



What these

# Walls won't Hold

A FILM BY ADAMU CHAN

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



Presented by BOUNDLESS FILMS  
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Thank you for signing up to organize a screening of *What These Walls Won't Hold*. Please use this discussion guide to prepare for your screening. This guide is not intended to be comprehensive, but exists to give you a few ideas of things to consider when making plans, along with question ideas & ways to engage your audience to ensure your event makes the most impact.

# DISCUSSION IDEAS

Whether you're hosting a few friends or family at home, or a panel discussion and Q&A with a large audience at a public event, use the following ideas for questions to guide the conversations.

## **Discussion Question Ideas for an at-home screening:**

- What are your initial thoughts/reactions after watching the film? Ask them to use one word to describe their thoughts or feelings about the film.
- Was there information in the film that was new to you? If so, what is your response to it?
- Are there themes/tropes/stereotypes that you've become used to seeing in films about prison that weren't present in this film? Conversely, were there new forms of representation that you experienced? How did these make you feel or see things differently?
- Was there a moment or statement in the film that stood out or challenged your thinking in new ways?





### **Discussion Question Ideas for Panel Discussion:**

- Can you introduce yourself and share your initial thoughts and reactions after watching *What These Walls Wont Hold*?
- What is your connection to the issues discussed in the film?
- Why is it important for impacted people to be able to tell our own stories? (Representation – what do you see as the relationship between representation and liberation? And not representation as just the act of being represented or included by outsiders or people in power, but telling our own stories from a place of deep love and knowing. Not just about changing what people on the outside think about us, but about how we see and relate to ourselves. And how that builds our capacity for healing; and to organize collectively to transform our world.)
- Are there themes/tropes/stereotypes that you've become used to seeing in films about prison that weren't present in this film? Conversely, were there new forms of representation that you experienced? How did these make you feel or see things differently?
- Can filmmaking/storytelling be a tool for organizing? (What power can documentary film have within the context of communities that don't have legitimacy, legibility, or ownership over the truth in mainstream discourses? – where DA's, Judges, Police, politicians and media hold authority over truth)
- The film demonstrates our deep need as humans to connect with each other and how building relationships can support resistance to the PIC. Can you share more on the importance of relationships and community to do this work?
- What are local organizations doing about PIC abolition locally? What can audience members do to support their efforts? (or efforts generally if there is nothing local)

# TIPS FOR FACILITATING TALK BACKS FOR LARGER PUBLIC EVENTS

**1. Make a plan.** Before the session takes place, make sure that you have an idea of what you'd like to achieve and how you want to try to achieve those goals. While that does not need to mean having every moment scripted, you should give yourself some direction. For instance, after the film is over, will you immediately solicit responses and questions from the audience? Will you provide an opportunity for organizers to speak to the audience? Will you share how *What These Walls Won't Hold* connects to issues in your community? Are there some starter questions you'd like to begin with?

**2. Engage Local organizers/activists.** Before the session, invite local organizers and activists to participate in the session. Anyone you invite should be able to speak to the issues raised by the film and discuss opportunities to be involved in local organizing or activism.

**3. Prepare to ensure that audience members have opportunities to participate without anyone dominating the conversation.** You may need to manage the flow of conversation. During sessions such as these people with strong opinions or experiences may want to share. Those offerings can enrich the conversation a lot. They will be more useful if they are in conversation with ideas shared by others. A facilitator may be tempted to let someone with lived experience dominate the conversation out of respect, however, multiple perspectives will make the conversation more dynamic. Likewise, a person with strong opposition to abolitionist politics may want to pose a stream of challenges. Their challenges will be best engaged rather than let to pile up without any discussion.

**4. If you don't know the answer, don't pretend.** Feel free to admit it. If you don't know the answers to a question being asked from details about how the prison industrial complex works or how to make PIC abolitionist politics real, it's OK. Prison industrial complex abolition is a big goal and there are many ways to realize it. While you may not know exactly what to do, people are organizing to make the politics real today, so you can assure people that the best way to get started is to join an organization putting abolitionist politics to work.

**5. Have resources available for audience members to use after the session.** It's unlikely that all the audience's questions will be addressed in any one discussion. It may be helpful to have additional resources available that audience members could use for study and engagement after the event. Additionally, it is useful to highlight opportunities for audience members to support campaigns and projects being run by local groups. It's important for your audiences to have meaningful and accessible ways to get involved.

# SAMPLE AGENDA

## **Sample Agenda for Hosting a Public Screening:**

1. Arrive Early (at least 30 mins before start time). Make sure your local team arrives early to set up and ensure everything is running smoothly.
2. Start on time (no later than 10 mins from posted time)
3. Brief introduction to What These Walls Wont Hold (5-10 mins) Introduce the film and make a brief introduction of any speakers or guests that you want to recognize. Make sure the audience knows that the film screening will be followed by discussion, and encourage them to stick around. If the group is small enough, ask the audience to make very brief individual introductions. Tell them an ending time.
4. Viewing of the film (43 mins).
5. Discussion (30-60 mins) This is a key part of the agenda. Folks will likely have strong emotions about what they've seen and will want to reflect and find out what they can do. Make sure that everyone who wants to speak has a chance, but keep the conversation flowing.
6. Take Action (about 10-15 mins) Sometimes the Take Action comes up organically in the discussion (ex: what can we do to fight against the prison industrial complex?). If it doesn't come up naturally, be sure to take time to invite your audience to get involved immediately.
7. Report Back! Let us know how your screening went!

