



Discussion Guide for Community Screenings

Repairing the World: Stories from the Tree of Life

The guide contains:

- Information and important context about the film
- Discussion prompts that provide an opportunity to process your thoughts, questions and response 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.



Thank you to our funders for making this film, engagement campaign, and accompanying resources possible.

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Additional material was excerpted from the Light in the Darkness Film Guide by the Public Conversations Project.

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How to Use This Guide

Thank you for sharing *Repairing the World: Stories from the Tree of Life* with your community. This Discussion Guide is intended for use by diverse community groups and organizations as a tool to process the film in a productive and mutually supportive way. We believe that the act of talking about antisemitism and bigotry can begin to raise awareness, build relationships and counter hate.



Overview of the Film

Repairing the World: Stories from the Tree of Life documents the powerful community response in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to hate and antisemitism in the aftermath of the 2018 assault on three congregations at the Tree of Life synagogue that killed 11 people – the deadliest antisemitic attack in U.S. history. The film follows survivors, families of the victims, diverse community members, participants, and civic leaders for three years 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.

As with other Not In Our Town films, *Repairing the World: Stories from the Tree of Life* creates a portrait of a community by including the voices of a chorus of characters rather than just one or two protagonists. In this way, the film is able to document how different segments of a community face the complexities of identity and belonging and participate in a process of collective healing and engagement.



Letter from the Director

Dear Viewer,

Hate has been my beat for 25 years. I have practiced studying its nuances and the mutable forces at play that unleash it. It started with a little half-hour movie about a town standing up to hate and antisemitism (*Not In Our Town*) that would compel me to follow the story. Our films have tracked the rise of hate speech and the threat of extremist violence (*The Fire Next Time*), hate crimes targeting immigrants (*Light in the Darkness*), and now, with *Repairing the World: Stories from the Tree of Life*, the ideological spread of antisemitic, white supremacist ideology that manifested in the deadliest attack on Jewish people in U.S. history.

Not In Our Town stories look at how communities collectively respond to hate and the bigotry and bias that fuel it. In all of our films, we choose not to dwell on the perpetrators, but to focus on those who were harmed, and those who take action in support of their neighbors. We redirect the dramatic emphasis to position hope over hate. At the same time, we are committed to surfacing the painful complexities of the story.

For years, NIOT has witnessed signs of escalating antisemitism in our screenings for communities and schools. What we were hearing was painfully confirmed with the Tree of Life massacre and increased antisemitic attacks in the years that have followed. We continue to learn about how antisemitism operates and the need for all of us to take it on.

Here and now, antisemitism, racism, and bigotry pose a danger to our communities, our country, and our world. The man responsible for the massacre, and the white power movement as a whole, is fueled by these intertwined hatreds that have motivated mass hate crime killings, from Pittsburgh to Buffalo, El Paso to Jacksonville. Attacks on Asians, Muslims, Sikhs, and the LGBTQ community cause incalculable harm and tear at the fabric of our communities and our democracy.

Not In Our Town: Films and resources that help communities respond to hate

Repairing the World is produced and presented by Not In Our Town (NIOT) and the nonprofit production company The Working Group. Launched by a PBS film campaign in 1995 about people standing up to hate and antisemitism in Billings, MT, NIOT produces high-impact films and media, and serves a network of hundreds of NIOT groups, schools and communities across the country working to stop hate and build safe, inclusive communities for all.

Learn more later in this guide and at NIOT.org.



The people in this story remind us that the key to becoming stronger than hate is learning how to stand up together when any community is targeted.

We have been tremendously inspired by the early reactions to *Repairing the World*. Pittsburgh's story has prompted viewers to speak about harmful incidents in their own communities and talk about their own challenges in standing up to hate. The people who are choosing to participate, see this film, talk about it, and take action inspire us and give us hope that we can stop hate, together.

What is most gratifying are the ideas for action and solutions emerging from these discussions. We can do something to stop the spread of hate. What can you do? We look forward to learning from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrice O'Neill', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Patrice O'Neill

Antisemitism and Racist Violence

Repairing the World foregrounds the multiple factors that led to the massacre and the need for response and collective action in each of these areas. Viewers of the film may have various degrees of knowledge, familiarity and/or personal connection to the difficult themes in this film, including antisemitism, racism and gun violence. There will be unique differences, histories and experiences for each group viewing the film, and some questions and areas of discussion may and should be adapted accordingly.

