



**Comm Skills Virtual Learning**

**Legal Communications I & II**

**Court Processes**

**April 22, 2020**



Lesson: April 22, 2020

**Objective/Learning Target: Students will understand court processes.**

# Bell Ringer/Let's Get Started

If the legal fine for a traffic violation is \$100, is it equally fair for all drivers to pay the same penalty regardless of their financial circumstances? Why or why not? (How is the burden of a \$100 penalty different for one person than it is for another?)

# Lesson/Activity

Watch [A Debtors' Prison](#). While watching the film, take notes about the events, challenges, policies and barriers that lead to each woman's incarceration.

In the hometown of police shooting victim Michael Brown and the surrounding municipalities, a practice with historical antecedents has become systematic: the operation of modern day debtors' prisons. *A Debtors' Prison* follows two plaintiffs in an unfolding court case, Samantha Jenkins and Meredith Walker, as they describe the matrix of controls that subjected them to incarceration for being po

# Lesson/Activity

In your notes, respond to these questions:

1. What surprised you most? What information, quote or scene was most significant for you? Why?
2. Samantha Jenkins says, “St. Louis is like a war zone. We get harassed a lot.” What does she mean? Who is “we” and what form of harassment are they experiencing?
3. What violations were Meredith Walker and Samantha Jenkins initially charged with? How did they end up being jailed multiple times over many years and owing thousands of dollars more than their initial fines?
4. Meredith Walker explains that she was charged for driving without insurance, but the officers never explained why they targeted her car and “ran her plates.” Why is that significant? *Note:* Much like controversial “stop and frisk” policies, the practice of “running plates” without probable cause has raised concerns about racial profiling and abuse of power. Although, there is currently no federal statute that prevents officers from checking license plates without probable cause (multiple courts across the country have ruled that it does not violate the Fourth Amendment) some states and municipalities have enacted policies that restrict the practice.

# Practice

Reflect on the themes, issues, and stories from *A Debtors' Prison* and how they relate to Robert F. Kennedy's assertion. (The opening quote from yesterday).

Complete a quick reflective writing piece.

# Practice

Next, research and investigate any significant changes to the juvenile justice system in the past decade by seeking answers to these questions:

If policies have changed, were those changes the result of juvenile justice reform? If so, what was changed and why? Did these reforms address the needs of economically vulnerable youth and their families? Are the reforms working?

What successful reforms implemented in other regions would benefit your community?

# Practice

Construct a positions on a local juvenile justice issue and write a persuasive letters to your local representatives. Consider mailing copies of your letter. Each letter should include the following:

- A clear statement of opinion or position
- An explanation of why this issue is significant
- Evidence that supports the opinion (and disputes counter arguments)
- A conclusion that includes a call to action



# Additional Resources

[Children Being Denied Due Process](#)

[The Price of Justice](#)

[Rights of Juveniles](#)