

House Party Guide

WE NEED YOUR HELP

A diverse group of policy makers, religious leaders, and environmental organizations from across the ideological spectrum are coming together to focus attention on climate change and urge action at the local and national level. As part of these efforts, the American Values Network is organizing a series of house parties all across the state of Nevada intended to bring people together to engage the policy process and build the political will to address climate change. We are going to kick off these efforts during the months of December and January with house parties centering on the video “Sisters on the Planet.” This is where you come in. Our goal is to set up numerous “house parties” that will serve the dual purpose of educating people about this issue and that will plant the seeds for people to become involved in other grassroots events on climate change, including a tele-town hall with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. To make all this work, however, we need people like you who are willing to host one of these house parties.

What is a house party?

A house party is an opportunity to get people together socially, learn about an important issue, and have fun while doing so. Just as people gather to watch popular television shows or for a movie night, people will attend your house party to watch the half-hour long movie, “Sisters on the Planet.” The house party can bring together 2 to 4 friends for an informal screening and discussion, or it can be a more formal screening for as many people as can comfortably fit in front of a TV or home theater. A guide is provided at the end of this packet to help facilitate discussion after the movie.

What are the goals of the house parties?

The house parties have two primary goals: (1) to raise awareness of the moral implications of climate change, how it most affects the least among us, and how communities are joining together to tackle the challenges it poses; and (2) to encourage people to become more involved in grassroots efforts to combat climate change and in urging their leaders to take action. At the end of the party, those who wish can sign up to participate in a tele-town hall with Sen. Harry Reid being scheduled for early 2010 to discuss the moral and national security implications of climate change.

What goes into putting on a house party?

Not much. You need to pick a location, date, and time to show the film; get a copy of the movie from us; invite friends, family, and neighbors to attend;

show the movie; ask your guest to join in this movement; and have fun.

As far as refreshments go, you can provide basics like beverages and popcorn, or you can do something more substantial – it is completely up to you! But it is important to remember that people are not going to come for fancy food; they are going to come to see a good, thought-provoking movie and to discuss its implications with the other people at the event.

Does the host have to do anything else besides get people to attend? Yes. You will need to make a simple “ask” to ensure that the house parties provide concrete deliverables. Guests will be looking for opportunities to “do something” on this issue after they watch the movie, and we need to make sure we tap into that energy. The pitch for this house party is easy because you will not have to ask anyone for money. The most important commitment you can get from folks is to have them sign up to participate in a tele-town hall with Sen. Reid. The tele-town hall is a great opportunity to show Senator Reid that people believe climate change is an important issue. Along with the DVD, we will send you a sign-up sheet for people to write down their names, telephone numbers, and email. The way the tele-town hall works is on the day of the event the people who sign up will receive a call asking them to join in. Then they can simply listen or ask the Senator a question. The date and time of the town hall have not yet been determined.

The second “ask” is that they agree to host their own house party later in the year (and most people like having social activities, so that won’t be too hard) and consider participating in one of our creation care service projects in the spring. These service projects are a great way to put ideas to action and will range from helping weatherize homes for shut-ins to cleaning up local stream banks of trash. People who sign up will get emails letting them know about the next volunteer project, which they can RSVP to.

Although you aren’t asking for much, it still helps to be persuasive and be specific. **Begin the pitch by making the case for taking action:** “This is an important issue, and this movie frames it in a unique way. It also is an issue that cuts across traditional ideological viewpoints. Senator Reid wants to hear from the faith community about how our values shape our views. It is important for him to know that we care about this issue.”

There are two important things to keep in mind when making your pitch: **Make your goals clear, and request action.** “Tonight, I am asking each of you to make a commitment to participate in the tele-townhall with Senator

Reid. He needs to hear from us about how our values inform our positions on important issues like climate change. He needs to know that we take this issue seriously and expect him to as well. The best way we can send that message is by having a big turnout on the call. And then I'm asking that you pick a way to keep expanding this movement and it's impact by hosting your own house party or participating in our on-going community service projects."

