

INCARCERATING US

what you'll find inside!

- about the film & filmmaker
- ready to watch! screening guide
- ready to talk! discussion guide
- ready to act! handout

Bullfrog Community Screening & Discussion Guide

Use your film screening of **INCARCERATING US** as a tool for educating your community about the importance of criminal justice reform in the United States. This guide offers some background information, helpful tips & discussion questions for an informative, rewarding screening. **Good Luck!**

For additional resources, visit incarceratingus.bullfrogcommunities.com/incar_resources

About INCARCERATING US

Incarcerating US exposes America's prison problem and explores ways to unshackle the "land of the free" through vital criminal-justice reforms. With 2.3 million people behind bars, the U.S. has the largest prison population in the history of the world.

Through dramatic first-hand accounts, expert testimony, and shocking statistics, *Incarcerating US* asks fundamental questions about the prison system in America: What is the purpose of prison? Why did our prison population explode in the 1970s? What can make our justice system more just?



About the Director

Regan Hines first began working with Life Is My Movie Entertainment on the development of several films, including marketing and distribution of *American Made Movie*. His directorial debut, *Incarcerating US*, analyzes the country's current criminal justice system and explores the factors that have created the largest prison population in the world. His desire to make compelling films that entertain, inspire change, and shed light on social issues neatly align with the mission of Life Is My Movie Entertainment. He resides in Los Angeles, California.

ready to watch!

Ideas and best practices to help make your community screening a success!

1. Publicize Your Event! This is the most important step because it not only tells the world what you're up to, but it lets the Bullfrog Community team know what your plans are so we can help you publicize your event. Visit incarceratingus.bullfrogcommunities.com/incar_screenings to register and get the word out on your INCARCERATING US screening.

2. Visualize Your Goal! What do you hope to achieve with your screening of INCARCERATING US? Your goal could be to generate a lively post-film discussion generally about the criminal justice system, mass incarceration, the War on Drugs, and systemic racism in the US; or more specifically about eliminating mandatory minimum sentencing as well as criminal-justice reform strategies and organizing tactics. Or, you can simply provide an opportunity for families to watch and learn together.

3. Where To Host? Consider which locations in your area would be ideal for accommodating a community film screening of the size you anticipate: downtown movie theaters, churches and synagogues, town halls, community centers, public libraries, school auditoriums, university and college venues, warehouses at a business and outdoor screenings at parks and playgrounds, and even private homes have been venues for many successful community screenings.

4. Find A Partner! Give some thought to who is already working on this issue in your community. Do you know of criminal justice reform groups, drug policy reform groups, civil rights and anti-racism groups or other groups and organizations working on these issues? Can they help sponsor the event? Spread the word? Speak on a panel discussion after the screening? Some potential partners include: law, history, civil-rights and criminal-justice departments and faculty at universities and colleges; nonprofits focused on criminal justice reform and drug policy reform; and civil rights and anti-racism groups.

5. Invite A Guest Speaker! *Incarcerating US* is part of a national conversation about the War on Drugs, the use of mandatory minimum sentences, and mass incarceration. Search for guest speakers in your area who have experience discussing or writing about these topics. Great speaker examples include policy experts, criminal defense lawyers, community leaders and organizers, or professors who have expertise or insight into the issues raised by the film, and invite them to attend and participate in a discussion or Q&A session.

6. Engage Your Audience! Use this discussion guide to engage your audience. Included in this guide is a section called Ready to Talk! with a few questions to get the conversation started and a section called Ready to Act!, a handout listing additional resources for further investigation about key issues raised in the film, all to support efforts to prepare your audience to act.

7. Spread The Word! Think about the best methods available to you for publicizing the film screening to people in your community. Sending emails, creating event notifications on Facebook or Meetup, using Twitter, and placing screening announcements in local newspapers and newsletters is a good start. Find a INCARCERATING US screening poster, discussion guide (includes handout), and press photos at incarceratingus.bullfrogcommunities.com/incar_resources to help publicize your event around town.

