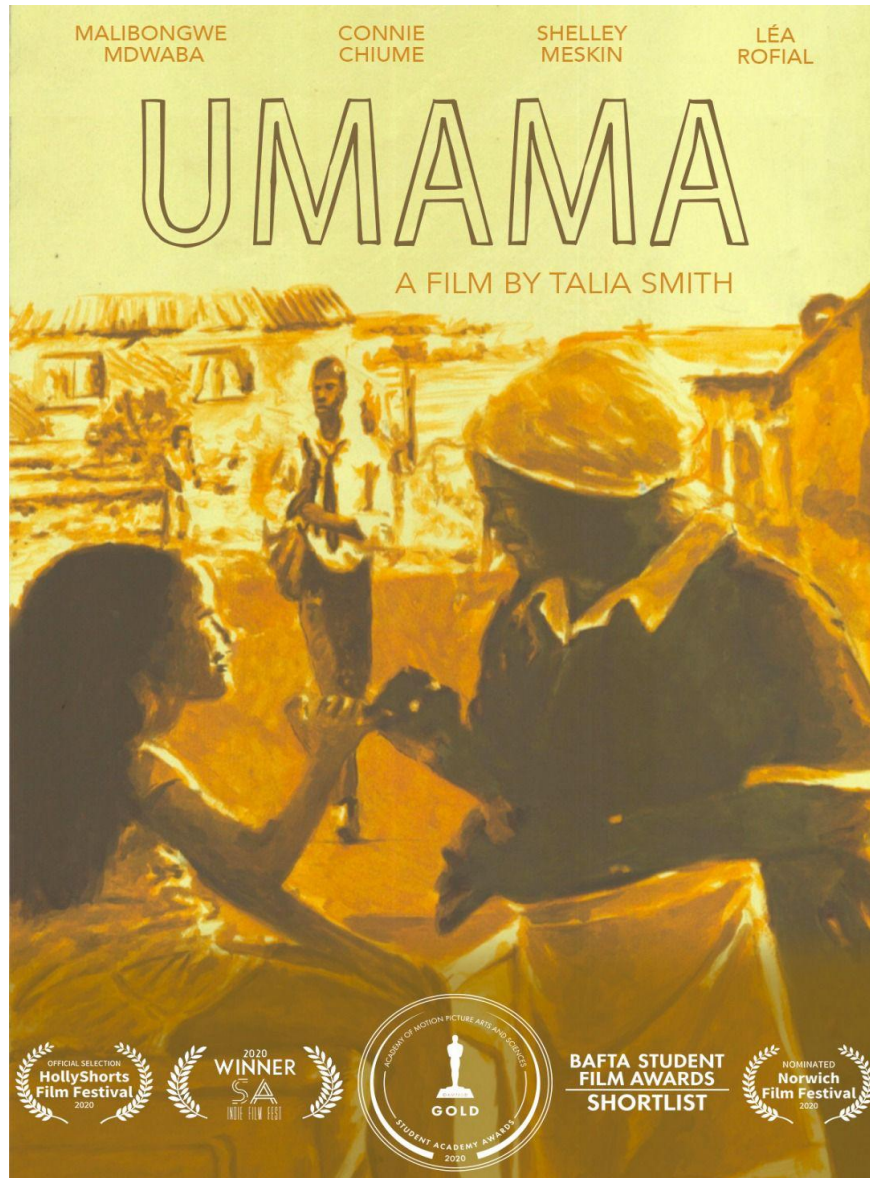


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Post-Viewing Discussion Guide



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ABOUT THE FILM

The morning after promising to celebrate her son’s academic achievement, South African domestic worker Sibongile wakes to find him missing. Despite her worries about her son, she must care for the children of her employer in order to get home and keep her promise. This story is about that day and the real relationships that inspired the film.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER



South Africa’s rich heritage inspired Talia Smith, writer and director of Umama, storytelling from a young age. At 18 she followed her dreams and studied Film & TV at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts. She has focussed her filmmaking career on true stories- highlighting ordinary people with extraordinary stories. Inspired by resilience and joy in the face of adversity, many of her films have thus far been centred around South African and female lead narratives. In 2019 she embarked on her final-year project and the film Umama was created.

