



[THE TUBA THIEVES]

ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

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Letter from the Filmmaker

The Tuba Thieves is a listening project that has been constructed through a process I equate to the children’s game Telephone. In this game, a phrase or sentence is passed down a line of whispering participants, morphing through mishearing. In the spirit of this joy surrounding misunderstanding, I have likewise created *The Tuba Thieves* as a celebration of how I hear, how information and stories transform in my ears, and the imaginative and generative possibilities in this. Everything in the film is rooted in deeply researched sound anecdotes, histories, experiences, and events. I require captions for films and often feel they attempt to “raise” a Deaf or hard of hearing person’s experience to a hearing experience. I am putting forth the idea of a more effective method: allowing hard of hearing and Deaf people to determine the value system from which captions are developed to best match their own experiences and desires of sound description. *The Tuba Thieves* is radically shifting the use of subtitles and captions by considering them as a third narrative space equal to visuals and sound.

Ultimately, this film is a meditation on access and loss and an investigation into what it means to steal, make, lose, own, protest against, and legislate sound and, therefore, inversely, quiet and peace. The history of sound segregation is deeply embedded in Los Angeles, through the design and mediation of sound. These choices declare an ownership over space and air, how sound travels through these substrates, and who is allowed or obligated to hear it.

During one scene, a group of Deaf friends discuss the loud BOOM and cloud of vapor that appears when a plane breaks the sound barrier, which is a phenomenon that occurs when something travels faster than the speed of sound. Deaf people, too, are traveling outside of the confines of sound, and I love this. The sound barrier in my life means a lack of access and ableism, so with *The Tuba Thieves* I hope to break sound barriers.

—Alison O’Daniel, director, *The Tuba Thieves*



About the Film

FILM SYNOPSIS AND OVERVIEW

In early November 2011, tubas were stolen from a high school in Los Angeles. About a week later, tubas were stolen from a different high school. A month passed and tubas were stolen from yet another high school. This continued: 12 schools in Southern California had their tubas stolen between 2011 and 2013. When reporters told the story, they focused on the thieves and asked: Who is doing this? Why? What is happening to the tubas? They did not seem curious about what a marching band sounds like without the lowest sound. They did not wonder what the tuba players were now doing in class. No one asked what happens when sound is stolen or lost, owned or delegated.

The Tuba Thieves starts from these questions. It is a film about listening, but it is not tethered to the ear. It is a film about Deaf gain, hearing loss, and the perception of sound in Los Angeles—by animals, plants, and humans. The human protagonist of the film is Nyke Prince, a Deaf woman whose story runs parallel to that of Geovanny Marroquin. Geovanny was the drum major at Centennial High School when their tubas were stolen. Their stories are connected by the omnipresence of noise pollution—helicopters, airplanes, leaf blowers, car traffic. The audience is the third protagonist—their experience of making sense of the film also is the film.

In *The Tuba Thieves*, Los Angeles life during the time of the tuba thefts is interrupted by unconventional reenactments of historic concerts: an irritated man leaves John Cage's 1952 premiere of 4'33" (where a pianist sat at a piano for 4 minutes and 33 seconds without playing a note); punks and Deafies intermingle at the 1979 final punk show at an infamous Deaf Club in San Francisco; and students tell how they organized a 1984 surprise Prince concert at Gallaudet University, an institution for d/Deaf and hard of hearing people. All these elements combine to build an exploration of sound, music, and an affection for miscommunication.

Visit [The Tuba Thieves Independent Lens webpage](#) to learn more.

BACKGROUND ABOUT D/DEAFNESS AND DISABILITY

The Tuba Thieves invites its audiences into deeper discussions about sound, sight, sensory translation, and subjective perception. As such, it is not a film exclusively “about” deafness. It is also not solely “about” the experiences of the d/Deaf community. Audience members who attend public screenings of *The Tuba Thieves*—whether they are d/Deaf, hearing, hard of hearing, disabled, nondisabled, or anything else—will all have their own perspectives to share about the world of the film.