In order to foster an informed and grounded discussion, Not In Our Town recommends that screening hosts review some foundational information about antisemitism, its history and current manifestations, and the racist white nationalist ideologies that motivated the mass shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue. Repairingtheworldfilm.org and NIOT.org feature additional resources for understanding the dangers of hate speech and online radicalization.

The following resources will provide a basic foundation for some of the central issues explored in the film:

- [Resources on Understanding Antisemitism](#), from the NIOT *Repairing the World* site
- [Explainer: Antisemitism and Its Impacts](#), from Facing History and Ourselves
- [Explainer: White Nationalism](#), from Facing History and Ourselves
- ["The Great Replacement:" An Explainer](#), from ADL
- Western States Center
- [Pyramid of Hate](#), from ADL
- [The Year in Hate and Extremism 2022](#), from Southern Poverty Law Center

Facilitators should review our [Facilitator Guide](#) for more in-depth support on navigating these complex and challenging topics. How can this story help open discussions on how we can do something to respond to hate speech, antisemitism, racism, and bigotry in public spaces? We look forward to learning from you. The ultimate goal is to inspire action to prevent hate and ensure safety and respect for all.

How do we find new ways to mobilize the vast majority of people who don't want the spread of hate speech and violence to harm themselves, their children or their neighbors?



Hosting a Community Screening Event

Screening events drive home the clear message from the Pittsburgh community that safety, solidarity and resilience start with relationships, collaboration and action. The events are a vehicle to bring diverse residents and community stakeholders together under the rubric of engagement, trust-building, and joint action against antisemitism and all forms of hate and bigotry. Post-screening panel discussions can explore how cities, faith groups, schools, civil rights groups and local businesses can work together to foster inclusion and broader civic participation.

Not In Our Town is committed to making the film available for community screenings at no cost so that all communities can access the story. In exchange, we ask that groups:

1. Review our [Screening Kit](#), including this discussion guide and related resources, in-depth.
2. Complete [this short form](#) to let us know about your plans.
3. Ask screening participants to complete a brief survey (via QR code on mobile devices) after the screening, and build in adequate time for the survey during your discussion.
4. Share brief information provided by Not In Our Town about deeper engagement with the film. Print copies of our [flyer](#) from the screening kit for participants to take with them.
5. Consider [making a donation](#) for your screening in lieu of a licensing fee, to support the ongoing *Repairing the World* engagement campaign.
6. Provide a brief one-paragraph summary of the event.



Plan Your Screening Event

1) Define your goals and build your audience

A screening of *Repairing the World* is an opportunity to build connections among diverse groups in your town. Consider the people in the film as a starting point for building your audience:

- Reach out to local Jewish organizations and involve them in the event. Organizations may include Jewish Community Relations Councils, Jewish Community Centers, Jewish Federations, local chapters of the Anti Defamation League or American Jewish Committee.
- Reach out to civil rights groups, other faith groups, intercultural groups, student groups, service organizations, PTAs, law enforcement, unions, elected officials, museums, and libraries. These organizations can help promote your screening by word of mouth, events, newsletters, blogs, and social media.
- Public media stations (TV and radio) or other local media outlets may want to join as engagement partners.
- Remember to include youth in your list of invitees. Young people featured in *Repairing the World* played a key role in organizing their community's response. Ask students and youth groups to help plan and take part in the screening discussion.

2) Identify speakers and a facilitator

You may want to invite the filmmaker, members of the film team, or survivors or leaders from Pittsburgh to your event. Consider local leaders and media partners for a panel.

Facilitators play a crucial role in helping the audience understand the lessons of the film and move to taking action in their community. A good facilitator is articulate, aware of the



subject, familiar with the community, and maintains a positive tone without getting derailed by individuals or groups with other agendas. A good facilitator promotes constructive discussion without taking over. The facilitator asks discussion participants to be brief and to bring “the better angels of their nature” or the best of themselves to a challenging conversation. Share the [Facilitator Guide](#) from our Screening Kit with the person you select to guide your discussion.

