

ROBERT DE NIRO

# ELLIS

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



A FILM BY JR

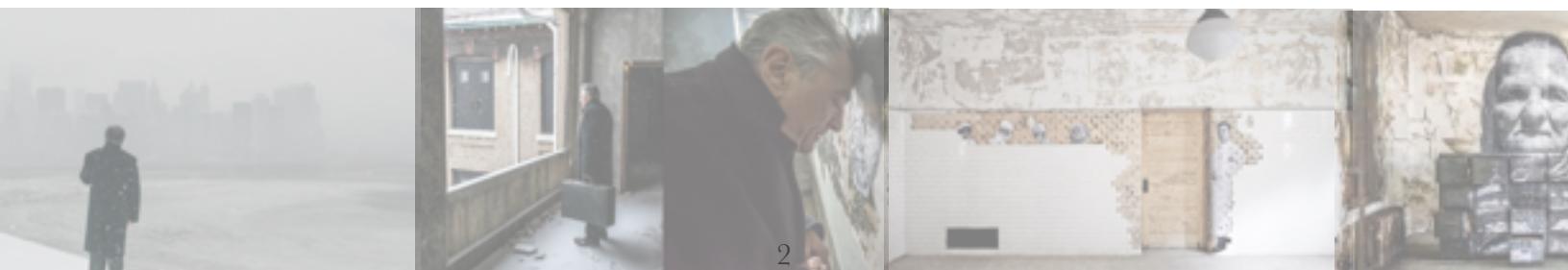
a film by JR cinematographer ANDRE CHEMETOFF written by ERIC ROTH original music WOODKID performed by NILS FRAHM editor MAXIME POZZI-GARCIA executive producers CATHERINE and NIKLAS ZENNSTRÖM and EMERSON COLLECTIVE producers GUILLAUME LEFRANÇOIS MARC AZOULAY SOL GUY EMILE ABINAL produced by JR and JANE ROSENTHAL

# ELLIS

## OFFICIAL DISCUSSION GUIDE

*"Talking about the past is the best way to understand the present and to approach our future"* -JR

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## ABOUT THE FILM

ELLIS awakens our collective memory, taking you back to the early years of Ellis Island through the experience of one immigrant. Set in the abandoned Ellis Island Hospital complex and using JR's unframed art installations, ELLIS tells the forgotten story of the immigrants who built America. It is the story of the ghosts of our countries past, the individuals who fled poverty, discrimination, and dictatorships, for a chance at a new life and eerily foreshadows the plight of those who currently seek the same opportunities and safety in this country and other parts of the world.



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Talking about the past is the best way to understand the present and to approach our future. When I started working on 'Ellis,' the refugee crisis had not yet reached its current peak. Walking around the abandoned hospital on Ellis Island, I could feel the presence of the hundreds of thousands of people who passed through, and of the countless ones who didn't make it and got turned back. I look for what's often missing in today's media coverage. I want to find the story behind each person who left his or her country. I want to know what made them leave everything and everyone behind, even when they knew they'd never be able to come back. It takes so much courage. There were immigrants in Ellis a hundred years ago, there are migrants now, and there will be some in a hundred years, so we have to do what we can to try to relate to each individual story. -JR

*"I'm the ghost of all those who never got to get there. And the ghost of those who will never get there."*  
- Eric Roth, ELLIS

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Did you have any family members that came through Ellis Island? Who were they and where did they come from?
2. Did you see your family's story reflected in the film?
3. Think back to the film. What room from JR's installation in the hospital do you remember most. Why? What do you remember from it?
4. In one scene there are faces of children on broken windows. What does this mean to you?
5. In the final scenes of ELLIS, Robert De Niro's character exits by walking on hundreds of photos of faces. Why do you think the faces are on the floor? (vs the wall or ceiling)
6. Why do you think JR uses current photos and not images from that time period on the floor?
7. Why do you think this film was shot in the thick of winter? What character does the weather play, or what does it represent?
8. Many of the immigrants who came through Ellis Island sacrificed everything to get here. Has immigrating to America become any easier since? If not, what are the barriers to entry today that are causing hardships for immigrants?
9. Do you think the American dream, as described in the film, is still the same dream today?
10. Where is today's Ellis Island and how are its stories being told today?
11. Ellis Island stood as a symbol for immigration in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. What places symbolize immigration today? Where are people coming through today?
12. Why did your ancestors come to the United States?
13. Why do you think they come today?
14. What might they be fleeing or escaping? What risks do they take?



## TAKE ACTION

### **Host a Screening**

If you are reading this, then we hope it means you are hosting the screening in the very near future. If not, host one! Just go to [ellis-themovie.com](http://ellis-themovie.com) and sign up. It is free to host a screening, and if you host it the week of November 9th or November 16th you will receive a limited edition ELLIS “passport.”

### **Share Your Story**

The stories of family, of making a new home, and of change that Ellis Island symbolizes are universal. Share your own story inspired by ELLIS with us. Post one of the images above or one of your own to Instagram with a caption about what ELLIS means to you. Make sure to tag us - @jr & @tribeca – and use the hashtag #ELLISstory. JR and Tribeca will be sharing their favorite posts.

### **Tell Everyone You Know**

Spread the word about film! Please join us in using the power of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and email to tell your friends, family and the world about this timely film. Go to [socialpresskit.com/ellis](http://socialpresskit.com/ellis) to spread the word.

### **Get Educated**

See below for additional resources on immigration, Ellis Island and the refugee crisis. Our favorite? The [Ellis Island Passenger Search](#). Search your family name to see if your ancestors came through Ellis Island.

# RESOURCES

## Articles

- [JR Brings Ellis Island's Abandoned Hospital to Life](#)
- [Festival Sporlight: JR's Ellis](#)
- [French Artist JR's Works are Turning the World Inside Out](#)

## Watch

- [JR's TED Prize Wish to Turn the World Inside Out](#)

## Books

- [The Ghosts of Ellis Island](#)

## JR online

- [Website](#)
- [The Inside Out Project](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Tumblr](#)
- [Twitter](#)

## Learn More About Immigration and Your Family History

- [Ellis Island Family History Center](#)
- [Save Ellis Island](#)
- [Ancestry.com](#)
- [The UN Refugee Agency](#)
- [Define American](#)
- [United We Dream](#)
- [Partnership for a New American Economy](#)
- [U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants](#)
- [World Relief](#)
- [National Immigration Forum](#)
- [America's Voice](#)
- [Kids in Need of Defense](#)
- [Center for American Progress](#)



## FILMMAKER BIO

### JR, Director & Producer

JR exhibits freely in the streets of the world, catching the attention of people who are not typical museum visitors. In 2011 he received the TED Prize, after which he created Inside Out, an international participatory art project that allows people worldwide to get their picture taken and paste it to support an idea and share their experience. His most recent projects include a collaboration with New York City Ballet, a huge installation on the Pantheon in Paris, the pasting of a container ship and an exhibition on the abandoned hospital of Ellis Island. He recently directed the short documentary *Les Bosquets*, based on the story of Ladj Ly and the performance of the ballet *Les Bosquets* of New York City Ballet (2014) inspired by the riots in the French suburbs in 2005. JR also directed Face to Face, Women are Heroes, and Wrinkles of the City Cuba.

[www.Ellis-theMovie.com](http://www.Ellis-theMovie.com)  
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