13TH MOVIE DISCUSSION GUIDE

Discussion Questions
Virtual Viewing
Virtual Discussion

FILM SUMMARY
The historical roots of African American oppression run deep, as Ava DuVernay’s documentary 13TH reveals. The film looks back to the ratification of Amendment XIII, which states, “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.” DuVernay argues that a prison-industrial complex which statistically imprisons black men disproportionately and allows for their disciplinary servitude, has taken advantage of America’s black population and brings into question if this system ultimately acts as a form of modern day slavery.

Featuring a wide range of interviewees including civil rights activist Angela Davis, “The New Jim Crow” author Michelle Alexander, regular New Yorker reporter and professor Jelani Cobb, social justice author and attorney Van Jones, and many more, 13TH moves from the media-induced criminalization of black persons to the corporate privatization of prisons with eloquence, poise, and a cavalcade of statistics to back up its thesis on the dehumanization of black people in America.

While sobering in its historical recontextualization of race in America, DuVernay’s film remains hopeful in acknowledging her fellow African Americans’ diligence and grace in their fight for equality under intolerable conditions. No one knows how bright or dark the future of America will be, but as Jones vigilantly states, “It will be.”
13TH MOVIE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions as a starting point for a group discussion or self-reflection. It is important for remember that everyone is on their own social justice journey, so leave time for next steps in the discussion. Next steps include continual education, advocacy, and lifestyle changes that shift our awareness and privilege.

01 A LEGACY OF SLAVERY
What's the underlying motive for the 13th amendment leaving a loophole for slave labor? Were you aware that the 13th Amendment still allows for some forms of slavery?

02 THE POLITICS OF MASS INCARCERATION
Before watching this documentary, were you aware that both political parties were complicit in creating the conditions that led to mass incarceration?

03 AFRICAN AMERICAN REPRESENTATION
How do you think media and popular culture representations of Black Americans, particularly Black men, have contributed to a climate of white fear and anxiety? How has that affected tough-on-crime policies?

04 BLACK STIGMA
How do you think media had contributed to the "dangerous black man" narrative?

05 THE HUMANITY OF STATISTICS
This film is full of statistics, many of them startling. Which statistic stood out to you the most? Why do you think this is? What will you do with this statistic?

HOW TO HOST A DISCUSSION
HOSTING VIRTUAL VIEWING AND DISCUSSIONS

01 Decide if you are viewing the movie together, virtually, or simply having a group discussion after viewing separately. (See Apps below)

02 Invite group to a specific date and time. Or contact group to decide on time. (Zoom provides meeting invitations with a link)

03 Establish a safe space for discussion. Create ground rules as a group so that individuals can share honestly with room for growth.

04 Setup further discussion with the group to follow up as everyone processes the new information. Encourage one another.

VIRTUAL VIEWING PARTY

NETFLIX PARTY
Netflix Party synchronizes video playback and adds group chat. Chrome browser and Netflix subscription required.

KAST
Kast is a real-time video sharing app with screen capture, voice, text, and video chat technology that makes it easy to connect.

VIRTUAL DISCUSSION

WATCH ON NETFLIX

WATCH ONLINE FREE

ZOOM
Video conferencing app with real-time messaging and content sharing. Best for just virtual discussion.

GOOGLE HANGOUTS
Video conferencing app with real-time messaging and content sharing. Best for just virtual discussion.