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WBGO Journal

RUST: Newark Filmmakers Marylou and Jerome Bongiorno's Third Doc on Urban America

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RUST premieres May 18 on PBS

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RUST is the third documentary in Newark filmmakers Marylou and Jerome Bongiorno's 3Rs Trilogy on Urban America.

Following the success of critically-acclaimed, award-winning national PBS broadcast REVOLUTION '67 (2007) on riots/rebellions of the 1960's and THE RULE (2014) on urban school reform, RUST uses Newark, New Jersey as a microcosm to take a deeper look into Rust Belt poverty, racism and mass incarceration while detailing industrialization and deindustrialization.



Marylou and Jerome Bongiorno join WBGO News Director Doug Doyle on a Zoom chat to talk about their RUST documentary on PBS

The Bongornos joined WBGO News Director Doug Doyle for a Zoom chat about RUST which is being screened on May 3 at 7pm. The virtual event hosted by Prudential Financial. More information about that event can be found at www.bongiornoproductions.com.

Marylou Bongiorno says work on the first two documentaries eventually led the couple to the making of RUST.

"We recognized after making REVOLUTION '67 and THE RULE that we had to make a third film to really understand poverty in Newark."

Jerome Bongiorno, a noted jazz guitarist who provides the music for RUST, stresses their films through their travels and success on PBS have opened the eyes of many around the world.

"We traveled around the country. We traveled internationally with those films. We learned that poverty was at the bottom of all the problems that exist in cities like Newark. When we traveled to those cities to speak about those films we would actually take notes on the poverty rate and the conditions of those cities, so we compiled all that data. We weren't surprised to see the poverty rate always correlated to the type of conditions that we found those cities to be in. We found that when a city has a poverty rate higher than 15% that crime was usually high and the graduation rate was low. Those two things are unacceptable. Now Newark, if you look at the data, has about a 30% poverty rate and as you can expect the conditions in Newark aren't good and we live here. So we wanted to start work to understand inner-city poverty in more detail so we could improve a city like Newark."



PBS

People's Organization for Progress head Larry Hamm in RUST

Have the Bongiorno found solutions to reducing poverty? Marylou Bongiorno says absolutely.

"There are time-tested solutions to this problem. We have started the process by examining it in terms of what happened to Newark in 1967. How did we get to a point that causes a city to erupt. And then look at decades of neglect that led to that and federal policies, and how the federal government has stepped in and made very specific solutions to each of these problems."

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Bongiorno Productions

Marylou and Jerome Bongiorno are proud Newark residents

Jerome Bongiorno says they show three basic solutions in RUST.

"The first one is you have to improve education. The second one is because you have a lot of single-parent families, you want families to have children while they are in a stable and committed relationship. That's probably going to take a lot of counseling. And the third thing is you've got to be people into jobs. Either you create those jobs here or you have to bring them to where the jobs are. Those are the top three. We talk about other in the film, but the top three are education, getting two-parent families or stabilize the families more and employee people with jobs."

The panelists for the May 3 virtual panel include Lawrence Hamm of the People's Organization for Progress, Renee Boynton-Jarrett from the Boston University School of Medicine, Khalil Gibran Muhammad from the Harvard Kennedy School and the Bongornos. Shane Harris of Prudential Financial will moderate the discussion at 7pm. There will also be a screening at NJPAC in June as part of the PSEG True Diversity series.

You can see the Zoom chat with the Bongornos at <https://fb.watch/5blmLQhipe/>.

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Marylou and Jerome Bongiorno

REvolution '67

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**Doug Doyle**

Doug Doyle has been News Director at WBGO since 1998 and has taken his department to new heights in coverage and recognition. Doug and his staff have received more than 200 awards from organizations like PRNDI, AP, New York Association of Black Journalists, Garden State Association of Black Journalists and the New Jersey Society of Professional Journalists.

[See stories by Doug Doyle](#)

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