



# PURPLE

AMERICA, WE NEED TO TALK.

## FILM DISCUSSION GUIDE

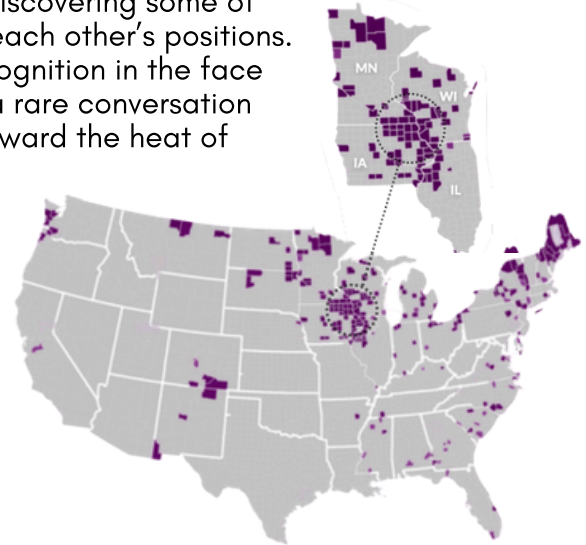
PRESENTED BY RESETTING THE TABLE

[WWW.RESETTINGTHETABLE.ORG](http://WWW.RESETTINGTHETABLE.ORG)

Dear friends,

We are delighted that you are interested in organizing a screening of PURPLE! PURPLE tells the story of everyday Americans with opposing viewpoints addressing their differences head-on and discovering some of the concerns and humanity that lie behind each other's positions. Designed to build greater empathy and recognition in the face of deepening U.S. divides, PURPLE models a rare conversation that uplifts and inspires even while going toward the heat of passionate political differences.

The film takes place in rural Wisconsin and Iowa, two swing states where "red" and "blue" still live in the same neighborhoods and where many people feel unrepresented by the two-party system. This politically pivotal region was home to the greatest concentration of counties that flipped Obama-to-Trump in the 2016 presidential election.



PURPLE is produced by Resetting the Table (RTT) - a non-profit organization that strengthens democracy through building collaborative deliberation across political silos in America today - in partnership with Transient Pictures, an Emmy-award winning production firm. RTT equips community leaders with the tools and skills to open courageous and constructive dialogue on political fault-lines issues within and across their communities. RTT offers facilitation training, communication skill-building workshops, multi-perspective educational classes, and decision-making forums across the country. We invite you to visit [Resetting the Table's website](#) and [Facebook page](#) to learn more about our wide range of tools, and we encourage you to check back with us as we expand our film offerings.

This Discussion Guide will help you host a screening of PURPLE and lead a meaningful conversation about it afterward. Because this guide is intended for audiences from diverse backgrounds and age groups, we encourage you to adapt it to meet your needs and choose the most appropriate focus based on your own priorities and objectives.

We are offering this material for free because we believe it is crucial to initiate as many Americans as possible into better understanding of their political counterparts and the importance of communicating across divides. We appreciate you continuing to spread the word by sharing the film and guide widely. By inviting friends, family, neighbors, students, fellow congregants, and colleagues to watch the film together, you can help disarm the destructiveness of our polarized country and heal the pain it has caused so many of us.

With gratitude and support,  
The Resetting the Table Team

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## A WORD ABOUT THIS GUIDE

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Engaging charged political differences can be sensitive and challenging work in our highly polarized political culture. We are increasingly conditioned to write off our counterparts before we've begun to understand their worlds and worldviews.

Polarization intensifies our confirmation bias – propelling us to gravitate to the people, ideas, and information that validate what we already think and dismiss out-of-hand those that don't.

Resetting the Table aims – with this film and all our programs – to build empathy and recognition across lines of difference without papering over our honest disagreements. Doing so requires teaching participants to hold a kind of cognitive dissonance, compartmentalizing their own lenses enough to take in others' perspectives, especially where they strongly disagree.

In that spirit, this guide offers a carefully structured 1 hour and 45 min. process to support viewers to slow down enough to understand the characters and themes represented in the film on their own terms, while discussing the value of doing so in our lives, communities and country.

You may choose to run the process as-is or adapt the process considerably according to the needs of your community or classroom. We offer these materials in the hope that however you use them, you will help viewers to gain insight and recognition for those different from themselves.



# HOW TO ORGANIZE A SCREENING FOR YOUR COMMUNITY, NETWORKS, OR CLASSROOM

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## DEFINE YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

PURPLE can be an effective tool with like-minded groups or politically diverse groups alike. For politically diverse groups, try to achieve balance among participants, so that no one is isolated as a dissenting viewpoint.



## RECRUIT COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Consider bringing in co-sponsors. Universities, libraries, other bridge-building organizations, and religious communities are good candidates.



**CHOOSE A DATE AND TIME** that you think will work for those you want to bring together.



## LET YOUR COMMUNITY KNOW ABOUT THE EVENT

Download an invitation template [here](#). You can customize the invitation in Canva [here](#). Creating a Facebook event or using an event platform like Eventbrite will help you keep track of who's coming and build interest among your friends and event attendees.



## GET PEOPLE READY AND PREPARED

Download [shareable images](#) for social media and post on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to help drive awareness around your event. *An important tip: if you will be running your program on Zoom, encourage participants to join the program from a computer rather than another device.*



## ENLIST A FACILITATOR

We encourage you to identify someone with formal or informal facilitation experience to facilitate the post-screening discussion. That person can be you! The facilitator should be ready to manage time effectively and support people from across the political spectrum to voice their reactions to the film. If you would like more support in structuring and facilitating a meaningful event beyond what this guide provides, you can reach out to [films@resettingthetable.org](mailto:films@resettingthetable.org).



## SEND A REMINDER

Follow-up with your guests by reminding your audience of the date and time of the program and/or updating your Facebook event page before the screening.



## HELP BUILD MOMENTUM AROUND ENGAGEMENT ACROSS DIVIDES

Use #RESETHETABLE in your posts to join others in building energy and hope around constructive engagement across political divides throughout the country.



## FACILITATOR SCREENING & PROCESS GUIDE

1 HOUR AND 45 MINUTES

# OVERVIEW FOR FACILITATORS

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*The following process is designed for a 1 hour and 45 min. virtual session on Zoom, including watching the film together.*



## PROGRAM GOALS

- To support viewers to achieve deeper understanding of the concerns and commitments of people with whom they disagree
- To introduce two tools for collaborative conversations across differences: Bull's Eye Reflections and Naming Differences
- To build motivation for constructive engagement across political differences



## YOUR ROLE

In this process, your primary role is to help viewers gain a deeper understanding of the multiple points of view and issues raised by the film. We encourage you to pose questions, listen carefully to responses, restate what you hear, and follow up with your audience based on their responses. As appropriate, ask questions to help viewers probe further into the issues and clarify their own thinking; for example: "What I hear you saying is...Is that right?" or "What did you hear in the film that supports that view?"



## PREPARATION

Prior to the discussion you should watch the film and review the questions and outline in this document carefully. The film touches on complex and sensitive subjects, and strong reactions may emerge. As much as possible, we encourage you to support viewers to stretch themselves to step into the lenses of each character in the film, while also considering how they might constructively challenge characters with whom they disagree. We also encourage you to support your participants to reach their own conclusions about the material.

## ADAPTING THIS GUIDE

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*This guide is intended for diverse contexts and audiences, including a range of ages and demographics. We encourage you to adapt it significantly for your settings, priorities, needs, and goals.*

*Please note that to keep this process to 1 hour and 45 min., you will not be able to include all of the discussion questions and material in this guide. Time-permitting, we encourage you to include the discussion questions that you think will be most rewarding for your group.*

- **If you have less than 1 hour and 45 min.,** you might ask participants to watch the film in advance or opt to skip one or more of the suggested activities. Alternatively, you might create a free-flowing conversation, drawing from the Discussion Questions in the Appendix, which lists all discussion questions in this guide.
- **If your group already has strong buy-in** into the need for dialogue across divides, you might consider shortening or skipping “Why Engage in Dialogue.”
- **If you expect your group to be skeptical** about the value of engaging their political ‘others,’ you might expand the time given to “Why Engage in Dialogue” and/or refer to additional materials at the end of the Guide.
- Note that the structure provided here focuses on discussing the value of dialogue and elucidating the viewpoints of characters in the film. **If you would like to offer more of an opportunity for your viewers to be in dialogue with each other** across their own disagreements or to build skills for dialogue across divides, we recommend a longer session and trained facilitators. You can reach out to Resetting the Table at [films@resettingthetable.org](mailto:films@resettingthetable.org) about bringing in trained facilitators for a modest fee.

*We have included a “troubleshooting” section in the Appendix relaying RTT’s approach and suggestions for responding to common challenges in group discussions.*



## SUGGESTED PROCESS OUTLINE

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Introduction and Go-Around (12 min.)

