

RECONSTRUCTION DESTRUCTED

Reconstruction, Destructed Community Discussion Guide *For Facilitators and Host Sites*

◆ Purpose

This guide is designed to **equip hosts with comprehensive tools to lead effective community conversations** around the film, *Reconstruction Deconstructed*.

◆ Target Audience

Community organizers, educators, faith leaders, civic groups, and discussion facilitators.

◆ Framing

Reconstruction Destructed is the 6th film in the "Juneteenth Reckoning with Slavery" film series, co-produced by **OMG Studios and the Minnesota Humanities Center**. Each documentary, released annually on Juneteenth, seeks to bring people together in conversation—both to reckon with our country's legacy of nearly 406 years of enslavement, and, to celebrate Black resistance, resilience, and leadership as essential components of our American freedom story.

As James Baldwin reminds us, "I don't think history is the past. If it were the past, it would not matter." These films bring history into the present by examining how our country's legacy of enslavement and resistance have profound and enduring implications. By having the courage to look back, we find that the past lives on in our current systems of racial capitalism, exclusion, and segregation, even in Northern states like Minnesota. Despite leading the country in progressive legislation during the period of Reconstruction (1865-1877), Minnesota still

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practiced slavery, segregation, racial terror, and lynching—creating a profound disconnect between our proclaimed values of freedom and equality, and the enduring reality of racism.

Reconstruction, the central topic of this year's film, presents an opportunity to reflect on how the cyclical nature of progress towards realizing our nation's founding promises—of liberty and justice for all. Periods of expanding rights and opportunities are often followed by fierce pushback and retrenchment. Understanding the promise and ultimate destruction of Reconstruction in the 19th century can help us draw upon the lessons of our past, to navigate our present moment of struggle and possibility.

At the Minnesota Humanities Center, we believe that transformative learning happens at the intersection of history, conversation, and community. This guide is intended to be a helpful accompaniment to the 2025 film. Feel free to make this discussion guide your own—it's just an outline to help prompt conversation, reflection, and connection. Thank you for joining us!

Pre-Event Preparation

Planning Checklist (4-6 weeks before)

- Secure screening location and equipment (this could be anywhere from a living room and a TV with friends, to an auditorium)
- Print facilitator and participant guides
- Recruit co-facilitators if needed
- Plan refreshments and accessibility accommodations
- Prepare promotional materials
- Identify local historians or community voices for optional panel

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Room Setup Requirements

- **Technology Needs:**

- Projector and screen for film
- Audio system
- Microphones (if large group)
- Extension cords and adapters

- **Physical Space:**

Depends on the activities you choose to facilitate, see more information below

- Seating arrangement that encourages discussion
- Accessible entrances and restrooms
- Wall space for timeline gallery walk (optional)
- Tables for small group activities (optional)

- **Materials to Prepare**

Depends on the activities you choose to facilitate, see more information below

- Participant guides (1 per attendee)
- Note cards and pens for opening reflection
- Reconstruction timeline materials for gallery walk
- Easel paper and markers for group activities
- Sign-in sheet and name tags

◆ Run of Show

Total Time: 90–120 minutes

1. **Welcome and Framing** (10 min)
2. **Intentional Breathing – Grounding Tool** (5 min)
2. **Film Screening** (25 min)
3. **Mini-discussion** (15 minutes)

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3. **Interactive activity** (20-30 minutes)
4. **Large Group Debrief and Community Harvest** (20 min)
 - a. Capture key insights, questions, and reflections.
5. **Closing Reflection + Next Steps** (5–10 min)
 - a. Facilitator closing - Intentional Breathing – Closing Unity (5 min)
 - b. Share strategies for continued learning and action. (handout)

Share local resources, reading, or events.

◆ Goals

Through conversation and participatory activities, we hope that you will:

- Better understand how the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments reshaped the nation—and what was lost when Reconstruction was dismantled.
- Reflect on how the three branches of government supported or failed Reconstruction's vision.
- Consider how dominant and non-dominant narratives of the Reconstruction era differ from one another
- Connect historical struggles to present-day efforts for equity, justice, and democratic participation.

◆ Guiding Principles / Community Agreements

Here at the Humanities Center, we:

- Honor each voice. Speak from experience, and listen deeply.

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- Stay curious. Ask questions, not just for answers, but for understanding.
- Acknowledge complexity. We hold multiple truths and histories.
- Respect the past, act in the present. Connect reflection to possibility.