



**SOCIAL JUSTICE**  
manchester umc

# MUMC Social Justice Media Discussion Guide

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## September 2020: Race

# WELCOME!

This guide is intended to help you, your friends, and your family to use movie night as an opportunity for reflection and discussion on racial justice issues!

**Each page contains a guide for one film. Guides include:**

Film Title  
Rating Information  
Streaming Platform  
Synopsis  
1-2 Paragraph Background Information  
4-5 Discussion Questions.

**Movies in this Guide:**

Movies are listed in ascending order of intensity.

*Coco*  
*Zootopia*  
*Black Panther*  
*The Hate You Give*  
*Loving*  
*Big Sick*  
*Just Mercy*  
*Selma*  
*Wind River*  
*Get Out*  
*Dear White People*  
*Sorry to Bother You*

**If you are using this resource with a group, let us know! Email me at [Nicki.Reinhardtswierk@Manchesterumc.org](mailto:Nicki.Reinhardtswierk@Manchesterumc.org)**

## **Coco**

Category: Family

PG (2017) Disney+

Race, Culture, and Family

### **Synopsis:**

In Disney/Pixar's vibrant tale of family, fun and adventure, an aspiring young musician named Miguel embarks on an extraordinary journey to the magical land of his ancestors. There, the charming trickster Hector becomes an unexpected friend who helps Miguel uncover the mysteries behind his family's stories and traditions.

### **Background Info:**

Day of the Dead (Dia De Los Muertos) is a two day holiday that reunites the living and dead. Families create ofrendas (Offerings) to honor their departed family members that have passed. These altars are decorated with bright yellow marigold flowers, photos of the departed, and the favorite foods and drinks of the one being honored. The offerings are believed to encourage visits from the land of the dead as the departed souls hear their prayers, smell their foods and join in the celebrations!

Day of the Dead is a rare holiday for celebrating death and life. It is unlike any holiday where mourning is exchanged for celebration.

### **Discussion questions:**

Different cultures celebrate differently. Dia Da Los Muertos connects our living family members with those who went before. Miguel and his family celebrate with ofrendas. At the end of the movie, Miguel's family adds Hector to their ofrenda to include him in the family and ensure he is not forgotten. This tradition is part of Miguel's Mexican culture.

1. How does our family remember our ancestors? How is that similar or different to Miguel's family?
2. How is Dia Da Los Muertos like our celebration of Halloween? How is it different?
3. How is Miguel's family like ours? How is it different?
4. How were the music, clothes, and scenery in this movie different from what we see everyday in the United States?

# ***Zootopia,***

*Category: Family*

*PG (2016) Prime*

Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Allyship

## **Synopsis:**

In a city of anthropomorphic animals, a rookie bunny cop and a cynical con artist fox must work together to uncover a conspiracy.

## **Background Information:**

A **stereotype** is an idea or belief many people have about a thing or group that is based upon how they look on the outside, which may be untrue or only partly true. Stereotyping people is a type of **prejudice** because what is on the outside is a small part of who a person is. Prejudices are thoughts or actions about someone based on what they are instead of who they are. Prejudice usually means we treat people differently and not in a nice way.

In Zootopia, Nick and Judy become allies despite stereotypes and prejudices about foxes and bunnies. They hurt each other and make mistakes, but they also forgive and decide to work together to overcome bias. Becoming an ally is the process of supporting people who face prejudice and building relationships beyond those who share our social identities

## **Discussion**

1. What stereotypes have we seen or experienced? (with young kids, starting with gender norms can be helpful ex: Girls like princesses and boys like cars)
2. Do the characters in this movie match the stereotype for each animal? How so or how not?
3. How do the animals feel when they are judged by stereotypes?
  - A. Nick isn't allowed in the cub scouts because he is a fox. Have you ever not been allowed into a group of known someone else who wasn't allowed? How did that feel?
4. Do we have any relationships like Judy and Nick? How can we help people who are stereotyped or experience prejudice?

# Black Panther

Category: Teen/Action

PG-13-Violence, 2018, Disney+  
Representation

## Synopsis:

After the death of his father, T'Challa returns home to the African nation of Wakanda to take his rightful place as king. When a powerful enemy suddenly reappears, T'Challa's mettle as king -- and as Black Panther -- gets tested when he's drawn into a conflict that puts the fate of Wakanda and the entire world at risk. Faced with treachery and danger, the young king must rally his allies and release the full power of Black Panther to defeat his foes and secure the safety of his people.

## Background Info:

Rather than dodge complicated themes about race and identity, the film grapples head-on with the issues affecting modern-day black life. It is also incredibly entertaining, filled with timely comedy, sharply choreographed action and gorgeously lit people of all colors. 'You have superhero films that are gritty dramas or action comedies,' director Ryan Coogler tells TIME. But this movie, he says, tackles another important genre: 'Superhero films that deal with issues of being of African descent.'"