Communication Agreement (2 min.)

Film Screening (22 min.)

Break-out Pairs to Discuss Immediate Reactions (8 min.)

Exercises: Bull's Eye Reflections and Naming Differences (25 min.)

Discussion: Questions and Reactions (10 min.)

Discussion: Why Engage in Dialogue (10 min.)

Discussion: Next Steps (7 min.)

What You Can Do and Closing (5 min.)

## YOU WILL NEED

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1. This [Google Doc](#), which includes prompts, discussion questions, and additional material that you can copy-paste into the chat (if using Zoom) or adapt into your own handout to share with viewers.
2. Accompanying slides on Bull's Eye Reflections and Naming Differences, available at [this link](#).
3. Transcribed excerpts from the film, available at [this link](#) and in the Support Materials of this Guide.

## FACILITATOR INTRODUCTION

*Note to facilitators: this text is meant to serve as an example of framing. It is not meant to be a script. Make it your own! Start with a warm welcome, explaining why you decided to screen this film and host a discussion.*

Welcome everyone! Thank you all for taking time to join us for this screening of PURPLE. My name is \_\_\_ and together with \_\_\_ we hope tonight will be an opportunity to gain inspiration around what we can do to help stem the tide of increasing polarization and division in our country.

The film will run for 21 minutes, after which we'll have an interactive session and discussion, finishing by \_\_\_PM.

Studies show the U.S. more intensely divided than at any time since the Civil War. As America fractures into ideological enclaves, many of us look with bafflement and contempt at those on other sides of our political and geographic divides.

Tonight we're going to watch a short film capturing a small group of Americans with opposing viewpoints modeling what a healthy public discussion of contentious issues could look like and coming to see some of the concerns and experiences behind each other's positions.

The group represents an ideological cross-section in rural Wisconsin and Iowa - a swing region within two swing states - and a politically pivotal place with implications for the country as a whole. It's home to the greatest concentration of counties that flipped Obama-to-Trump in the 2016 presidential election. The film was made by an organization called Resetting the Table that works to build courageous and constructive communication across political divides in American life. Resetting the Table conducted a Listening Campaign in this area in 2017, including 330 interviews of people from a broad range of backgrounds. The film captures a subsection of everyday people with opposing viewpoints drawing from their interviews.

After we watch the characters in the film modeling their own honest, productive conversation across differences, we'll take some time to discuss our reactions, reconstruct their viewpoints and differences, and talk about what we can do. We'll spend the bulk of our time working to capture the views of the core protagonists and the heart of the disagreements among them, putting into practice two skills Resetting the Table teaches as a foundation for dialogue across divides.

Before we watch the film, we want to take a few minutes to bring everyone's voices into the room.

*This [Screening Guide Google Doc](#) includes Prompts, Communication Agreement, and other material that will be helpful to orienting participants throughout this process. We encourage you to put a link to the Screening Guide Google Doc into the chat at the beginning of the process.*

## **GO-AROUND (12 min.)**

*In a group of 12 or less, we encourage you to do an opening go-around in which each person says one sentence. A tip: if you're using Zoom, paste a go-around order into the chat so that the process will run more smoothly and also prime people for when it will be their turn.*



Example go-around prompts (*remind people to answer in one sentence*):

- What brought you here tonight?
- What is one thing bringing you energy and hope in this time?

*In a group of 13 or more, we encourage you to get everyone participating by having them write something in the chat. As responses come in, read a few of them out loud.*



Example chat prompts:

- What is one hope you have for our time together?
- Where are you calling in from?

## **COMMUNICATION AGREEMENT (2 min.)**

*We encourage you to read the Communication Agreement out loud and ask for nods of consent. You may want to ask a second host to read it so they hear another voice. If you have not yet done so, we encourage you to put the [Screening Guide Google Doc](#) into the chat and refer your viewers to the Communication Agreement on the first page.*

*We're going to set some intentions for how we're communicating in our time together.*

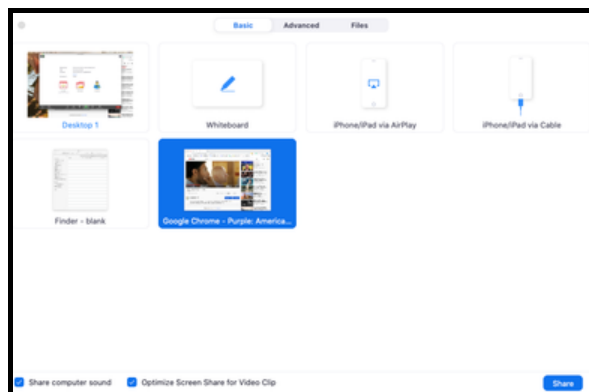
- We will listen resiliently and carefully, even when we hear something hard to hear.
- We will speak with respect, humility, and thoughtfulness:
  - Expressing our views without insulting or attacking individual participants or an entire group
  - Connecting what we know and believe to particular sources of information and experiences
  - Asking questions rather than assuming we know the intentions of others
  - Speaking for ourselves rather than on behalf of an entire group
  - Supporting others in the conversation
- We will share airtime.
- We will honor confidentiality. We will not attach names or identifying information to comments made without permission.

***Ask participants to give nods of consent.***

## SCREEN FILM (22 min.)

### How to Screen the Film using Zoom

1. Open the PURPLE [YouTube](#) link in your browser.
2. In Zoom, click the **Share Screen** button located in your meeting controls. (Learn more about [screen sharing](#).)
3. Select the screen with the PURPLE YouTube video and select **Optimize** and **Share Computer Sound** for full-screen video clip with audio.



4. Click **Share**.
5. In the YouTube window, click **Full Screen** and press **Play**.
6. Play your video in full screen while continuing to share your screen.
7. Note that your mouse will be visible to viewers; we recommend keeping your mouse off screen for the duration of the film.

## OPENING PAIRS (8 min.)

Take a moment to jot down a poignant reaction to the film. In a moment, we'll ask you to share your reactions in pairs. I'll share some prompts in the chat to help get your thoughts moving.

### *Put the following prompts into the chat.*

Ask

- What struck or moved you?
- What ideas or moments stayed with you?
- How were you impacted by seeing this conversation?
- Did anything you heard help you understand a new perspective?
- Did anything make you think about something new?

After participants have had a minute to write and think, **place everyone in pairs** in break-out rooms to share their reactions with each other. Remind them that they'll have 5 min. and they should share airtime. Encourage them to focus on a moment that stayed with them from the film to give focus to their conversations.

## BULL'S EYE REFLECTIONS AND NAMING DIFFERENCES AMONG THE PROTAGONISTS

Welcome back everyone. I'm glad you had a chance to share some of your immediate reactions with each other. I'm sure we only scratched the surface, and there are many more questions and thoughts on your minds. Before we hear more, **we're going to take some time to try to pause our reactions for now to capture the views of the core protagonists and understand them on their own terms.**

Often, in our polarized and combative political culture, many of us react before we have taken the time to make sure we understand. **One of our goals tonight is to slow down - to see if we can take some time to reconstruct the thinking of the characters before we respond with our own perspectives.** These exercises will also help you understand what made the conversations in the film go well. We hope you will be able to bring these practices into conversations across differences in your lives.

We're going to practice the skill Resetting the Table puts forth as the most important foundation for building productive communication across disagreement. That skill, often called reflection, is an effort to **demonstrate to people that we see them as they wish to be seen.**

### *Show Slide #1.*

In a conversation, this may sound a bit like, "Let me see if I get it. For you it's this and this and this. Did I get that right?" We're aiming to show people we've heard them, to get to the point that they'd say: "Yes exactly, that's it. That's exactly me."

Resetting the Table calls this **hitting the bull's eye**. When you hit the bull's eye, you capture the heart of what matters most to others. You may have noticed the facilitator does this several times in the film. For example, he says to Ted at one point: "You're saying, 'Well I'm still here actually and the policies you're talking about are gonna harm me.'"

### *Show Slide #2.*

Why do we do this? There is a wealth of research that shows that the more people feel that who they are is truly seen by those around them, the more they feel a sense of ease and connection - even in the face of passionate disagreement. When people feel seen as they see themselves, they are much more likely to be receptive, flexible, generous and courageous.

**Hitting the bull's eye creates space for people to talk to rather than past each other, even in the face of strong differences.**

This is tremendously challenging today, when we're often unaware we're projecting all kinds of things onto our ideological counterparts, and encountering the worst possible versions of their thinking rather than an accurate - let alone generous - representation of their ideas.

**We're going to take some time to give a few bull's eye reflections to different characters in PURPLE, and then to name a few differences among them.**

### *Return to Slide #1.*

## Exercise 1: Bull's Eye Reflections (10 min.)

### **Share Excerpt #1.**

If using Zoom, put [this link](#) to Transcribed Excerpts into the chat and ask people to open the document and skim Excerpt #1 (alternatively, you can send the document as a pdf or paste the Excerpts into a Google Doc). If you didn't watch the film together, you may want to watch a clip from 9:24-12:06 (see page 12 for Zoom video sharing instructions).

