

educational screening kit

Theme #identity

Searching for the 4th Nail

Director: George Eli

Production country & year: USA, 2009

Length: 52

Producer: Nikhil Melnechuk, Lucy Kaye

Editor: Nikhil Melnechuk, Lucy Kaye

Official Website: <http://www.searchingforthe4thnail.com>

Buy DVD: <http://www.searchingforthe4thnail.com/purchase.html>

Synopsis

George Eli, an American Gypsy, turns his camera on the secret life of his Romani culture. As we see through his 8mm family footage, growing up Gypsy was "a pretty good life" - carefree and lawless. Eli's journey begins when his two sons ask him: "What does it mean to be a Gypsy?" He has no clear answer beyond what he's learned from movies and TV. Eli and his sons begin an original and emotional quest for the truth, as Eli examines the inexplicable Roma traditions, and questions whether he must leave these old ways behind in order to give his sons a future.

Biography

George Eli is an established filmmaker who attended the New York Film Academy and has worked alongside documentary icon Albert Maysles on the crew of the film "When the Road Bends". Eli has also created several of his own films, including "Trust in the Lord" and "Searching for the 4th Nail", which recently received a standing ovation at the Outreach Event screening in New York City. He gained his love for filmmaking at an early age watching films with his father. His earliest memory of a "Gypsy" on screen was of Quasimodo and Esmeralda in the Hunchback of Notre Dame. Since then, he has been determined to break the "Gypsy" stereotype. He went on to found Eli Films in 2000, a small independent production house committed to bringing stories that matter to life. Eli is also a father and photographer.

Contact

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What to read to get some useful background information?

★ To learn about the way identities are shaped

We recommend reading Salto Youth publication “E.M.POWER: A practical booklet on how to empower young Ethnic Minority women” (2008).

<https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-1641/EMPowerBooklet.pdf>

Sections we recommend in particular:

- Identity: race, ethnicity, nationality, pages 11-13
- Identity: the epigenetic principle, pages 13-16

★ Stereotypes, prejudice and intercultural education

Check the Council of Europe education pack “All different, All equal” (2004) and in particular the section “We All Live with Images” in chapter 2, “Understanding Difference and Discrimination”.

<http://www.eycb.coe.int/edupack/>

★ To go further, you can take a look at

“Roma Identity”, a publication of papers presented and discussed at a seminar organized during the Roma World Festival Khamoro, May 28-29, 2010 in Prague, Czech Republic, edited by Hristo Kyuchukov, Constantine the Philosopher University, and Ian Hancock, University of Texas (2010).

http://www.slovo21.cz/nove/images/dokumenty_integrace/fin_cd_roma_identity_part%201.pdf

Questions for discussion after the screening

- What is the starting point of Eli's search? Why?
- What are the most important things that Eli learns or that you learnt throughout his search?
- Had you heard about the story of the 4th nail before? Did you understand it?
- What would you do if your child was afraid to share his/her identity/origins at school?
- Do you know any Roma characters in story books in your country? Any movies? How are they portrayed?
- What did you learn about the history of Roma in school?
- How does oral culture/tradition shape identity differently than written culture?
- What are the consequences of a child having such a negative Roma identity? What are possible ways to change that?
- Based on the film, what do you think can be the positive elements of George Eli's identity?
- What was surprising for you in the film?
- What do you think about the connection between legend and stereotype?
- In what ways can we begin to change the makeshift, misguided identity of Roma which is represented within mainstream society? How do you think stereotypes shape one's identity?

Workshop outline ideas:

1. Self-association

Objectives:

- Warming up for the topic of identity

Collect and print different images (or use Dixit cards, images from newspapers etc.) and put all of them on the floor. Ask the participants to choose one picture that represents them in that moment. They can share in smaller groups of 3-4-5 people or in the full group.

2. Personal objects

Objective:

- Warming up for the topic of identity

Ask the participants in advance to bring a personal object with them to the workshop. They can share why they chose that object in smaller groups or in the full group.

3. Identity flower

Objectives:

- Participants reflect on their own identities
- Getting to know each other deeper

Ask the participants to think individually about the elements of identity, and their answers to the question: “Who are you?” They can think about different categories, groups, characteristics etc. Ask them to represent their identity visually in a drawing. It can be very simple (for example, a flower, tree, building, etc.). The drawing can have different parts in different sizes or colours, as a way of can writing, drawing, or representing their identity elements in each part of the drawing, representing the importance of each element with the size or colour of that part. For example, if they draw a tree, then they can draw the leaves in different sizes, writing their most important identity element in the biggest leaf or on the roots of the tree, etc.

After finishing the drawing, participants form small groups (3 people) and ask everyone to share their own image. Questions for discussion:

What parts of your identity are you born with and what can you choose? How much freedom do you have to choose your identity?

Is there any difference or conflict between your personal identity and the way it is perceived in society? How do you feel about it? How can you cope with it?

If you think about the movie, what is the relation between George’s personal Roma identity and how he is perceived as a Roma person in society?

This activity is similar to this one: “Who are I”: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/who-are-i->

4. On the way to the 4th nail

Objectives:

- Analyzing the movie
- Understanding better the motives and discoveries of George to search for his identity

Ask participants to form small groups of 3-4 people. Asks them to collect the different steps of the way George searches for his identity in the movie: people, institutions, discoveries, etc. Ask the groups to create a poster about the search that represents what they think are the most important stations, discoveries, and key moments. To support the process, you can write these questions on a flipchart that they can discuss while making the poster:

- What is the starting point of Eli questioning his identity?
- What is his the first important discovery?
- What is he confused about in the process?
- Who are the key people he meets on the road?
- What are the unanswered questions that remain at the end?
- What are his most important learnings achievements?

When they finish the posters, ask the groups to present them.

5. Role play

Objectives:

- Inspire thinking about the effects of negative identity
- Raise awareness of the roles and possibilities of adults around Roma children in influencing their identity

Together as a group, watch the scene again where Christopher says he doesn’t want to tell other students at school that he is Roma because of what they would think. Tell the

participants that now they will imagine how different people would react to this situation: how would George continue this conversation, what would George discuss with his wife or with the teacher, etc.?

Split the participants into pairs and give role pairs to each group: George and Kristopher, George and his wife, George and the teacher.

Ask the pairs to decide who will play each role between and spend a few minutes in silence imagining the character and the situation.

When they feel ready, one pair can start to improvise their discussion while the others are listening. Another option is that every pair improvises their discussion at the same time so they don't have to act in front of each other if they feel uncomfortable, and then each group summarizes or replays their discussion in the full group.

6. Roma Living Library

Objectives:

- Provide opportunity for participants to meet Roma people, and get to know their personal experiences and identities related to being Roma

Invite Roma people who are open to talk with the participants about their Roma identity and their personal experiences connected to being Roma. Prepare the room with chairs in circles or around tables, as many circles as many guests you will have. Split the participants into groups to give them the chance to talk with the guests in small groups. It is good if you can have small groups of 2-3 people and if all participants can have the opportunity to participate in a discussion with each guest.

It is recommended to start with an introduction circle when everyone shortly introduces themselves. You can do a closing circle at the end when everyone shares how this experience was for them.