

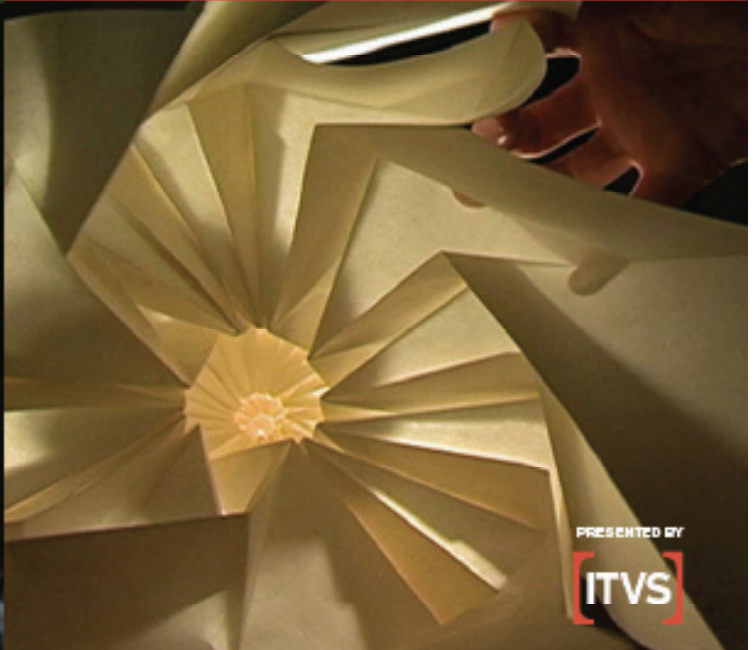
[C] COMMUNITY CINEMA



FACILITATOR'S GUIDE



[I] INDEPENDENT LENS 



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PLANNING A SCREENING

As You Plan Your Event

A Community Cinema screening can be used to spark interest in a range of topics and inspire both individual and community action. Using the following checklist will help ensure a high quality/high impact event.

Set realistic goals.

Will you host a single screening or use the film to spur ongoing efforts in your community? Will you steer a panel or discussion towards a specific topic or let the audience pursue whatever issues they choose? Be sure to include your event partners in the decision-making process. Being clear about your goals will make it much easier to structure the event, target publicity and evaluate your results.

Structure your event so that it matches your goals.

Do you need an outside facilitator, translator or sign language interpreter? If your goal is to share information beyond what is included in the film, are there local experts on the topic who should be present? How large an audience do you want? (Large groups are appropriate for information exchanges; small groups allow for more intensive dialogue.)

Arrange to involve all stakeholders.

It is especially important that people be allowed to speak for themselves. If you expect audience members to plan action that affects people other than those present, decide how you'll give a voice to those not in the room.

Choose an accessible venue.

Is your venue wheelchair accessible? Is it in a part of town that's easy to reach by various kinds of transportation? Can you provide clear signage? If you are bringing together different constituencies, is it neutral territory? Does the physical configuration of the room allow for the kind of discussion you hope to have? Can everyone easily see the screen and hear the film? Is the room comfortable?

Leave time to plan for action.

If you hope that your screening will have lasting impact, it is important to leave your audience some time to plan action. Planning next steps can help people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic, even when the discussion has been difficult. It is also important to be prepared to facilitate networking. Consider having a sign-in sheet at the door so that people can share contact information, such as email addresses. Let participants know exactly how that information will (and won't) be shared.



FACILITATING A DISCUSSION

People who feel safe, encouraged, respected and challenged are likely to share openly and thoughtfully. As a facilitator you can encourage that kind of participation. Here's how:

Prepare yourself:

Identify your own hot-button issues. View the film before your event and give yourself time to reflect so that you aren't dealing with raw emotions at the same time that you are trying to facilitate a discussion.

Be knowledgeable. You don't need to be an expert on topics or issues related to the film, but knowing the basics can help you keep a discussion on track and gently correct misstatements of fact. Prior to your event, take time to check the Background Information and Suggested Resources in the film guide handout.

Be clear about your role. Being a facilitator is not the same as being a teacher. A teacher's job is to convey specific information. In contrast, a facilitator remains neutral, helping move the discussion along without imposing his or her views on the dialogue.

Know who might be present. It isn't always possible to know exactly who will attend a screening, but if you know the groups that make up your community, you have a better chance of predicting who may come to your event. You should also keep in mind that issues can play out very differently for different groups of people. Factors like geography, age, race, religion and socioeconomic class can all have an impact on comfort levels, speaking styles and prior knowledge. Take care not to assume that all members of a particular group share the same point of view.

Preparing the group:

Agree to ground rules around language. Prior to starting a discussion or Q&A with a panel, remind the audience of basic ground rules for ensuring respect and aiding clarity. Typically, such rules include telling people to avoid yelling or the use of slurs, and asking them to speak in the first person ("I think...") rather than generalizing for others ("Everyone knows that..."). If a speaker breaks a ground rule, gently interrupt, remind them of the rule and ask them to rephrase.

Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard. Be clear about how people will take turns or indicate that they want to speak. Plan a strategy for preventing one or two people from dominating the discussion.

Talk about the difference between dialogue and debate. In a debate, participants try to convince others that they are right. In a dialogue, participants try to understand each other and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening to each other actively. Remind your audience that they are engaged in a dialogue.

Encourage active listening. Ask the group to think of the event as an opportunity for listening, as well as for discussion. Participants should be encouraged to listen for things that challenge as well as reinforce their ideas. You may also consider asking people to practice formal "active listening," where participants listen without interrupting the speaker, and then rephrase to see if they have heard correctly.

Remind participants that everyone sees through the lens of their own experience. Who we are influences how we interpret what we see—everyone in the audience may have a different view about the content and meaning of the film they have just seen, and all of them may be accurate. Inviting speakers to identify the evidence that they've based their opinions on can help people to understand one another's perspectives.

Take care of yourself and your group members. If the intensity level rises, pause to let everyone take a deep breath. Also, think carefully about what you ask people to share publicly so that you are not asking for people to reveal things that could place them in legal or physical danger. Let the audience and invited speakers know whether or not press will be present at your event.

ITVS COMMUNITY is the national community engagement program of the Independent Television Service. ITVS COMMUNITY works to leverage the unique and timely content of the Emmy Award-winning PBS series Independent Lens to build stronger connections among leading organizations, local communities and public television stations around key social issues and create more opportunities for civic engagement and positive social change. To find out more about ITVS COMMUNITY, visit www.pbs.org/independentlens/communitycinema.