Who can give a bull's eye reflection to Akram or to Ted, and hold off on editorializing or criticizing? Remember: we're trying to capture what matters to Akram and to Ted on their own terms, as they see themselves, so that if they were here they'd say: "Yes exactly, that's it. You get me." What is most important to each of them? **What do they each want the other to understand? I encourage you to try to step into each of their lenses.**

### **Facilitator, take a couple of offerings, then model:**

**Ted:** Ted wants Akram to understand, I have been given nothing in this life. I have crawled and fought for everything I have. I have taken on physical injury and saved lives. To imply that I'm the beneficiary of any kind of unfair system or advantage flies in the face of everything I've had to do to overcome obstacles and struggles of all kinds. And I'm proud of what I've achieved by my own blood, sweat and tears.

**Akram:** Akram wants Ted to understand – without denying all of the self-reliance of which Ted is so proud – that Ted had privileges that others don't have that enabled all his hard work to yield success. There is systemic racism and other forms of systemic injustice that present myriad structural barriers to people of color and marginalized populations and that Ted did not have to overcome, which does not nullify all his struggles, achievements and hard work.

### **Time-permitting, questions for further discussion:**

*Note to facilitators: If doing the full process in this guide in 1 hour and 45 minutes, you may want to save discussion of these questions until after the next exercise. Ask people to note to themselves what they'd want to ask and say to Ted and Akram, and let them know you will open up space to hear some of their thoughts, questions and reactions after the next exercise.*

#### **Ask**

- What did you hear in the backstories of Ted and Akram that may inform their respective perspectives?
- What questions would you want to ask the characters if they were here?
- What would you want to say to them?

*If participants offer a challenge about a character during the reflection process, remind them that our first task is to try to capture the character on their own terms. If they make an assumption about a character after completing this exercise, encourage humility and curiosity by reminding viewers we don't know what the character might say. Direct the viewer to consider what questions they might ask the character if they were here.*

## Exercise 2: Naming Differences (15 min.)

Now that we've practiced bull's eye reflections, we're going to try another tool for difficult conversations, something Resetting the Table calls Naming Differences.

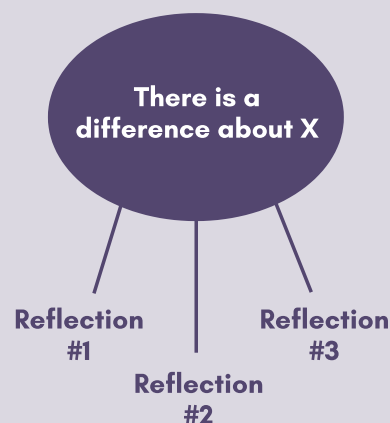
### **Show Slide #3.**

Naming Differences is a key mediation tool, and it means **capturing the crux of differences between two or more parties, and capturing how each person relates to that difference accurately and without distortion.** We want to get to the point that, if both parties were here, they would say, "Yes, that's the heart of the difference between us. And you get *me* in relation to that difference."

Why do we do this? Resetting the Table teaches that the strongest way to disarm the potentially destructive charge of differences is to name them clearly and directly - so long as we are able to capture the way *each* party relates to the difference as *they* see it.

You may have noticed the facilitator did this a few times in the film as well. For example, he said: "Whose responsibility is it [to help individuals to succeed]? Is it the government's responsibility? ...You said, Akram, there's a communal responsibility, Karen you said we're doing this as much as we can in the church."

We're going to try this with a few characters.



### **Share Excerpt #2.**

If you haven't already done so, put [this link](#) to Transcribed Excerpts into the chat and ask people to open the document and skim Excerpt #2 (alternatively, you can send the document as a pdf or paste the Excerpts into a Google Doc). If you didn't watch the film together, you may want to watch a clip from 14:39-18:45 (see page 12 for Zoom video sharing instructions).

**Ask**

Let's see if we can name a core difference between AJ and Ted?

*Continued on next page....*

**Facilitator, take a couple of offerings, then model:**

One core difference between AJ and Ted is around whether government services primarily promote or undermine human dignity. The facilitator summarizes this as a difference around the "moral quality of something coming to us from government." Relatedly, there is a difference about whether self-sufficiency is a precondition for human dignity.

**For AJ:** Everyone, by virtue of being a human being, deserves basic rights that the government ought to protect to ensure human dignity (a right to healthcare, shelter, education, etc.). Especially given the history of structural injustice and oppression in this country - still baked into all of our systems - the government has all the more responsibility to correct historical and institutional disparities and inequities by providing for basic human needs. Moreover, our systems are such that people might work themselves to the bone - like her mother has - and not be able to get to the point that they can secure a life of dignity or pursue life, liberty and happiness.

**For Ted:** Excessive government services undermine the dignity of the human person, unless they simply cannot work. In addition, they create their own injustice by forcing those who work hard day after day to pay for those who take advantage of the system and don't take responsibility for their own lives. Yes, services should be there to support people who can't provide for themselves or temporarily need our help. But our default - from a moral perspective - should be everyone taking care of themselves. Ted keeps saying "I've earned it;" because in his view earning your keep, hard work, and not being dependent on others are the very foundations for human dignity.

**Ask**

What are core differences between Karen and AJ?

**Facilitator, take a couple of offerings, then model:**

One core difference between Karen and AJ is around whether government or the church is a better agent to take care of those in need societally.

**For AJ:** Government *must* be a vehicle for one another's basic needs; given history and the present reality of structural injustice, the government must provide a safety net for those who might otherwise fall through the cracks if we were relying on more subjective and voluntary (and less inclusive) vehicles like the church to care for peoples' basic needs.

**For Karen:** She also wants to achieve that communal care, but she does not want us to rely on government to provide such care because it has many unintended harmful consequences - including undermining peoples' agency rather than empowering them and also eroding our communal responsibility to care for one another. While the government should play some role, the church is a more appropriate agent for taking care of each other because it balances empowerment with support and individual with collective responsibility (for example, by mentoring the next generation if people aren't born into families that gave them advantages). Karen and AJ arguably share a goal, but differ over how to get there.



## OPEN DISCUSSION (10 min.)

- What questions would you want to ask the characters if they were here?
- What would you want to say to them?
- Who did you find yourself wanting to challenge? How might you frame your challenge in a way that you think they would hear and be able to take in?
- Think of a character with whom you disagree. Did you like anything that they said? What experiences did you hear that shaped their view?
- What did you hear that helped you understand the perspective of someone on the other side of a political divide?

## WHY ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE ACROSS DIVIDES? (8-10 min.)

We're now going to zoom out for a few minutes to ask a big-picture question that many people raise in this polarized time and you might have been asking yourself: why does communicating across political divides matter?

*Note to facilitators: in a group of 24 or under, you can welcome people contributing their ideas verbally. In a larger group, you may want to ask people to share their thoughts in the chat or in a collaborative document like a Google Doc. After people have contributed, summarize what they've shared, drawing from the experience of the participants in the film.*

Ask

- Why engage with people with whom we disagree?
- What's lost – personally and societally – if we remain in our ideological bubbles?
- What do you see the characters getting out of being in dialogue with each other?

*We encourage you to summarize quickly and share what you find most compelling. This is not intended to be shared in full or word-for-word. Make sure that your summary is not long and frontal, or it will be energetically draining. Your summary should last no longer than 3 min.*

*Continued on next page...*

## WHY ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE, cont.

### Sustaining relationships and community.

A poll after the 2016 election of 1000s of people in all 50 states found that 16% had stopped speaking to a family member or close friend over politics.

**This finding suggests the unraveling of 50 million relationships.** At a societal level, we are at a point in which many of us think “they” are so bad, so cruel, so repellent in one way or another that we write them off completely. When societies get to the point where huge factions see one another as “other” and enemy, divides can degenerate into serious mutual harm, from discrimination to actual violence. This is arguably already happening in America, where studies have found that we are significantly less likely to hire, loan money to, or help those in need across political lines.

Several of the characters affirm the importance of dialogue to sustaining social cohesion and a “shared sense of we” in our communities and democracy. Steven names that the dialogue propelled him to see past caricatures and false assumptions about his counterparts. Ted describes coming to see the intelligence and integrity of everyone around the table – and moves from talk of civil war to affirming a vision of the U.S. that includes those with whom he strongly disagrees.

### Collective insight.

We don’t learn very effectively from echo chamber or silence. Without communication across divides, we lose nuance and insight that can only emerge from connecting with those who challenge us and help us see what we don’t already see. **We often don’t realize we’re operating with blind spots, incomplete understanding, and distortions** – of both each other and the issues themselves.