“In coming to the U.S., this story began to percolate in my mind—simply because I was no longer in a society where these kinds of stories were part of its DNA. When I would tell classmates that I had had a ‘domestic worker’ my whole life, I could not articulate well enough that that’s not all she was to me. I had to then ask myself why I felt such a strong need to justify this situation. The purpose of the film is not to make sense of these circumstances nor provide a solution; rather it simply states that they exist—something the audience must comprehend for themselves.

The film explores both South African specific issues along with universal themes, including the major class contrasts that exist in the legacy apartheid has left behind; crime and safety in South Africa; South Africa’s melting pot of cultures; to be ‘in’ but not ‘of’ a specific group; and, above all else, the dichotomy in which love exists: it is at once confusing and the only thing that makes sense.” - Talia Smith



INTRODUCTION TO THE POST VIEWING DISCUSSION GUIDE

This post-viewing guide aims to help stimulate productive discussions around the issues depicted within the film along with asking questions that allow for critical reflection. The guide is to help facilitate constructive discussion around the film and how it connects to one's life.

TIME :

- 20 MINUTE FILM
- 30 MINUTES PER RECOMMENDED TOPIC DISCUSSION

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

- To engage in deeper understandings and reflections around the themes of Umama.
- To start a conversation among South Africans in a space of sensitivity, understanding and human connection.
- To explain the specific vulnerabilities that South African domestic workers and their children experience.

NAVIGATING THE POST VIEWING DISCUSSION GUIDE

OUR INTENTION

The purpose of this document is to provide a general overview of the themes illuminated in this film and to create a guideline for empathetic and compassionate reflection and discussion.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

The Umama post viewing discussion guide has been created for no specific audience but rather with the potential of being able to speak to and benefit different individuals emerging from all different backgrounds, age groups, races and nationalities.

With this being said, it is our recommendation that facilitators should explore the guide and thereafter choose themes and questions that suit their intention and audience's needs.

CREATING A SAFE SPACE FOR DISCUSSION



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You can increase the freedom, and quality of your discussion by providing your participants with a safe space. Giving permission to speak freely will allow your participants to fully express themselves, to explore what comes up for them, and to give feedback. When people feel safe in a discussion, they are more likely to be fearless and speak their minds. Creating a safe space will help your discussion grow broader and deeper. To develop psychological safety in a discussion, address permission up front and directly, to ensure your participants feel ready to be vulnerable to speak their truth. Ask the participants to dedicate their full attention to each person who speaks, allow each person the time to conclude their thoughts, and to share what they feel is valuable. Alternatively, safety activities or icebreakers such as a moment of silence, one minute meditations or ice breaker activities are other ways to create a safe space.

HOW TO FACILITATE DISCUSSIONS

STEP 1: PLAN FOR DISCUSSIONS

As different viewing parties may be triggered by different themes in this film, it is important for the facilitator to create a safe space to discuss sensitive topics. It is imperative to consider different scenarios and to have the proper support in place prior to the session. **Below are some actions to consider:**

- Have facilitators meet in advance to conduct planning.
- Complete a safety planning activity to pinpoint any problems that might arise and to create a plan to address them.
- Build partnerships with local mental health and psychosocial service agencies, to ensure linkages are in place if any challenges arise, so that participants are informed on-hand on how to contact available services within the community.
- Invite a mental health professional to be present during the post-viewing discussion or to co-facilitate the discussion.

STEP 2: SELECT YOUR FILM VIEWING OPTION

Note that it is recommended that young individuals, especially those with acute mental illness, view the film with a trusted person so that emotional support is available if needed. **Viewing options to consider:**

Option 1: Screen the entire film to the group together. Then during the discussion, return to the selected clip options and lead the discussion.



