



The
Florida
Project

DISCUSSION GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Warm, winning and gloriously alive, Sean Baker's *THE FLORIDA PROJECT* is a deeply moving and unforgettably poignant look at childhood. Set on a stretch of highway just outside the imagined utopia of Disney World, *THE FLORIDA PROJECT* follows six-year-old Moonee and her rag-tag gang of friends. Moonee and her rebellious mother Halley live week to week at "The Magic Castle," a budget motel managed by Bobby, whose stern exterior hides a deep reservoir of kindness and compassion.

Despite her harsh surroundings, the precocious and ebullient Moonee has no trouble making each day a celebration of life, her endless afternoons overflowing with mischief and grand adventure as she and her playmates fearlessly explore the utterly unique world into which they've been thrown. Unbeknownst to Moonee, however, her delicate fantasy is supported by the struggle and sacrifice of Halley, who is forced to explore increasingly dangerous possibilities in order to provide for her daughter. With *THE FLORIDA PROJECT*, Sean Baker gives life and a voice to a community rarely seen on screen. Through the eyes of Moonee, Halley, and Bobby, Baker has created a spellbinding and transformative portrait of contemporary lives lived in the margins that are otherwise too easily forgotten. *THE FLORIDA PROJECT* declares, boldly and proudly, that anywhere can be a Magic Kingdom - it just depends on how you see it.

To watch *THE FLORIDA PROJECT* is to be deeply affected by it. The film raises really important questions. What can I do to help kids like Moonee? What causes this situation? What are the solutions? This action guide is meant as a jumping off point to answering these questions and hopefully encouraging new ones. Here you'll find some helpful resources as well.

Total Running Time: 1 hour 55 minutes

DISCUSSION GUIDE OVERVIEW

Watching *THE FLORIDA PROJECT* can be an incredibly moving experience. You may feel afterwards that you want to do something to help families like Moonee's. Talking about the emotions the film evokes can be the next step to advocating for change. This discussion guide will help you to generate a conversation about family homelessness – what Sean Baker, the director of *THE FLORIDA PROJECT*, has called "hidden homelessness." We hope it will also encourage viewers to become a part of the solution to end family homelessness and poverty.





MAIN CHARACTERS

- Moonee, the six-year-old protagonist (Brooklynn Prince)
- Halley, her mother (Bria Vinaite)
- Bobby, the motel manager (Willem Dafoe)
- Jancey, Moonee's best friend, who lives at Futureland Inn (Valeria Cotto)
- Jancey's grandmother (Stacy Josie Olivo)
- Scooty, Moonee's friend, whose mother, Ashley, works at the restaurant (Christopher Rivera)
- Ashley, Scooty's mother and Halley's friend (Mela Murder)

ISSUES TO WATCH FOR

The film touches on some heavy issues that are often felt by families experiencing homelessness. As you watch, note which of these arise and how they affect the story.

- Housing instability
- Helping each other
- Job loss/unemployment, or lack of living-wage jobs
- The high cost of housing
- Generational poverty
- Resilience and survival behavior
- Gaps in our social safety net
- Foster care and the child welfare system
- The effects of childhood trauma
- Lack of quality childcare
- Child hunger

DIRECTOR BIO

Sean Baker (Director/Co-Writer/Producer/Editor) is a New York native and graduate of NYU'S Tisch School of the Arts. He is an award-winning writer/director known for *TAKE OUT* (2004), *PRINCE OF BROADWAY* (2008), *STARLET* (2012) and *TANGERINE* (2015). Sean's latest feature, *THE FLORIDA PROJECT*, premiered at Cannes – Director's Fortnight 2017. *THE FLORIDA PROJECT* was acquired by A24 for theatrical and home entertainment release. Baker is also the co-creator of the long-running comedy show *GREG THE BUNNY*, which had incarnations on IFC TV, FOX and MTV.

DID YOU KNOW...

- Children who were homeless with their families can have a hard time breaking the cycle; many of them end up homeless as adults.
- Millions of families lost their homes during the recession due to job loss and other economic factors. Many homeless parents are working, or seeking jobs.
- Supportive communities can be the most important safety net for preventing and ending homelessness.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who was your favorite character and why? Did you find yourself identifying more with the children or the adults?
2. The director, Sean Baker, used the term “hidden homelessness” to describe the experience of families in the film, who live week-to-week in budget motels. How does the stress of hidden homelessness affect the daily lives of the families in the film?
3. Have you witnessed poverty as a tourist? The film juxtaposes poverty against “the happiest place on earth.” How did this make you feel?





DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

4. How does the location of the film, which largely takes place in motels along the road to Disney World, affect the narrative of the film and the character development?
5. The film showcases families experiencing homelessness in the Orlando, FL area. How are these issues relevant to your community? In your personal life?
6. How do the people who live in the Magic Castle motel and the neighboring Futureland Inn support each other? What are their challenges in creating community?
7. What do you think is Moonee's perspective on her family's financial situation? Does she know how much Halley is struggling to keep them housed? Should she know?
8. Did you sympathize with the struggles of Halley and Moonee? What do you think Halley's "backstory" might be that led them to this living situation?
9. What did the character of Bobby add to the movie? What role can caring adults play for children in unstable housing situations?
10. What were the moments of joy in the film and how did they affect you? What about moments of heartbreak?
11. How did you react to the last scene? What do you think might happen to Moonee after that scene?
12. Were there elements to the film that were universal experiences? What were they and how did they affect you?

THINGS YOU CAN DO

1. Tell your friends and family to watch *The Florida Project*. Talk about it afterwards.
2. Host your own viewing party or discussion group.
3. Share your thoughts about the film on social media.

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