*Did you see any participants learning or gaining insight from the discussions? How so?*

*Did you gain any new understanding of an issue or group of people from what you saw?*

### Political effectiveness.

No matter what you believe/where you come from, no matter how true your message is or where you stand politically, **if we want to be politically effective, we can’t only talk to ourselves.** Activists and advocates need the ability to bring in new champions and work in coalition with strange bedfellows to get things done. We won’t be able to advance our respective agendas without better engaging those who are not already with us. As conflict transformation scholar John Paul Lederach teaches, social change often requires “critical yeast” (small numbers of unlikely partners coming together) every bit as much as “critical mass” (large numbers of like-minded people mobilizing). Entrenched and polarized social conflict generally leads all of us to have to fight harder to achieve less, making all of our problems harder to address.

You’ll often hear bridge-builders say that “the point isn’t to change anyone’s mind; the point is understanding.” Resetting the Table suggests that this position isn’t realistic, or even desirable. Many of us want to stretch the thinking of those with whom we disagree. The question is how we can do so in ways that are effective and that sustain relationship and mutual dignity. As many who teach the art of persuasion emphasize, listening is generally a precondition for being heard.

Akram describes dialogue as leading to the ability to work together and engage in creative problem-solving to create change. He also models learning how to better frame the issues he cares about to reach those with different political lenses from his own.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.iirp.edu/images/conf\\_downloads/OAQLEm\\_On\\_Mass\\_Movement\\_-\\_The\\_Theory\\_of\\_Critical\\_Yeast\\_Lederach\\_2005.pdf](https://www.iirp.edu/images/conf_downloads/OAQLEm_On_Mass_Movement_-_The_Theory_of_Critical_Yeast_Lederach_2005.pdf)

## NEXT STEPS (5-7 min.)

We're going to move into thinking about what we can do to support more conversations across divides in our lives and communities. Take a couple minutes to write down next steps for yourselves and/or the community. I'll paste some guiding prompts in the chat. In a moment, I'll invite a few of you to share one next step with the group.

**Instruct participants to take a couple of minutes to write** about their next steps for individual and collective impact. If using Zoom, you can paste these questions into the chat or Google Doc.

- With whom and where in your life could you see having a similar conversation across political disagreement?
  - Is there someone you know with whom you disagree politically that you might be interested in opening a conversation?
- Whose perspectives would you most like to understand or engage?
  - Whose perspectives are missing from your world that you might be interested in seeking out?
- Who are audiences you can reach with this film or its messages?
- What other next steps are you drawn to take?

Ask

**Ask for 5-6 people to volunteer a next step they'd like to take in a sentence.**

## CLOSING (5 min.)

Building from what's already been said, I'll share suggested next steps from Resetting the Table.

**Share "What You Can Do."**

If using Zoom, share as a link in the chat and encourage everyone to download it. Alternatively, you can paste these suggestions into a Google Doc.

**Quickly summarize the three possibilities on the next page.**

*Continued on next page...*

1. **Spread the word.** Help more people take in the messages of this film and the humanity of its characters. Engage with the film on YouTube by liking, commenting and subscribing. Share this film with 10-15 people whom you think could benefit. Who do you know who might resonate with this film, or be made more hopeful by it? With whom would you like to be in conversation around it, both those who share your political leanings and those who do not? Use #RESETHETABLE in your posts to spread your reactions to PURPLE via Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. You can download social media tools [here](#).

2. **Screen the film.** Organize a screening of PURPLE in your community or school, and work with Resetting the Table to make it a meaningful event. Encourage your teachers, professors or religious leaders to bring this film into their classrooms and congregations. You can download an invitation template [here](#). You can [customize the invitation in Canva here](#).

3. **Pursue dialogue across divides.** Set an intention to get out of your echo chamber and talk to those with whom you disagree. Practice “offering bull’s eye reflections” and “naming differences” in your own life. Get involved with organizations like Resetting the Table, One America Movement, Mismatch.org, Living Room Conversations, and other organizations that offer opportunities for such engagement. If you would like to participate in online facilitated discussion with Resetting the Table, you can fill out this [form](#) to register your interest. Commit to reading the news from multiple angles through sources like ProCon.org and Allsides.com. Continue to advocate for your values and vision while taking in the perspectives of multiple parties, *remembering that empathy is not the same as agreement*.

Ask

***Ask everyone to write in the chat one thing that they appreciated about or took from this experience in a sentence or phrase. Read a few out loud. We would greatly appreciate it if you took a screen shot of peoples’ takeaways and sent it to us at [films@resettingthetable.org](mailto:films@resettingthetable.org), so we can learn more! Optional: ask participants to fill out [this survey](#) about their experience. You can put the link in the chat.***

***Thank everyone for coming and close with a charge, for example:***

Thank you for your thoughtfulness tonight and willingness to stretch your comfort zones. We hope you will be inspired to go out and build courageous and constructive communication across divides, within and across our communities.

*Continued on next page...*

*An optional closing quote from Eyal Rabinovitch, Resetting the Table's Co-Executive Director and the facilitator in this film:*

"We hope they'll leave thinking, I've never talked to a person like this in this way before. And they'll sit with that and ruminate on that, and it will change the way they think of someone who is a political other to them....We're in this moment when there's a lot of seeing our political others as incomprehensible or worse, and saying, 'screw them.' The kind of shifts we aim to enable are for people to move from that toward a place of minimal care. Of saying, 'I'm thinking about the needs, the history and the personal life story and the views and argument of the person who I spent a day with. And whatever solutions, whatever I advocate, I want to make sure the world I build has room for them too.'"

**We value your feedback and would love to hear highlights, questions, suggestions or stories from your experience as you use this resource. Please send us your feedback by filling out our [screening host survey](#) and/or [viewer survey](#). If you took a screenshot or took any notes of peoples' takeaways, please send it to us so we can learn more!**

**You can also reach us at [films@resettingthetable.org](mailto:films@resettingthetable.org). We look forward to hearing from you.**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FROM THROUGHOUT THE GUIDE

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*We invite you to draw from these Discussion Questions if you would like to have a less structured conversation or create your own process. The following questions can be used to prompt deeper exploration of the themes and perspectives in PURPLE and how they relate to us all.*

### **Digesting the Film:**

- What did you hear in the backstories of the characters that may inform their respective perspectives?
- What questions would you want to ask the characters if they were here? What would you want to say to them?
- Think of a character with whom you disagree. Did you like anything that they said? What did you hear that shaped their view?
- Who did you find yourself wanting to challenge? How might you frame your challenge in a way that you think they would hear and take in?
- What did you hear that helped you understand the perspective of someone on the other side of a political divide?

### **Reflecting on Next Steps:**

- With whom and where in your life could you see having a similar conversation across political disagreement? Is there someone you know with whom you disagree politically that you might be interested in opening a conversation?
- Whose perspectives would you most like to understand or engage? Whose perspectives are missing from your world that you might be interested in seeking out?
- Who are audiences you can reach with this film or its messages?
- What other next steps are you drawn to take?



## SUPPORT MATERIALS

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- [The Need: Polarization and Social Conflict in the U.S.](#)
- [About Resetting the Table](#)
- [Background Information & FAQs](#)
- [Troubleshooting Common Challenges in Discussions](#)

## THE NEED: POLARIZATION AND SOCIAL CONFLICT IN THE U.S.

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In The Federalist 10, founding father James Madison warns of “the violence of faction” – where the population splinters into adversarial subgroups – as one of the greatest internal challenges that the United States and any democracy will face. Madison admonishes of the potential for the country and its political institutions to become so infected by “a factious spirit” – characterized by “distrust,” “unsteadiness,” and “injustice” – that people will be unable or unwilling to care about each other’s needs and work together toward any common good. Madison insisted that American democracy would similarly unravel without concerted investment in connection across differences.

Today we live in one of the intensely factious eras Madison and many of his contemporaries feared. While the past several years have thrown into sharp relief the profound political distancing among disparate Americas (geographic, ideological, racial, etc.), social scientists have been documenting the forward march of this social fracturing over the past two decades and more. Studies have found America more combative and polarized than at any time since the Civil War. A 2014 Pew Research study showed the degree to which Americans increasingly live in like-minded enclaves. This self-segregation penetrates every dimension of our lives, from where we live, to whom we marry, to who our friends are, to what religious communities we do or don’t join.

Geographic and ideological siloing has in turn fed a sharp rise in mutual contempt, distortion and demonization across political lines. Research shows that we are significantly less likely to hire, loan money to, find attractive, or help those in need across party lines – exceeding any other division in U.S. society. A Reuters poll of thousands of people in all 50 states found that 16% stopped speaking to a family member or close friend in 2017 over politics. The siloing of mass and social media both mirrors and reinforces this dissolution of direct relationship.

