



Grasping at the Roots

Conversation Guide

Hello!

This film wouldn't be what it is without community, and no matter where it travels, we want the film to continue to spark conversations in community centers, family and community gatherings, centers of education, and wherever else this film may find those wanting to learn more about their own environment and curious about climate justice. The purpose of this guide is to:

- Engage the audience in critical conversations and questions around topics of Environmental Justice
- Provide a guide for facilitating the conversation
- Connect and build relationships within various communities through interactive activities for audience/community members

Below is a set of questions, group activities, and a facilitation guide to help move through the film.

We really appreciate you for being part of this film's journey.

Sincerely,
The Grasping at the Roots Team

BEFORE THE FILM

Take a little time to set the tone of the event and welcome people into the space. This is a heavy topic, but the film is also full of light, life, and visionary solutions to some major struggles. We're here to understand where we fit into this legacy, to join this work, to dream together as our own community. We want to fight the bad while we build the new.

Here's something you can share about the film before it plays:

Grasping at The Roots is a documentary film that highlights stories of some environmental justice activists in the United States, and demonstrates how climate change is intimately connected to *all of* our lives. The film shares the goals, challenges,

victories, and hopes of Climate Justice Alliance member organizations in Detroit, MI, Indianapolis, IN, Richmond, CA, and Jackson, MS. Grasping at the Roots highlights local action, education, and collective strategies in these four cities as residents adapt to political, economic, and ecological challenges surrounding climate change. It is a love letter to the movement and a beacon of hope in an ever-changing environment.

Keep in mind that **some folks may have sensitivities that came up** during this film, or may have more to share than others. All are okay, but it is always important to **set the agreements for the space**. Here are some suggestions:

- One mic
- No one is perfect
- Expect to leave with more to come
- Be mindful of speak
- Self and community care
- Seek first to understand, then be understood

These are just some suggestions, feel free to come up with your own and whatever comes up in the space. One other thing to look out for is to call all the voices into the room as much as possible: if you see some folks not speaking up as much or some speaking more than others, make space for quieter voices in the room.

When conversations start, and especially when conversations get juicy or heated, they feel like they can go on forever! But we know, and assuming that the space you're hosting the screening at has hours, that you gotta end the conversation. **We'd suggest having a timekeeper** if you're working with a limited amount of time to keep track of the film run time, and time for activities.

Also **we highly recommend having music for the conversation**, or during group breakouts to keep the energy up and alive :)

A side note: **if people ask where they can see the film or would be interested in hosting a screening of their own**, please forward their contact information to keenanrhodesmediums@gmail.com.

AFTER THE FILM

INTROS

It's important for people in the room to get to know one another, and will also help break the ice. A good way to start is to have folks seated in a circle (provided the seating is adjustable) or turn to one another so everyone can see each other. Introductions could be something like:

- Name, where you're from/where do you call home, what's your superpower, and what brought you here today to this screening?
- Other questions may include:
 - What's something that you're taking away from this film back home with you to your neighborhood?
 - What is something that you're leaving with more curiosity about, or that you want to dive deeper into?
 - What was a standout scene from the film that made you emotional, or that jogged your memory of another similar moment or feeling? Is there anything that this film reminded you of?

QUESTIONS

Review of the film:

- What general thoughts or reflections would folks like to share?
- What did you like about the film?
- How did the film change your perspective or opinion on environmental justice?
- Which community solution stood out the most to you?
- How do race and environmental justice intersect in your community?

Tapping into the knowledge in the room:

- For the folks that may have experience with some of the issues brought up in the film: what are some of the environmental challenges you or others in your community/neighborhood have experienced?
- Thinking about some of the specific things we saw in the film, like the footage from Hurricane Katrina, there are some natural disasters and events that stand out in our mind. What are some of those memories that pop up when you think of things like Hurricane Katrina, or Hurricane Sandy, or Hurricane Harvey, or maybe even earthquakes or floods that happened?
- How have you observed changes in weather over the course of your life?
- What are some of the ways your community or culture honors nature or practices care of land and water? Are there any stories that come to mind that show these examples?
- How did you or your ancestors honor nature or have a relationship with the natural world?
- What ways have you seen communities build better futures for themselves?

Analyzing what we're up against:

- How have you seen corporations buy up or destroy resources or things that we rely on, such as fresh water and food, or land in the community?
- What are some of our own challenges in dealing with climate change in our communities?