Wakanda is an African nation free of colonial influence or loss of resources. In the Marvel universe, this isolation has led Wakanda to become the most technologically advanced society on the planet. Wakanda is geographically located in the ancient Ethiopian Kingdom and this movie includes a celebration of a variety of African cultures, clothing, traditions, and politics.

## Discussion:

1. This film wrestles with the history of oppression in the U.S. The two main figures in this film – T'Challa and Erik Killmonger – represent the two dominant voices on how to respond to oppression: 1) escape and later humanitarian aid or 2) through violent protest. It's important to understand both perspectives:
  - A. Why does Killmonger feel the way he does, and how could you empathize with him?
  - B. Why do you think the film validates T'Challa's approach instead?
2. Why is it important for superheroes to be diverse? How is Black Panther an example of both racial and gender diversity compared to other superhero films?
3. What role do symbols, colors, and costumes play in this movie? How is African heritage celebrated through these elements.
4. What does this movie say about colonization? How does the history of Wakanda compare to real African nations?

# **The Hate You Give**

Category: Teen/Drama

PG-13 (Language/Gun Violence) 2018 HBO/Prime/Hulu

Police Shootings

## **Synopsis:**

Starr Carter is constantly switching between two worlds -- the poor, mostly black neighborhood where she lives and the wealthy, mostly white prep school that she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is soon shattered when she witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend at the hands of a police officer. Facing pressure from all sides of the community, Starr must find her voice and decide to stand up for what's right.

## **Background Information:**

About 1,000 civilians are killed each year by law-enforcement officers in the United States. By one estimate, Black men are 2.5 times more likely than white men to be killed by police during their lifetime. Another study, Black people who were fatally shot by police seemed to be twice as likely as white people to be unarmed. A third study based two million 911 calls in two US cities, found that white officers dispatched to Black neighbourhoods fired their guns five times as often as Black officers dispatched for similar calls to the same neighbourhoods

## **Discussion:**

1. How does the movie deal with racism/issues related to race?
2. Are lessons learned? If so, how would you describe them?
3. What do you think Lisa means when she says that "white folks want diversity but not too much diversity"?
4. What are the two identities/communities that Starr must juggle?
5. Does this movie change your perception of police-related violence? How so?

## **Loving,**

Category: Date Night/Drama

PG-13 (Language) 2016, HBO/Prime

Interracial Relationships

### **Synopsis:**

The story of Richard and Mildred Loving, a couple whose arrest for interracial marriage in 1960s Virginia began a legal battle that would end with the Supreme Court's historic 1967 decision.

### **Background Information:**

On June 12, 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court rendered a decision in *Loving v. Virginia* which stated that prohibition of marriage between people of different races was unconstitutional. This ended all race-based legal restrictions on marriage in the United States. The anniversary is remembered every year as Loving Day. This film is the true story of the couple whose marriage prompted this vital court ruling.

### **Discussion:**

1. What are some of the arguments for and against interracial marriage in the 1960's? Do we hear any of the arguments today?
2. What is the interaction between political ideals and the internal moral compasses of individuals?
3. How has our culture's perception of interracial marriages changed over time?
4. Have you dated someone of a different race? What was that experience like? If not, how might your experience of your relationship changed if you and your partner were not the same race?
5. What role does place play in this film? How does location play into experiences of racism in today's America?

## **The Big Sick,**

Category: Date Night/Romantic Comedy  
R (language/sexual content) 2017, Prime  
Cultural Divides

### **Synopsis:**

Pakistan-born comedian Kumail Nanjiani and grad student Emily Gardner fall in love, but struggle as their cultures clash. When Emily contracts a mysterious illness, Kumail finds himself forced to face her feisty parents, his family's expectations, and his true feelings.

### **Background information:**

This film is loosely based on the relationship by actor-writer Kumail Nanjiani and his wife writer-producer Emily Gordon. While this film highlights Kumail's particular experience as a Pakistani immigrant, this movie has been praised for highlighting the struggles of intercultural relationships and the tension between South-Asian and American cultures.

The events of the film take place around 2006 and include elements of Islamophobia and confusion about Middle Eastern and Far Eastern cultures that are not as extreme in today's political climate.

### **Discussion:**

1. What role does cultural difference play in Kumail and Emily's relationship? When is it an asset and when is it a challenge?
2. How does Kumail approach the conflict between his parents expectations and his desire for his own life?
3. When have you experienced tension or confusion with others because of cultural differences?
4. How does Kumail's relationship with Emily's parents change throughout the film? What can this teach us about interacting with folks of different races or from different backgrounds?
5. How is this movie similar to other romantic comedies you have seen? How does it differ?