In sum, our country’s fracturing follows a classic pattern of polarized social conflict. In such a pattern, people who disagree tend to harden against each other’s genuine integrity and concerns. Informal interaction across lines of disagreement grows rare. These patterns inflict considerable societal damage, including: loss of trust in public leaders and political institutions; reduced insight and creative problem solving on issues of shared concern; undermined effectiveness among justice seekers; and breakdowns in familial, communal and societal relationships across divides that often create the conditions for hatred, violence, and bigotry.

Conversely, seminal studies of inter-group relations in sharply divided societies have found that prevention of intra-societal hatred and violence hinges on – more than any other variable – the presence of civic associations and communal spaces that bring rival “tribes” together, facilitate communication and a shared sense of ‘we,’ and enable people to solve their problems together rather than see each other as enemies.



# RESETTING THE TABLE

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Resetting the Table (RTT) is dedicated to building a shared democracy in American life by strengthening the capacity of leaders and communities to communicate across political silos and address important public problems. We aim to restore our democracy and social fabric through collaborative deliberation, rebuilding a sense of “we” that includes our political counterparts and their aspirations and concerns while addressing and learning from our differences.

Resetting the Table believes a healthy democratic society does not depend on uniformity or consensus. On the contrary, engaging differences productively is a precondition for the care, insight, and collaboration among leaders and citizens necessary to address issues of public concern. Such communication supports diverse “tribes” coming to understand each other’s hopes and needs, unleashes creative problem solving, enables us to reach new allies, and revives the basic trust, recognition, and cooperation that are the lifeblood of a shared democracy.

RTT is proud to have built one of the most effective and celebrated frameworks for courageous and constructive communication across political divides in the country. With decades of combined expertise in the fields of mediation, facilitation and dialogue, RTT has developed a large and growing toolkit of programs, including training for clergy and community leaders, Town Square dialogues, multi-perspective educational resources, and public decision-making forums. RTT has brought more than 25,000 community leaders and members together to speak, listen, challenge each other, and make decisions together across a staggering range of backgrounds and views.

RTT’s **core activities** include:



**Facilitation Training:** Recognized by veterans of peace-building and conflict resolution as one of the most rigorous training programs for practitioners in the field, RTT works to build a national field of skilled facilitators to support cross-conflict communication across the country.



**Forums for Face-to-Face Communication:** RTT designs and facilitates carefully curated forums offering rare opportunities for meaningful discussion and learning across divides of American life.



**Capacity-Building for Community Leaders and Organizations:** RTT equips faith and community leaders with the tools and skills to build vibrant dialogue across differences within and across their communities.



**Media Production and Training:** A new frontier for our work, RTT produces and disseminates empathy-generating stories across political and geographic silos. RTT also trains journalists and other media producers in mediation tools that support mutual recognition across divides and new narratives of shared civic reality.

Learn more at [www.resettingthetable.org](http://www.resettingthetable.org).

# BACKGROUND INFORMATION & FAQs

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## 1. Why was PURPLE filmed in rural Wisconsin and Iowa? What is the connection between the filmmakers and the region?

Filmed in a swing region within two bordering swing states, PURPLE takes place in one of the most politically pivotal and divided places in America. Home to the greatest concentration of counties that flipped blue-to-red in the 2016 presidential election, it's a little known, beautiful place and one of the only hilly landscapes in the Midwest.

In 2017, a team of Resetting the Table facilitators lived in this region for six weeks, conducting a Listening Campaign of 330 interviews and bringing more than 175 participants together in dialogue forums on issues inspiring passionate disagreement within the region. RTT interviewed pastors and priests, mega-dairy farmers and organic farmers, small business owners, stay-at-home-parents, teachers, regional planners, and artists – people from a dramatic range of backgrounds, political sensibilities, and ways of life.

Resetting the Table was drawn to making PURPLE in this region for several reasons:

- **Rare ideological heterogeneity.** Most Americans live in ideologically homogeneous enclaves today. We saw this area – a place where social conservatives, libertarians, and progressive activists still live in the same neighborhoods and attend the same schools – as possessing unique insight into the profound divides in our country as well as the potential to unlock some of the healing and transformation desperately needed in the face of those divides. The area is 98% white, so racially it is not at all representative of the country as a whole. Ideologically, however, it is more diverse than most cities in the U.S. We wanted to shine a light on a kind of viewpoint heterogeneity that many urban and coastal Americans rarely encounter beyond the distorting light of media images and OpEd pages.
- **Getting past caricatures of rural people.** Despite a flurry of attention after the 2016 election, rural Americans continue to be subject to immense projection, misrepresentation, and underrepresentation in both Hollywood depictions and media. Many rural Americans tend to be highly suspicious of outsiders with cameras and “drive-by journalists” as a result. Resetting the Table felt driven to open up a more complex and multi-dimensional story of rural people, building from the relationships and trust we had earned with a wide range of community leaders and members in the area.
- **Political importance.** As a swing region located at the intersection of two swing states, what happens in this area has political consequences for the country as a whole. Yet too few journalists, researchers, and even pollsters have spent enough time with people in this region or similar areas to understand the fluctuating politics that define elections. We saw immense gaps between journalistic analysis and what we heard in our 330 hour-long interviews. We wanted to begin to shed light on some of the people, stories, and deeper motivations behind the voter tallies and analysis in the news.

## 2. How did you choose the participants?

The participants represent an ideological cross-section of people in the region, including many people we interviewed in 2017. We sought out a diversity of demographics – age, gender, race and ethnicity, religious affiliation, job, class status, and viewpoint – as they are represented in the area. We also looked for participants who were articulate, compelling, multi-layered, and reasonable – and who could serve to translate world views that people in other parts of the country may have only encountered in stereotype if at all.

### 3. How long did the participants spend together and what did they do together? What enabled them to have such difficult conversations constructively?

The participants spent a day together, from 8:00am–8:00pm. Some had grown up together and some were meeting for the first time from neighboring towns. The arc of the day – rooted in RTT’s methodology and toolkit – included:

- **Exchanging Life Experiences.** In many charged conversations, people react to each other’s views without knowing what really matters to each other; much integrity and complexity is obscured as a result. The participants began by exchanging formative life experiences to begin to see the underlying motivators and stories behind each other’s respective political lenses.
- **Surfacing Differences.** Participants surfaced their differences directly on a number of issues, from economic policy to gun policy, immigration, abortion, climate change, and Trump. RTT’s methodology focuses on finding the fault-lines in any particular group that matter most.
- **Communication Skill-Building.** Participants practiced the skill on which this guide focuses: Bull’s Eye Reflections. The group practiced capturing what matters most to each other on a series of topics that had emerged as areas of strong difference over the course of the day. Skill-building built the group’s capacity to engage in direct and productive conversation across disagreement.
- **Extended, Facilitated Conversation.** Finally, the group had a free-flowing, facilitated conversation that became the heart of this film.

At the heart of RTT’s methodology lie twin commitments to “directness” and “stabilization.” Directness means going toward the heat. We draw from the insight that paradoxically, when there’s a core difference in the room that matters, we are far more likely to get to unexpected commonality, shared interest, and even collaboration when we first go toward our differences and explore them in full, rather than trying to set them aside.

Stabilization means working to produce conditions in which empathy, humility, and peoples’ best selves emerge organically because they’re connected, receptive and empowered. It means transforming the common patterns of cross-conflict communication – reactivity, rigidity, and self-absorption – into receptivity, flexibility and recognition so that participants can take in new people, information, and ideas. At RTT, we primarily achieve stability – even while going toward the heat – through skilled facilitators, carefully structured process, and communication capacity-building among participants.

### 4. Why did you choose the topic of the social safety net?

The social safety net emerged as a difference that mattered to this group of participants. We also chose it because it is both timely and timeless; even when it is not in the news, it intersects with many national debates and foundational issues around equity and privilege, work, and the role of government. It’s a topic that inspires differences among Americans that are rooted in divergent histories, life experiences, values, hopes and concerns, and yet we rarely plumb those differences with real depth.

We filmed additional groups discussing abortion, Trump, guns, health care, and organic and conventional farming. We hope to make many more films, capturing the evolution of the relationships of the characters in this film as well as many other compelling characters discussing other contentious topics.

