



## LUNAFEST 2023: Discussion Questions

### General reflections on the entire program:

Here are some suggested questions, in no particular order, to get you started; feel free to modify these to fit the interests of your group. There are probably more questions here than you need, so pick and choose at will. Perhaps you already have your own questions.

- How did the films make you feel? Empowered, excited, inspired, refreshed, sad, curious, confused?
- Which parts of which films brought up these feelings?
- Did any of the films challenge your perceptions about the world and your place in it?
- Did you gain an insight, learn something new, or think about a familiar topic from a different perspective?
- Which film was most memorable for you? What set it apart from the others?
- Which (if any) character (protagonist) in a film resonated with you most, and why?
- Do you feel any of these films are particularly insightful or relevant (timely) now? If so, why? Or why not?
- Do you have any questions that you would have liked to ask the director(s) or actor(s) of a particular film?
- What similarities and differences did you notice in the approaches to the themes that run throughout the program? For example, gender and gender identity, sisterhood, stages of life, benefits to be gained by taking a risk and stepping outside of our comfort zone, our bodies/ourselves, inclusiveness versus othering, where and how we find joy, the empowerment in the various ways we collect ourselves—in families, friendships, communities, elective affinities.

For example, what can you discuss about the freedom that can come with outdoor activities as portrayed in the three films *Reclaim Your Water*, *This is Beth*, and *Swimming Through*?

What do you think about the experiences of the women who have come to the United States from elsewhere, e.g. the women portrayed in *Miss Chelove and More than I Want to Remember*, or those whose families have roots in other cultures, e.g. *Syed Family Xmas Eve Game Night*.

- Is there a film (or more than one) that is particularly relevant to the members of your group or audience? You may want to build your discussion by focusing just on those.



**Suggestions for film-specific questions for group discussion:**

***Reclaim Your Water*** – Faith E. Briggs, Director

- Natasha says, “Everyone wants to try something that they don’t even know they want to try, until someone invites them in.” How does that manifest in the film, in society, and in your life?
- Natasha states that the idea of us being post-racial is inaccurate. What are your thoughts about this.
- Besides the beach, are there other locations, activities where Black folks aren’t particularly well represented or comfortable?
- What is an activity that brings you joy?

***Miss Chelove*** – Sara T. Gama, Director (*pronounced Saw-RA*)

Miss Chelove’s [website](#)

- Miss Chelove goes **big** with her art. Her canvases are 2, 3, 4 stories tall. What do you think it means for her as an artist to express herself on such a large scale? How does the scale of her work affect the viewer?
- Cita’s mother said, “If you don’t try, you’ll never know,” which resonates when thinking about what it takes to come from Java to America, or what any immigration journey is like. Do you agree that her mother was “bold in her exploration of life”?
- Cita talks about the responsibility she feels to represent her Indonesian culture and heritage. What about the immigrant experience do you take away from this film?
- Did you grow up within an extended family or discover them later in life as Cita did? What was that experience like for you?
- Cita wants her artworks to communicate a connection with the power of strong resilient women and the power of the indigenous. Do you see that power in her works?
- As Cita was “coming up”, there were not a lot of other women doing this art form. Where did she find the strength and support, as an ethnically ambiguous “other” person, to pursue her development as an artist? Where do we find and give support?
- Are there large public art works or murals where you live or that you’ve visited? Who do they represent?

***Pete*** – Bret Parker, Director & Pete Barma, Writer & Producer

*Pete* was selected by Whoopi Goldberg to premiere in the animation program at the 2022 Tribeca Film Festival. Whoopi has said she showed it to her nine-year-old granddaughter who said “Oh, there’s a Pete in my class!”



- Do you think today's cultural climate makes it easier or more difficult than it was in the '70s for kids and parents to work with issues of identity?
- What would you say to kids who, like Whoopi's granddaughter, are realizing that they have a gender nonconforming "Pete" in their class.
- How do we talk to kids today about finding the courage to be their authentic self?
- Do you think it was difficult for Pete's mom to be such a determined and effective advocate for her kid? She is the superhero of this movie and to some extent, a role model for how to be an ally. Discuss what characteristics and strategies you know of that make for effective advocating and ally-ship.
- Do you think animation was a good way to tell this story?

***This is Beth*** – Jen Randall, Director

The film looks beneath the success of Beth's career into her grappling with body image and cruel self-talk and celebrates how she transformed this dynamic to rediscover the love of her sport and herself.

