



# UNSPOKEN

HOW CAN A TOWN MAKE PEACE WITH ITS PAST WHEN THE TRUTH IS BURIED?

"ON FRANK'S ETERNAL  
CAMPING GROUND,  
THEIR SILENT TEXTS  
ARE SPREAD,  
AND GLORY GUARDS,  
WITH SOLEMN ROUND,  
THE BONDAGE OF THE DEAD"

COMRADES

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[www.unspoken.film](http://www.unspoken.film)

## FILM DISCUSSION GUIDE

# UNSPOKEN

Can a town marked by the last mass lynching make peace with its past? Unspoken is a documentary feature film that traces the journey of resident Stephanie Calabrese who picks up an iPhone camera to uncover buried truths and explore how the community has been impacted by its racial divide through the lens of her own whiteness. Stephanie's foray into filmmaking offers an insider's intimate look at the impact of the 1946 quadruple lynching, segregation and integration through today in Monroe, Georgia, and shatters a code of silence that has distanced neighbor from neighbor for generations.

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## Using This Guide

This guide is an invitation to dialogue following a screening of documentary feature film UNSPOKEN. It is based on a belief in the power of human connection and designed for people who want to use UNSPOKEN to engage family, friends, classmates, colleagues, and/or community members in a spirit of openness with an aim toward racial reconciliation. Use this guide as a tool to explore your own impressions and to listen to and understand the impressions and perspectives of others, particularly those that might differ from yours.

After viewing UNSPOKEN, you may want to give participants some quiet time to reflect on what they have seen. The discussion prompts are intended to help a wide range of audiences think more deeply about the issues raised in the film and to exchange perspectives. Choose prompts that best meet your needs and interests. Consider posing discussion prompts and giving people some time to themselves to jot down or think about their answers before opening the discussion. For larger groups, you could ask participants to share their thoughts with a partner or in small groups (3-6 participants) before starting a larger group discussion.

Be sure to leave time for participants to pause and take breaks as needed. Honest discussions like these often require vulnerability and courage. Planning a followup discussion session or next steps can inspire participants to feel energized and optimistic, even in instances when conversations may have been challenging.

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## Getting Started

Participants bring in different perspectives and experiences. Make no assumptions and listen with empathy. People may be thinking:

- People won't understand me
- I don't agree with everything and I don't want to be judged
- I have stupid questions or I am afraid to ask questions
- I've never had to think about or talk about this
- I don't want to offend anyone
- I don't see race or color
- I am not a racist and therefore play no part in racism

Consider sharing these guidelines with participants to create a safe space for honest dialog:

- Remain open and curious. Respond with questions before responding with your own interpretation or explanation of impact in regards to someone else's comments.
- Recognize and acknowledge people's experiences. The person/people you are in conversation with are bringing their own perspective, shaped by their own experiences (culture, history, practices, upbringing).
- Be mindful to take breaks to recenter when conversations feel uncomfortable or too wrought with conflict to be productive.
- Regardless of agreement and alignment, everyone is worthy of being valued in the dignity of their humanity. Resist blame and shame.
- DON'T assume intent. DO center impact over intent.
- Understanding and dismantling racism is not a checklist, a meeting, or a one-time commitment. Make small, realistic, challenging commitments to grow, learn and evolve. We can do this together.

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## Discussion Prompts

After participants have watched the film, choose one or more of these questions:

- What emotions came up for you while watching the film?
- What prior knowledge or assumptions did you have, and how did the film confirm or dispel them?
- What did you learn from this film? What surprised you the most?
- Describe a moment or scene in the film that you found particularly disturbing or moving. What was it about that scene that was especially compelling for you?
- Which character resonated with you most and why?
- Did the film change your mind about any aspect of the subject that it presents? What new information or persuasive technique caused you to change your mind?
- Consider a time when you silenced yourself or someone else out of fear, shame or pride. How did this hurt you or someone else? If you later released the silenced story, how did that help you, your loved one, or the situation?
- Consider a time in your life when you felt misjudged or misunderstood based on things you cannot or choose to not change about yourself such as your physical appearance, your culture or heritage, or religion? How did that make you feel?
- Describe the role of the media in shaping community perceptions throughout the film. How has the influence of traditional media and social media shaped your perceptions on race and racism?

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## Prompts to Inspire Action

To help participants process what they've learned through the first set of prompts, now move the dialog toward action steps. Choose one or more of these questions:

- What did you learn from this film that you wish everyone knew? What might change if everyone knew this information?
- If you could encourage one person (or one group) to view this film, who would it be and why? What steps can you take to approach this person or group?
- How can you better acknowledge, bear witness to, and learn from the racially-motivated trauma of our past in your community/family/organization?
- What needs to change now, in your view, to bridge the racial divide in your own community/family/organization?
- How can you, as an individual, help bridge the racial divide and contribute to ending racism? What actions can you commit to do?
- Complete this sentence: This history is important because \_\_\_\_\_.
- Complete this sentence: This film makes me want to learn more about \_\_\_\_\_.
- Complete this sentence: I am inspired by this film (or discussion) to \_\_\_\_\_.

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## RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

There have been countless conversations, films, books, podcasts and workshops that helped inform perspectives and influenced the creation of UNSPOKEN. These resources have been helpful to better understand our history of racial injustice, racial bias and racism. For an up-to-date list visit of resources visit:  
<https://www.unspoken.film/learningguides>

### FILMS

- 13th, Directed by Ava DuVernay
- Always in Season, Directed by Jackie Olive
- American Son, Directed by Kenny Leon
- BlackKkKlansman, Directed by Spike Lee
- Hidden Figures, Directed by Theodore Melfi (scenes filmed in Monroe, GA)
- I Am Not Your Negro, Directed by Raoul Peck
- Just Mercy, Directed by Destin Daniel Cretton
- Malcom X, Directed by Spike Lee
- Marshall, Directed by Reginald Hudlin
- MLK FBI, Directed by Sam Pollard
- Quest, Directed by Jonathan Olshefski
- Selma, Directed by Ava DuVernay
- Till, Directed by Chinonye Chukwu (scenes filmed in Monroe, GA)
- When They See Us, Directed by Ava DuVernay
- Who We Are: A Chronicle of Racism in America, Directed by Emily Kunstler & Sarah Kunstler

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## RESOURCES TO FURTHER STUDY

### PODCASTS & MULTIMEDIA

- 1619 Podcast by The New York Times + The 1619 Project Website
- Letter from a Birmingham Jail by Martin Luther King, Jr. (audio reading)
- NPR's Code Switch
- NPR's Invisibilia: The Confrontation
- Nice White Parents Podcast Series from Serial and The New York Times
- Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man by Emmanuel Acho
- The King Center: Beloved Community Talks

### BOOKS

- Fire in a Canebrake by Laura Wexler
- The Last Lynching by Anthony Pitch
- Black America Series: Walton County, Georgia by Lynn Robinson Camp and Jennifer E. Cheeks-Collins
- The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volume 1: Called to Serve January 1929 - June 1951
- The Souls of Black Folk by W.E.B. Du Bois
- Gordon Parks: Collected Works
- Heavy by Kiese Laymon
- Selected Poems by Langston Hughes
- How the Word is Passed by Clint Smith
- Do The Work: An Antiracist Activity Book by W. Kamau Bell & Kate Schatz

### WORKSHOPS / CLASSES

- Racial Equity Institute Workshops – <https://racialequityinstitute.org>
- The King Center Workshops – <https://thekingcenter.org>

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Contact us with your feedback so we can continue to make improvements to this guide and other learning resources, and share your experiences to inspire others.

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