

“THE LAUNDROMAT” FILM

STARTING THE DIALOGUE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE FOLLOWUP ZOOM CALL

Use as many of these questions as you wish to start discussion or move it forward.

Answers are provided if you wish to use them, to amplify the discussion and lead folks towards more resources and action. *Feel free to do your own research for more updated answers.*

Ask folks to use the CHAT feature in the Zoom toolbar to raise their hands to speak.

If there are less than 15 people, you can ask them to say “STACK” with their name, to be called on.

- 1- Had you ever heard of ‘shell corporations’ and this kind of fraud before viewing the film? What had you heard or understood?
- 2- Have you ever heard of the PANAMA PAPERS, on which the film was based?
- 3- Besides the personal loss and heartbreak of real people caught in these shell games, are you aware of the kinds of damage this kind of fraud does to countries and their citizens?
- 4- There is a lot of money at stake in these fraudulent schemes. And the people who perpetrate them are very willing to use violence as a way to protect their assets and ill-gotten gains. Are you aware of some of the violence being perpetrated because of these ‘laundromat’ operations around the world?
- 5- Journalists who report on these crimes are often targeted by huge transnational banks and the corporations that profit from them. Are you aware of the increasing attacks on journalists? Do you see these attacks from governments on freedom of the press as retribution for reporting details of their crimes? Could President Trump’s attacks on the press be part of that strategy?
- 6- Have you or anyone else you know been victimized by one of these fraudulent companies or predatory financial arrangements?
- 7- How does bribery and corruption in government affect the ability of regulatory agencies to go after perpetrators of these sorts of fraudulent schemes?
- 8- Are you aware of the Anti-Corruption Act which has been proposed to Congress but is currently a non-starter?
- 9- There is a strategy for passing state and city anti-corruption resolutions, as a way of bypassing a corrupt federal government. It has strong bi-partisan support, because most Americans oppose corruption. Would you like more information about this?

Q1- Had you ever heard of ‘shell corporations’ and this kind of fraud before viewing the film? What had you heard or understood?

A1- (Give time for people to think of answers and respond.)

Q2- Have you ever heard of the PANAMA PAPERS, on which the film was based?

A2- Here is a definition from Wiki. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama_Papers

There are also articles about the Panama Papers in the RESOURCES list provided.

Q3- Besides the personal loss and heartbreak of real people caught in these shell games, are you aware of the kinds of damage this kind of fraud does to countries and their citizens?

A3- Dr. Louise Isobel Shelley is a University professor and Omer L. and Nancy Hirst Endowed Chair at the Schar School of Policy and International Affairs at George Mason University in Virginia. She is also founder and executive director of the Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center. She had this to say as part of a larger interview available on Youtube.

“Money laundering countries, particularly in the developing world, are losing enormous amounts of capital that are needed for infrastructure development, education, health, [and] the development of new businesses, of entrepreneurship,” Shelley said. “With this much money lying overseas, you can do all sorts of malicious things. You can interfere in electoral processes. You can help pay for fake news.”

“The Laundromat wasn’t just a money laundering system.

It was also a hidden investment vehicle, a slush fund, a tax evasion scheme, and much more.”

Video Interview with Dr. Louise Shelly on Trade-Based Money Laundering

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYdEULRBT2M>

Q4- There is a lot of money at stake in these fraudulent schemes. And the people who perpetrate them are very willing to use violence as a way to protect their assets and ill-gotten gains. Are you aware of some of the violence being perpetrated because of these ‘laundromat’ operations around the world?

A4- The journalist who first reported on the Panama Papers, Daphne Caruana Galizia, was murdered in a car bomb in Malta. There is evidence of threats, bribes and intimidation against jurists and politicians who do not ‘go along’. Corruption has become epidemic in every nation, including the US. See the RESOURCES provided for more detailed examples.

Q5- Journalists who report on these crimes are often targeted by huge transnational banks and the corporations that profit from them. Are you aware of the increasing attacks on journalists? Do you see these attacks from governments on freedom of the press as retribution for reporting details of their crimes? Could President Trump's attacks on the press be part of that strategy?

A5- Allow time for comment.

Here is an article from Transparency International that can help offer suggestions for answering these questions:

THE HIGH COST JOURNALISTS PAY WHEN REPORTING ON CORRUPTION.

<https://www.transparency.org/en/news/the-high-costs-journalists-pay-when-reporting-on-corruption#>

Q6- Have you or anyone else you know been victimized by one of these fraudulent companies or predatory financial arrangements?

A6- Allow time for stories to emerge and comments.

Q7- How does bribery and corruption in government affect the ability of regulatory agencies to go after perpetrators of these sorts of fraudulent schemes?

A7- It's hard to ignore the demands for 'smaller government' that results in fewer staff for investigation of whistle-blower reports, and the demands for 'less regulation' that help corporations and big banks be more 'profitable'. Each of these demands seem practical on their face, but the results are that reduced staff investigative agencies are less capable of pursuing criminals, and it is harder to hold these fraudulent companies accountable if there are less regulations to measure their methods. Combine that with new 'gag laws' that fail to protect whistleblowers, and the picture is complete. As Bill Black, of the University of Kansas Law School said in his book titled the same name, "It's easier to rob a bank if you own it". People who constantly demand smaller government seem not to understand that the demands on government expand with a growing population, and increasing varieties of schemes to defraud the public.

Q8- Are you aware of the Anti-Corruption Act which seeks support in Congress but is currently a non-starter?

A8- In true "the foxes are never going to authorize more rights for the hens" style, the Anti-Corruption Act is still seeking support in Congress. Hopes are not high that they will consider it without a LOT of pressure from we the people. Instead there is a strategy to pass city and state versions that can create change at the Federal level through local pressure.

Here is a look at what is contained in the Anti-Corruption Act.

<https://act.represent.us/sign/what-anti-corruption-act/>

Q9- There is a strategy for passing state and city anti-corruption resolutions, as a way of bypassing a corrupt federal government. It has strong bi-partisan support, because most Americans oppose corruption. Would you like more information about this?

A9- WILPF's National Women, Money & Democracy Committee supports the activist Efforts of www.RepresentUs.org. This organization is mobilizing Democrats and Republicans to promote the passage of the Anti-Corruption Act in local resolutions and ballot initiatives in states across the US. Learn more at their website and consider volunteering for phone banking, right from your desk, to inform voters and turn out the vote in these highly contested local elections.

The Laundromat Project is part of the W\$D Committee of WILPF US.

Join WILPF US, then join our committee to work on important feminist economic issues and an economy that works for all of us. For more information contact info@wilpfus.org.



Women's International League for Peace & Freedom – US Section (WILPF US) is part of the oldest international women's peace organization in the world. Founded in 1915 by Jane Addams and international women who tried to stop World War I, they have been active in opposing militarism and armed conflict for over 100 years. WILPF connects economic justice and human rights to the quest for peace. Learn more about WILPF, join us, and support our work at www.wilpfus.org. Find us on Facebook.



**Women's International League
for Peace & Freedom US section**
www.wilpfus.org

info@wilpfus.org