



# Facilitator Guide for Community Screenings

*Repairing the World: Stories from the Tree of Life*

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## Stories Can Inspire Thought and Action

***Repairing the World: Stories from the Tree of Life*** tells the story of Pittsburgh, PA's powerful community response to hate and antisemitism in the aftermath of the deadly attack at the Tree of Life synagogue in 2018 that killed eleven people. For three years the film follows survivors, families of the victims, diverse community members, students and civic leaders as they examine their vulnerabilities and the impact of rising antisemitism, racism, hate speech, and gun violence. Against the backdrop of a tumultuous period in the country, a local community that has faced violence and trauma works to heal and grapple with what it means to be stronger than hate.

*This guide is written for those facilitating the connections and discussion after a film screening. It is intended to provide guidelines that support the facilitator in preparing for, crafting and facilitating a meaningful and productive group gathering and discussion.*

Facilitating discussion and connection at a film screening for *Repairing the World* is about much more than understanding the film. The mass shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue received national and international attention. Less visible have been the steps taken by various members of the Pittsburgh community to build connections that can strengthen their resilience to hate.

Their story can inspire thought and action for communities around the world to:

- Understand the harm of hate to the entire community, and the influence of hate speech.
- Engage in the ongoing practice of confronting antisemitism and bigotry in their own community before hate can turn to violence.
- Deepen connections and practices for resiliency in order to respond more effectively to hate and intolerance when they do occur.

## How to Use This Guide

Now more than ever, we need spaces in our country to engage in constructive dialogue around the issues of racism and antisemitism that divide communities. *Repairing the World: Stories from the Tree of Life* presents an opportunity for just that by showing examples of individuals who struggle with the harm and violence, with division and missteps, while also embracing the humility to take steps to come together, create understanding, and develop relationships which bridge those divides and thereby strengthen communities.

**This facilitation guide centers on these core questions:**

**What moments or scenes resonated most for you? Who did you identify with in the story?**

**How did the film push or challenge your understanding about how antisemitism manifests today? How did the film deepen your understanding about the connections between antisemitism, racism, and bigotry in other forms?**

**In what ways have you experienced hate in your own community?**

**What did you learn from this story about what our community could do to create stronger, more resilient connections that resist or confront bigotry and hate?**

If you are just beginning your work to set up a screening or considering the different ways you might use *Repairing the World* with your community, be sure to explore the full [Discussion Guide for Community Screenings](#). In that guide you will find:

- Information and important context about the film
- Discussion prompts that provide an opportunity to process your thoughts, questions and responses to the film
- Practical tips for planning a community screening event, and



- Resources for further learning, and action steps for follow-up and sustained engagement to enhance local capacity to respond to and prevent acts of hate, antisemitism, racism, anti-immigrant bias and all forms of bigotry.

## Values for Effective Facilitation

Community screenings, like the film itself, can be guided by several values:

- In discussing the film and your community, choose to focus on those who were harmed, not to dwell on the perpetrators.
- Avoid reproducing more hate and division by demonizing.
- Seek to understand the painful complexities of the story.
- Surface the social conditions that give rise to these acts so that they can be honestly seen, along with sharing real-life examples of overcoming them when available.
- Position hope over hate.
- Strive for restorative practices with the goal of repairing communities.

## Additional resources to strengthen facilitation skills

- [Fostering Dialogues Across Divides: A Nuts and Bolts Guide](#) from Essential Partners (formerly Public Conversations Project)
- [National Center for Dialogue and Deliberation](#) offers resources and a network of facilitators
- [Conversation Agreements and Guides](#) from Living Room Conversations
- [Dialogue Facilitation Organizations](#)



# Preparing to Facilitate

*Repairing the World* does not shy away from the controversial issues that face communities. That is exactly why it can mobilize a community towards more productively confronting bigotry and hate. For this same reason, it is helpful for facilitators to begin with a little inner preparation.

Many facilitators prepare with reflective practices of their own—journaling, visual representation, and silence. Give yourself time to process the power of this film, to consider your own proximity to bigotry and hate, and the connections and care you need in regard to this topic. This attention to self is important so that you can be fully present and help create a safe space for the community members who attend the screening.