# TROUBLE-SHOOTING COMMON CHALLENGES IN DISCUSSIONS

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*Note to Facilitators: Many of you have your own techniques for addressing challenging dynamics. We encourage you to utilize whatever practices you feel most comfortable with and/or are the norms in your community, group, or classroom. Below we offer Resetting the Table's approach to dealing with challenging dynamics, which is relatively uncommon and builds upon the approach to conflict advanced by the field of Transformative Mediation. We typically train facilitators extensively in this framework, and you may find some of the prescriptions below difficult to enact. We offer them for your consideration and encourage you to think through how you might handle these dynamics if they arise, whether it be as we recommend or otherwise.*

## **TRANSFORMATIVE VS. CONTAINMENT APPROACHES TO CHALLENGING DYNAMICS**

Resetting the Table takes a “transformative” approach to dealing with reactive participants and challenging group dynamics, perhaps best understood by contrasting it to a more common “containment” paradigm. In a containment model, part of the facilitator’s role is to enforce the boundaries of “appropriate” communication, which are often agreed upon in advance via “ground rules.” When participants do something that crosses those boundaries, they are generally asked to try again in a way that is more appropriate. There are advantages to this model and containment moves are unavoidable at times. However, the containment strategy can produce a feeling of being “policed” and/or constrained; some tiptoe for fear of “doing it wrong,” while those who are corrected feel shamed before the group.

Although intended to produce a sense of safety, containment moves can unintentionally leave participants inhibited, embarrassed, or defiant. At times, participants end up holding back their raw expression and emotion, and as a result, much depth, meaning, vibrancy, and learning across differences gets lost. In the context of a charged conversation, where there are already so many patterns that tend to keep participants from being fully expressive and connected to others, the containment paradigm can act as a barrier to the kinds of conversations we hope to produce.

By contrast, the transformative approach prioritizes the sustained stability of all participants more than enforcing ground rules of acceptable behavior. In the transformative model, the facilitator’s intention is not to check people if they cross norms of behavior, but to support everyone to remain stable, empowered, connected, and receptive. Our intention is not to ensure that the space is “safe” according to a set of guidelines, but rather “safe enough” for everyone in the group to communicate honestly and courageously and be seen and taken in by one another. To do this, the onus is on the facilitator to do three things: first, to be highly attuned to the subtle cues of participant reactivity; second, to be aware of the ways participant statements and language are likely to produce such reactivity even if the participants don’t express it explicitly; and third, to intervene to restore stability and receptivity when it’s been lost, including among parties who’ve said things others found hurtful, triggering, or offensive.

**Intervene with purpose, not judgment.** When intervening to address group dynamics, we encourage facilitators to name and address any challenges that are getting in the way of participants communicating productively and remaining receptive. Your overarching message should not be: “you are a problem because you did X, Y, or Z.” It should be: “We are trying to achieve something together as a group in this conversation and there is something happening that is an obstacle to that. My role is to see if we can overcome that obstacle.”

### ***Recommended/Sample Interventions***

- When Participants Feel Distorted/Misunderstood
- Dominant Participants
- Silent Participants and/or Shut-Down Parties
- Isolated Participants: Minority Voices
- Getting Lost in Facts and Definitions
- Lulls and Bored Participants
- Escalating Disagreements
- Offended, Hurt, or Annoyed Participants
- Repeat Offenders: What to Do When All Else Fails

### ***When Participants Feel Distorted/Misunderstood***

Just as bull's eye reflections produce receptivity because of the stabilizing power of being known as we wish to be known, the opposite is also true. When people believe that they are being misunderstood, mischaracterized, or distorted, they are likely to get destabilized. In such a case it is crucial that facilitators intervene, name the dynamic, and work with participants to make sure they are able to offer stabilizing corrections. We might highlight that differences remain among participants' understandings of one another, even once the distortion has been corrected.

*"Maya, if I hear you right, you think you're being mischaracterized here. Earlier when you said... you didn't mean that the way that Brian seems to be interpreting it. Is that right? Do you want to clarify?"*

*"Maya, if I hear you right, you think you're being mischaracterized here. Earlier when you said... you didn't mean that the way Brian seems to be interpreting it. It sounds like for you, even though you realize what you're saying sounds harsh, it's actually coming from a place of love and care. As far as you are concerned, this is the best way we can care for others. Now, Brian may still disagree with that, but it's really important for you that your intentions are not misunderstood here. Brian, how is that landing on you?"*

Make sure to also return to the person who made the seeming mischaracterization to make sure that their intentions and what they were hoping to get across is also tended to and reflected, before returning to the group. “Brian, I want to also make sure we’re hearing what’s important to you here correctly.”

### ***Dominant Participants***

There can be a range of reasons why one person starts to dominate a conversation. Often it is simply because of a combination of their inter-personal communication patterns and the sense they have of their standing within the group. For example, they may feel that they represent a unique voice that this group really needs to hear. More than that, it is often fine for one participant to be the center of some section of the conversation. That does not necessarily mean they are “dominating.” We categorize someone as being “dominant” to the extent that they are taking a disproportionate amount of space in the conversation and that in doing so this is either preventing others who want to enter to do so or frustrating parties who want to hear from other voices.

There are two interventions to try with dominant parties, the first being “softer” than the second. The first option is to see if we can subdue their energy with a bull’s eye reflection. Notably, sometimes a good reflection invites participants to say even more. Thus, if our aim is to enable others to talk, we must give a bull’s eye reflection and then turn back to the group or another individual.

*"Mike, what I'm hearing here is that for you... (bull's eye reflection). Emily, earlier you were discussing something very similar, I'm wondering how you see that now."*

If such “capture-and-move-away” efforts have failed once or twice, and a participant continues to have a dominant energy that is getting in the way of the conversation, facilitators need to intervene to make a direct request to make room for others’ voices. We aim to do so first by giving recognition to how the participant sees themselves and their position in the group and then appealing to the need in a group conversation for everyone to have the opportunity to express themselves:

*"It's clear that this is a topic you have thought much about and care deeply about. We want to make use of your knowledge and passion. AND I also want to make sure we hear from others. We want to make sure everyone has the room to reflect and contribute, so we can make use of their knowledge, perspectives and questions as well. So, please help us make more room for what others have to share, even as we want to ensure that others also take in what you've said."*

### ***Silent Participants, Part I***

If people don’t want to talk, at any point and for any reason, they don’t have to. Many are happy to simply observe and listen and we don’t want to push them otherwise. However, sometimes people need an invitation to feel comfortable participating. When there is a silent participant, we want to make sure that they are freely choosing to observe rather than feeling shut down. From time to time, check in with those who have not spoken:

*"You haven't said much yet and I'm curious to hear if there's anything on your mind you'd be willing to share. You are, of course, free to listen without speaking if that's your preference. I just want to make sure you have a chance to speak if you wish."*

### ***Silent Participants, Part 2: Shut-down Participants***

There are times when a participant is not speaking because something has happened that has made them feel reactive and shut down. In such a case, we want to tread lightly as we invite them to address what has triggered their reaction:

*"Michael, you seem less engaged in the last few minutes. We don't need to talk about it if you don't wish to, but I'm wondering if it would be useful to you to name what happened for you and see if we can address it."*

What to do next depends on what the participant says. If they have a request or it becomes clear that a group dynamics challenge is taking place, facilitators should address it accordingly.

### ***Isolated Participants: Minority Voices***

There are times when one or two people are holding dissenting perspectives from most or all of the rest. In such cases, we encourage you not to make assumptions about what support participants might need. Frequently, people are fine being a minority voice, while at other times it can be very difficult and destabilizing. Moreover, as more information and understanding comes out in a conversation, alignments and perceptions can shift. That said, when such a dynamic arises, facilitators should intervene and address it.

- **Name it.** Name the dynamic, noting that it isn't necessarily permanent.
- **Make sure the lone voice is fully understood as they wish to be understood.** Ask questions and offer ongoing reflections, so as to maximize the likelihood that the isolated participant remains centered and receptive.
- **Follow their requests/needs.** Support any requests that party might make in terms of their discomfort.
- **Move on, asking others to be mindful.** Invite the rest of the group to be mindful of this dynamic, even as the differences and disagreements that are present continue to be explored.

*"Julia, while this might change as we hear more, it seems that you might be holding a different perspective than others who've spoken so far. That can be a tough position to be in. I want to make sure that we understand you right (Bull's eye reflection, naming differences with the group). We can explore this difference further, and I'm curious to hear what others have to say. But I want us to be mindful that it can be hard to hold a minority perspective in a group, and ask if you have any requests from the group." (Give them an opportunity to respond).*

### ***Getting Lost in Facts, Definitions, and/or Abstractions***

We welcome analytical, evidence-based discussions, even as we seek to remain connected to people's personal commitments and priorities. At times, exchanges of facts allow people's deeper concerns and commitments to remain obscured and/or deflate the focus and the energy of the conversation. Furthermore, our role is not to adjudicate among factual claims. As a facilitator, you want to restore flow, spontaneity, and personal connection to the conversation.

- **If a participant's contribution or the overall conversation are very abstract or overly general:** Ask for a specific example or concrete experience that illustrates what they mean.

*"Can you concretize that? Is there a specific example or a direct experience you've had that illustrates what you're saying more concretely?"*

- **If there is a disagreement on facts or definitions:** Ask parties to explain why this difference matters.