3) Choose a central, accessible venue that is comfortable for a film screening

Consider a local theater as a potential screening venue. In many communities, the public library serves as a safe haven for the local community, as well as a place for community participation and engagement. Other accessible locations include university/college lecture halls, Jewish Community Centers, school auditoriums, churches and synagogues, union halls, public media, and government buildings.

4) Spread the word

Access the [Screening Kit](#) for outreach materials such as sample email invitations, flyers, posters and postcards. Create a sense of common purpose and commitment to outreach among the partner sponsors. Make a plan for conducting outreach via email, social media and other methods; also make a plan for collecting RSVPs. (Eventbrite offers a free service). Ask representatives from partner organizations to personally invite their constituents, coworkers, families, neighbors, and friends and announce the event in newsletters, websites, and bulletin boards.

Distribute event flyers to recruit in gathering places such as cafes, libraries, sporting events, or other public spots. Promote your screening with calendar listings and articles in your local newspaper, faith centers, local news blogs and websites, and on radio. Find out from your local media how long before your event they need information, and send them a press release in time. Be sure to invite reporters and media to cover the screening.

5) Prepare for the event

Working with the screening co-sponsors, make sure the logistical needs are set prior to the event. A few areas to consider:



Time: We suggest blocking 2.5 hours for your community screening and discussion. The full-length version of *Repairing the World* is 82 minutes, and we request that screening hosts run the film in full as there is additional content embedded in the credits. An abbreviated, 42 minute version of the film, is also available for community screenings. Here's a sample schedule:

Full Film (82 min) Screening Agenda: 2.5 hours

- Doors open 30 min before your start time. Give people time to arrive.
- 6:30 PM – Begin to pull lights down.
- 6:35 PM – Welcome the community and introduce the film.
- 6:40 PM – Start the film!
- 8:05 PM – Transition to discussion through personal reflection about the film.
- 8:10 PM – Q&A and discussion about the film.
- 8:30 PM – Audience survey on screen during last part of discussion.
- 8:45 PM – Closing remarks, reminder about survey, announcement of plan for next steps. End of program by 9:00 PM.

Abbreviated Film (42 min) Screening Agenda: 2 hours

- Doors open 30 min before your start time. Give people time to arrive.
- 6:25 PM – Begin to pull lights down.
- 6:30 PM – Welcome the community and introduce the film.
- 6:35 PM – Start the film! It's 42 minutes long.
- 7:20 PM – Transition to discussion (See facilitators guide).
- 7:25 PM – Q&A and discussion about the film..
- 8:00 PM – Audience survey on screen during last part of discussion.
- 8:15 PM – Closing remarks, reminder about survey, announcement of plan for next steps. End of program by 8:30 PM.

Accessibility: In addition to considering the physical accessibility of the selected event space via public transportation and other means, consider language and other accessibility needs for members of the community who may attend. An interpreter should be used if your facilitator(s) cannot speak the languages represented in your audience. Consider finding a theater that has closed caption readers for viewers when screening the film.

Room Set-Up: Ideally, the room set-up will allow for people to see one another so that they can dialogue face-to-face, as well as move into pairs or small groups for discussion. If the setting does not allow for this, encourage participants to stand, if possible, when speaking.

Materials Needed:



- Easels, chart paper, markers, tape for posting material, sign-in sheets, etc.
- Depending on group size and setting, a held-held or lavalier microphone may be needed for discussion leaders and/or audience members (and plans made for how the microphone will be circulated, as needed).
- Any Ground Rules should be written out ahead of time, as well as any other charts or information to help save time during the discussion.

See our [Planning Timeline & Checklist](#) for more logistical details.

6) Move from dialogue to action

The goal of Repairing the World screenings and discussions is to deepen connections across communities, and spark long-term community efforts to stop hate and make every resident feel they belong. Let your screening attendees know that this is just a beginning. Here are other ideas for taking action in your town:

- Organize a rally or vigil in support of safety and acceptance for everyone.
- Share the film and youth resources with [local schools](#).
- Convene a follow-up event to discuss how to address hate speech in community life.
- Participate in [United Against Hate Week](#). See 20 Ideas for Action.
- Create a civic proclamation opposing hate and affirming inclusion.
- Organize a ‘stronger than hate’ community photo.
- Start a “One Book/One Community” club with your local library.
- Get to know your neighbors. Begin with a community potluck or event.
- Start a [Not in Our Town](#) or community inclusion group.