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL “SISTERS ON THE PLANET” HOUSE PARTY

- 1 **Pick a location.** You can easily host a screening at your house or apartment. But you can also host the party at an office, a club, or any function room with a screen and a DVD player.
- 2 **Pick a time and date.** Think of a time and day of the week in December or January that will work well for you and your friends. The movie will be more than enough to build an event around.
- 3 **Consider co-hosts.** Sometimes people create a host committee to help share the responsibilities. Or a single friend or roommate can be drafted to help with the logistics. Either way, make sure each person involved has a specific task to help put the party together, like inviting friends. This reduces the work for everyone and increases attendance.
- 4 **Register to host the party.** Once you are sure you can host, email rjohnson@americanvaluesnetwork.org with your name, address, and the date and time of your party. We will send you a copy of the movie and a sign-up sheet.
- 5 **Set goals and decide on size.** Consider your screening venue, how many people you can comfortably accommodate, and how intimate or large a group you would like to watch the film. Commit to inviting enough people that you can fulfill that goal.
- 6 **Send invitations.** You can send invitations out via email, attaching a flyer (we can send you a sample flyer). Another useful resource is Evite (www.evite.com). Particularly if it is a small gathering, a simple phone call or word of mouth will work best. Most importantly, you know the people you are inviting; use a method with which they are likely to be most comfortable.
- 7 **Follow up.** Several days before your party, call or email everyone you invited. Evite makes this easy – it sends a reminder at a preset time.
- 8 **Plan a format.** Work out a rough schedule beforehand. See below for a possible timeline.

- 9 **Make a pitch.** As host, you need to make three concrete “asks” after the movie ends: (1) Ask them to commit to participating in the tele-town hall with Senator Reid; (2) to consider hosting a house party later in the summer; (3) to sign up and provide their contact information so we can contact them about further events their area.

- 10 **Send the information to us.** Once you have collected people’s contact information and recorded what they have committed to do, send that information through email or snail-mail to Rachel Johnson at rjohnson@americanvaluesnetwork.org or 1901 N. Fort Myer Dr. Suite 901 Arlington, VA 22209.

Sample House Party Agenda.

- 6:45 PM Host welcomes everyone, calls on guests to introduce themselves and their interest in the issue, and introduces “Sisters on the Planet.”
- 7:00 PM Screening begins.
- 7:30-8:30 Film ends. Give your pitch and encourage discussion (discussion guide below), and ask people to sign-up to stay involved.

The party can continue or you can call it a night. With a smaller group, you can watch the movie over dinner. For the younger crowd, consider selling the party as a way to start the evening and make it end early enough that people can still go out afterwards.

Sisters on the Planet: Discussion Guide

Introductory Questions

What are your first responses to this video? Did anything in particular strike you? What and why?

For Discussion Leaders

*Allow peoples' responses to these questions to determine which direction the conversation moves. Questions for discussion are provided below. You do not need to cover all the questions (and you likely will not have time to do so in an hour), nor do they need to be asked in any particular order; they are merely provided as a guide to help facilitate conversation and present a number of directions you can take it to best match your group's needs/interests. If you wish to draw upon a biblical text and use this in a devotional/Bible Study context, ask someone in your group read Matthew 25:31-46 after hearing everyone's initial reactions to the video. Discussion questions related to the scriptural passage are provided in **bold**.*

Discussion Questions

One of the reoccurring themes in these women's stories is that weather patterns are not as stable as they once were which is disrupting agriculture and making it difficult for communities to know when to plant crops.

- Does this experience resonate with our lives at all, or is it wholly unfamiliar?
- Are we ever forced to reflect on how our sources of food are impacted by weather? How aware are we of where our food comes from?
- Can anyone in the group think of times when the supply of any of their food was disrupted? E-coli threats? The loss of corn crops in the mid-west after severe flooding? Sick cattle or chicken? If you were impacted by these instances or others like them, to what degree was your life affected?
- What would it be like to be entirely dependent on food grown in your community?

