



Community Reads Discussion Questions and Quotes from the text

[Winter Quarter 2020, Community Reads](#)

Freedom is a Constant Struggle, chapter 2

13th by Ava DuVernay (documentary clips)

Event details: <https://guides.lib.uw.edu/bothell/communityreads/w20>

Quotes from the text

1. "It is a mistake to assume that all we have to do is guarantee the prosecution of the cop who killed Michael Brown. The major challenge of this period is to infuse a consciousness of the structural character of state violence into the movements that spontaneously arise" (15-16)
2. "Racism persists in a framework that is far more expansive, far vaster than the legal framework" (16-17)
3. "We can't only think about crime and punishment. We can't only think about the prison as a place of punishment for those who have committed crimes" (23)
4. "I think that you can say that all over the world now the institution of the prison serves as a place to warehouse people who represent major social problems" (25)
5. "You could remove the chains, but if you did not develop the institutions that would allow for the incorporation of previously enslaved people into a democratic society, then slavery would not be abolished" (25-26)
6. "Therefore if, and this is one of the problems with all of the reform movements, if you think of the prisoners simply as the objects of the charity of others, you defeat the very purpose of antiprison work. You are constituting them as an inferior in the process of trying to defend their rights" (26)
7. "Sometimes we have to do the work even though we don't yet see a glimmer on the horizon that it's going to be possible" (29)

Discussion Questions

1. The film *13th* focuses mostly on the USA, but Angela Davis reminds us to keep global context in mind. What are some connections you see between issues mentioned in the film and issues abroad?
2. Who benefits from structural racism and mass incarceration?
3. Look at quote #3 above. How do the book and the film each challenge the common notion of “crime”? What are the connections between crime and prison?
4. What is your automatic reaction to the idea of prison abolition? Why? Is that reaction any different from what it would have been before watching the film or reading the book? Why?
5. Growing up, what did you understand the role of prisons to be? Has your understanding changed at all over time?
6. Look at quote #7 above. Have the book or film given you any ideas for steps you can take to support movements on issues you care about? If so, what? If not, how can you begin learning more?