In preparation for an event, organizers may find it helpful to become familiar with some general d/Deaf and disability-related terms. Several brief definitions and guidelines appear below. Some of these guidelines are courtesy of the [National Center on Disability and Journalism, AI-Media](#), Reid Davenport for [“I Didn’t See You There,”](#) and the [National Association of the Deaf \(NAD\)](#).

What is ASL?

American Sign Language (ASL) is a natural language complete with its own grammar and syntax. ASL is visual—taken in with the eyes and expressed through hands, faces, bodies, and 3D space. Sign languages are dynamic, living languages that are the core of Deaf culture and identity. Many countries have their own sign language—there are well over 100 sign languages globally, and regions have dialects, much like the many languages spoken all over the world. Like all languages, sign languages, including ASL, are living languages that grow and change over time.

Descriptions to avoid

Do not refer to ASL as a “communication tool” or “communication mode,” as “broken English,” as “codified English,” or as “signed word for word like English.”

Do not refer to d/Deaf or hard of hearing people as “hearing impaired.”

For any Deaf people/culture/language-related questions:

When asking questions about ASL, Deaf people, “how to sign ____,” for example, respectfully defer to Deaf people to answer, if present.

What is the difference between a person who is “deaf,” “Deaf,” or “hard of hearing”?

The d/Deaf and hard of hearing community is diverse. There are variations in how a person becomes deaf or hard of hearing, level of hearing, age of onset, educational background, communication methods, and cultural identity. How people “label” or identify themselves is personal and may reflect identification with the Deaf and hard of hearing community, the degree to which they can hear, or the relative age of onset.

“Deaf” with an uppercase “D”

The word *Deaf* with a capital “D” indicates people with hearing loss who share a cultural identity with other Deaf people. In addition, those within a given Deaf community generally use the same sign language.

“deaf” with a lowercase “d”

The word *deaf* with a lowercase “d” simply refers to the physical condition of having hearing loss. People who identify as deaf with a lowercase “d” don’t always have a strong connection to the Deaf community and don’t always use sign language. They may prefer to communicate with speech. There are a variety of reasons why a person identifies as deaf. For example, they may have been born to hearing parents and grown up in the hearing world with little or no exposure to the Deaf community or they may have been born with hearing and experienced hearing loss later.

Hard of hearing

The term *hard of hearing* is widely accepted to describe mild to moderate to severe hearing loss. A person who is hard of hearing often does not use sign language as their first or preferred language, whether because they never had the opportunity to learn a sign language or because they preferred not to use a sign language.

Disabled

Many disabled people identify with “disability” (and all its iterations) as a political identity. The reasoning behind this is that disability is a social construct, rather than a medical phenomenon. The terms *people with disabilities* or *disabled people* are both valid. A rule of thumb for non-disabled people is to refer, when appropriate, to someone as a person with a disability unless asked by that person to use other language (e.g., disabled person).

Terms like differently abled, special needs, handicapable, impaired, limited, and wheelchair-bound are problematic. In addition, framing disabled people as inspiring, courageous, and so on is dehumanizing and othering. The media at large has perpetuated these storylines to the detriment of disabled people.

Able-bodied / Nondisabled

These terms are used to describe someone who does not identify as having a disability. Some members of the disability community oppose the term *able-bodied* because it implies that all people with disabilities lack able bodies, or the ability to use their bodies well. They may prefer “nondisabled” as being more accurate.

SCREENING OBJECTIVES

Indie Lens Pop-Up screenings of *The Tuba Thieves* will pursue the following objectives:

- Center d/Deaf perspectives and experiences of sound, sight, and multimedia.
- Invite varied communities to consider and discuss the sensory worlds they occupy.
- Encourage reflection about how intersectional identities and lived experiences affect our perceptions of the sounds and sights in the film.
- Prompt conversations about captioning and access as rich and complex forms of artistic production.

Engagement Suggestions and Overview

HOW TO SHOW THE FILM

Event facilitators are encouraged to show the shorter film segments in this engagement guide either as stand-alone clips or combined, depending on your audience and overall goals for your event.