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Option 2: Send the film to participants to watch before the meeting. Then, as a group, show the selected film clip options and lead the discussion. This option is useful when there is no available equipment to watch the film together.

STEP 3: SELECT THEMES OPTIONS TO DISCUSS

Prior to the discussion, select between 2-4 film themes options and ideas that you would like to draw out during the conversation based upon the participant's needs and the available time. **It may be useful to:**

- Share snippets of clips from the film that enhance the idea you want to share, or, if you are not able to do so, provide a description of the clip to refresh participants' memories.
- Share an impactful quote from the clip to share with participants to reflect on.
- Curate a list of specific questions to lead the discussion, if time is limited.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Apartheid: a policy or system of segregation or discrimination on grounds of race segregation on grounds other than race.

Bantu Education: (in South Africa under apartheid) the official system of education for black South Africans.

Communication: the successful conveying or sharing of ideas and feelings.

Culture: the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society.

Domestic Worker: a person who is paid to help with cleaning and other menial tasks in a person's home.

Identity: a fundamental organizing principle that develops constantly throughout the lifespan.

Sacrifice: give up (something valued) for the sake of other considerations.

Toxic Masculinity: a set of attitudes and ways of behaving stereotypically associated with or expected of men, regarded as having a negative impact on men and on society as a whole.



RECOMMENDED DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. LEGACY OF APARTHEID

Bantu Education

A 1953 South African segregation law which provision was enforcing racially separate educational facilities. The curriculum included and encouraged learning gardening and domestic work. The education was aimed at training children for manual labour and menial jobs that the government deemed suitable for those of their race. It was explicitly intended to inculcate the idea that Black people were to accept being subservient to white South Africans. (Bantu Education Act | Definition, Summary, & Facts, 2021)

Town to Township

“Apartheid is often construed as a largely political construct, but architecture and planning were critical to implementing apartheid policies.

Until the early 1990s, when South Africa became an inclusive democracy, nonwhite workers were forced to live outside cities in residential areas known as townships. Early separation was formalized and reinforced by colonial laws such as the Natives’ Land Act of 1913, which reserved nearly 90 percent of the land in South Africa for a tiny minority white population.

Cities were designated “for whites only”, and townships became, in effect, the mechanism for housing the nonwhite labor force. Such policies accelerated the growth of separate townships across the country at all scales — from cities like Cape Town and Johannesburg to the smallest villages. Soweto occupies only 10 percent of the land of metropolitan Johannesburg but contains 40 percent of its population.

While in a few cases, like Alexandra, older townships were close to white enclaves and separated only by walls and fences, in most places a vast zone of uninhabited land separated the townships from the city. Getting to work often involved a long and expensive commute to a job that could be three hours away” (Findley, and Ogbu, 2011).

Socio-Economic Divide

Professor of South African Literature at University of Amsterdam and author Ena Jansen in her book *Like Family: Domestic Workers in South African History and Literature*.



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Jansen writes, “The social and economic division between black and white lingers on in post-apartheid South Africa and remains largely unresolved. Most white neighbourhoods have retained the demographic character of the twentieth century, and to this day, black people generally enter them in their capacity as servants, gardeners, and cleaners.”



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- How are the lives of the two children in the film different?
- Why do you think Sibongile says "You are so lucky to get such an education."
- Where can we see the legacy of apartheid existing within the film?

2. BULLYING AND CRIME

Causes of Bullying, Bullying Behavior in Bullying Child

“The roots of bullying behaviours dig deep into the fabric of our culture, setting the stage for a host of responses our children learn from an early age. Intolerance and discrimination are two long-standing cultivators of bullying, especially when kids are confronted by obvious social or racial differences between themselves and others” (Richfield, 2019).