Note that the areas in which these women live consist primarily of poorer populations – both abroad in third world countries, but also here in the U.S. One often overlooked aspect of climate change is the devastating impact it is already having on the lives of the poor.

- Martina says that in her own life she has witnessed the changes in the land caused by climate change. Why have we in the U.S. not more directly or severely experienced these changes? What are some of the things we do to protect ourselves from the effects of climate change?
- “Adaptation” is a term used to describe how communities are adjusting to the changes in their circumstances as a result of climate change. The work Sahena does in her community to help them prepare for natural disasters and to protect food and water supplies is a small-scale form of adaptation. Should we be doing more to help poor communities internationally and domestically adapt to the changes they are experiencing on a larger scale? How far does our financial obligation go to help the poor trying to adapt abroad? **How does faith inform this discussion, and would you give money or agree to higher taxes to help the poor?**
- Jesus says, “I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.” At one point Martina asks, “What can I do to end this thirst?” Due to increases in droughts and floods that are destroying crops, millions of women just like Martina and Sahena are unable to feed their families or provide them with clean water. Are they among the least of these? Who are the least of these in today’s world? What is our responsibility to them?
- Sharon and Sahena’s stories emphasize the importance of not only responding to disaster, but of taking steps to protect people from further harm. What steps should be taken to prevent further loss of human life? Is large-scale action needed by the U.S. or on the global stage? **Do we have a responsibility to act? Does Matthew 25 suggest we will be held accountable if we do nothing about climate change? Are our responsibilities corporate/communal or individual?**

- Sahena presents preparing for natural disasters as part of her daily life. Can anyone in the group share an experience when their life was impacted by a natural disaster? What would it be like to have storms and flooding that continue to grow more severe be a constant threat in your life?
- At one point, Martina asks, “Is it really people here who are damaging the rain patterns and climate?” Consider that the U.S. has 4 percent of the world’s population, but produces nearly a quarter of its CO2 emissions. It is the emissions of wealthy nations that are most directly contributing to climate change, but the poorest among us are the ones experiencing the consequences. What is our responsibility to them? **Are we reflecting Jesus’ love for the poor in our individual actions and as a nation? Does a secular Republic like ours have a responsibility to care about moral constructs and how our actions will affect non-citizens?**

The stories in this video come from women all over the world. Most often, discussions of climate change will center on areas such as Africa where there are severe droughts, or southeast Asia where there is widespread flooding.

- Is climate change a *global* threat? How urgent do you think the threat is?
- Were you surprised to see someone from the United States included in this video? Did Sharon’s story provide anyone with a different perspective on the threat posed by climate change?
- Considering that natural disasters have quadrupled in the last year, and have been increasing in intensity, what impact is climate change having on the United States, both directly and in terms of the aid we offer other regions?
- Are we responding to climate change with an appropriate sense of urgency? If yes, why? If no, what more should we be doing?

On the global stage, what role should the U.S. play among other nations in responding to climate change?

Although not directly addressed in this video, a coalition of [22 senior U.S. Generals](#) backed by several CIA reports have said that climate change will be one of the greatest national security threats our nation faces in the coming decades. As oceans rise and rivers and lakes dry up, there will be increasing population pressures (like the one following the drying of lake Chad and mass-migration that followed and played a key role in the Darfur genocides) that will destabilize regions, result in wars over resources, and create hotbeds for extremism. [[Click here for a fact sheet on how climate change threatens national security](#)]

- Does this information change the way you view the threat of climate change?
- Does the U.S. really need to worry about destabilized 3rd world countries? Could one make an economic argument for investing in adaptation now to avoid paying the much larger military costs (to say nothing of the human ones) of war or peacekeeping later?
- **Do you think the combination of the more “selfish” national security argument with the more selfless moral one makes for a more compelling case for action on climate change or waters down the strong and clear Christian call to help those in need?**