Think about the format you plan to use for your event: moderated conversation, audience discussion, interactive group activity, and more. Upcoming sections of this guide suggest various activities and discussion questions for each film excerpt. Activities can be done in small or large groups, depending on venue and audience.

Next, pick a space appropriate for your chosen format: a theater, a meeting room, a flexible seating space set up for a lecture, group tables. Plan on taking roughly 1.5 hours for your screening event.

BASIC TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

Remember that experiences of deafness, hearing loss, disability, and sensory perception are deeply variable and deeply intersectional. The members of the d/Deaf community who appear in the film—and who may show up at your screening event—are not a monolith. The world of d/Deafness is a spectrum, as well as an alternative way of experiencing the world of sound and sight. Facilitators should keep this diversity in mind as much as possible.

During your event, encourage your audience members to share different life experiences and perspectives. Know that some of these differences may initially feel unfamiliar to audience members who are hearing. Urge everyone to bring their personal responses to the film, and then engage in reflections with others.

IDEAS FOR HOSTING AN EVENT

As you plan your *The Tuba Thieves* screening event, consider collaborating with your local d/Deaf community. Reach out to local or national organizations (several are listed below) to seek out d/Deaf people as moderators and event co-organizers. Also remember to plan for accessible communication and ASL interpreting as you pursue these collaborations.

Further ideas for engaging with your local community include the following:

- Connect with local arts, culture, music, and disability advocacy groups. Invite these groups to come to your event, promote it within their communities, and lead an activity or conversation of their choosing.
- Highlight existing art forms, like ASL poetry and dance troupes. Some regions of the United States host regular ASL slam events, some are home to a variety of d/Deaf and disability-related arts groups and nonprofits, and others have their own unique

d/Deaf arts events. One example is the Boston-based nonprofit [DEAFinitely, Inc.](#), which brings together diverse d/Deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing youth through dance and mentoring. You might consider inviting a group like this to your event.

- Engage with the senses beyond vision and sound. Look up local art projects and exhibits that highlight different sensory experiences and may be more accessible to people with various sensory abilities. Or invite your audience to participate in brainstorming about what these kinds of exhibits could be like. As one example, check out archival materials from [The Senses: Design Beyond Vision](#), a multisensory exhibition at New York City's Cooper Hewitt Museum in 2018.

SUGGESTED PARTNERSHIPS

Many of these national organizations have local chapters, as well as various resources (both online and in-person) for further learning and community building.

- [The National Association of the Deaf](#)
- [Hearing Loss Association of America](#)
- [Association of Late-Deafened Adults](#)
- [American Society for Deaf Children](#)
- [Hands and Voices](#)
- [National Black Deaf Advocates](#)

Consider reaching out to local organizations to find community partners, as well as to advertise your event more broadly.

- Most states have an agency or commission for the deaf and hard of hearing (DHH). Find [NAD's list of state DHH agencies](#).
- Check social media and search for local influencers in the Deaf community. Engaging with online personalities will help spread the word about your event.
- Look up a Deaf school in your area. The Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf has a [list of accredited schools](#). When looking up a Deaf school, keep in mind that this film is more suitable for high school and college students than for younger children.
- Find out about ASL classes or accredited ASL interpreting programs that are nearby. See [this list of Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education programs](#) and also check out the [search tools](#) from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.
- The San Francisco Public Library has an online [list of Deaf organizations](#). See if any institutions in your area have similar resources.



Film Excerpts and Activity Prompts

EXCERPT 1: OPENING SCENES

Scenes in this Segment:

Los Angeles skyline and noise / Nyke in the recording studio / Nature Boy at the audiologist's / Traffic noise / Local high schools and tubas / Band players on the bus / Deaf friends hanging out / Nyke in the closet, opening credits / Tubas stolen / Black-and-white ASL depiction of Nyke and Nature Boy

Goal:

Allow audiences to experience the world of the film for themselves while uncovering and sharing their own individual responses to it.

Total Runtime: 20:50

Background Information:

(For event facilitators: The information in these background sections is for you to use however you wish. Draw from them as a resource for introductory comments, use them as talking points during your event, or incorporate them into your activities and discussions. Also feel free to share directly with audiences if time permits.)