For more information and tips on planning these activities, visit [NIOT.org](#) and [repairingtheworldfilm.org](#) or email info@niot.org.

7) Share your story

After your screening, tell us what you’ve done! Please send a paragraph recapping your event with any photos to info@niot.org. Tag Not In Our Town on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). Use the hashtag #NotInOurTown to share, and also to learn from groups around the country who are starting their own Not In Our Town community campaigns. For personal reflections about the film, please share a message with our team. If you give permission, we will post selected messages with first name, city and state.



Screening Discussion Questions

This discussion guide centers on these core questions after viewing *Repairing the World*:

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?

Below is a brief outline based on the questions above intended for a discussion among participants of your screening. You should prioritize the discussion based on your audience and goals. If your event includes a panel of speakers, incorporate these questions into the discussion, and limit the panel so there is time for interaction with the audience.

Note to facilitators: At the beginning of the discussion, urge people to please use the principles of Fred Rogers to be kind to each other throughout the discussion, including keeping comments brief to allow time and space for others. Not In Our Town strongly recommends that you review the [Facilitator Guide](#) from our Screening Kit for in-depth guidance, additional questions, and facilitation tips and techniques.

Start with Personal Reflection

To transition into the discussion after viewing the film, invite participants to consider the first question privately. Individuals process challenging material in different ways, so it is important to give viewers time to think, even for just 60 seconds. They may choose to jot down ideas in a journal, but they will not be asked to share what they write:

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

Move to Group Discussion in Three Rounds

Each discussion round is centered around 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 for each round are provided in the Facilitator Guide.**

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 5-6 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.

Group Discussion Round 1 is focused on the film:

**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?**



Group Discussion 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 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?

Group Discussion Round 3 helps participants move towards action:

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?



Bring 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.



Planning Timeline & Checklist

Adapted from [Out in the Silence](#) Event Planning Checklist. Used with permission.

1. Preliminary planning: 6-8 weeks in advance

- Book the venue and decide on a date and time for your screening.
- Determine event facilitator, speakers and panelists.
- Reach out to partner organizations to co-sponsor.

2. Logistics and initial outreach: 4-6 weeks in advance

- Visit our [Screening Kit](#) for graphics and language you can use to publicize your screening.
- Secure a link to *Repairing the World* and audio-visual equipment.
- Create an agenda for your event.

3. Continued planning and outreach: 2-3 weeks in advance

- Create an email announcement about your event to share with your group's mailing list and any partner organizations. Send your first email 2 weeks before, and a follow-up announcement 2-3 days before the screening.
- Contact community calendars about your screening.

4. Media outreach: 10 days in advance

- Use our sample press release to send to your local press, including print, radio, television, blogs, ethnic & community media.
- Make calls to local television and radio programs.

5. Final planning: 1 week in advance

- Send your second email announcement.
- Follow-up with local press about event details.
- Test the link to the film to make sure it plays without delays.
- Finalize your agenda, and make copies to distribute at the event if desired



6. Guidelines and Event Checklist

- Encourage people to sign up for your email list as they arrive.
- If you choose to address content warnings, you may inform audience members during opening remarks that the film includes themes of violence, guns, racism and antisemitism.
- Encourage your community to do what they need to feel safe, heard and supported before, during and after the screening. Provide time for reflection and discussion following the screening and direct your audience toward resources that can help them continue to process and learn after the screening event ends.
- Have a timekeeper so that everyone stays within their allotted time.
- Remember to allot sufficient time for the audience participation survey, which will be provided to you.
- Take photos.
- Enlist a note-taker to write down next steps.
- Have information about partner organizations and anti-hate groups available.

7. Share your story

After your screening, tell us what you've done! Please send a paragraph recapping your event with any photos to info@niot.org. Tag Not In Our Town on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). Use the hashtag #NotInOurTown to share, and also to learn from groups around the country who are starting their own Not In Our Town community campaigns. For personal reflections about the film, please share a message with our team. If you give permission, we will post selected messages with first name, city and state.