“Feelings of low self-worth, anger, and sadness create a combustible combination when confronted by the presence of happy, well-adjusted peers. Imagine the raw frustration when angry and unhappy kids must endure the daily happiness of their peers. Bullies emerge with a "misery loves company" agenda, capitalizing upon random opportunities to deflate a popular kid, further humiliate an unpopular one, or taunt a committed teacher. Children who follow this path



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to bullying behaviors are often critical and moody, fixated upon what is wrong with people and events around them” (Richfield, 2019).



Crime in South Africa

“In February 2007, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation was contracted by the South African ANC government to carry out a study on the nature of crime in South Africa. The study pointed out different factors which contributed to high levels of violence. Violent and non-violent crimes in South Africa have been ascribed to:

- The normalisation of violence. Violence is seen by many as a necessary and justified way of resolving conflict, and some men believe that coercive sexual behaviour towards women is legitimate.
- A subculture of violence and criminality, ranging from individual criminals who rape or rob, to informal groups or more formalised gangs. Those involved in the subculture are engaged in criminal careers and commonly use firearms, with the exception of Cape Town, where knife violence is more prevalent. Credibility within this subculture is related to the readiness to resort to extreme violence.
- The vulnerability of young people due to inadequate child-rearing, followed by poor guardianship and youth socialisation. Due to poverty and deprivation, unstable living arrangements and inconsistent parenting, some South African children are exposed to risk factors which increase their chances of becoming involved in criminality and violence.
- The high levels of inequality, poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and marginalisation.
- The consumption and abuse of alcohol is seen as a direct cause or contributing factor in many murder, attempted murder, assault, gender-based assault and rape cases. Many of these violent crimes in fact occur in or directly outside bars, taverns, shebeens or nightclubs. In addition many South Africans, including on-duty



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policemen, are arrested for drinking and driving, a crime which is linked to 27% of fatal road accidents.” (Crime in South Africa - Wikipedia, 2021)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- What are some of the root causes of bullying that these articles put forward?
- Where can we see the physical manifestations of living in a high-crime society within the film?
- What are some of the results that can come from having child-headed/ single-parents households?
- How does this article help us understand characters such as Kathalo?
- How can we understand people's motives for committing criminal offenses through understanding their journey and traumas?
- Is there room for forgiveness for the highest degree of crime such as murder?

3. TOXIC MASCULINITY

What to Know About Toxic Masculinity

“A study in the Journal of School of Psychology uses the following definition to explain toxic masculinity: “the constellation of socially regressive [masculine] traits that serve to foster domination, the devaluation of women, homophobia, and wanton violence”.

In modern society, people often use the term toxic masculinity to describe exaggerated masculine traits that many cultures have widely accepted or glorified.

This harmful concept of masculinity also places significant importance on ‘manliness’ based on:



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- strength
- lack of emotion
- self-sufficiency
- dominance
- sexual virility

According to traditional toxic masculine values, a male who does not display enough of these traits may fall short of being a ‘real man’. Overemphasis of these traits may lead to harmful imbalances in someone trying to live up to these expectations. Some examples include:

- aggression
- sexual aggression or control
- showing no emotion or suppressing emotions
- hyper-competitiveness
- needing to dominate or control others
- a tendency towards or glorification of violence
- isolation
- low empathy
- entitlement
- chauvinism and sexism

One example of this includes telling another person who is showing emotion to “**man up**”; in other words, to hide that emotion. This example illustrates how some people view emotion or vulnerability as ‘**unmanly**’.

Another common example is the saying, “**boys will be boys**”. This expression advocates for careless, aggressive, or otherwise damaging behavior in young males, rather than teaching them about responsibility and owning up to their mistakes.

Expressions of this type highlight how cultures and societies have traditionally viewed males. However, these views can cause harm and embellish the idea of masculinity, leading to an even more toxic attitude toward these behaviors” (Johnson, 2020).





DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- How is toxic masculinity represented within the film?

4. SENSE OF IDENTITY

Identity vs. Role Confusion in Psychosocial Development

“Erik Erikson defines **identity** as a fundamental organizing principal which develops constantly throughout the lifespan”.