8. Tell Us How It Went! Visit incarceratingus.bullfrogcommunities.com/incar_discussion to tell us about your event. Contribute to the film's discussion page to help other divestment campaigns, universities, non-profits, and student and community groups further the discussion and put on successful events. Where it was held? Who attended? What went well, and what was challenging? What did you discuss? Your feedback will help others to organize their own successful events and will energize Bullfrog Communities as a whole.

ready to talk!

Your audience will be excited to discuss the issues raised by INCARCERATING US. Here are some questions that will get people talking.

- 1.** Why should the average American care about criminal justice reform in the United States?
- 2.** How does reforming the criminal justice system rank in terms of domestic political issues when compared to things like healthcare, balancing the budget, military spending, Medicare/Medicaid and other frequently discussed issues?
- 3.** Do you know anyone who has experienced problems with our current criminal justice system?
- 4.** What are some steps people can take to connect with criminal justice reform activities in their community?
- 5.** Eric Sterling contrasts the stable incarceration rate from 1920 to 1970 with the dramatic increase in the incarceration rate beginning in the 1970s and continuing into the 2000s. To what extent do you believe the “War on Drugs” is to blame for this dramatic increase in incarceration in the US?
- 6.** Amy Povah received a sentence of 24 years in prison based on mandatory sentencing guidelines. To what extent should judges have discretion to decide on an appropriate sentence for someone convicted of a crime rather than be forced to give mandated sentences?
- 7.** Amy Povah was convicted of conspiracy to distribute MDMA (ecstasy). What are some problems with the conspiracy law and how it applies to illegal drug distribution?
- 8.** Neill Franklin discusses the murder of his good friend and colleague Ed Toatley by a drug dealer. Why do you think this made Neill reflect on the drug war and change his position on it?
- 9.** Neill Franklin points out that the clearance rate for homicides in the US was around 90 percent in the 1960s and it is around 60 percent today. What are some reasons why the clearance rate has declined during this period?
- 10.** Despite serving time in prison multiple times for drug offenses, Tracey Syphax became a highly successful business owner. His prison terms were relatively short compared to drug offenders who receive long mandatory minimum sentences. What do you think we can learn from his extraordinary life story?

Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP) — <http://www.leap.cc/>

Founded on March 16, 2002, LEAP is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization made up of current and former members of the law enforcement and criminal justice communities who are speaking out about the failures of existing drug policies in the U.S. The mission of LEAP is to reduce the multitude of harmful consequences resulting from fighting the war on drugs and to lessen the incidence of death, disease, crime, and addiction by ending drug prohibition.

The Sentencing Project — <http://www.sentencingproject.org/>

The Sentencing Project is a leader in changing the way Americans think about crime and punishment. Founded in 1986, The Sentencing Project works for a fair and effective U.S. criminal justice system by promoting reforms in sentencing policy, addressing unjust racial disparities and practices, and advocating for alternatives to incarceration.

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

FAMM is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization fighting for smart sentencing laws that protect public safety. Since 1991, FAMM has worked to eliminate mandatory sentencing laws and promote sentencing policies rooted in the fundamental American values of individualized justice, fairness, proportionality, and respect for liberty and due process.

Criminal Justice Policy Foundation — <http://www.cjpf.org/>

Founded in 1989, CJPF is one of the oldest drug policy reform organizations in the United States. CJPF's mission is to educate the public about the impact of drug policy on the criminal justice system. Recently, CJPF has focused on expanding the coalition of organizations advocating the end of drug prohibition.

The Messages Project — <http://themessagesproject.org/>

The Messages Project is a nonprofit organization that enables children of incarcerated parents to maintain and rebuild relationships with their mothers and fathers. Since 1999, The Messages Project has recorded and delivered more than 10,000 video messages from incarcerated parents to their children.

CAN-DO — <http://www.candoclemency.com/>

CAN-DO is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit foundation that advocates Clemency for All Non-violent Drug Offenders.