The first 20 minutes of *The Tuba Thieves* immerse us in the unique artistic concerns and cinematic language of the film. We witness the sprawling setting of Los Angeles in the background, crisscrossed by highways and the flight paths of jet planes. Then we meet the film's central characters: Nyke, a Deaf woman who works at a sound recording studio; her partner, Nature Boy, whom we first see inventing ASL poetry during a mind-numbingly routine audiogram test; their wider circle of signing Deaf friends, who hang out together and tell engaging stories about breaking the sound barrier; and, of course, the film's eponymous tubas—the musical instruments whose unexplained thefts from high school marching bands first sparked director Alison O'Daniel's curiosity.

When these tuba thefts began in Southern California in 2011, O'Daniel wondered about the tuba players, imagining them in class, empty-handed, bored, listening. She wondered how the band sounded without its lowest instrument. How did schools replace them? Before these thefts were even over, O'Daniel had decided to make *The Tuba Thieves*. O'Daniel identifies as d/Deaf. She wears hearing aids, but she grew up in a hearing family in a hearing culture. As an adult, she started to learn ASL. She describes her experiences of living on the d/Deaf spectrum as frustrating and disorienting with delays in comprehension, a range of misinterpretations (from the comical to the psychedelic), an awareness of social expectations and norms around volume and behavior, heightening of other senses, and a constant reimagining of communication, language, and the aural world.

O'Daniel's goal in creating *The Tuba Thieves* was not to focus on the thieves—nor even the tubas themselves—but to consider how listening can become a form of storytelling. The sonic experiences of living and listening in Los Angeles arise throughout these opening scenes, which invite the audience into a heightened sonic sensitivity. As we watch the film's characters interact and respond to sound in different ways, we become more aware of our own sonic responses and assumptions. If we, too, remain curious, we can enter a discussion with each other about what we see and hear, how it may surprise us—and why.

Before Viewing:

- Prompt audiences to pay attention to elements such as sound, visuals, captions, camera movements, editing, and the ways the characters are portrayed.
- As you watch, consider these questions: How are you receiving information about the narrative and the film? How does this feel familiar or strange to you?

Suggested Activities:

1. Invite audience members to break out into groups and share their initial responses to *The Tuba Thieves*. If they had to choose a facial expression, a few words, or a bodily gesture to describe their impressions, what would those be? And why?
2. In response to the audiology-booth scene, play a game of Telephone. Audience members will break into groups and choose one mutually accessible form of information to share with each other—for example, sight, sound, or touch. Then one person will send a short burst of information down the telephone chain: making some kind of noise, making a face or gesturing a visual shape into the air, or tapping a distinctive pattern on the next person’s arm. After the message has passed down the chain, consider these questions: How did individual subjectivities and sensory impressions change the message’s eventual meaning? Can you imagine creating a poem out of these fragments?
3. For a larger-format activity, organize a live performance to go with this film segment, such as an ASL slam poetry segment involving local Deaf poets.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

1. Consider the tuba-stealing scene. There are parts of the scene that are off-screen, and some that are not heard. Can we guess what is happening based on the sound/ visuals? Why or why not?
2. Does stealing/removing the tubas as part of the narrative influence the film’s soundtrack and score? Continue to think about these sorts of sonic filmmaking choices as we watch other clips from this film.
3. Now consider the scene that features a group of Deaf friends hanging out. How does the camera lens affect the way you follow this conversation? And how do these Deaf characters engage with the sonic environments around them—or not?
4. Think about the relationship between captions and sound that you have noticed so far. Does no sound = no captions? Does the presence of captions = sound? How have you engaged with the captions in this film?
5. What response did you have to the final scene in this segment, in which Nature Boy and Nyke’s relationship unfolds via a black-and-white ASL storyteller? How does this scene feel different from watching the live filmed scenes? How can ASL function as its own form of cinematography?

Resources:

- For more overviews of *The Tuba Thieves*, especially when preparing to show clips, check out [this review](#) in *Variety* or [this one](#) in *Screenanarchy*.
- For an interview with Alison O’Daniel about the film, read [this piece](#) in *Filmmaker Magazine*.



