***The Confessions***

**After watching The Confessions, read the video themes and then pick two discussion questions and answer completely based on what you saw during the documentary and in your research**. Upload to Schoology under The Confessions Activity.

**VIDEO THEMES**

* Although it may be hard to believe, people sometimes confess to crimes they did not commit. The way a person is questioned during interrogation, as well as the personality of the person involved, may contribute to a false confession.
* Interrogation techniques such as yelling or lying about evidence are legal as long as the suspect is not threatened or coerced into confession.
* Defendants may plead guilty—even if they are not—in the hopes of reducing the severity of the crime they are charged with or to get a more lenient sentence. This is called plea bargaining.
* In real-life court cases, unlike fictional ones on TV or in the movies, it is often difficult to determine the truth of what happened.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

* When interrogating suspected criminals, police are allowed to make accusations, lie about or make up evidence, yell at the suspects or get in their faces. In the case shown in the video, the police told one of the men that he had failed a polygraph (lie detector) test, even though he had passed it. Why do you think it is legal for police to lie when questioning a potential criminal? Do you think that is right? What do you think police should and should not be allowed to do during an interrogation?
* Before being questioned by police, suspects must be told their Miranda rights, which give them the right to remain silent and to speak to an attorney. Why might these men have waived their rights? In what ways might their innocence have affected their perception of the importance of remaining silent or having a lawyer present? How might their story have been different if they had insisted on exercising these rights?
* In this case, DNA tests of hair and bodily fluids did not indicate that any of the four men were at the crime scene. Why didn't the DNA test results help clear these men of the crime?
* Eventually these men were found guilty of the crime in court, even though there was no evidence linking them to the crime, and a positive DNA match identified another man who had confessed to the crime. How could that happen? In what ways were the following parties responsible for the outcome: the four men themselves; the police; the lawyers; and—in the case of a court trial—the jury?
* This case took place in Virginia, which not only has a death penalty, but also has the highest total number of executions of all the states in the nation. How did the possibility of the death penalty play into this story?