# Just Mercy

Category: Drama/Date Night

PG-13 (language) 2019 Prime

Incarceration

## Synopsis:

After graduating from Harvard, Bryan Stevenson heads to Alabama to defend those wrongly condemned or those not afforded proper representation. One of his first cases is that of Walter McMillian, who is sentenced to die in 1987 for the murder of an 18-year-old girl, despite evidence proving his innocence.

## Background information:

Bryan Stevenson is the founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative. Mr. Stevenson and his staff have won reversals, relief, or release from prison for over 140 wrongly condemned prisoners on death row, and have won relief for hundreds of others wrongly convicted or unfairly sentenced. He has argued and won multiple cases at the United States Supreme Court, including a landmark 2012 ruling that banned mandatory life-imprisonment without-parole sentences for all children in the United States who are 17 or younger and a 2019 ruling that provides new protections for prisoners suffering from dementia and neurological disease.

## Discussion:

1. Bryan says, "The opposite of poverty is not wealth, it's justice." Do you think Walter's story would have played out the same if he had been wealthy and white? How does the race of the victim factor into decisions about sentencing?
2. In what ways did the film expand your understanding of mercy? How might you extend mercy, especially to those who are most vulnerable in society, in your own life and everyday interactions?
3. How is Bryan affected by racism despite his level of education? Do you see parallels in your own community?
4. What did you learn about the lives of incarcerated people by watching Just Mercy? How is mass incarceration similar to mass detention of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. today?
5. On the night of his execution, Mr. Richardson remarks to Bryan that "it's been a strange day. More people have asked me how they can help me today than they ever asked me in my life." What do you make of these acts of compassion in the hours leading up to the execution of Mr. Richardson? In what ways could compassion have been extended to other aspects of Mr. Richardson's life prior to his execution date?

# **Selma,**

Category: Drama

PG-13 (language/violence) Prime

Civil Rights History

## **Synopsis:**

A chronicle of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s campaign to secure equal voting rights via an epic march from Selma to Montgomery Alabama in 1965.

## **Background:**

The Selma to Montgomery march was part of a series of civil rights protests that occurred in 1965 in Alabama, a Southern state with deeply entrenched racist policies. In March of that year, in an effort to register black voters in the South, protesters marching the 54-mile route from Selma to the state capital of Montgomery were confronted with deadly violence from local authorities and white vigilante groups. As the world watched, the protesters—under the protection of federalized National Guard troops—finally achieved their goal, walking around the clock for three days to reach Montgomery, Alabama. The historic march, and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s participation in it, raised awareness of the difficulties faced by black voters, and the need for a national Voting Rights Act.

## **Discussion:**

1. What was the connection between faith and politics in the Selma protests?
2. How did the protests shown in Selma compare to modern protests for racial justice? How do you account for these similarities and differences?
3. Did the Selma campaign succeed in the short term? In the long term?
4. Large portions of the Voting Rights Act were repealed by the US Supreme Court in 2013. Are voting protections still needed for minority groups? Why or why not?
5. How does this film portrayal compare to what you learned in school or what you experienced and witnessed in the 1960's.

## **Wind River,**

Category: Thriller/Mystery

R- Sexuality/Violence, 2007, Netflix

Native American Populations

### **Synopsis:**

Cory Lambert is a wildlife officer who finds the body of an 18-year-old woman on an American Indian reservation in snowy Wyoming. When the autopsy reveals that she was raped, FBI agent Jane Banner arrives to investigate. Teaming up with Lambert as a guide, the duo soon find that their lives are in danger while trying to solve the mystery of the teen's death.

### **Background Information:**

Native American women are murdered and sexually assaulted at rates as high as 10 times the average in certain counties in the United States—crimes overwhelmingly committed by individuals outside the Native American community. These crimes are particularly likely in remote settings where transient workers - oil workers, for example - live in temporary housing units called “man camps” on and near Tribal lands. Their crimes fall between jurisdictional cracks, leaving victims and their families without recourse

The missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW) epidemic affects Indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States. It has been described as a Canadian national crisis and a Canadian genocide. A corresponding mass movement in the U.S. and Canada works to raise awareness of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) through organized marches, community meetings, the building of databases, local city council meetings, tribal council meetings and domestic violence training for police.

### **Discussion**

1. How did the investigation process on the reservation differ from the process we are used to seeing in mysteries?
2. How do race and culture affect family structure and mourning processes?
3. Why is the relationship between Native communities and white individuals so tense in this film?
4. This film highlights several justice issues related to Native communities (missing women, drugs/alcohol, poverty, tribal sovereignty). Were you aware of these issues before? Why or why not?
5. Why don't we know how many Native women have gone missing? Why don't we already know about this issue?

