

B. Community-specific Questions

1. How does a community determine if racial reconciliation is needed in their region?
2. Do you think your community needs to make amends for past or current injustices to its' communities of color?
If yes: Have any steps been taken to date? If yes: What? Are they effective?
If no: How can they be changed? Are there any lessons from the video that could be useful in making additional changes in your community? Have you personally contributed to such efforts?
If no: What would reconciliation look like in your community? What action steps could be taken? What type of resources are needed? Who should be held accountable for ensuring that changes are made? Are there any lessons from the video that could be useful in making such changes in your community?
3. Do you know of any individual endeavors, community movements, government actions or other nations' efforts that have moved people toward racial reconciliation?
If yes: Could your community use any of these examples as models or for more tools?
4. In the documentary, Alastair Geddes stated that faith leaders must lead racial reconciliation efforts. What do you think of this statement? Should they be responsible for taking the lead on such issues?
If yes: Why?
If no: Who should be responsible?
5. Do you think your life has been affected by the slave trade? How about your community's condition and the nation as a whole?
If yes: How so?
6. Do you think the Reconciliation and Development Conference in Benin could impact communities of color other than African-Americans in the United States?
If yes: How so?

conclusion

Be sure to leave a sufficient amount of time at the end of the session to determine next steps. Your group may decide to meet again about a segment of your discussion or to continue with the questions provided. Be sure to thank everyone for participating and let them know that they have just been a part of an important process towards healing themselves, their community, and the nation as a whole.



Noble Desire was co-produced by WHRO and FOX43.

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Discussion guide written by Danielle Glosser, Senior Public Policy Strategist, National Conference for Community and Justice, Washington National Office

Noble Desire



introduction

This discussion guide is designed to serve as a tool for conducting a dialogue about the WHRO documentary, *Noble Desire*. It may serve as the foundation of your conversation or as a resource to select a few discussion questions. The amount of information you decide to use from this guide should be tailored to your group's needs and goals.

The questions encourage thoughtful discussion about the Reconciliation and Development Conference in Benin; the potential impact of this event on residents of the United States; and the roles and responsibilities of your community as a whole, as well as its individual residents, in fostering social justice and racial reconciliation.

Noble Desire, a one-hour program, features the historic efforts of a small west African country's quest for reconciliation. Benin's President, Mathieu Kerekou, invited representatives of slave merchants as well as victims of the African diaspora to participate in an event where apologies were made for the role of their ancestors in the Atlantic Slave Trade. Europeans and Americans also attended and sought forgiveness from displaced Africans. Three hundred people attended including the President of Ghana, nearly 50 African Kings, two members of the U. S. Congress, delegations from several European nations, and members of the African diaspora.

helpful hints for getting started

DEFINING DIALOGUE

According to The National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ), a human relations organization dedicated to fighting bias, bigotry and racism, dialogue is a purposeful conversation on a common subject between two or more people of differing views and undertaken so that each can learn from the other, and each can change and grow. Designed to minimize the conflicts and communication breakdowns traceable to differences in style and mode of communication, the dialogue process fosters new, respectful relationships that are informed by a deepened understanding of the role of prejudice and stereotyping in discriminatory behavior. From these new relationships, a commitment to fight against such behavior in one's self, one's life, and one's community is formed. This commitment to action is critical, since only human action can break down the walls that divide us.

One should not underestimate the power of dialogue. Giving people the opportunity to explore their own perspectives and listen to those of others is the first step in discovering commonalities and differences which often lead to greater understanding and respect of others. The result is often personal growth, which is the foundation for change.

preparing for dialogue

Before organizing a group to view the video, the host should watch the program and think about the following questions:

- > Who should be included in the group?
- > What are the goals of the conversation?
- > What format will be most effective?
- > How long should the dialogue be held?
- > Who will facilitate the conversation?
- > Are there additional community-specific questions that could be posed to the group?
- > What will be done with the information from the session?



It is also critical to consider the following:

A. Setting

Choose a neutral setting that is accessible and inviting to a diverse group of individuals. Be sure that everyone has an unobstructed view of the television. Check the equipment well in advance of the arrival of the participants.

B. Equipment

Determine what materials you will need for conducting a dialogue. Aside from the television and video, you may want to consider the following items: name tags, flip charts, markers, tape, notepads and pens for the participants, and refreshments.

C. Seating

After the video is viewed, consider creating a more open and warm atmosphere by forming a circle with your chairs.

initiating a dialogue

A. Introductions

It is important to allow ample time for the participants to introduce themselves. Carefully consider how you will accomplish this task. If you have a large group, you may want to divide the participants into smaller groups for this exercise. Common exercises include a variety of "icebreakers" which are introductory games. For example, go around the circle and have everyone share their name and why their parents selected it for them.

Establish dialogue ground rules. Ask the group to share what they feel would be important in creating a safe space. Potential rules may include the following: actively participate, listen for understanding, no "sidebar" conversations, be open to new perspectives, consensus is not required, take responsibility for your own learning, and reserve judgment.

B. Watching the Video

Before beginning the video, clarify the goals of the dialogue and any particular questions or information that the participants should pay special attention to when watching the video. Encourage the participants to take notes, write questions, and monitor their emotions. View the video!



the dialogue

After the broadcast, invite participants to take a few moments to take a break in order to silently reflect on the video. The facilitator(s) should then address some of the key points that were discussed in the video. Below are questions that may be used. Be sure to select the questions that are most appropriate for your group. Do not try to cover all of the questions listed in one session - only choose a couple from each section.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A. Apology, Reconciliation, and Forgiveness Questions

1. In general, why do you think people make apologies and seek to reconcile with one another?
2. What does an apology look like, sound like and feel like to you? What about an act of reconciliation?
3. The last time you made a significant apology to someone, how did it make you feel? Were you forgiven?
If yes: Do you think it was harder for you to apologize or for the victim of your act to forgive you?
If no: Why do you think you were not forgiven?
4. The last time someone made a significant apology to you, how did it make you feel? Did you forgive the person?
If yes: Why?
If no: Why not?
5. Have you ever thought about apologizing on someone else's behalf? Did you do so?
If yes: Why? How did it make you feel?
If no: Why not?
6. Is there any value in apologizing for someone else's actions?
If yes: Why? How about your ancestors?
If no: Why not?
7. In the video we learned that in 1997 Congressman Tony Hall (D-OH) introduced a resolution to the House of Representatives for the United States government to apologize to African-Americans for slavery. What do you think of his proposal? Would an apology from the government be sufficient for past injustices to the African-American community?
If no: Why not? What would be?
8. On a personal, community, and national level, what do you think are the steps toward reconciliation? How about toward forgiveness?