

## **Thank you for signing up for our TalkFest session on "Nomadland"!**

As the name TalkFest suggests, it is our intention for everyone to be able to participate and decide which of the issues raised by the movie they find most engaging. It is in the hope of enriching the conversation that we are providing some additional resources and questions, not as required reading or points to be followed but as food for thought.

### **Additional Resources**

- [Chloe Zhao on \*Nomadland\* and the road to self-rediscovery](#)
- [Talking to One of the Real-Life Nomads of \*Nomadland\*](#)  
A conversation with Bob Wells about being on the road and the life-changing magic of not paying rent.
- [The End of Retirement: When you can't afford to stop working](#)  
by Jessica Bruder, author of *Nomadland: Surviving America in the Twenty-First Century*

### **Food for Thought**

- Why do you think people become nomads? Is it mostly out of necessity or by choice? How does the itinerant lifestyle portrayed in the film speak to the need of the characters for freedom and independence but also for human connection and companionship?
- How do events like the Rubber Tramp Rendezvous and websites like Bob Wells' [CheapRVLiving.com](#) help create a sense of community? How do van-dwellers support each other? Why do they refer to each other as "vanily"?
- Linda May lives the nomadic life, but dreams of building an "[earthship](#)" and settling down. If economic circumstances improved for the van-dwellers in this movie, do you think many of them would settle down and maybe even go back to their former ways of life?
- Why doesn't Fern stay with Dave when his family offers her accommodation in their guest house? What is holding her back?
- One of the Amazon workers, Angela, shows Fern her Morrissey tattoo, which reads "Home, is it just a word? Or is it something you carry within you?" Did your understanding of the word "home" change after watching the movie?
- Fern tells a family who worries that she's spending another winter in her van, "I'm not homeless. Just houseless. Not the same thing, right?" How is it different?
- For most people home is a predictable and secure place. It is part of who we are. Does owning a home give us a false sense of security? Does staying in one place make us stagnate by limiting our ability to grow in different directions and rediscover ourselves and our true potential?
- In the first scene of the movie, we see Fern putting her things into storage. At the end, we see her parting with her stuff. How do the attitudes of the van-dwellers in the film contrast with the propensity Americans seem to have toward accumulating more and more stuff? What similarities do you see with movements such as [minimalism](#) and the [tiny house movement](#)?
- How do people like Linda May reconcile their anti-consumerist ideals with working jobs offered by companies such as Amazon?

- The fact that the movie is much less blatant in condemning the working conditions of elderly employees in Amazon's CamperForce program than the book has led some viewers to call *Nomadland* apolitical. Do you agree? Why do you think Zhao filmed the warehouse scenes in the same way she did the scenes of Fern cleaning toilets and shoveling beets?
- The book *Nomadland* mentions a Kurt Vonnegut quote which van-dwellers share:  
*"Every other nation has folk traditions of men who were poor but extremely wise and virtuous, and therefore more estimable than anyone with power and gold. No such tales are told by the American poor. They mock themselves and glorify their betters."* Do you agree? What could explain this difference?
- Another difference commonly noted is that Americans tend to admire risk-takers, whereas Europeans are instinctively risk-averse. Do you think a phenomenon like the one depicted in the movie could become a reality here? Would you consider leaving your current job and home and becoming a "digital nomad"?
- One of the [movie trailers](#) quotes John Steinbeck's 1962 travelogue *Travels with Charley: In Search of America*: *"I saw in their eyes something I was to see over and over in every part of the nation- a burning desire to go, to move, to get under way, anyplace, away from any HERE. They spoke quietly of how they wanted to go someday, to move about, free and unanchored, not toward something but away from something. I saw this look and heard this yearning everywhere in every state I visited. Nearly every American hungers to move."* Would you agree? How could one explain this characteristic of the American psyche?
- Bruder acknowledges that the vast majority of nomads she came across were white. Why would the nomadic lifestyle be less attractive for African Americans?
- At the end of the film, Bob tells Fern that "What's remembered lives" and she heads back to Empire to sell the things in her storage unit and tour her old home for the final time. Why do you think she does this?
- Why do you think director Chloé Zhao included so many lingering wide shots of the landscape? What do the vast horizons and wide-open landscapes represent?

### **TalkFest Project**

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