Identity involves the experiences, relationships, beliefs, values, and memories that make up a person's subjective sense of self (Cherry, 2021). This helps create a continuous self-image that remains fairly constant even as new aspects of the self are developed or strengthened over time. Identity provides the following:

Self-sameness: A sense of continuity within the self and in interaction with others

Uniqueness: A frame to differentiate between self and in interaction with others

Psychosocial development: Mental and physical health for adolescents.

During the identity versus confusion stage, the conflict is centered on developing a personal identity. Successfully completing this stage leads to a strong sense of self that will remain throughout life.” (Cherry, 2021)

The South African Identity Crisis

“ In 1979, social psychologist Henry Tajfel proposed that our sense of who we are is based on our group membership/s. South Africa's identity crisis is unique because, according to Tajfel's



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theories, the groups to which we belong are an important source of pride and self-esteem. Groups give us a sense of social identity: a sense of belonging in a social world.

However, this inherent need to belong also fuels intergroup conflicts and is the reason why prejudices form so easily. In order to increase our self-image, we enhance the status of the group to which we belong, but we also discriminate against the “out group” – the group to which we do not belong. An “us”, and “them” practice of social categorisation (or pigeonholing people into certain groups) is quickly established. Then begins a process of actively seeking out negative aspects of an “out-group”, thus enhancing our own self-image. It’s not hard to see how this can easily equate to prejudiced views between cultures” (SACAP, 2013).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- What helps us inform the creation of our own identities?
- Do you think the media can help validate or invalidate the identities of others?
- At what stage of life do we start becoming aware of our identity?
- Do you think having a sense of identity is important? Why or why not?
- Explain what Thabiso may be feeling with regard to his identity?
- How do you feel we can bring about social cohesion in our society?

5. DOMESTIC WORKERS

Domestic Employment: Making Visible an Invisible Relationship



“Although it is challenging to capture the full scope of domestic employment, the International Labour Organization (2015) estimates that there are more than 67 million domestic workers globally. Such



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work takes multiple forms, including nanny, home attendant, and house cleaner, and the vast majority of people filling these jobs are women (Kennedy, 2012). Domestic employment relationships, which involve employers managing and financially compensating domestic workers in exchange for on-going work in employers' private homes, are pervasive, with far-reaching social and economic consequences (Luebker, Simonovsky, & Oelz, 2013; see Kennedy, 2012). These relationships can be highly interdependent and shape the ways in which both partners (worker and employer) define, evaluate, and situate themselves in society (Andersen & Chen, 2002). In addition, domestic employment relationships are deeply embedded in histories of societal power disparities based on gender, race, and social class (Calás & Smircich, 2011; Hoobler, 2016; Kennedy, 2012): "For centuries, a woman's social status was clear-cut: either she had a maid or she was one" (Bloom, 2015). Today, these relationships exist as a common means for households to manage the many, often competing work and family demands (Hochschild, 2012). In this way, domestic employment relationships are the linchpin that "makes all other work possible" (National Domestic Workers Alliance, 2018). Individually, the dynamics of these relationships can profoundly influence the health and well-being of both the worker and employer (Bick, 2017; Malhotra et al., 2013; Seierstad & Kirton, 2015). Collectively, they have implications for major societal issues, including women's economic and career mobility, work–family management, and transmigration issues (Calás & Smircich, 2011; Rajjman, Schammah-Gesser, & Kemp, 2003; Spector et al., 2007).

