



### 13<sup>th</sup> Study Guide (Movie # 9)

#### **Background Information**

Last August, we began looking at how America dehumanized and terrorized descendants of Africa for profit through the racist system of slavery. After watching this documentary, we must ask, "Has the institution of slavery really ended?"

1. Think back to the documentary *America After the Civil War*. Remember how the movie discussed that the southern economy would suffer due to the abolishment of slavery. Now that you have watched this documentary, how do you feel about the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment and racism in the United 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."*

2. What did you learn about the "War on Drugs" campaign started by President Nixon and revitalized by President Reagan? Specifically describe how racism was evident in the treatment of punishment for use/selling/distribution of different drugs.
3. What was your reaction when you heard John Ehrlichman, counsel and Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs under President Richard Nixon, say,

*"We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities."*

4. Describe how has the US criminal justice system has recreated the system of slavery within the prison systems of the US. How has mandatory minimum and maximum sentences contributed to the criminalization of Blacks? Does America care about the “scarlet letter” that prison inmates are branded with for the rest of their lives?
  
5. The Clintons, Newt Gingrich, and Charles Rangel appeared in this documentary. They apologized for their role in in promoting devastating, “Tough on crime” legislation. Consider the following: trauma Blacks experienced in prison, the time away from family and friends while in prison, the denial of everyday life experiences while in prison, and the loss of life (Example Kalief Browder) while in prison: Is an apology enough? Let ‘s not forget the profit American businesses have made from the Prison Industrial Complex. How can America give back to the millions of Black men and their families what incarceration took away?
  
6. **CoreCivic, formerly the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA)** runs more than sixty facilities across the United States. These include thirty plus state prisons, more than ten federal prisons, nine immigration detention centers, and four jails. A list of companies who profit from prison labor were shown in the documentary. Did you recognize any of the companies? Many have criticized foreign countries for underpaying people for their labor. How do you feel about purchasing products made in US sweatshops in America?
  
7. Civil Rights Lawyer, Michelle Alexander, said that thousands of Blacks and people of color are in jail because they are too poor to get out (due to high bail fees). Kalief Browder described how he was treated because he could not post bail and refused to accept a plea bargain. Why don’t Black men get “Liberty and Justice for all”? What are your thoughts about our legal system now?
  
8. Describe the role that the news media has played in promoting racism, criminalization and “cimmigration” against Blacks and people of color

throughout American history. Provide specific examples of how people of color are portrayed.

9. At the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> documentary, the song, "Letter to the Free" plays while the credits run. Use the link below to watch this five minute music video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K07tVuPH0xA>

The chorus repeats:

*Freedom (Freedom)*  
*Freedom come (Freedom come)*  
*Hold on (Hold on)*  
*Won't be long (Won't be long)*  
*Freedom (Freedom)*  
*Freedom come (Freedom come)*  
*Hold on (Hold on)*  
*Won't be long (Won't be long)*

What is your interpretation of the lyrics?

10. Were there other scenes from this documentary that you found shocking, alarming, or were new to you? If so, please describe them and explain how the scene affected you.
11. After four hundred years of slavery, dehumanization and oppression, more than one hundred years of Jim Crow terror and lynching along with continued dehumanization and oppression, and now Blacks live with the constant threat from law enforcement to punish or kill black men and women with impunity, what do you think we can do to get America to recognize that Black people are human beings, and that Black Lives do Matter?



**Discussion for all three movies that we viewed this summer  
will be held on September 9, 2021 at 7:15 pm.**