



How to Bring Community Stakeholders Together

In the Not In Our Town network, we know that change can happen when we work together, but we also know it can be difficult to bring all parties to the table. This guide will give you some tips and guidance on making that happen.

Before Your Event

Topic: Identify the specific issues/challenges facing your community regarding intergroup relations and social justice and develop talking points for discussion.

Who to Invite: Invite diverse community members to your event, including individuals from groups who may be vulnerable to hate crimes. Reach out to leaders of local faith-based, civil and human rights, law enforcement, and immigrant organizations.

Film: Short films are a great way to kick off conversation on difficult topics. You can find nearly 100 videos at niot.org/videos, many of which are free and available to stream on the web. Videos include responses to racism, religious intolerance, anti-gay violence, and hate groups. NIOT videos also feature stories on hate prevention and ways to build inclusion. Learn more on the final page of this guide.

A Note on Public Officials: If public officials will be in attendance, consider how to manage these dynamics. Some officials may seek (or be expected) to offer a response on behalf of their office or position. While this may be appropriate to a modest degree (i.e., clarifying information or demographic details, explaining a legal policy, etc.), it is important to ensure that all audience members have an opportunity to speak. It is also important to acknowledge any negative dynamics that may emerge as a result of existing community tensions. Establishing Ground Rules (described below) should help alleviate this potential dynamic.



Review the Goals and Objectives

As a group, discuss the goals and specific objectives you have for this event as a means to help achieve those goals. Keep track of these objectives to be sure the group gets there. Is the meeting an initial discussion about who is being harmed or what the issues are? What are the next steps the group wants to present?



Establishing Ground Rules

1. Welcome the participants and briefly introduce yourself. Remind everyone to sign in. If the group is fewer than 30 people, invite individual self-introductions, including names, where they live, profession, and reason why they attended the event.

2. Screen a film, even if it is short. Using stories from another community can help open a discussion about

yours. Explain that after viewing the film, they will discuss their reactions and lessons learned from the documentary with the goal of inspiring local action against hate to ensure safety and respect for all. Offer information about breaks, note-keeping or other “housekeeping” details so that the participants feel comfortable with their environment and the process to follow.

3. Explain that one important step before starting the film or event is to review and agree to Ground Rules for the dialogue to follow. Explain that these will help ensure a “safe” and productive environment for the group to discuss emotionally-charged and sensitive topics. Ask for agreement to honor the ground rules with a head nod or hand raise.

Suggested Ground Rules:

- We will speak for ourselves and use “I” statements. We won’t try to represent a whole group, nor ask others to represent or defend an entire group.
- We will seek to understand one another’s perspectives and beliefs.
- We will listen with resilience, keeping an open mind when we hear something that is hard to hear.
- We will share airtime and refrain from interrupting others.
- We will “pass” or “pass for now” if we are not ready or willing to respond to a question—no explanation required.

4. Discuss the film and how it relates to your own community.

Use a discussion guide or consider these key questions:

- What was the most upsetting thing you saw in the film?
- Who in the film did you most relate to and why?
- What was the most inspiring or hopeful thing in the film?
- In what ways is our community similar to the one depicted in the film?

Surface Values & Action Planning

Ask participants to identify the values that they believe help to sustain a long-term transformation in a community and how people relate to one another. Such values may include trust, compassion, courage,

integrity, patience, etc. Stress that these values hopefully not only prevent hate violence from occurring but also are the foundation to support a community to build a safe, inclusive environment for everyone.

Some prompting questions may include:

- What are 3-4 specific issues/challenges facing this community regarding intergroup relations and social justice?
- What actions will address these concerns? Are they practical and do-able?
- Who needs to be involved? How do we engage the key stakeholders and other members of the community?
- What barriers do we face and how might we overcome them?

Brainstorm Action Ideas

School-based: Initiate student-led fundraiser for victims’ families; changing school leadership; educator training on hate crimes and bullying; teacher-led classroom discussions on bias and prejudice; public art exhibition and accompanying training for middle school students.

Media: Invite local media—including ethnic media and talk shows—to cover positive community responses. Ask them to join the community in resisting demeaning or exclusionary language.

General Community: Organize community-led vigils; multicultural theatre event; art and library projects.

Local Government: Create a community pledge, art project, community forum, proclamations of legislation on demeaning or exclusionary language.

Law Enforcement: Host community forums and conduct media outreach; train on relationship building with community members; improve hate crimes reporting systems.