*"Now, given that we might not be able to resolve this difference over factual claims/definitions, I'm wondering why do these facts/definitions matter to you? In other words, what truth or insight would be gained from accepting this fact/definition?"*

### ***Lulls and Bored Participants***

When the energy is low in a conversation, it is often because parties are actually shut down, withdrawn, and/or frustrated because of something that is happening at the table that should be addressed directly (see Offended or Hurt parties section). Nonetheless, lulls are normal in group conversations. Sometimes participants are just thinking. If it seems like the energy is simply low or deflated, it should be addressed:

- **Name it.**

*"It feels like we've hit a lull over the last few minutes."*

*"It feels like the energy is low. Maybe where we are now isn't interesting for some."*

- **Redirect toward where participants have energy.** Seek to regain momentum by returning to something people had energy about earlier, inject more substance into the conversation (returning to the prompts and asking for another couple of volunteers) OR you can ask:

*"So where do you want to take this conversation in a way that would be meaningful? Does anyone have a question to pose or a comment to make on what really matters to you? Is there something that you'd like to return to that came up earlier?"*

- **If you are getting *nothing*, name it and ask why.**

*"It feels like the energy has really gone out of the conversation. What happened? Is it about the substance, or about how we're speaking?"*



### ***Escalating Disagreements and Overt Conflict***

Dramatic escalation rarely happens, particularly when facilitators are proactively, preventatively intervening to support all participants to the conversation to be heard as they wish to be. Participants are also usually invested and want the conversation to go well, even if they have some doubts and skepticism. Yet, this is the dynamic about which most facilitators, conveners, and participants are often most concerned.

If and when disagreements escalate and participants get reactive – triggering defensiveness or rounds of attack – the facilitator must intervene directly and decisively, making sure each party to the escalation is seen as they wish to be seen, and giving participants choices over how to proceed:

- **Come in with a “strong hand”** (as appropriate/needed) to take control of the conversation and slow things down. You will likely need to sustain a strong-hand energy throughout this sequence.

*“Everyone, I have to come in here. Please hold onto what you want to say. I will do what I can to make sure that everyone is heard shortly. To do that, we’re going to slow things down.”*

- **Name the destabilization.**

*“Karen and David, you each had powerful reactions to what the other just said. Some escalation is arising and it’s going to be hard to continue to have this conversation in a productive way while we’re escalated.”*

- **Name your intention to re-stabilize.**

*“Charged moments will happen, especially when we have significant differences. These conversations matter and at times we can get angry or wounded or frustrated with each other. To move forward, I first want to make sure that everyone speaking is understood correctly and see if we can clarify exactly what the differences are.”*

- **If appropriate, affirm participants’ investment in the conversation.**

*“This topic/issue clearly means a lot to both of you.”  
“There is a lot at stake here for both/all of you.”*

- **Offer reflections for each party** when possible/appropriate. Include both their views and their states of mind, without minimizing their lens or shying away from the disagreement. Keep in mind that parties may be escalating because one or more of the parties has not been properly seen. Give as close to a bull’s eye reflection as you can. You may need to have some back-and-forth with the participants so as to get to the bull’s eye:

*“David, you said that at the heart of this for you is \_\_\_\_\_. And you’ve experienced painful marginalization over this in your community. And Karen, when you heard that, you had a really strong reaction. You said \_\_\_\_\_. And that’s because, if I understand you correctly, you think \_\_\_\_\_. And David, you really didn’t like hearing yourself characterized that way. As you see it, your views are well-grounded in both pragmatic analysis and deeply held values, as you’ve said.”*

- **Continue to affirm the conversation, attending to parties' requests/needs.**

*"So I think we are beginning to understand what's happening for both of you. This is a big difference and one that is a core divide in many communities. It's personal for you both."*

*Or: "David, you felt that Karen made false assumptions about you. And it's important that she sees you correctly. How does that land for you, Karen?"*

*Or: "Karen, you said that while you don't mean to insult David, you sincerely believe that the consequences of his position are dangerous, and you want to be able to have a conversation around those dangers with David and others at the table. How does that land for you, David?"*

- **If it still seems needed, give the participants a chance to make choices about if and how to return to the conversation.**

*"If we can, we want to be able to return to the conversation in a way that allows us to talk to one another and think through these differences. I want to ensure that this space is comfortable enough for both of you to move forward. David or Karen, what else are you needing or wanting going forward? Is there anything you'd like to ask of one another or of me as we do so? Is there something that I've missed in my understanding of each of you that you'd like to address or clarify?"*

- **The conversation may organically start again.** If possible and appropriate, you might bridge out to the group to move on:

*"David and Karen have said a lot. How has all this landed on others at the table? Does anyone want to add anything to what has been said so far?"*

### **Offended, Hurt, or Annoyed Participants**

People may offend or upset one another, though in our experience it is often unintentional. They may have different communication norms or they may inadvertently mischaracterize others individually or collectively. Regardless of the intention, the impact may be significant, often leading participants either to shut down or escalate, and must be addressed by the facilitator. When this happens:

- **Intervene and check-in with the group.** Note that your energy and tone should depend on the extent to which you are certain that offense has been taken.

Scenario A: If you're not sure if someone has become reactive: *"I want to stop here for a moment. I want to check in with (whomever may be destabilized)."*

Scenario B: If it is clear someone has become reactive (strong hand, as needed): *"I need to come in and stop us."*

- **Explain to the speaker that their communication may have become an obstacle to the conversation.** If the charge is high, you should include a short reflection of the speaker:

Scenario A: *"Jason, I want to make sure we understand you here correctly. If I understand you right, for you (bull's eye reflection). Before we have people address what you said, I want to caution you. Some of the language you used (name the language) might have been painful or frustrating to others and might prevent them from hearing what you have to say or being fully in the conversation."*

Scenario B: *"Tina, you just characterized anyone who supports \_\_\_ as (ignorant/naive/hypocritical, etc.) and I want to address that for a moment. I understand that you don't see things the way that Aaron sees them and there are important things about \_\_\_ you want us to get. For you, \_\_\_. And there may be a lot more for us to discuss on that. But, it may be hard for Aaron and perhaps others here to stay in the conversation, hearing you characterize \_\_\_ as \_\_\_."*

- **Check in with the person/people that may have been upset** and either verify the impact the offensive language had (to make sure this intervention is needed) or to give them a chance to name that impact:

Scenario A: *"I want to check in with you/the group and see how Jason's words landed. Things like (the language used) can be hard to hear. Or you might feel like you have been falsely cast or misunderstood."*

Scenario B: *"I want to check in with you (harmed/offended party) and see how that landed on you. You might be feeling like you've been really misrepresented. How did that impact you?"*

- **As they respond, ask questions and help people be articulate about what matters most to them.** After they respond, reflect the harmed/offended participant(s) response:

*"So this language was upsetting to you because it characterized you as \_\_\_ for supporting \_\_\_, when for you \_\_\_."*

*"This isn't something you want to get into. It's no big deal and, as far as you're concerned, we should just move on."*

*"That felt like an unfair and insulting attack. You're not sure you want to continue in this conversation. What you had really said was \_\_\_ and, as far as you're concerned, you were totally misrepresented."*

**If the harmed party continues to seem destabilized, stay with them.** Reflect their mindset and ask them what they need in order to continue.

*"You're still frustrated and you're not ready to continue. I want to ensure this space is welcoming/comfortable enough for you. What would be useful for you right now?"*

NOTE: It can be helpful in many scenarios to go back to naming your intention:

*"My aim isn't to constrain anyone, but rather to encourage us to speak in ways that keep all of us in the conversation."*

### **Repeat Offenders: What to Do When All Else Fails**

It rarely happens. However, if someone repeatedly breaks the “communications guidelines” and seems to simply lack the desire or ability for self-discipline:

- **Name it.**

*“Susan, there have been multiple times now in this conversation that you’ve had a difficult time staying within the spirit of our conversation.”*

- **Reflect what’s important to them.**

*“I understand that you feel strongly here. It seems that what’s important to you is \_\_\_\_.”*

- **Explain that the boundaries are firm.**

*“Yet a few times now it’s been hard for you to communicate in this conversation in a way that meets our communications agreement. That’s understandable. These conversations stir a lot of emotion and energy. But it’s my role to support a conversation in which everyone has the space to communicate what matters to them as well as their respectful disagreements. Would you be willing to spend a few minutes just listening and taking in what others have to say?”*

If they refuse, or if you believe that they are unable to listen without impeding the conversation, explain that it’s becoming hard to support a conversation in which everyone can fully participate and if that continues, you will have no choice but to ask them to excuse themselves from the conversation. Resetting the Table has not yet faced a scenario in which this has been necessary.

# PURPLE

## SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLKIT

Use the copy and assets below to tell your social networks about your PURPLE screening + discussion or to encourage your social networks to host their own screenings and discussions!