EXCERPT 2: THE DEAF CLUB

Scenes in this Segment:

Split screen: Deaf and hearing audiences mingle in a reenactment of The Deaf Club in the late 1970s.

Goals:

- Think more deeply about how musical performance contains many different layers of meaning, from sensory to cultural to phenomenological.
- Consider how various communities can engage with music—or not!

Total Runtime: 3:40



Background Information:

While music often has a central role in hearing culture, d/Deaf and hard of hearing people can experience music in a range of different ways. Some love attending concerts; some love playing instruments; some love composing and performing their own music, sometimes incorporating elements of sign language. They listen to music through hearing aids and cochlear implants, through feeling vibrations, or through song lyrics and dance. And they also create innovative ways—holding inflatable balloons in the air, standing by the bass speakers—to engage with musical events that aren’t always accessible.

But individual ways of engaging with sound and music vary, and some DHH people aren’t big music aficionados, preferring to engage with other interests and forms of socializing. This scene in *The Tuba Thieves* highlights The Deaf Club, a notable punk music venue that was open in the Mission District of San Francisco for 18 months between 1978 and 1980. (The venue first opened when Daphne Hanrahan—who at the time was the manager of the punk band The Offs—confused the San Francisco Club of the Deaf with an actual musical club, then decided to rent out the space to make it into a punk venue.) Two or three concerts took place at The Deaf Club each week, where hearing punk fans rocked out to the music alongside Deaf community members who had come for their own regular social hangouts.

In reenacting a scene from this historic venue, *The Tuba Thieves* juxtaposes different subjective and cultural worlds, inviting us to consider the real-life moments and locations where d/Deaf and hearing people coexist alongside each other. The film ponders how these varied lives can overlap in time and space—especially when individual perceptions and priorities are quite different.

Before Viewing:

- Encourage audiences to pay attention to the use of a split screen in this film clip. What do you see on each side of the screen, and how does it change?
- Think about the different kinds of people you see onscreen and their relationship to this environment.

Suggested Activities:

1. While watching this scene (or any of the scenes), give each audience member a balloon to hold to experience sound and music differently, through haptic input and tactile resonance. Highlight [The Heavy Air campaign](#) started by director Alison O'Daniel.
2. Bring in a local musical group for a live performance: a jazz troupe, a punk band, others. Then explicitly invite audiences to engage with the music in any way their bodies want to. They can dance or sway or wheel in place, hold their balloons in the air, get up close and personal to watch the performers, or touch the bass speakers. Also invite audience members to use the architecture and objects in the room to feel the music: lean on a table, hold a chair, lie on the ground, and so on.
3. Highlight existing d/Deaf musicians: Show a clip from [Evelyn Glennie](#), [Sean Forbes](#), [Matt Maxey](#), [Wawa Snipe](#) (who appears in this film), and others. Emphasize the originality of d/Deaf musical innovation, as distinct from other related phenomena like ASL interpreting at concerts.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

1. What are the different responses you see from the various people in this musical scene? What kinds of experiences do you think they might be having? Whose points of views are we alternating between? (hearing band members, hearing audience, Deaf audience, etc.)
2. What kind of experience did you have while watching this scene and holding your balloon? How did this feel to you? (Facilitators: Remember that music may be more or less important to each individual audience member, and this is okay.)
3. What are the different spaces and ways in which you experience music? (in the background, at a concert, through headphones, socially, privately, etc.) How do these experiences differ from each other?
4. What sensations do you feel when the sound and visuals of the film don't conventionally match—such as when you can't hear the band playing, but you still see them playing? How does this highlight different forms of experience and perception?

Resources:

- FoundSF, a digital history archive of San Francisco, has [this informative page](#) about The Deaf Club and its history.
- [The Heavy Air campaign](#) page provides more context behind the balloons used for screening events of *The Tuba Thieves*.



