EXPLORING THE ISSUES

Starters

These broad, personalized questions can help kick-off the discussion, or get it going again if there is a lull:

- Describe a moment from INEQUALITY FOR ALL that is really sticking with you – maybe you found it particularly inspiring or particularly troubling. What was it about that moment that is so memorable?

- Imagine going home and telling a friend about this film. What would you say?

- What parts of the film were surprising or made you sit back and say, “Hmmm, I need to think more about that?” Or, “Wow, I never thought about that.”

- What did you learn about _______? [fill in the blank with a specific issue you want to raise].

- If you could spend a day with one person in the film, who would you choose? What would you want to talk about with them?

- What single word best describes how the film made you feel?

The Big Economic Picture

These questions help people explore the context for the issues raised in the film:

- What is the purpose of an economy? We think and talk about the economy all the time, but ultimately, why do we have it? What purpose is it supposed to serve? (Follow up: And does our economy serve that purpose now?)

- In what ways did the film affirm or challenge what you were taught about “equal opportunity” and “the American Dream”?

- If, as Robert Reich argues, the economic “game” is currently rigged, who is doing the “rigging” and how?

- What do you, or the people in your community, have in common with people in the film?

- What do you think most Americans don’t realize about income inequality? What difference do you think it would make if they did have this information?

- Reich says, “When we see the contrast between the values we share and the realities we live in, that is the fundamental foundation for social change.” What do you think about that statement? How would you describe the disconnect between American values and the reality that most Americans live? Are you seeing glimpses of social change?

Reich’s Questions

Using some of the questions that Robert Reich poses during the film can take the group directly to core content:

- Robert Reich asks, “What is happening [today] in terms of income distribution and wealth? Why is it happening?” What do you see happening? What do you think the causes are?

- Reich says, “The question is not inequality per se; the question is, when does inequality become a problem?” In your own words, when do you think inequality becomes a problem?

- Reich asks, “How much income inequality can Americans tolerate and still have a functioning democracy?” What do you see as the relationship between income inequality and democracy?

- Reich makes the point that “Government sets the rules by which the market functions. All of these rules are necessary to construct a free market. The real question is, who do these rules benefit and who do they hurt?” What do you think of that idea – that an economy is simply a set of rules, and we write the rules? Who do you think benefits or is hurt by the current set of rules?

- Reich asks, “Who is looking out for the American worker? Who is actually working in Washington and in state capitals to improve the well-being of the American workforce?” In your view, who should be looking out for the American worker? What could you do to ensure that workers had an advocate in the halls of government?

- Reich asks, “Why didn’t the nation respond to the Great Regression that started around 1980? Why didn’t we take bold steps to ensure that the economy would continue to work for just about everyone?” What bold steps do you think we need now?