#ResetTheTable #PurpleDoc #Weneed2talk



/resettingthetable

@resettingtable

### ASSETS



INVITATION TEMPLATE

[Download Invite](#)

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PURPLE SOCIAL IMAGE

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PURPLE STILL PHOTO

[Download image](#)

### IMPORTANT LINKS

**PURPLE WEBSITE** | [resettingthetable.org/purple](https://resettingthetable.org/purple)

**PURPLE FILM** | [youtube.com/watch?v=TH9t7ud7Jgk](https://youtube.com/watch?v=TH9t7ud7Jgk)

**PURPLE DISCUSSION GUIDE** | [resettingthetable.org/purple-discussion-guide](https://resettingthetable.org/purple-discussion-guide)



## SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS TO PROMOTE YOUR SCREENING/WATCH PARTY

- Hi friends & family! I'm hosting a virtual screening and discussion for a new film from @ResettingtheTable that models what healthy public debate on fault-line issues can look like. Join me & find out more: [Insert Link: e.g., Facebook Event or [Customizable Invite](#)] #ResetTheTable #PurpleDoc #Weneed2talk
- Did you know a study found 1 in 6 Americans stopped speaking to a family member or close friend after the 2016 election? I'm hosting a screening of a new film from @ResettingtheTable that captures the concerns and humanity beneath our national conflicts. Join me! [Insert Link: e.g., Facebook Event or [Customizable Invite](#)] #ResetTheTable
- I'm excited to host a screening and discussion of a new film from @ResettingtheTable. PURPLE models a political conversation that uplifts and inspires even while going toward the heat of passionate political differences. Join me! [Insert Link: e.g., Facebook Event or [Customizable Invite](#)] #PurpleDoc



## SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS FOR SPREADING THE WORD

- #Weneed2talk! Filmed in a swing region within two bordering swing states, PURPLE models what healthy public debate on fault-line issues can look like. Check it out here: [Insert Link: e.g., [YouTube page](#), [Purple webpage](#) or [Discussion Guide](#)] #ResetTheTable #PurpleDoc #Weneed2talk
- Going beyond voter tallies, polls, & stereotypes, PURPLE reveals some of the concerns and humanity beneath our national conflicts. Host a watch party: [Insert Link: e.g., [YouTube page](#), [Purple Webpage](#) or [Discussion Guide](#)] #ResetTheTable #PurpleDoc #Weneed2talk
- A collaboration between @ResettingtheTable, a leading political mediation organization, and Transient Pictures, an Emmy-award winning production firm, PURPLE models a rare political conversation that uplifts and inspires, even while going toward the heat of our honest differences. Watch here: [Insert Link: e.g., [YouTube page](#), [Purple webpage](#) or [Discussion Guide](#)] #ResetTheTable #PurpleDoc #Weneed2talk
- At a time of great turmoil, PURPLE is a humanizing & uplifting look into people and stories behind the polarization that's unraveled millions of relationships in our country. Host a screening and discussion in your community: [Insert Link: e.g., [YouTube page](#), [Purple webpage](#) or [Discussion Guide](#)] #ResetTheTable #PurpleDoc #Weneed2talk

# TRANSCRIBED EXCERPTS FROM THE FILM

## #1: TED-AKRAM EXCHANGE

9:24-12:06

Link starts at 9:24

*Akram:* [For me] it comes back to...privilege. There are so many people who if they miss [a] car payment, they can't turn to anyone. So there's a privilege that your children also carry with them.

*Ted:* Well, Akram, I don't owe anybody anything. When I was in junior high school, I... said "Dad...can I get a little more allowance?" He said, "How much were you thinking?" I said, "A dollar?" He said, "Get a job." And that was the last I was on the dole....Now, if somebody can't work for whatever reason, by all means we need to support...people every way possible. But if they can work and they don't want to work, or not work much, why in the world should people who have worked their entire life—I started work when I was 13 years old and I'm still working. I'm a senior citizen, and I'm still out there busting my hump 200 days a year when possible, either doing farm work or herding cattle or guiding why should I pay for anybody....

*Akram:* I think a lot of times that when people don't work there are other reasons there, whether they don't know how to interview very well or they don't have the skills, you talked about at 13 you were able to go and get a job because your dad told you to. You used skills that your father probably taught you.

*Ted:* Well, Akram, if this doesn't begin in the home, who's responsible for it?

*Akram:* In a lot of other societies, it's not just the nuclear family unit that's responsible for children, but the collective.

*Ted:* You know, my dad when he cut off my allowance, he said, "Go get a job," he called my uncle, said, "Hey I got a worker for you," so I started at the princely wage of a buck and a quarter an hour.

*Akram:* With your uncle?

*Ted:* With my uncle.

*Akram:* Who was looking out for you.

*Ted:* Well, no, he set me straight. This life is not easy guys....

# TRANSCRIBED EXCERPTS FROM THE FILM

## #2: KAREN-AJ-TED EXCHANGE

8:43- 9:12, 14:39-14:58, and 16:12-18:45

[Link](#) starts at 14:39

*AJ:* I don't think our government does enough for the people that live in this country. I think that the way our country was set up to begin with, being on stolen land from people... we've built a country on the back of slave labor and continue to in some ways. I really don't feel like most people wake up thinking that I want to be one of these "nags" on society....I want people to be in a place where all their basic needs are being met... without having to justify why they deserve to have basic needs. Like, if you're another human being you deserve to have access to health care, to food, to shelter....

*Ted:* Let's talk about the long game.... What about the people that came before you?

*AJ:* What do you mean?

*Ted:* Well, I've been working for 55 years I still have to work till the day I drop because my pension is diminishing with each dollar.... My earning capacity keeps going down the older I get. I'm worn out.

*AJ:* I'm also willing to give you what you need....

*Ted:* I don't want you to give, I've earned it.

*AJ:* It's not about that.

*Ted:* Throw the old dog a bone?... I won't take it.

*AJ:* No...It's about community. Like all of our families used to take care of each other. We used to have grandparents that lived in our house and our parents lived in our house and we've moved away from that. And with that we've moved away from valuing our folks who are older than us. It's not about a handout. I should be taking care of you because I value you as a person....

*Karen:* When I hear you talking about community and we need to take care of one another, it sounds like you're mostly saying that means that the government becomes our community. Isn't there also a part of that that then disincentivizes each of us in our own giving because the government will do it? And an unintended consequence is we begin to lose community, because we're no longer obligated to one another in a way because the government will take care of it. And I know I've been guilty of that sometimes, where I'll say, "Well they're on food stamps, they're fine," whereas before we had quite that growth of that safety net...we took care of our elderly, they were in our homes because we had to, and community was built in.



# WHAT YOU CAN DO



## 1. Spread the word.

Help more people take in the messages of this film and the humanity of its characters. Engage with the film on [YouTube](#) by liking, commenting and subscribing. Share this film with 10-15 people whom you think could benefit. Who do you know who might resonate with this film, or be made more hopeful by it? With whom would you like to be in conversation around it, both those who share your political leanings and those who do not? Use #RESETHETABLE in your posts to spread your reactions to PURPLE via Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. You can download social media tools [here](#).



## 2. Screen the film.

Organize a screening of PURPLE in your community or school, and work with Resetting the Table to make it a meaningful event. Encourage your teachers, professors or religious leaders to bring this film into their classrooms and congregations. You can download a sample invitation [here](#).



## 3. Pursue dialogue across divides.

Set an intention to get out of your echo chamber and talk to those with whom you disagree. Practice “offering bull’s eye reflections” and “naming differences” in your own life. Get involved with organizations like Resetting the Table, One America Movement, Mismatch.org, Living Room Conversations, and other organizations that offer opportunities for such engagement. If you would like to participate in online facilitated discussion with Resetting the Table, you can fill out [this form](#) to register your interest. Commit to reading the news from multiple angles through sources like ProCon.org and Allsides.com. Continue to advocate for your values and vision while taking in the perspectives of multiple parties, remembering that empathy is not the same as agreement.



## 4. Support Resetting the Table’s work.

We are a small nonprofit organization, and we hope to make many more films like this one and provide them for free. We rely on the generosity of people like you to continue our work. You can make a tax-deductible donation online at [resettingthetable.org/donate](https://resettingthetable.org/donate).



The PURPLE Discussion Guide supports formal and informal educators and facilitators to deepen recognition across political divides and explore the need for collaborative deliberation across them. The Guide provides a structured process, discussion questions, and exercises to help viewers step into the lenses of characters with disparate backgrounds and points of view.



RESETTING  
THE TABLE

Resetting the Table (RTT) is dedicated to building a shared democracy in American life by strengthening the capacity of leaders and communities to communicate across political silos and address important public problems.

[resettingthetable.org](http://resettingthetable.org)

TRANSIENT

Transient Pictures is an Emmy-award winning production firm with a passion for telling authentic, emotionally gripping stories and a mission of producing innovative, socially charged documentary films.

[transientpictures.com](http://transientpictures.com)