EXCERPT 3: HUMMING PLANTS

Scenes in this Segment:

Outside cabin, cloudy day / Inside truck cab with plants, rain pounding
/ Inside truck cargo with plants humming

Goal:

- Highlight the sensory perspectives and expectations typically embedded in films' sound editing and captions.
- Invite audiences to think about captions as a site of translation, knowledge, art, political reclaiming, and even humor.

Total Runtime: 3:22



Background Information:

In filmmaking, *diegetic* sound refers to the sounds that can be heard by characters in a movie or in a TV show. Such sounds fit directly within the narrative world of the film: spoken dialogue, cars honking, birds singing, the shouts of other characters in the environment, and so on.

Nondiegetic sound, however, refers to the sounds that are not heard by the film's or TV show's characters, but only by the audience. These sounds are added to the film during the postproduction process: the film's soundtrack and score, voiceover narration a character's internal dialogue, and so on.

The Tuba Thieves challenges us to think about diegetic and nondiegetic sound in new ways. It prompts us to reconsider where exactly certain sounds are coming from, as well as who is hearing them. The film achieves this through its sound editing and audio production, as well as through its use of captions. The captions onscreen are an essential component of experiencing *The Tuba Thieves*. Rather than being "standard" or "boilerplate" accessibility tools that center typical hearing understandings of sound, these captions have all been composed by d/Deaf and hard of hearing people. They explore sound in new ways. They are frequently playful and creative. They beckon us to consider what we hear and how we describe it—and also what we expect to hear or see when we watch a film.

Before Viewing:

Pay attention to the sounds you hear or see in this clip. And pay special attention to the captions and what they are doing.

Suggested Activities:

1. Write out some of the captions from this scene (or from the opening segments of *The Tuba Thieves*) on assorted pieces of paper. Pass them around, then ask audience members to discuss in small groups. What sorts of effect, style, information, and perspective are embedded in each of these captions? Or what imagery/sounds would you relate to the captions written on the pieces of paper, without knowing their original context in the film?
2. Alternatively, provide the audience with one shared piece of media (a postcard from your city, a paragraph from that day's newspaper, a short audio or video clip from the local news). Ask everyone to break into smaller groups, then explain that they will translate this artifact into an entirely different sensory medium. They might describe an image through sound or through written text, or maybe express a sonic concept through facial expression or a drawing. After this sensory-translation activity is complete, ask the audience to reflect on these questions: How many different interpretations did you come up with? What was your sensory-translation process like? During your translation process, which types of information did you decide were most important to express? Which groups of people did you imagine would be engaging with these translations?

Suggested Discussion Questions:

1. Which sounds in this clip are diegetic and which are nondiegetic? How do you know? What about in other clips or moments you have seen so far?
2. Consider how the plants become “characters” in this short segment from *The Tuba Thieves*, when sound and movement give them signs of life. Would removing the sound/movement take away from this perception?
3. What are some of the expected and unexpected sounds you have noticed from the visuals in the film, during this scene and others? What made these sounds feel expected or unexpected to you? (subjective real-life experiences, cultural norms, cinematic conventions, etc.)
4. What have you noticed about the placement, appearance, style, and usage of the captions throughout this film? How are these features similar to or different from captions you've encountered in the past?
5. How can captions and other accessibility tools become a central part of experiencing films and multimedia, rather than being only an add-on or afterthought?

Resources:

- For more on how captions can do a more thoughtful job of engaging with the DHH community, check out Alison O'Daniel's [“How to Caption” resource](#).
- O'Daniel also highlights the importance of captioning equity in her short essay [“Film Festivals—And All Movie Theaters—Need Open Captions”](#) (*Variety*, January 22, 2023).
- Christine Sun Kim's [“Rewriting Closed Captions” video](#) (2020) is another playful look into captions and the Deaf experience.
- For more on creative captions from Kim, look at their [“Captioning the City” exhibit](#) (Manchester, UK, 2021).



EXCERPTS 4 AND 5: SEEING SOUND

Segments In This Section:

First segment: Film montage of neighborhood with noise pollution, dB on screen / Geovanny stuck outside his house / Montage of historic photos of jet planes and LAX neighborhoods

Second segment: Montage of historic photos of planes breaking the speed of sound / Drum concert

Goal:

- Think about what we describe as “noise,” as well as the impact of noise pollution on different groups of people.
- Engage with how sound is something that can be seen (or understood in a primarily visual way), not solely heard.