# **Get Out,**

Category: Horror

R Language/Violence, 2017, Amazon Prime

Microaggressions, contemporary race relations

## **Synopsis:**

Now that Chris and his girlfriend, Rose, have reached the meet-the-parents milestone of dating, she invites him for a weekend getaway upstate with Missy and Dean. At first, Chris reads the family's overly accommodating behavior as nervous attempts to deal with their daughter's interracial relationship, but as the weekend progresses, a series of increasingly disturbing discoveries lead him to a truth that he never could have imagined.

## **Background Info:**

The metaphor of the film is nuanced and multi-layered, but the main theme of the film's horror is the real-world concept of a system silencing you no matter how loudly you shout. On the Blu-ray, Peele also explicitly stated that it is "a metaphor for the marginalization of the black horror movie audience. We are a loyal horror movie fan base, and we're relegated to the theater, not on the screen."

Throughout the film, Chris experience Microaggression. These are statements or actions that are do not have hurtful intentions, but have hurtful impacts. For example, the assumption that black individuals are by nature athletic is based on historical conceptions of race. Asking a black individual if they are good at basketball is a Microaggression?

## **Discussion:**

1. What was your initial reaction when you saw police lights at the end? How is it different than when you may have seen police lights at the end of a horror movie like *Scream* where there is a white woman protagonist?
2. Rose's family hosts a "party." How do the guests respond to Chris? What are some examples that highlight the struggle minorities can face in these situations?
3. How is the "sunken place" a metaphor for oppression? What does this movie say about the treatment of black bodies? How has white culture's thoughts about the black body changed or remained the same over time?
4. How does this film connect microaggressions to violence and horror?

## **Dear White People,**

Category: Comedy

R- Language/Sexual References/Drug Use, (2014) Prime  
Racism (New and Old)

### **Synopsis:**

A campus culture war between blacks and whites at a predominantly white school comes to a head when the staff of a humour magazine stages an offensive Halloween party.

### **Background Information:**

Blackface is a term used to describe a form of theatrical make-up used predominantly by non-black performers to represent a caricature of a black person. In the U.S. the practice gained popularity during the 19th century and contributed to the spread of racial stereotypes such as the "happy-go-lucky ducky on the plantation" or the "dandified coon". By the middle of the century, blackface minstrel shows had become a distinctive American artform, translating formal works such as opera into popular terms for a general audience. Early in the 20th century, blackface branched off from the minstrel show and became a form in its own right. Blackface has largely fallen out of favor, but continues to pop up on college campuses across the country.

### **Discussion:**

1. How did you feel during the "Dear White People" segments of the movies? Which white people's behaviors or perspectives have you seen within yourself?
2. Discuss the similarities and differences in the reactions of our main characters to the party. What do you think caused these differences in perspectives? How did characters' motivations play into these reactions?
3. Why did Lionel struggle to find belonging in college? What other identities or combinations of identities tend to be left out in our culture?
4. How can we be more sensitive to the impact of our words, actions, and perspectives? How do we become better white people?

# Sorry to Bother You

Category: Comedy/Fantasy

R- Violence/Sex/Language, 2018, Hulu

Race and Economics

## Synopsis:

In an alternate reality of present-day Oakland, Calif., telemarketer Cassius Green finds himself in a macabre universe after he discovers a magical key that leads to material glory. As Green's career begins to take off, his friends and co-workers organize a protest against corporate oppression. Cassius soon falls under the spell of Steve Lift, a cocaine-snorting CEO who offers him a salary beyond his wildest dreams.

## Background Info:

Raymond Lawrence "Boots" Riley (born April 1, 1971), is an American rapper, producer, screenwriter, film director, and activist. He is the lead vocalist of political hip-hop groups The Coup and Street Sweeper Social Club. Riley identifies as a communist and was heavily involved in the Occupy Oakland movement.

Some character's in this movie code-switch. Code-switching is the practice of changing back and forth between two styles of speaking. Many black folks in America practice code-switching by using a more academic tone called a "white voice."

This movie references "woke" culture. To be "woke" is to be aware of issues of injustice in the world. This is often a positive thing, but can also lead to toxic cultures that are focused primarily on using language to gain reputation rather than creating practical change.

## Discussion:

1. How do you interpret the film's ending? What do you think it says about the filmmakers experience/perspective as a black man in America?
2. How did our main characters relate to race and money?
3. What does this movie say about "wokeness" or political activity?
4. Discuss the role of the "white voice" in this film. Have you ever seen others code-switch? Why is this necessary in our society?