## Suggested Reflective Prompts Pre-Screening

- What scenes, words, and people in the film felt particularly close to you? Why?
- What glimmers of hope do you see in the film? And what glimmers do you see in your own community? Who is in your community?
- What incidents (recent or deep-seated) are dividing your community?
- How can you show up with curiosity? What assumptions of your own could you be open to changing?
- What would it look like for your community to be “stronger than hate”?

After the screening and community engagement, recognize the space you have been holding for others. As the facilitator, allow yourself to let go as well. Community change happens over time. It is important to take care of yourself in this journey.

## Suggested Reflective Prompts Post-Screening

- What surprised you in the screening?
- Did any comments feel “triggering” or particularly upsetting for you? Why?
- What do you need to move forward?



## Set the Stage for Engaged Conversation

Setting the stage to engage in productive and reflective conversation happens from the moment of invitation. As noted in the [Discussion Guide for Community Screenings](#), it's important to set that stage with attention to the purpose for convening and to design the screening experience in its entirety for community healing. See a sample email invitation in the [Screening Kit](#) for examples of language to use in the invitation.

### Audience

Community discussions of *Repairing the World* can be held with a wide range of audiences, and the conversation will vary depending on who is in the room. Regardless of the intended audience, it's important to take stock of who is actually in the room for the conversation, in order to be present for their experiences. For the film discussion to have full impact on community healing, it's also valuable to consider who is not in the room but is present in your community.

### Entry

**The entry is an opportunity for community members to be seen.** Rather than leaving entry as people simply walking in and having a seat, perhaps not talking to anybody else or only talking with people they know, consider one or more of the following ways for individuals to be seen:

1. Welcome each person that arrives, asking their name.
2. Create a welcome committee so that it is not just you welcoming attendees. Ideally, this would be a diverse group of community members who can welcome, engage in conversation, and introduce attendees to each other.



3. Invite people to make a name tag with the name that they would like people to use. (Tip: encourage writing quite large so it is visible from a distance.)
4. In the reception area—or on the chairs for the screening—have cards with simple questions for connection:
  - a. What brought you to this screening tonight?
  - b. What is an aspect of our community you enjoy?
  - c. Where do you enjoy bringing visitors to in our community?
5. Set paper/pens within easy access of viewers or hand them out as they come in. These will be helpful for the reflective process.

It's easy to overlook these steps, but entry is really important for creating an initial connection. These first simple connections become the foundation on which people may build when they get to the more complex material of the film. It's hard to go deep if you don't even know your neighbor's name.

## Framing What to Expect Next

**Finally, before starting the film, remember to frame what will happen afterward.** This would have been set up by the invitation, so this is a time to reinforce that they have a much more significant opportunity than watching a movie with strangers in a theater. This screening doesn't end with the film credits. Rather, the film is the beginning—an invitation to engage in the topics raised and make a difference in their community.

- Share any logistics specific to the venue or process of what will happen after the film.
- Encourage viewers to take a breath when the film ends, and let them know you'll give them a moment to think before diving into the discussion.
- Highlight that there is paper/pen around in case they want to write/doodle.
- Acknowledge that each individual will experience the film from the lens of their own life, so it is both an individual and communal event to watch this film together. Applaud them for their commitment to engage in discussions which we don't always get the opportunity to have. In a time when it is easy to disengage with challenging issues like hate, they are showing courage and generosity.
- Encourage a curious mindset. Explore how deeply they can learn and share a value for challenging assumptions.

## Discussing the Film

Building community connections requires creating the space for movement. This movement is more likely when individuals have space to think.



Recognize that in a community space, each person is on their own journey. Encourage individual growth while also protecting and providing space for the community as a whole.