Building the future:

Climate change and climate collapse are really challenging topics to talk about, and they can get really deep. It's important to focus on where we have agency, the things we can do to encourage action.

- What are some of the ways in the past or present that our communities have worked together?
- What are some ways we could address climate change, or the things causing it, here?
- The idea of resiliency hubs is becoming more popular. What does resilience mean to you? What already exists in our community to meet the needs of people, and what do we need?

GROUP ACTIVITIES

Paired sharing:

- Have folks break into groups of two or more depending on the room size and have them ask one another a set of the questions from the ones listed above.

World Building:

- Break participants into groups and give them spaces in different parts of the room.
- Task each group with a prompt of designing a community that is safe from climate collapse with everything it needs. What would it have? What would be designed? How is the worldview different from ours? How are things governed? What would justice look like?
- Supply folks with paper, crayons, markers, and whatever else they may need for use.
- What's worked well has been putting participants in intergenerational groups, giving folks poster boards or huge post-its, and letting folks have the space and imagination to play around in world building. If people ask for specifics on the prompt, offer freedom for them to interpret prompts as they will.
 - Feel free to roam and check on groups as facilitators - at times elders can take up a lot of space, and it's important to encourage others to keep participating together as well for more sharing between generations to happen.
- When folks come back together after about 15-20 minutes, have groups share out what they came up with and their experience during the activity. What went well? What was challenging? What conflicts came up and how did the group move through them? Feel free to add your own reflection questions.

Asset Mapping:

- Optional: Break out folks into groups
- Prompt them with listing out what resources, nature points, businesses, and organizations exist in the community, including but not limited to:
 - Natural Water sources
 - Natural spaces
 - Community Organizations
 - Youth service organizations

- Book Stores
- Environmental Organizations
- Water Plants/Treatment Facilities
- Car Plants
- Jails/Prisons/Juvenile Detention Centers
- Industrial facilities
- You can use tools like Google Maps and pin these places that come up; feel free to have groups choose how far out they'd like to map points. It could be a few square mile radius, five square mile radius, city level, county level, etc. Note that the wider the area, the more will come up for the asset mapping exercise. If short on time, it's wiser to keep it limited, like a 2 square mile radius which would cover the size of a neighborhood in a major metropolitan neighborhood.

Spectrograms:

- Designate one part of the room as 0 and another part of the room as 5 (the area between should be clear to walk around in)
- Tell people you are going to read a question and you want them to pick a place in the room that represents their feeling, 0 being absolutely no and 5 being absolutely yes, with room in between for nuances
- It's useful to start with an example. E.g. a cupcake is a muffin, or salt is a spice.
- Once people have landed in a spot, ask a few people from the 5's, 0's and in between to share why they landed there with the group.
- Example prompts related to the film:
 - I saw myself and/or my community in this film.
 - I am playing an active role in building the new in our community.
 - I know what we need to do to address climate change.
 - Another world, a better world, is possible.
 - Winning that better world is possible, and I'm willing to fight for it.

Future Headlines:

- Choose a future date (eg. 5, 10, 20 years from now) and ask people to imagine what success in your work/campaign/community looks like at that point.
- Craft 5-10 'headlines' from that future point. It could be a headline from a news outlet, a text from a relative or a family member, or an IG post/tweet.
- Be sure to either supply folks with paper and pencils/pens. If there aren't any available, have folks use notes apps on their phones. Try to keep it to pen and paper so folks don't drift from the activity using other apps on their phones, we want to keep people as present as possible. Allow 5-10 minutes for this activity, and invite folks to share their headlines.
- Think about what narratives these headlines/tweets/IG posts suggest. Ask the group, What actions are needed to make these headlines a reality? What would this world look like, and what role did we play in shaping it?

CLOSING

- As always, thank the folks for showing up! They took time from their busy schedules to be here with one another and to support the film + community. That deserves some acknowledgement :)
- Task folks to make sure that they exchange their contact information.
- Ask for a round of community announcements: if folks have events coming up, give them space to share what's going on.
- Take some notes and share them with us! We'd love to hear what folks had to say.
- **Take a group picture!** We'd love to continue to archive parts of these conversations as the film continues to proliferate throughout the community. Send it to us at the emails provided above :)