

Sample Discussion Questions for Prison Kids Film Screening

PRISON KIDS – SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The United States incarcerates children at a higher rate than any other developed country. Fusion traveled across the country, gathering the stories of kids who grew up behind bars. We found children subjected to solitary confinement; mental health problems; physical and mental abuse; racial inequities; lives ruined forever at an early age. Narrated by Academy Award-nominated actress Gabourey Sidibe and featuring an introduction by Russell Simmons, the film explores America's failed juvenile justice system through the eyes of young people and their families. (2015) 64 min.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What were your impressions of the youth featured in the film?
2. What was the most surprising thing about the film?
3. What issues does the film raise about the purpose of the juvenile justice system and the balance between punishment and rehabilitation?
4. What role does race play in who enters the juvenile justice system and how the system responds to the needs of youth of color?
5. What messages about adolescent development, mental health, and trauma emerge through this film? What is the impact of incarceration on these issues?
6. What do you think about the reliance on medication to address needs of the youth in the film?
7. What do you think about the role of educators, teachers and law enforcement in responding to school discipline issues?
8. What should or could have been done to better respond to the needs of the young people in the film?
9. What are the policies, practices, and protections in your state for youth who come in contact with the juvenile justice system?
10. What changes should states make to better serve and protect kids in contact with the criminal justice system? Who is in a position to make these changes?
11. Community-based alternatives to youth prisons emerges as an important theme. Are there appropriate community based alternatives available in your community?
12. What did you learn from the film that you did not know before?