



Talking Through Walls at Park 51

Dialogue Guide

Role of the Facilitator

1. To create a safe and respectful environment.
2. To facilitate and guide the discussion.
3. To aid and excite the group in developing common ground and take-away's.
4. To manage the Ground Rules:

Explain that in order to make the discussions as valuable as possible, we want to follow certain guidelines, or ground rules, as we talk together. Suggest the following guidelines:

1 – No interruption

2 – Time limit (no one dominates) Suggested two minute flexible

3 – Speak from the I - I feel, I had and experience which helps me know this, feel-this, believe this. When I heard _____, I felt ____, because_____.

4 – Confidentiality – No one is quoted by name out of the room. We may discuss that we are in a dialogue and someone said something interesting, but no names.

5 – Active and Reflective Listening –

Active – to be present, to hear with out preparing a response. To take in. To silence our background conversation.

Reflection – Check in, reflect what you heard the other person has said, and ask that person if you got it right, the intent as well as the words.

6 – Generous listening – listening for the emotions and naming the emotions of the

speaker so they feel truly heard and acknowledged; their experience is their experience and it is sacred and real for them.

7 – People have the right to pass – everyone has the right to pass.

(Guidelines created compliments of the Dialogue Project).

Questions following film.

Select these questions and let the group process them, giving each its proper time. Try to let each person work through the questions. 8 – 10 minutes per question.

- *Did you find certain people inspiring in this film. Who? What did they do or say that you found meaningful? Can you reflect on the fears of the people who did not want a mosque built? Is there a way to acknowledge them without accepting prejudice? How do you think this was done in the movie? Do you think you could behave that way?*
- *Rafey Habib, a member of the Muslim congregation, says that when an extremist makes a statement, it makes headlines around the world, but when moderates speak, they are often ignored. Do you agree? Who do you hear speaking for various religions in the public sphere, and would you like to hear different voices?*
- *A woman in one of the interfaith groups quotes an Aretha Franklin song: “R-E-S-P-E-C-T—find out what it means to me.” She says, “We can’t just treat other people the way we want to be treated; you have to find out how THEY want to be treated.” How can we do that? What can we do to make sure we are being respectful to others in our community?*

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

Are there aspects of Zia Rahman’s experiences in the film that challenged ideas you already held about Islam or Muslims?

How does location play an integral role in the purpose of a religious center? What circumstances make an area most in need of one?

How would you want to be received by the community that you are building a religious site in?

In the film, we saw that local community members were expressing concern over parking or traffic, instead of voicing outright religious concerns at the beginning. Why do you think debate was put in these terms at first?

TAKE-AWAY ACTION PORTION

If you haven't already done so, turn the dialogue towards some of the questions below that have more of a focus on what individuals can do to increase understanding and cooperative action between people of different faiths and with Muslims.

- Can you reflect on the fears of the people who did not want a mosque built? Is there a way to acknowledge them without accepting prejudice? How do you think this was done in the movie? Do you think you could behave that way?
- What vision do you have for a Muslim Community Center...what do you see emerging from a community center here? Try to be specific....do you envision artists of different faiths and ethnicities sharing calligraphy techniques? Do you see it as a space for musicians to share their craft? What needs in the local neighborhood can be met by this Center?

OPTIONAL QUESTIONS

- *What can you do as a person to increase understanding between non-Muslims and Muslims? Can you make an attempt to engage in interfaith and/or intercultural dialogue on a personal level or does it have to be through a group?*
- *What can you do over the next week/month/year to engage in more dialogue?*
- *Give an example of how you think interfaith dialogue could be organized at religious centers, in community groups, or as part of cooperative service projects.*
- *What do you think should be done or can be done to generate more dialogue between American Muslims and people of other faiths?*
- *Are there comments you've heard during this discussion that you found particularly insightful or helpful as you think about things you may want to do in the future?*

When time is up, notify all of the small groups that they need to come back together for ten minutes or so to conclude the program.

4) Program Conclusion

Once the group has reassembled, explain that the program is almost over but that you want to take a few minutes to wrap up the discussions and give everyone a chance to express their views one more time.

ASSIGN A RECORDER TO REPORT BACK TO THE LARGER GROUP

Explain that you would like some brief comments from each group and give an instruction like this:

- *If the facilitator or someone else in the group took notes, give a summary of the discussion and speak to the large group.*
- *If any good or interesting points were brought up, express them to the larger group and see what others think of them.*

6 Closing Steps to Wrap up Your Dialogue:

1. Remind people that comments need to be brief and call on several different people to answer the question(s) you have posed.
2. After a few minutes, remind people that before completing the program explain there is one more thing you want to do. Tell them that you are going to pass out a response form that asks them to give feedback on the program.
3. Pass out the response forms and give the group a few minutes to fill them out. While they are still filling out the forms explain that some people are interested in continuing this type of conversation and if they want be contacted about that they should indicate that on the form
4. Thank people again for coming and adjourn the meeting. Encourage people to stay around and visit informally for a while if they wish.
5. After the meeting, collect all forms as well as any written comments that emerged from the group. If possible, you may wish to ask the small group facilitators to stay for a few minutes so you can debrief with them shortly after others have left.
6. Finally, pass out the post dialogue facilitator evaluations to all facilitators!