

INCARCERATION NATION

PRISONERS ON OUR OWN LAND



CONVERSATION GUIDE

A simple conversation guide to talk about the hard truths of prison, policing and how ‘tough on crime’ policies are letting our communities down.

INTRODUCTION

For many of us, watching Incarceration Nation will be the first deeply personal look at the harms prisons and over-policing can inflict on individuals, families and the whole community. It can be challenging to know how to talk about such highly charged topics like racism, crime and policing.

However, Incarceration Nation is not just a documentary about the harms of policing and prisons - it is an invitation for us all to do things differently... and that might be just the kind of meaningful hope your friends and family are looking for at a time when understandably many of us feel quite powerless.

INVITING YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY TO WATCH

The first step is to invite your friends and family to watch Incarceration Nation. It will always be easier to encourage friends and family to watch if you do it together. Some ideas from our team:

If you can't get together in person - set up a Zoom/Google hangout/FaceTime dinner date and eat dinner together online and then watch the film on SBS on Demand using the chat function to share any thoughts or reactions as you go

Alternatively, watch the film separately but organise for a debrief phone/video chat immediately afterwards so you can discuss what really hit home for you and what thoughts and questions the film provoked

Bring people together over a meal to - have friends over, or invite your family around, to watch the film and discuss over a dinner or snacks.

Some invitation starters

Have you seen Incarceration Nation? It brings together some of Australia's leading experts and people who have spent time in prison to talk about why prisons aren't working, particularly for First Nation Communities, and what we could do differently. I would really like to watch it with friends - would you join me for dinner and a documentary?

"As you know, I'm really passionate about [First Nations peoples' justice/equality/racism] and a new documentary has just come called Incarceration Nation that looks fantastic. It covers how racism, trauma and poor policies are driving up the number of First Nations People in prison - even though rates of crime are going down. Would you watch it with me, and have dinner and chat about it afterwards?"

FACILITATING CONVERSATIONS

People are likely to have big questions, big feelings and big reactions to Incarceration Nation - particularly if some of the ideas and stories in it are new to them. It is important to give people space to share these reactions without judgment.

A big part of facilitating difficult conversations is about asking questions and creating the space for people to share how they're feeling and what they are thinking. Reflecting on your own feelings and reactions, and then inviting others to share, is an important part of creating an environment where people feel comfortable to speak honestly and openly about their reactions.

Some questions you might want to use to kick off - you can start with something simple and open-ended to open up a discussion:

I was really shocked by a lot of what I saw in Incarceration Nation. I knew that the justice system didn't always work for everyone but I wasn't aware of how bad things really were. Which parts really stuck out for you?

There were a lot of things about our history I learnt from watching Incarceration Nation. It made me think that a lot was left out of what we learnt about Australia in school. Did you learn anything new when you watched the film?

FACILITATING CONVERSATIONS

Don't be afraid to drill down into specifics - that's where you can really help people to think about what they have seen.

Some questions you could ask are:

Young people - children - being locked away after experiencing some really traumatic stuff was a common theme in Incarceration Nation. It upset me, because I think about all the ways adults could have intervened to help them on the way.

What did you think?

I was shocked to see how violently young people in detention are treated in Incarceration Nation. Seeing Dylan Voller being treated so roughly when he was young then being restrained when he was older was really confronting. It left me very confused about how young people are meant to come out of those situations and change their behaviour.

How did you feel when you saw that?

Incarceration Nation made it really clear that First Nations People are treated drastically differently by the justice system and are often targeted by police. Seeing Tanya Day's story then hearing that a white woman who was in the same situation that night was driven home by the police really shocked me.

What did you think when you saw that? What other stories struck you?

FACILITATING CONVERSATIONS

More questions you could ask are:

Keenan Mundine walking us through the process of what happens when you get to prison made me realise how little I know about the reality for people who are incarcerated.

What did you think about that section?

Trauma and disadvantage were a common threads throughout so many of the stories we heard about. Then in prison, people often experience more of the same - and have very little support when they get out. That feels to me like we're not even giving people a chance to get back on their feet.

What do you think we could do differently?

Watching Incarceration Nation and seeing how much your race and socioeconomic status impacts how you are treated by the justice system really made me think about how lucky I am. I can see now that I benefit from that privilege everyday. I'm going to think about what I could do differently each day to transfer my privilege to those who lack it.

Maybe I can [donate to Indigenous led organisations/share and amplify the voices of First Nations people on social media/educate myself about structural racism in Australia/use my voice to advocate for policy change].

Has the film changed the way you think about our justice system? Do you think you'll make any changes after seeing the film?

TRICKY QUESTIONS

When people are faced with confronting material, they will often reach for things to justify the status quo:

“Well, they must have done something really bad”

“What about the murderers?”

“That’s all really sad but people deserve to be safe.”

These are understandably reactions. It is confronting and challenging to watch a film like *Incarceration Nation* that questions things many of us believed to be necessary and true.

It’s really important that you know you do not need to have all the answers.

It is enough to say you don’t know, but what you do know is that the status quo is hurting a lot of people and you believe we can do things better.

“I am not going to pretend I have all the answers, but I feel strongly that there must be a better way to respond to trauma, homelessness and poverty than locking all those people away behind bars instead of providing basic support and alternatives.”

*“I don’t know what should happen with murders and serial killers. But none of those people in *Incarceration Nation* were murderers or serial killers. They were kids and young people who were really struggling and were let down. I really believe we can do better by young people who need our help.”*

“Don’t you think our communities would be safer if we invested money in building more safe, affordable housing and gave families and young people the supports they needed when they are struggling?”

WHAT NEXT?

Incarceration Nation is an invitation for us to all to take action to create a better future. The first step, is to share the documentary with your friends and family.

TAKE ACTION

Incarceration Nation is a film and campaign for change, which reveals the racist systems that continue to impact Indigenous people today.

But systems are built by people. And we have the power to change them. Together, let's change these systems for a better future.

Incarceration Nation is driving change through our impact campaign. If you haven't already, sign up and take out action journey.

[Sign up here.](#)

State and Territory MPs have the power to change the laws that push Aboriginal people, and children, into prisons and to implement the recommendations, independent oversight and accountability that could save lives. Write to your MP, asking them to watch Incarceration Nation and make changes that will keep kids out of jail and end blak deaths in custody.

[Write to your MP](#)

[Sign the petition to #RaiseTheAge](#)

First Nations People have the solutions. Support Indigenous voices and organisations by researching, following, sharing and donating.

[Start here with our partners](#)

Our impact campaign is always evolving. Let us know how we can use this story for change.

[Take our survey](#)

Keep educating yourself. [Find more resources here.](#)