



Conversation Guide

The Reunited States Documentary & Political Peace Building Actions

Table of Contents:

- Introduction
- About the Film
- About the Issue
- Conversation Agreements
 - Intro : Getting to Know Each Other
 - Round One : The Reunited States Prompts
 - Round Two: *United or Divided?*
 - Round Three : Reflection & Next Steps
 - Closing
- Sample Agenda for a 90-minute discussion

This document is based on the Living Room Conversations discussion model. It offers a simple, sociable and structured way to practice communicating across differences while building understanding and relationships. Typically, in-person or online conversations are between 60-90 minutes. Rather than debating or convincing others of your own position, participants take turns talking to share, learn, listen and be curious about how others arrived at their positions. The goal is not to change someone's mind, but rather to understand where they are coming from

The Reunited States can be a particularly effective format for prompting thoughtful discussion. Viewing the film prior to discussion provides a dramatic springboard for dialogue, providing participants a common experience and point of reference upon which to discuss their own views on divisions in our country. You can encourage further exploration of the ideas and issues by directing participants to <http://www.reunitedstates.tv/>.

About the Film

At a time when America is ripping apart at the seams, *The Reunited States* is a powerful and urgent documentary that follows the unsung heroes on the difficult journey of bridging our political and racial divides. Susan Bro, who lost her daughter when a car drove through a group of counter-protestors in Charlottesville, and David and Erin Leaverton, a Republican couple who travel to all fifty states in an RV to find out what divides us, are just a few of the characters profiled in the film. Each of these bridge-builders have realized that while our divides run deeper than they ever could have imagined, so does the love and hope to bring our country back together. Based on the book of the same name, the film urges us to consider that everyone has a role to play in reuniting the country.

About the Issue

Political and philosophical differences are normal in a healthy and free society. No citizen should be expected to violate his or her own conscience or compromise sacred principles. But the common values we share, and our shared desire to solve common problems, should also enable us to make reasonable and principled compromises for our mutual well-being. In some instances, the Left and the Right fundamentally agree on the desire to work through differences, yet political parties, media, and social media benefit from amplifying divisions as part of their engagement and business models. Therefore, dialogue amongst citizens is one of the strongest ways to overcome division.

Conversation Agreements

These will set the tone of the conversation; participants may volunteer to take turns reading them aloud. It can be helpful to post the agreements in chat or on screen during an online event. If in-person, a handout may be helpful.

- ***Be curious and listen to understand.*** Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. Do not interrupt, as it is challenging for some to speak openly; please wait until the person speaking finishes until you chime in.
- ***Practice respect and suspend judgment.*** Setting judgement aside opens you up to learning from others and makes them feel respected and appreciated. Try to truly listen, letting go of your preconceptions of what you may disagree with, which will color your experience.
- ***Be authentic and welcome that from others.*** Share what's important to you. Speak

[reunitedstates.tv](http://www.reunitedstates.tv)

Everyone has a role to reunite the country.

from your experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.

- **Be purposeful and to the point.** Do your best to keep your comments concise and relevant to the question you are answering. Be conscious of sharing airtime with other participants.
- **Own and guide the conversation.** Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the conversation as a whole. Be proactive in getting yourself and others back on track if needed. Some facilitators request that a participant keep track of time and gently let people know when their time has elapsed.

Intro : Getting to Know Each Other

Each participant can take 1-2 minutes to answer one of these questions:

- Check in chat - Name, location, how have these divisions affected you personally?

Breakout rooms of 4

Read Agreements

Round One : The Reunited States Prompts

Each participant can take 1-2 minutes to answer one of these questions:

- Introduce yourself
- What message from the film resonated with you?
- What scene or moment most moved you?

Round Two: United or Divided?

- What values do you understand to be shared by all Americans?
- What is the promise of the United States to its citizens? To the world?
- How do you demonstrate respect for others, while maintaining an ability to speak your mind?
- What is healthy communication for you?
- If there is agreement on values discussed, where do you think there are opportunities for the Left and Right to work together?

Round Three : Reflection & Next Steps

- What was most meaningful / valuable to you in this event?
- Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the conversation you just had?

Closing

Please ask participants to complete a [survey about your event and the film](#). Thank you!

reunitedstates.tv

Everyone has a role to reunite the country.

Sample Agenda for a 90-minute discussion

Note: While some participants may be late to the discussion, it's important to start on time as to achieve a hard stop at the 90-minute point.

1. Welcome participants to the event. (2 minutes)
2. Review agenda (1 minute)
2. Introduce yourself and affiliation/interest in the issue of political and racial divides. (2 minutes)
3. Conversation agreements (2 minutes)
4. Getting to know each other. (8 minutes)

Ideally, each participant can have 1-2 minutes to introduce themselves. Depending on the size of your event, you will want to adjust time dedicated to introductions. A few alternatives to live introductions are:

- Ask participants to answer introductory questions prior to event and verbally summarize the responses
 - Ask participants to round-robin with only their name, affiliation, and short comment related to their interest in the topic.
 - Create a participant list that can be provided at the start of the event (no online discussion). This is a great option if networking is one of the event goals.
4. Conversation (60 minutes)
 5. Reflecting on the conversation (10 minutes)
 6. Closing (5 minutes)
 - Opportunities to get involved
 - Announcements
 - Offer thanks

reunitedstates.tv

Everyone has a role to reunite the country.