### Facilitation is...

- Creating an open atmosphere for voices to be heard
- Moving the discussion forward with attention to building understanding
- Inviting new thinking - curiosity about one's self, about each other, and about their community

### Facilitation is not...

- Being the content expert
- Explaining the film or the context for the film
- Driving your own agenda without attention to the group
- Just letting people talk

## Engaging with controversial issues

Repairing the World reflects the real-world complexity of interrelated issues. Those attending any screening will respond and engage based in part on their proximity to these issues. Thoughtful discussion leaders know how important it is to be aware of potential issues for the audience and for themselves as facilitators. This list is provided for your preparation for the conversation following the film. You uniquely create the atmosphere in which people will be able to talk about the film, issues raised, and most importantly, their own experiences as members of your community. How can you engage as a facilitator in a way that builds the opportunity for rich engagement? How can you help community members participate with curiosity and empathy?

While there can be many fruitful and engaging discussions around the historical and ideological elements shown in the film, that is not the purpose of this guide, **nor should the facilitator feel obligated to be fluid in talking about all potential topics.** For example, participants may bring issues such as gun violence, gun safety laws, links to other mass shootings, immigration policies, radicalization through conspiracy theories online, the Israel/Palestine conflict, and more into the discussion. Facilitators need not have expert knowledge in all of these, but it is helpful to recognize that these issues may influence engagement.

Understanding that viewers may bring strong views on these topics will help the facilitator better support a productive experience for participants. Ultimately, keeping the focus on areas outlined in the discussion questions presented in the guide will help the conversation be more fruitful. [Repairingtheworld.org](http://Repairingtheworld.org) will provide guidelines for additional discussions the community may want to convene focused on countering hate speech, building interconnection, understanding antisemitism and racism, community healing, and others. Local conveners, leaders and community members can help guide priorities for next steps based on community needs.



## As the facilitator:

- Listen carefully to each individual
- Stay present with the group as a whole.
- Look for opportunities to elevate the voices not always heard, particularly young people.
- Recognize and acknowledge the courage to engage, particularly when someone shares a difficult truth. It is too easy to go silent in our polarized world and just avoid conflict.

A guiding star for facilitators is the desire to build community. When in doubt about what to do, come back to that question—**how can my response, question, and action help build community in this moment?** (see [Values for Effective Facilitation on p.3](#))

## After the film has ended:

- Take a breath and watch the room to make sure there is a pause for the viewers. This could include a reminder of the instruction you gave in framing.
- Let the viewers know you will share a prompt for personal reflection before starting the discussion. Note: individuals process challenging material in different ways, so it is important to give people thinking time. Give at least 60 seconds, or ideally a few minutes.
- Share this prompt for personal reflection: **What moments or scenes resonated most for you? Who did you identify with in the story?**

## Group Discussion in Three Rounds

*If you are leading a full audience discussion in a theater, there may not be the time or space for small group discussions as outlined below. Start with a personal reflection as noted above, then move to a larger discussion with the full group for the following rounds of questions. Prioritize the rounds based on time allotted and your community's priorities.*

Group discussion questions are noted in 3 “rounds” since in each case, there is one guiding question, which could be all you need to get rich engagement. Remember your goal is a space for individuals to really listen to each other, so it is more important to hear many voices on a single question than to go through a lot of questions. Follow-up questions are provided in the case that the conversation is staying surface level, but if the viewers are going deeper, they do not need to be asked of the group.

If your audience is not yet very familiar with each other, it can be helpful to have viewers talk first to just 1 or 2 others. This can be done by inviting them to turn to a neighbor or two. Let them know they will have just a couple of minutes each to share. After 3-5 minutes, bring them back with an invitation to share what came up in their small group. This strategy could be used on any or all of the rounds. If time and space allow, you could call on 3-4 people to reflect on their discussions. If time is limited, do this strategy for just round two.

### **Round 1 is focused on the film.**

In the interest of the discussion moving towards your own community, keep this section relatively short.

**How did the film push or challenge your understanding of how antisemitism manifests today? How did the film deepen your understanding of the connections between antisemitism, racism, and bigotry in other forms?**

Follow-up questions (if needed) could include:

- How was the antisemitism shown in the film different than what is more often portrayed about antisemitism?



- Where did you see connections between antisemitism and other forms of bigotry?
- What obstacles to confronting antisemitism did you see in the film?
- What was an experience shown in the film that you had not known about?
- Whose actions are you curious about?

