



ELCA World Hunger
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Life and Debt, 2001 (86 minutes)

Life and Debt explores the impact of globalization on Jamaica. The film provides an important perspective for groups who want to engage in fairly deep discussion around the topics of globalization, trade policy, and economic development. An Internet connection on hand can be used to help answer questions of history and policy that may arise.

The leader should definitely watch the film in advance, as it portrays an important but rather condemning view of the West and the United States and may cause discomfort among viewers. It will be helpful if the leader is prepared for this and has time to reflect on the subject before facilitating the discussion. It may be especially useful for the leader to know, briefly, what has happened to Jamaica's economy since 2001.

Questions for Reflection

These questions are intended to be open-ended with no right answer. Allow for thoughtful silences and encourage friendly dialogue. The questions are in no particular order; select those that seem most relevant to the group (feel free to add your own, too!).

- 1) Discuss the song lyrics at the beginning of the movie (“The rich man's wealth is in the city · Destruction of the poor is his poverty · Destruction of your soul is vanity · Do you hear · I and I, I wanna rule my destiny · I and I, I wanna rule my destiny”). How do they relate to the message of the film?
- 2) What is the role of the tourists in the film?
- 3) The film suggests that Jamaica's economic problems are due to the greed of the West and, in particular, the United States. What is your reaction to that?
- 4) What is the purpose of the IMF? Why would anyone ever use it? (More information on the IMF from their perspective is available at www.imf.org. The “About the IMF” tab contains particularly helpful information.)
- 5) The film takes a pretty negative view of globalization. What are the good and bad effects of globalization as it's currently happening? How could it be improved?
- 6) Did Jamaica have any real alternative to IMF loans and agreements?
- 7) How might the church (particularly the ELCA) respond to the situation?
- 8) Do you see any reason for hope in Jamaica's state of affairs?

Other Resources

If this film and the issues of globalization and trade grabbed your interest, you may want to check out the following resources:

The DVD series, *Commanding Heights: The Battle for the World Economy* (2003).

Bread for the World Institute, *Hunger 2009: Global Development: Charting a New Course* (Washington, D.C.: Bread for the World Institute, 2009), especially chapter 3, "A Clear and Consistent Approach to Development." Available online at www.bread.org.

Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), especially chapter 10, "Trade Policy for Reversing Marginalization."

Mark Curtis, *Trade for Life: Making Trade Work for Poor People* (London: Christian Aid, 2001).

Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*, rev. ed. (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2000).

Shannon Jung, *Food for Life: The Spirituality and Ethics of Eating* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), especially chapter 5, "Global Food Disorder."

For more on Jamaica and links to recent news stories about Jamaica, visit the ELCA companion profile Web page: www.elca.org/jamaica.