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Post-Screening Discussion and Facilitation Tips

Stand Tall: Live Like Lincoln

Lincoln Community Screenings

February 12, 2013

Plan Ahead

- Appoint a discussion moderator. This could be one of the lead organizers of the event, a charismatic local personality or respected community leader (or all three!) who is a good public speaker and knows how to hold the attention of an audience.
- The moderator's responsibilities include: ensuring that all desired discussion questions/topics are addressed within the scheduled time, and that all panelists are given a balanced amount of time to share their thoughts and perspectives. The moderator should also have a good sense of when to ask follow-up questions, re-focus the discussion when it is going on an unrelated tangent, and manage the overall mood of discussion to be positive and constructive, rather than negative and critical.
- Determine the discussion questions and conversation you want to have (see prompts below).
- Confirm your panelists. Let them know what the discussion questions/topics will be, and that they will be expected to say a few words about their work.
- On the night of the event, when your panelists arrive, let them know to come up to the front of the room/stage as soon as the movie credits start to roll.
- Have someone on hand to help set up the chairs, microphone, podium or other equipment needed for the post-screening discussion.

General Outline for Post-Screening Discussion

Timeframe	Activity	Description
5 minutes	Moderator Introduction	When the film ends, the moderator welcomes everyone back, focuses the audience's attention and reminds people to stick around for the post-screening discussion. (At this point, panelists should be already seated or taking their place on stage or at the front of the room.) The moderator may offer some initial thoughts on the film, or share relevant statistics or anecdotes about your community as a way to connect what people just saw on the screen to the conversation you are about to have.
5 minutes	Panelist Introductions	The moderator introduces each panelist and briefly mentions their affiliation and work. Or, the speakers introduce themselves, their organization and a brief thought or insight about the film.
20-25 minutes	Discussion Questions	The moderator prompts each speaker with questions to guide the discussion along (see questions and prompts below).
5 minutes	Follow-Up Activity and/or Call to Action	The moderator and/or panelists offer up a call to action on how audience members can "stand tall," and announce any upcoming community events, activities or meetings to continue the conversation.

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10-15 minutes (optional)	Audience Q&A	If there is extra time and people are sticking around, the moderator invites people from the audience to ask questions directly to the panelists.
1 minute	Conclusion	Moderator thanks everyone for coming! Thank sponsors, partners, venue and organizers.

Theme-Based Questions & Prompts

The following are a set of recommended discussion prompts, categorized by theme. Moderators/lead organizers should read through and pick 4-5 questions that are relevant to your event and panelists. You can pick one question from each category, or focus on a few of the themes in particular. Feel free to adapt, expand and customize the questions as you see fit. You may also want to send these questions to your panelists ahead of time, so they know what discussion topics may come up and can prepare accordingly. These questions can also be used in any follow-up conversations and panel discussions.

Lincoln's legacy:

- It's an honor for our town to be named after President Lincoln. How is Lincoln's legacy most relevant to our town today?
- In your opinion, how can people in our town best emulate Lincoln's legacy?
- What is most admirable about Lincoln's legacy? What is problematic?

Exploring local divides/conflicts:

- Lincoln's story takes place at a time of major political divide. How is this relevant to our town or our town's history? What types of divisions would you say we're still struggling with?
- How are divisions and conflicts best addressed in a community? What are some ways in which our town has come together to address divisions in the community? What still needs improving?
- What qualities about Lincoln made him a good peacemaker? How can we emulate these qualities?

Leadership:

- We saw Lincoln making some tough decisions in this film. What do you think about his approach? Can you relate? If so, how?
- For community leaders: Lincoln demonstrates some essential characteristics of leadership in the film: moral courage, determination, the ability to listen, etc. How can you relate to his approach? How do you embody these characteristics in your work? What are other components of good leadership (that he may have lacked)?
- Some have compared Lincoln to President Obama. What do you think about this comparison? In your opinion, what are the similarities and differences between their presidencies?
- For historians: As president, Lincoln had a very clear role as a leader, but there are others in the film who were leaders in their own right, such as Elizabeth Keckley, William Slade and Mary Todd Lincoln. Whether they were in the film or not, talk a little bit about the era's unsung leaders.

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- Who are the unsung or emerging leaders in our community? (*Note to moderators: If you are presenting any kind of leadership award, now would be a good time to make that announcement.*)

Reflecting on history:

- A lot has changed since the Civil War. How has our town/nation changed over time? How have leadership roles changed?
- This year is the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. What do you think are milestones of progress? What do we still have to overcome?
- For historians: African Americans contributed a great deal to the abolition of slavery. Can you comment on these contributions, and tell us more about some of the African American leaders who were pivotal in advancing the movement?
- While the Emancipation Proclamation was about freedom, the issue of equality continues to be a battle, even today. What does equality mean to you? What barriers still stand in the way of equality? How can we all contribute to the fight for equality?
- Besides Lincoln, who was the most memorable character in the film for you and why?

Political process and civic engagement:

- For policymakers/officials: In the film we bear witness to the ins and outs of the American political process. What do you think is most interesting or noteworthy about the American political process? How does the political process play out on a local level?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks to the way laws are passed, policies are changed and voices are heard?
- The decision makers in the film are mostly elected officials, but how can anyone in a community get involved in efforts to make change?
- What would you recommend to people interested in getting more involved in and/or informed about the political process or taking on local leadership roles?

Closing questions/final thoughts:

- What does “standing tall” mean to you?
- How can people in our town “stand tall”?
- How can our town collectively “stand tall”?
- What’s one action or activity you would recommend to everyone in the audience to carry forward the discussion we’ve had today? (A “call to action” such as going to a city council meeting, volunteering, etc.)

Do You Need a Specially Trained Facilitator?

If you anticipate your discussion raising any hot button issues, such as race relations or politics, you will definitely need to have a moderator who is trained in intergroup dialogue and/or conflict resolution. If you anticipate discussing issues of race, make sure you have a sensitive facilitator who has moderated conversations on this topic, and keep in mind the importance of having diversity on your panel to ensure balanced perspectives.