## **Round 2 asks viewers to connect to their own community.**

This is the substance of the discussion and will be the basis for future conversations in the community. It is also the toughest emotionally, since it is both difficult to hear the pain others have seen or experienced, and not something we talk about much. This is not about condemning individuals or defending ourselves. If we don't talk about experiences of bigotry and hate, we can't address them, so as painful as this may feel, it is tremendously important. This is where you as a facilitator need to hold the tension and the compassion for all participants so that the conversation can go deep. Stay with this part of the conversation for as long as you can, and hear from as many voices as possible.

**In what ways have you experienced hate in your own community?**

Follow-up questions (if needed) could include:

- In what ways have you seen others in our community experience and/or respond to bigotry and hate?
- Not all hate crimes are mass shootings or collective violence. Hate can be expressed in daily occurrences. What have we seen in our community?
- What questions could we ask to find out more about how our community is or has been affected by bigotry and hate?
- Who is challenging bigotry and hate in our community? Where/when do we see that happen?



## **Round 3 encourages participants towards an action step.**

→ *As you begin Round Three of your discussion, this is the time to share the **participant survey** provided by Not In Our Town on the big screen. Participants can scan the QR code on their mobile devices, and respond to the questions asked.*

In public life and online, it's easy to feel overwhelmed considering the complexities. More important, though, is to think about how to start with small things. You don't have to change the Constitution to change social norms about how we speak to each other on the internet and in public. If time is very short, pose this question as an opportunity to journal or discuss with the person next to them for a few minutes, with an acknowledgment that this is just the beginning.

**What did you learn from this story about what our community could do to create stronger, more resilient connections that resist or confront bigotry and hate?**

Follow-up questions (if needed) could include:

- What would our community look and feel like if we took these steps?
- How could more conversations like this help? Who would you want to participate?
- What is one step you personally could take today to move in that direction?
- What would you like to see the next step be after this screening?



## Bringing the Discussion to a Close

**It's important to consider how to end the discussion with a sense of hope and inspiration.** These issues are challenging. Growth and learning takes time, but as the survivors, families and Pittsburgh community have shown, healing and action for change are possible.

Consider one or more of the following ways for individuals to have a moment to breathe and collect themselves for re-entry:

1. Complete the participant survey to share what they've learned
2. Share an invitation for a future convening that builds on this discussion
3. Thank hosts, co-sponsors, speakers, and participants for investing their time and energy in participating in the event and engaging in the discussion



## Additional Resources from *Repairing the World* and *Not In Our Town*

- Remember, talking about antisemitism and bigotry makes a difference in raising awareness, challenging hate, and building relationships. Talk about this film and the discussion with others.
- Connect teachers with [classroom resources](#) for using the film.
- Download the [Community Resiliency Guide](#) to help your community rebuild after an incident of hate.
- Topic-Specific Guides - for context and resources if you choose to focus your discussion on a particular topic or feel you need additional support on an area particularly resonant with your community.
- Launch a [Not in Our Town group](#) in your own community.
- Make plans to participate in [United Against Hate Week](#).
- Monitor hate in your community.

**Not In Our Town (NIOT)** is an organization that provides public television films, stories, and resources to local communities and schools seeking to address hate, racism, and bullying. The spark for NIOT was Patrice O’Neill’s and Rhian Miller’s original 1995 *Not In Our Town* PBS documentary focused on a community’s response to hate in Billings, Montana, which inspired local activists and leaders across the country and around the world to take up the cause and fight against hate-based attacks. A Not In Our Town network of hundreds of communities and schools informed subsequent films, demonstrating how to use this medium to promote civic participation and inspire individuals to create positive change in their own communities.

NIOT has since evolved into a movement to stop hate, address bullying, and build safe, inclusive communities for all. Using film, social media, and organizing tools, NIOT helps local leaders build vibrant and diverse cities and towns where everyone is encouraged to participate. NIOT films feature courageous people standing up to hate and provide roadmaps for community actions.

Find more at [niot.org](http://niot.org) and [repairingtheworldfilm.org](http://repairingtheworldfilm.org)