofs over their heads. The first interviewee begins by talking in detail about market forces that can make a day trader rich; one assumes that he's a young, wealthy guy who made a fortune by paying attention. But he's on the street, and his banter about economic "corrections" ends up coming across, perhaps unintentionally, as a metaphor for the vicissitudes of life. Another grizzled man discusses classic New York City architecture versus the soullessness of today's pop-up skyscrapers. While these interviews are going on, filmmakers Jedd and Todd Wider surround the subjects with gorgeous black-and-white images of Manhattan scenes that feel like echoes from a distant dream. Offering a poignant personal look at a perennial social issue, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (T. Keogh)

EDUCATION

The Bad Kids ★★★

(2016) 101 min. DVD: \$19.95, Blu-ray: \$24.95. FilmRise (avail. from www.amazon.com).

Keith Fulton and Lou Pepe's film is a fly-on-the-wall documentary about Black Rock Continuation High School, an alternative California campus that aims to encourage at-risk students to complete the credits required for graduation. The staff is portrayed as incredibly committed, with principal Vonda Viland and her aides calling students to remind them to come to class and even occasionally driving them to school while also constantly offering encouragement in counseling sessions. The main focus here, however, is on the titular kids, particularly

Joey, a musician whose drug-addict mother presents an obstacle to his progression; Lee, who has a young son with classmate Layla; and studious Jennifer, who was abandoned by her parents and lives with her grandmother. The film offers a straightforward look at the factors threatening the students' success—not only dysfunctional families but also their own lack of confidence and a penchant for making excuses for their failings. Overall, however, like Viland and her staff, *The Bad Kids* maintains a dogged optimism even in the face of the myriad challenges facing the students. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (F. Swietek)

Teach Us All ★★1/2

(2017) 80 min. DVD: \$125: public libraries; \$350: colleges & universities. DRA. The Video Project. PPR. Closed captioned.

Filmmaker Sonia Lowman's documentary links the tumult of the 1957 integration of Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas with the state of re-segregation in today's public education system. *Teach Us All* works best in detailing the struggle of the Little Rock Nine, who faced racist mobs in an effort to gain access to a public high school—which was only achieved after President Eisenhower gave them an escort in the form of the 1,200-man 327th Airborne Battle Group of the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division. Two members of the Little Rock Nine plus a white classmate who witnessed events vividly recall that historical episode, as well as desperate efforts by Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus to keep his state's public school racially segregated. Somewhat less successful are Lo's efforts to explain why many public schools in major metropolitan areas continue to lack racial and ethnic diversity. Case studies in Little Rock, New York City, and Los Angeles offer demographic information without asking the truly

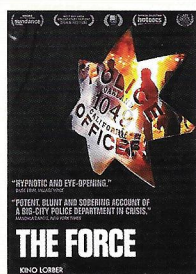
tough questions about why so many of today's public schools fail to turn out students who are able to function at their grade levels. A few success stories are highlighted, most notably Little Rock's Baseline Academy, but these feel like isolated exceptions to a dismal rule. Presented in a full-length version and a 57-minute abridged edition, this is a strong optional purchase. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

LAW & CRIME

Inside Peace ★★★

(2017) 58 min. DVD: \$19.95 (\$49 w/PPR). Studio View Productions.

America has the world's largest prison population, marking the end of the road for many, or serving as a revolving door. Filmmaker Cynthia Fitzpatrick's documentary centers on efforts made by the Dominguez State Jail in Texas to offer a way out for inmates doing hard time for theft, drug dealing, and assault. Most grew up with no positive role models, seeking a sense of self-worth through sex, drugs, and alcohol. Taking a therapeutic approach, the prison presents video seminars and discussions on ways to establish inner peace through mindfulness and self-awareness, ultimately moving towards self-acceptance. The goal is to drop the tough guy mask, breaking the cycle of hopelessness, and to "let everything go." Initially, some inmates came to seminars simply to relieve boredom or get out of their cells, but later a waiting list developed for seats at the meetings. Of course, problems don't end when prisoners are released—one inmate says he feels the "target on my back" that makes it hard to get a job or even reestablish close relations with family. But the



The Force ★★★

(2017) 92 min. DVD: \$29.95. Kino Lorber (avail. from most distributors).

In recent years, law enforcement has been viewed through camera lenses as either brutal and racist (think of *Fruitvale Station* and *Detroit*) or benign good guys who lock up miscreants (as in *COPS* and *Live PD*). Peter Nicks's documentary provides a more balanced consideration of one police department in Oakland, CA, that has a history of community relations problems, but also law enforcement officers who are trying (albeit not always successfully) to do their finest. In 2003, Oakland's city government agreed to enter into federal oversight of its police force following a civil rights lawsuit that deeply embarrassed municipal leaders. *The Force* opens in 2014, while federal oversight is still taking place. Despite promises by Chief of Police Sean Whent, many in the community, especially African Americans, are deeply frustrated with the local police, and the officers themselves have their own concerns about how the department is being run. Nicks presents footage from police ride-alongs that document the genuinely harrowing nature of this profession that is often absent from the anodyne reality TV shows. But Nicks also acknowledges the swelling anger of the Black Lives Matter movement and their bitter view of how police treat African Americans. A provocative documentary portrait of a police department at odds with itself and, too often, the people it is supposed to serve, this is recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)