- Did you find Beth a relatable and sympathetic character?
- Discuss the difference between how issues of body image and negative self-talk might affect people competing at the top of their sports as opposed to people involved in sports just for the fun of it as in *Reclaim Your Water*.
- What are the pros and cons of pushing for excellence in an athletic activity?
- The film isn't able to show all the work Beth did to get healthy. How do you know when your competition with yourself isn't good for you, and what are some of the options or techniques for finding balance?

***More Than I Want to Remember*** – Amy Bench, Director

[Office of Refugee Resettlement](#)

Mugeni is a teenager when she flees the very complicated conflict in southeastern Congo where militia attacks on the Banyamulenge, a persecuted minority, have led to the destruction of hundreds of villages and the displacement of over 200,000 people. As a result of the genocide, many Banyamulenge have ended up as refugees in neighboring countries.

In the United States, the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program now assists refugees from 50 countries. Unaccompanied children who are nationals of Afghanistan and Ukraine are now also eligible for Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Program support.



- Does this short film, with its very personal and intimate story, help you understand what it might mean to be a refugee? Did you learn something new that you don't get from the news or statistics?
- What does the film say about the role of the US as a safe and welcoming sanctuary for persecuted people?
- Have you encountered refugees in your community? Are there programs available to assist them?
- What did you think of the animation and the beauty of its visuals? Was it an effective way to tell this story?

***Syed Family Xmas Eve Game Night*** – Fawzia Mirza, Director & Kausar Mohammed, Producer & Actor

*While Noor (Kausar Mohammed), the youngest sister and a queer Pakistani Muslim woman, is a bit anxious about bringing her Puerto Rican girlfriend, Luz, home for the first time on the family's annual game night, the unexpected appearance of the eldest sister really ups the ante leading to the ultimate Trial by Chai.*

Holiday movies and rom-coms are cherished American genres, and often white, white, white—so it's wonderful to see a rom-com in which a queer Muslim Brown couple from two different cultures “meet the family.”

- Do you have a favorite scene or line? For example, Soraya's question to Luz: “Are you white?”
- The story's trajectory toward the happy ending is full of delights. What does it show about the not so obvious bonds between the sisters and family members?
- How is it that sisterhood triumphs for the happy ending?
- Do you have any experiences of confrontations at family gatherings that are or are not resolved that you'd like to share?

*“Bringing this story to the screen has been such a dream every step of the way,” Mohammed said of the project. “This project is a showcase of queer, Muslim, BIPOC talent—from the South Asian artists featured on the soundtrack to our amazing cast and crew. I want people to see this and feel the magic of what happens when communities who haven't been given a voice can finally tell their own stories.”*

- Do you think that this comedy does what Kausar hopes for in her introduction: to normalize Muslim identities on screen and to uplift the importance of joy?

***Swimming Through*** – Samantha Sanders, Director

The film shows a wonderful example of unexpected benefits and an almost Zen commitment to a daily practice, and unexpected benefits. With the beautiful photography and uplifting



story, the film recognizes the importance of outdoor public space that provides urban dwellers the opportunity to be out in nature.

- While a daily sunrise swim in a freezing cold lake (or any swim) may not be your choice, does the general principle resonate with your experiences?

If anyone here is familiar with Chicago, you probably know the location of the film, Promontory Point in Hyde Park, and the history of community support for its restoration. The film premiered as the local citizenry continues to battle for the preservation of Promontory Point's limestone revetment. The film's three characters traveled the country to share this film and their story, which underlines the Point's unique value.

Is there a special place in your community, that, like Promontory Point, is in need of preservation?

What kind of unique opportunities for experiences does it provide?

Is there any community activity around protecting that place?

[https://www.hpherald.com/evening\\_digest/promontory-point-preservation-study-up-for-federal-funding/article\\_2751b684-daf1-11ec-b162-139ed7d5fb86.html](https://www.hpherald.com/evening_digest/promontory-point-preservation-study-up-for-federal-funding/article_2751b684-daf1-11ec-b162-139ed7d5fb86.html)

[https://www.hpherald.com/evening\\_digest/celebrating-85-years-of-promontory-point/article\\_d28784ec-e132-11ec-9af1-e3ab2ab499ad.html](https://www.hpherald.com/evening_digest/celebrating-85-years-of-promontory-point/article_d28784ec-e132-11ec-9af1-e3ab2ab499ad.html)