

**PERVERSION OF JUSTICE** (7:44 minutes)

Directed & Produced by Melissa Mummert

*Winner of the Changemaker Award*

*Sponsored by Working Films*



**About the Film**

I worked as a chaplain intern at a federal prison for women. My job was to roam around the sprawling prison compound and listen to the inmates' stories. Women told me about their long sentences for drug conspiracy offenses. They told me that they were serving ten years, twenty years or even life sentences for their minor involvement in drug related crimes. I saw pictures of these women's children and heard the hurt in their voices. I felt called to speak out and to help others understand the human impact of draconian drug laws.

Thousands of women are serving outlandish federal prison sentences in the United States for their tangential relationships to drug dealers. *Perversion of Justice* focuses on Hamedah Hasan, a young mother who was sentenced to two life sentences for her first drug offense. Shot over the course of four years, *Perversion of Justice* follows Hamedah on an emotional roller coaster as she navigates her many appeals. We witness her suffering daughters growing up as best they can hundreds of miles from their incarcerated mother. This short piece, as well as a longer 30-minute documentary, weaves Hamedah and the girls' stories along with criminal justice experts who provide context about the misguided U.S. War on Drugs. While the film details an American tragedy, it is ultimately hopeful and calls the audience to action.

To date, Hamedah Hasan is still incarcerated in Southern California, over a thousand miles from her daughters. She still has heard nothing about her presidential commutation request. There has been a great deal of activity around drug policy reform efforts in the last few months. There is also a movement afoot to make crack cocaine and powder cocaine sentences more equitable.

**Filmmaker Bios**

**Melissa Mummert, Director & Producer**

Reverend Melissa Mummert is an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister and advocate for incarcerated women. She decided to make a documentary about the Federal Sentencing Guidelines and drug conspiracy laws while serving as a chaplain intern at a federal prison in California. *Perversion of Justice* is her first documentary.

Melissa has had an eclectic career, including serving as a case manager for homeless youth in East Los Angeles, California writing for websites and entertainment magazines in Hollywood

and serving as an AmeriCorps Volunteer in Service to America on a Navajo reservation. Mummert currently coordinates a domestic violence education program for female inmates at the Mecklenburg County Jail in Charlotte, North Carolina.

She holds degrees in philosophy and theater from Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri, and a Master of Divinity Degree from Starr King School for the Ministry in Berkeley, California. Mummert lives happily with her husband Jay and baby daughter Annie.

### **Take Action**

The Women's Prison Association (<http://www.wpaonline.org>)

Life after prison. The WPA is a service and advocacy organization committed to helping women with criminal justice histories realize new possibilities for themselves and their families.

Families Against Mandatory Minimums (<http://www.famm.org>)

How does Mandatory sentencing work? How do we change the situation? FAMM works to change mandatory sentencing laws. Read how.

The Center for Community Alternatives (<http://www.communityalternatives.org>)

Volunteer at Community Alternatives and help pave the way to re-integrative justice and a reduced reliance on incarceration.

Drug Policy Alliance (<http://actioncenter.drugpolicy.org>)

No more war on drugs! Join the DPA in its vision - where new drug policies are no longer based on fears, prejudices and punitive prohibitions.

**For more information about *Perversion of Justice* and the films from the eighth annual Media That Matters Film Festival, visit [www.mediathatmattersfest.org](http://www.mediathatmattersfest.org) or contact us at [festival@artseengine.net](mailto:festival@artseengine.net).**