Despite the pervasiveness and impact of domestic employment relationships, they are "invisible" in many ways (Peterson, 2007). From a public policy perspective, most domestic workers are not granted the same rights as those employed by organizations (Luebker et al., 2013; National Domestic Workers Alliance & Center for Urban Economic Development, 2012). In fact, an estimated 30% of domestic workers are excluded from national worker protections and 90% do not have access to their country's social security systems (International Labour Organization, 2018). At the household level, many women who hire domestic workers do not see themselves as formal employers. Instead, they view themselves as consumers of household services, referring to the women who work in their homes as "the help" (Hoobler, 2016; Kennedy, 2012). Or, dismissing the documented power differential between employer and worker, they may describe domestic employees as "part of the family" (Anderson, 1997; Galvaan et al., 2015; Kennedy, 2012). Such factors culminate in the majority of domestic workers being treated as invisible socially, economically, and under (outside) the law" (Masterson, and Hoobler, 2019).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

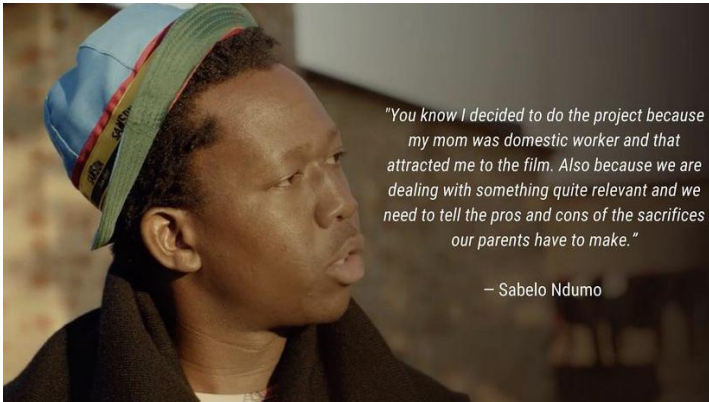
- What steps can we take to improve the well-being of domestic workers?
- Give 3 examples from this article that show how domestic work is undervalued.



- How do you think undervaluing one's work affects one's self-image?
- What boundaries can help to foster positive working environments?
- When an employee experiences a trauma, how can the employer be of best assistance?

6. SACRIFICE

A Mother's Sacrifice



“Like most of the domestic helpers from the Philippines, Imelda “Susan” Famadula smiles a lot. She has been working in Hong Kong for 15 years, waking early in the morning, dropping the kids off at school, going to the market, bringing the kids back, all along while taking care of various household tasks that last until midnight, and for six days a week.

Imelda loves Sunday. She can meet friends in the city's financial Central district, where bankers and office workers make way for domestic helpers. Imelda also goes to church, but most importantly, she is free to meet her family – via the Internet.

Every month she sends nearly all of her salary back to the Philippines for her family. Only once every two years does she manage to save enough to travel back to her hometown. “I may not go back this year, second year in a row, as my kid needs more money while studying in the university”, she said, still smiling. The Internet is her lifeline, connecting her soul with those she feeds thousands of miles away.

In Hong Kong, she has two boys to take care of. When she started working for her current family eight years ago, they hadn't even been born yet.



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“They like me very much.” The work makes her happy, keeps her busy, and helps keep her mind from straying to homesickness.

Foreign domestic helpers make up around three percent of Hong Kong’s population. Nearly half of those are from the Philippines. There are many other Imeldas here, helping to keep the city running. For them, there is as much sweating as smiling” (Ranoco, and Yip, 2012).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- What parallels can you find between Susan and Sibongile’s experiences?
- What sacrifices do both Susan and Sibongile make?
- What are the consequences of these sacrifices ?
- How does Thabiso interpret Sibongile's sacrifice?
- How are the sacrifices Sibongile has to make different from those made by other mothers?
- How do you think employers should act to minimize the emotional strain of these sacrifices?

7. PERSPECTIVE

The Importance of Taking into Account the Perspective of Others

“Playing this role meant I was asked to revisit a time in my personal life where I also had a parent figure missing. In the process, I realized that what you do when you mirror someone else’s reality, what you are saying is ‘we see you, you matter.’”