Faith Communities: Host and invite members of targeted community to share experiences with violence and hatred in a safe space; education/workshops for faith leaders and members.



Wrapping Up

1. Wrap-up the program by deciding on the time and location of the next follow-up meeting. Reinforce the plans for documenting and sharing the ideas generated by the group.
2. Close by reminding participants that change happens in small increments. Invite each person to think of one specific action/change that they can make in their lives to advance the ideals that they have discussed, at the personal rather than at the organizational or community level.
3. After providing a minute to reflect on these ideas, ask for volunteers to share aloud their commitments. Solicit 5-10 ideas. Encourage participants to support one another in achieving these personal goals.
4. Thank people for coming and remind them to attend the follow-up meeting, and to sign in so they can be included on any follow-up activities.

Start Dialogue
with a Not In Our
Town Film

Not In Our Town: Billings

The residents of Billings, Montana join together when their neighbors are threatened by white supremacists. Townspeople of all races and religions swiftly move into action in this critically acclaimed documentary that sparked a national movement against hate and intolerance. Includes discussion guide.

<http://www.niot.org/niot-video/not-our-town-billings-montana-0>

Not In Our Town II

Five stories of community responses to hate. Segments can be screened separately.

- The Ku Klux Klan announces a recruitment rally in Kokomo, Indiana and the community responds.
- Three white servicemen are found guilty of murdering two young African-Americans in North Carolina.
- In Novato, California, grocery clerks chase down a knife-wielding assailant who has attacked a man of Asian descent.
- State Social Service Department employees establish a “Not In Our Agency” education campaign.
- More than 500 residents of Bloomington/Normal, Illinois march to protest church burnings.

Includes discussion guide.

<http://www.niot.org/action-hub/kit/not-our-town-ii-video-viewing-and-discussion-guide>

Not In Our Town Northern California: When Hate Happens Here

When Hate Happens Here looks at five communities confronted by hate. Segments can be screened separately.

- After a transgender teen is killed by local youth in the suburban community of Newark, high school students, residents and civic leaders struggle with how to deal with a brutal and preventable crime.
- Sacramento mobilizes after the worst anti-Semitic attacks in the California capital’s history.
- Redding citizens find new strength in diversity after a prominent gay couple is murdered.
- The San Francisco Public Library turns the mutilation of gay-themed books into an opportunity for creative community action.
- The residents of the Shasta County town of Anderson join forces to make their values clear when a cross is burned on an African-American family’s lawn.

Includes Educator Guide.

<http://www.niot.org/action-hub/kit/not-our-town-northern-california-educator-guide>

Light in the Darkness

A series of attacks against Latino residents of Patchogue, New York culminate in the murder of Marcelo Lucero, an Ecuadorian immigrant who had lived in the Long Island village for 13 years. Over a two-year period, the story follows Patchogue Mayor Paul Pontieri, the victim's brother, Joselo Lucero, and everyday Patchogue residents as they address the underlying causes of the violence, heal divisions, and begin taking steps to ensure everyone in their village will be safe and respected.

Two versions available: 27 minutes and 60 minutes.

Includes screening and discussion guides, sample press releases, event flyers and survey forms.

<http://www.niot.org/lightinthedarkness>

Class Actions

Class Actions profiles three communities where students are creating change in the wake of racism, anti-Semitism, and the traumatic consequences of bullying. Segments can be screened separately.

- In the heart of the South, students at the University of Mississippi question whether traditions tied to the Confederacy and segregation continue to belong on their campus.
- As Indiana University students celebrate the holiday season, the sense of calm is shattered by a series of attacks against Jewish institutions.
- On the edge of the Mojave Desert in California, educators, political leaders, and students face the dangers of bullying after teen suicides devastate two nearby towns.

Includes screening and discussion guides, sample press releases, event flyers and survey forms.

<http://www.niot.org/classactions>

Short films: 1-10 minutes

<http://www.niot.org/videos>

NIOT.org is home to films and more than 100 short videos. Most are free and can be streamed online. Searchable by category. Highlights include "Wear a Hijab Day," "Students Map Bully Zones to Create a Safer School," "New Immigrants Share Their Stories," and "Oak Creek Gathers After Hate Crime Killings."

Tips for Hosting a Screening:

<http://www.niot.org/action-hub/kit/tips-hosting-not-our-town-screening>

Additional Resources

See accompanying Not In Our Town guides: "Quick Start Guide: How to Start a Campaign" and "10 Ideas for Sparking Action in Your Town."