EDUCATOR, FACILITATOR & COMMUNITY SCREENING GUIDE

612: DARKNESS IN THE LAND OF NICE

Six Years After 2020: Youth Power, Systemic Disparities & Community-Led Solutions

Oscar®-Qualified Short Documentary | Runtime: 30 Minutes | Directed by Diem Van Groth | www.612film.com

ABOUT THE FILM & EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE

612: Darkness in the Land of Nice examines what happened in Minneapolis and St. Paul in the six years following the 2020 murder of George Floyd. What began with North Minneapolis adoptee filmmaker Diem Van Groth documenting protests in real time evolved into a six-year inquiry past breaking headlines to ask a defining question: *Six years later, what has truly changed?*

Contrasting Minnesota's celebrated quality-of-life rankings against some of the nation's sharpest racial disparities in homeownership, education, and policing, the documentary centers youth activists, historians, policy leaders, and grassroots builders creating systemic equity today. During its 30-day digital preview, the film reached over **65,500 viewers**—with **31% between ages 13 and 17**—proving strong resonance with students and educators.

Curriculum & Discipline Alignment

- **High School (Grades 9–12):** U.S. History, Civics & Government, Sociology, Ethnic Studies, Media Literacy
- **Higher Education:** African American Studies, Urban Planning, Public Policy, Criminal Justice, Education Equity
- **Civic & Workplace:** DEI Workshops, Municipal Policy Forums, Leadership Development

Key Learning Objectives

- Analyze the gap between regional reputation ("Minnesota Nice") and measurable socioeconomic data.
- Examine historical policy decisions—such as highway construction through St. Paul's Rondo neighborhood—and generational wealth.
- Evaluate how youth-led protest movements translate urgency into long-term institutional reform.

FILM CHAPTER MAP (30-MINUTE SCREENING TIMING)

Designed to fit seamlessly inside a single 45-to-60-minute class period or workshop session with time remaining for facilitated dialogue:

Time	Chapter Title	Core Thematic Focus for Discussion
0:00	The Unrest in Minneapolis	May 2020 frontline footage and the global spark ignited in the Twin Cities.
1:09	Personal History & Identity	Director Diem Van Groth's perspective as an adoptee raised in North Minneapolis.
2:23	The Systemic Racism Paradox	Unpacking "Minnesota Nice" alongside top national quality-of-life rankings.
4:19	Deep-Seated Inequities	Demographic data on racial gaps in homeownership, income, and opportunity.
7:34	Activism & Police Reform	Youth mobilization during a pandemic and debates over accountability vs. promises.
11:08	Education Achievement Gaps	Classroom disparities, teacher representation, and pathways to student success.
15:15	Mentorship & Opportunity	Intergenerational support systems empowering Black and Indigenous youth.
18:06	Community Infrastructure	Grassroots institutions building health, wellness, and economic resilience.

22:53	The Destruction of Rondo	How I-94 displaced St. Paul's thriving Black business district and cultural hub.
28:43	Reflecting on the Future & Hope	Accountability six years later and what sustainable civic progress requires next.

FACILITATOR NORMS & PRE-SCREENING SETUP

Setting the Room (5 Minutes Before Screening): Because *612* addresses systemic racism, policing, and lived trauma, establish shared group agreements before pressing play: *listen to understand rather than debate, speak from personal experience ("I" statements), critique systems and policies rather than individuals, and allow space for reflection.*

GUIDED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. CULTURE, PERCEPTION & "MINNESOTA NICE"

Q1: How does the film define the paradox of "Minnesota Nice"? In what ways can politeness or conflict avoidance in a community mask deeper structural inequalities?

Q2: State Demographer Susan Brower and other voices highlight stark gaps in homeownership and income despite high overall state rankings. Why do aggregate statistics often hide disparities experienced by specific neighborhoods?

2. HISTORICAL POLICY & THE DESTRUCTION OF RONDO

Q1: Marvin Anderson discusses the construction of Interstate 94 through St. Paul's Rondo neighborhood. How did mid-20th-century infrastructure decisions impact generational wealth, small businesses, and community cohesion?

Q2: What does modern restorative work—such as the ReConnect Rondo land bridge initiative—teach us about repairing historical harm through urban planning?

3. YOUTH POWER & SUSTAINED CIVIC ACTION

Q1: University of Minnesota organizers Maddie and Emma reflect on young people staying in the streets during a global pandemic. What gave Gen Z activists the agency to sustain momentum when older institutions stalled?

Q2: Six years after 2020, how do we distinguish between symbolic corporate or political statements and measurable, lasting reform?

4. EDUCATION EQUITY & COMMUNITY-LED SOLUTIONS

Q1: Justice Alan Page and Black Men Teach Executive Director Markus Flynn emphasize education and representation. How does having teachers and mentors who share students' lived experiences change classroom outcomes?

Q2: Look at your own school, workplace, or municipality: which local institution or grassroots effort is already modeling the solutions seen in the film, and how can you support it?

ACTION PROMPTS & FEATURED COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Extend the screening beyond discussion by connecting students or participants with local research and the grassroots organizations featured in the documentary:

- **Local Policy Audit Activity:** Have students research three local metrics in their own city or county—homeownership rates by race, high school graduation/representation rates, and municipal budget priorities—and present one concrete policy proposal.
- **Oral History Project:** Pair students to interview an elder, educator, or neighborhood organizer about how a specific street, school, or community institution has changed over the past 20 to 50 years.

Black Men Teach Recruiting, preparing, and retaining Black male educators in elementary classrooms. *blackmenteach.org*	**Page Education Foundation** Providing financial grants and mentoring pathways for Minnesota students of color. *page-ed.org*

ReConnect Rondo Restoring economic and cultural vitality to St. Paul's historic Rondo community. *reconnectrondo.com*	**V3 Sports** Building community wellness, aquatic access, and youth leadership in North Minneapolis. *v3sports.org*

Educational Licensing, Institutional Screenings & Director Q&A Inquiries: Visit **www.612film.com**

© 2025–2026 DVG Productions LLC | Waazakone LLC. Fiscal Sponsor: International Documentary Association (IDA). All Rights Reserved.