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“In order to resolve conflict constructively, so that all parties are satisfied with the outcome, a person must be able to hold all the opposing ideas, positions, and perspectives in mind at the same time and still function effectively. Successful problem-solving and conflict resolution largely depend on a person’s ability to take the opponent’s cognitive and affective perspectives and understand how the conflict appears to the other person and how that person is reacting emotionally and attitudinally. If a person cannot take in the perspective of opponents, then his or her understanding of the issue is limited and incomplete” (Johnson, 2019).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- Do you identify with any character within the film? Please explain.
- How can understanding the perspectives of others be valuable to one’s growth?
- Explain a new perspective that could change the way you might interact with others.
- How can learning about other perspectives help improve relationships in the workplace?

8. CULTURES

Why Is Understanding Culture Important If We Are Community Builders?

“The world is becoming increasingly diverse and includes people of many religions, languages, economic groups, and other cultural groups.

It is becoming clear that in order to build communities that are successful at improving conditions and resolving problems, we need to understand and appreciate many cultures, establish relationships with people from cultures other than our own, and build strong alliances with different cultural groups.



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Additionally, we need to bring non-mainstream groups into the center of civic activity. Why?

- In order to build communities that are powerful enough to attain significant change, we need large numbers of people working together. If cultural groups join forces, they will be more effective in reaching common goals, than if each group operates in isolation. Each cultural group has unique strengths and perspectives that the larger community can benefit from. We need a wide range of ideas, customs, and wisdom to solve problems and enrich community life. Bringing non-mainstream groups into the center of civic activity can provide fresh perspectives and shed new light on tough problems.
- Understanding cultures will help us overcome and prevent racial and ethnic divisions. Racial and ethnic divisions result in misunderstandings, loss of opportunities, and sometimes violence. Racial and ethnic conflicts drain communities of financial and human resources; they distract cultural groups from resolving the key issues they have in common.
- People from different cultures have to be included in decision-making processes in order for programs or policies to be effective. The people affected by a decision have to be involved in formulating solutions- it's a basic democratic principle. Without the input and support of all groups involved, decision-making, implementation, and follow-through are much less likely to occur.
- An appreciation of cultural diversity goes hand-in-hand with a just and equitable society. For example, research has shown that when students' cultures are understood and appreciated by teachers, the students do better in school. Students feel more accepted, they feel part of the school community, they work harder to achieve, and they are more successful in school.
- If we don't learn about the influences that cultural groups have had on our mainstream history and culture, we are all missing out on an accurate view of our society and our communities.

As you think about diversity, it may be helpful to envision the kind of cultural community you want to build. In order to set some goals related to building relationships between cultures, resolving differences, or building a diverse coalition, it helps to have a vision of the kind of cultural community you hope for " (Axner, n.d.).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- How do we see different cultures represented within the film?
- Do you think it is important to learn about other cultures and why?
- Do you think schools do a good job of exposing students to other cultures?



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- Explain what may occur due to ignorance towards other cultures?
- What role does cultural competency play in community cohesion and community building?

9. COMMUNICATION

Intercultural Misunderstanding in South Africa: An Analysis of Nonverbal Communication Behaviour in Context



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“Communication does not occur in a void; people always communicate within a situation or setting (Steinberg, 1994). As human beings, we use language, i.e., verbal and nonverbal signals to communicate and interact with one another and to link us to the world. Much of what we do when we interact with others is based on our cultural values and background. In this interaction we often encounter people who not only use different languages but who also come from cultures and backgrounds different from ours. Because of our differences, misunderstandings may occur in the process of communication, and this may have a negative effect on people around us” (Ntuli, 2012).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- What does this film teach us about the importance of communication?
- Where can we see instances of a lack of communication within the film?
- Give one example from the film of how communicating one’s emotions and perspective could have prevented feelings of loneliness and sadness?
- What does this film teach you about upholding one’s promise?

CALL TO ACTION

If you feel inspired by the lessons learned through the film and discussions and want to further the discussion and broaden your knowledge, or alternatively are seeking a professional to help you deal with topics raised in this film, visit our website and check out our resource tab for more information.

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