



PRAY THE DEVIL BACK TO HELL EVENT HOSTING GUIDE



Pray the Devil Back to Hell is a testament not only to the transforming power of community activism, but also to the inspiring influence of film. With just a little preparation, your community screening of *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* can educate, engage, and entertain—all at once. Moreover, it can provide a tangible way for you to honor the incredible peace-building efforts of Liberia's women—and to spread their message of hope and solidarity to your own corner of the world.

Here are a few tips to get you started as you plan your screening.

Planning Your Screening

Venue: First, you'll want to pick an appropriate venue. If your organization doesn't have a spot of its own, inquire about securing a screening or meeting room at your local public library or high school. Both often offer spaces to community organizations at no charge or for a nominal fee, and both may come with built-in audio-visual equipment (and someone who knows how to use it!) More creative venues, like local coffeehouses or public parks can work, too, as long as there's ample room for seating, easy access for the elderly or disabled, and a way to control the lighting. Just remember that many venues fill up fast. You may want to reserve your spot a month or so in advance.

Equipment: Next, you'll need to rent, borrow, or reserve a few basic pieces of equipment. If you are screening the film on DVD, you'll need:

- A wide-screen television **or** a projector and a large screen.
- A DVD player. (Laptop or desktop computers with DVD players work, too.)
- A set of good speakers, if you're using a projector. (Check the volume controls to be sure they're loud enough.)
- Chairs or benches.

Make sure to do a dry run before the day of your event, to be certain that your cables fit, your sound is audible, and the picture is the right shape and size. Keep in mind that if the picture looks clear but it is either too stretched or too squashed, you may need to adjust the "aspect ratio" or "mode" settings on your projector or television until the image looks normal.

Concessions: One way to make your screening feel like a night on the town is to offer refreshments and other goodies.

If you're selling merchandise, set up a special table for them in a prominent place. You might consider including a selection of your own organization's buttons, membership envelopes, or stickers, too. Invite your guests to visit the table before they leave. If you're fund-raising, remind them that their purchase helps support your group or cause.

For refreshments, consider asking a few volunteers to bake treats or brew coffee. Alternatively, ask a local market or bakery to donate a hot beverage or a selection of snacks, or invite attendees to contribute something to the refreshment counter themselves.

Promoting Your Event

As soon as you have a date and venue set, begin to publicize and promote your event. Usually, the sooner you get the word out, the more time local journalists, activists, and community organizations have to rally around your screening.

First, consider submitting the who, what, where, and when of your screening to the community events calendars of your local newspapers. Most community weeklies have a special email address or fax number for these submissions, and they are usually able to include them in the paper for no charge.

Next, draft a press release. The language on the *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* website can help you craft your message about the film. When you're done, submit the release to all of your local news and lifestyle publications. You'll probably want to include the editors of the lifestyle and arts sections of your local paper, the editor of any appropriate local newsletters, blogs, or church bulletins, and the news directors of your local NPR affiliate, local television news affiliates, and public access television stations.

Lastly, tap into the usual communication channels used by your group. Post an announcement on your website or bulletin board; hang posters in your local library, coffee shop, YMCA, book store, or video store; invite folks to your event through Facebook or Evite, or mail postcards to your mailing list. For more outreach tools, visit the Spread the Word page at www.praythediabacktohell.com

Organizing Post-Film Events

A community screening can become particularly engaging when there is an opportunity for questions, discussion, or debate after the film. Moreover, inviting the right speaker or curating a panel of dynamic local experts can help you broaden the appeal of your event. It may even attract audience or press attention you might have otherwise missed. While post-film discussions can take many forms, the following often work best and are relatively easy to plan:

Keynote Speakers: Sometimes a local individual is especially well suited to reflect on the themes of *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* or to interpret the film in reference to local issues or experiences. If you have someone particular in mind, be sure to invite them well in advance and give them an opportunity to view the film first and to prepare some short remarks. At the event itself, provide your speaker with a chair, stool, or podium and a glass of water. Introduce him or her before the talk, and help to facilitate questions from the audience afterwards. If your speaker has published a related book or study, you might also offer to sell or promote this research at your event.

Panel Discussions: If you'd like a less formal or more interactive post-film activity, you might consider organizing a panel discussion or Q&A session. In the weeks leading up to your screening, identify four or five local experts or community leaders who can offer a unique perspective on the themes explored in *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*. You can invite a selection of people who represent diverse areas of expertise, or you can curate a more specialized panel, inviting three experts who can comment in depth on the film.

After the screening, set up chairs or stools at the front of the room, provide your guests with water, make a brief introduction for each panelist, and then invite questions and comments from

the audience. If your venue is especially large, you may want to provide microphones for both question-askers and question-answerers.

If you anticipate a lot of questions, or if you want to be sure that each panelist has an equitable opportunity to speak, you may wish to serve as a moderator (or to appoint someone else for that job). Alternatively, you can pass out slips of scrap paper before the screening begins and encourage viewers to jot down questions as the film rolls. When you're ready to begin your panel, collect the questions and distribute them among your panelists.

Receptions: Whether or not you have a speaker or panel, you'll probably want to encourage your audience to mingle and socialize after the film. Refreshments often facilitate this kind of interaction (especially if they're provided free of charge!)

Wrapping Up

Even as your event comes to a close, you can capitalize on the energy and excitement of the screening to foster continued engagement from your community. As folks file out, invite them to join your mailing list, take a look at your recent projects, peruse your calendar of events, or place comments in a suggestion box.

Please feel free to send photos, news clippings, or viewer feedback from your screenings via Facebook or via email at info@praythedevilbacktohell.com. *Please note that we may not be able to respond personally to each email, but please know that we do read each and every email we receive!*

We'd love to hear about what worked for your group, and to share your successes with others!