

MY FELLOW AMERICAN

My Fellow American Guide for Hosting an Event

We're excited for you to host a My Fellow American event! We want this to be easy for you, and for you to be knowledgeable on the campaign and our mission. Below is a guide to get you started! Also, feel free to email outreach@upf.tv with any further questions.

About My Fellow American

My Fellow American is an online film and social media project that calls upon concerned Americans to pledge and spread a message that Muslims are our fellow Americans. It asks people of other backgrounds to pledge, and share a real life story about a Muslim friend, neighbor, or colleague that they admire. Using the power of social media, My Fellow American seeks to change the narrative – from Muslims as the other, to Muslims as our fellow Americans. Most Americans have never met an American Muslim.

Many only know Muslims through the way they are portrayed in the media. American Muslims are so often vilified as “the other” that it is possible not to recognize that most were born in the U.S., or that those who immigrated here came seeking the same freedoms and opportunities that have always attracted people to America.

Muslims are our fellow Americans, who today face threats to their civil rights and even their personal safety because of the fearful and often hateful rhetoric that would not be tolerated were it uttered about any other minority group.

Types of Dialogue Events

- **Living Room Dialogue:** A living room dialogue is a small gathering of people who join to watch a UPF film and discuss it. A living room dialogue typically takes place in a living room, but it can be held at a coffee shop, library, or other comfortable space. A living room dialogue must include at least five people, and the host must agree to pass out pre-dialogue and post-dialogue evaluation forms.
- **Community Dialogue:** A community dialogue is hosted by an

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organization such as a university, a citizens group, or a religious group. The organization signs up to host the dialogue and hosts a presentation of the My Fellow American project. The 20,000 Dialogues team supports organizations that host community dialogues by providing customized train-the-trainer orientations as well as resources for publicizing the community dialogue.

For either type of event, you will have the resources to advertise, facilitate, and lead an effective dialogue.

Sample Schedule for Event

1. Short Intro
 - a. Welcome guests, start off with some icebreakers and ground rules
2. PowerPoint with My Fellow American (MFA) intros
 - a. Understanding the current climate towards American Muslims
 - b. Introduction to the My Fellow American project and campaign
3. Short explanation of the project, what it means to you, why you are hosting the event
4. "My Fellow American trailer" viewing
 - a. Gauge the reactions to the film. After the viewing, assure guests that it can be difficult and emotional to watch. Confirm that the voices in the background are true, recent statements said in America.
5. "Who is Your Fellow American?" viewing
 - a. Excerpts from our collected video stories, presenting our campaign and a call to collect more video stories
6. Show examples of other's video stories
 - a. To use as a guide when presenting or collecting your own stories
7. Q & A
 - a. Answer any questions guests may have about the project, facilitate conversations about ways to help promote the campaign and reach a mainstream audience
8. Break up into groups
 - a. Film guests' stories about their fellow Americans
 - b. Network with other guests
 - c. Talk about ways to spread this message of hope and understanding, combating the negative images currently in the media

Estimated length of event: about an hour and a half, though allow at least two hours.

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Four Steps to Running your Event

1. **Promote and Publicize** – publicity, media, and social networking tools
2. **Prepare** to facilitate your event – icebreakers, orientation and exercises
3. **Facilitate** the event – use our discussion guides
4. **Evaluate** the event – print out the pre and post evaluation forms for participants

Promote and Publicize

- Publicity Flier
- Press release template
- Social Networking
 - o Link your event to our Facebook group for My Fellow American
 - o Contact a local chapter of one of these organizations and ask for their help:
 - The Council on American Islamic Relations
<http://www.cair.com/Home.aspx>
 - Islamic Networks Group
<http://www.ing.org/affiliates/default.asp>
 - *20,000 Dialogues* Partners
<http://www.20000dialogues.org/howtopartner.aspx>
 - o Do an internet search for “interfaith” and “name of your city” or “mosque,” “Masjid,” or “Islamic Center” and “name of your city” to find Muslim contacts in your community. Make sure you ask to speak to someone involved with interfaith efforts.
- Invitation Tools
 - o Use Evite, a free service for sending online invitations
<http://new.evite.com/#home>
 - o Use one of the sample texts for an e-mail invitation, which can be found below, so you can invite others to join your event

Prepare to Facilitate

- Facilitator Orientation
 - o Use the Power Point Orientation as help for organizing and facilitating your event
- Icebreakers
 - o Handouts for helping dialogue participants meet each other and feel comfortable
 - o <http://www.20000dialogues.org/downloads/Icebreakers.pdf>

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- Ground Rules (from the Public Conversations Project) guide to helping your group develop ground rules before your event.
 - o <http://www.publicconversations.org/docs/resources/SampleGroundrules.pdf>
- Exercise on stereotyping (from the Public Conversations Project) to assist your group in identifying stereotypes.
 - o <http://www.publicconversations.org/upload/excerciseonsterotyping.pdf>
- Prayer for Peace by Abdul Aziz Said of American University's International Peace and Conflict Resolution Division
 - o http://www.2000dialogues.org/downloads/Prayer_for_Peace_General.pdf

Facilitate

- Dialogue Guide
- Questionnaire
- Evaluation form

Evaluate the Event

Please mail your post-dialogue evaluation form to:

20,000 Dialogues

Daniel Tutt, Outreach Director
1200 29th St., NW, Ground Floor
Washington, DC 20007

Sample Texts for an E-Mail Invitation to Join a Dialogue

Sample 1

Subject: Request participation by a [insert faith tradition here] to watch and discuss the film *My Fellow American*.

Hello,

My name is _____ and I'm writing to invite the participation of a (insert faith group) from our city to participate in a viewing of the *My Fellow American* and follow-up discussion.

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We are a group of friends coming together in the spirit of dialogue and understanding as part of a national effort called *20,000 Dialogues*, a project of Unity Productions Foundation. You can learn more about the film we're watching and this project at www.myfellowamerican.us.

We would like to conduct this dialogue on [insert suggested date, time and location]. The entire event should take around two hours. If this time is not convenient, please suggest a different time. We plan on watching the film and then discussing it together. There is a lot we can learn from each other and in this time of lack of understanding between different faiths and cultures, we invite you to get to know us, and for us to get to know you.

Please call me at [insert your phone number] or [insert your email address] to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

[insert your name]

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Sample 2

Subject: Getting together to watch a documentary

Hi there. I'm taking part in a viewing of a short film with a follow-up discussion and I wanted to invite you to come.

The film is called *My Fellow American*.

The film portrays everyday Americans that have a lot of relevance for today, especially because there is so much misunderstanding between the Muslim and Western worlds.

Watching this film and discussing it is part of a project called *20,000 Dialogues*. You can learn more at www.myfellowamerican.us.

The dialogue is scheduled for [insert suggested date, time and location]. The entire event should take around two hours. There is no cost to participate and we'll have refreshments. If this time is not convenient, please suggest a different time. We plan on watching the film and then discussing it together. There is a lot we can learn from each other and in this time of lack of understanding between different faiths and cultures, we invite you to get to know us, and for us to get to know you.

Please let me know if you will attend our dialogue.

Sincerely,

[insert your name]

Resources

Take a look through our "My Fellow American Resources Packet" for more background knowledge and resources to help you understand the context of our campaign.