Total Runtime: 5:30



Background Information:

Los Angeles is known for its noise pollution. The noise from the jet planes at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) became an increasingly prevalent issue of social and environmental justice during the 1960s, when the earliest transcontinental commercial jet flights brought the city into the “jet age.” As LAX expanded, adding more terminals and transforming from a municipal airport into a major international airport, residents whose homes were right under the flight paths started to live with the near-constant sounds of jet planes overhead.

These noisy planes raised many concerns: about the stress caused by ongoing noise exposure, about the impact of this noise exposure on health and well-being, and about the (often-marginalized) communities that wound up with little choice but to endure these sonic environments. Such concerns about public health and social privilege are highly political and are ongoing. Noise has presumably become one of the central features of modern life, and it is present throughout *The Tuba Thieves*, where both the human and the animal residents of Los Angeles navigate their auditory surroundings in various ways—and with various consequences.

These short clips invite us to think more deeply about noise pollution, as well as about how different people and creatures can experience it. Some are unwillingly subjected to the adverse impacts of noise, whereas others may perceive its effects in other ways, including through their eyes and their social observations.

Before Viewing:

Think about how noise is present throughout these clips. How does it arise through the visuals, through sound editing, and through different people’s responses onscreen?

Suggested Activity:

1. Gather in small groups and consider how they have each experienced noise in their own life. Have each group member think of an example of a situation, setting, or emotional experience that feels “noisy” and to then think about how to express this “noise pollution” without the use of sound. Ask them to draw an image, create a short nonverbal skit, or invent some other physical rendition of what this experience of noise feels like for them.
2. Alternatively, ask them to consider these questions as a group: Why do we describe certain phenomena as “noise”? What do the terms *inner noise*, *emotional noise*, “*go make some noise*” (to object to an unacceptable situation), and so on mean to you? What is “noise” when sound is not involved? What effect can noise (real sonic noise or otherwise) have on different people?

Suggested Discussion Questions:

1. What does “seeing” sound look like? How does this experience arise in these clips?
2. What is the difference between noise and music? How might different people answer this question?
3. What information is transmitted through sound that we don’t always think about? (The distance between objects, someone’s tone of voice, wider social judgments about what is “normal” or “abnormal,” etc.) What type of information is transmitted through visuals that we don’t always think about?
4. In film, can we rely on the information we see and hear to lead us to the same social and personal conclusions that we might experience in real life? Why and why not? How can a filmmaker’s decisions guide us into certain forms of perception?
5. How is noise pollution an issue of social and environmental justice? Can you think of examples from your own life and your own community?

Resources:

- Read the [LAX Noise Management Program report](#) from the Environmental and Land Use Planning Division of the Los Angeles International Airport about LAX-related noise pollution concerns, current noise reduction measures, and some of their histories.
- The article [“Poor neighborhood endures worst LAX noise but is left out of home soundproofing program”](#) about low-income neighborhoods and soundproofing (from 2019) is one of many from *The Los Angeles Times* highlighting the impacts of airport noise on different communities in Los Angeles.
- Check out this [interactive piece “Noise Can Take Years Off your Life. Here’s How.”](#) from The New York Times on the health effects of prolonged noise exposure.



EXCERPT 6: RACE, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND MOTHERHOOD

Segment in this Section:

Nyke and her father seated outside, back patio

Goals:

- Consider the hopes and fears that arise with becoming a parent, preparing to care for a new life in an unpredictable and unequal world.
- Discuss the intersections between race/disability/gender in American social contexts.

Total Runtime: 3:04



Background Information:

In this intimate scene, the film's protagonist, Nyke Prince, sits down with her father and discusses the relationship she has with Nature Boy, as well as her hopes and apprehensions about becoming a mother. Several of her concerns are directly related to her experience as a Black Deaf woman in America.

Just like all other human experiences, the personal lived realities of DHH people are highly intersectional, and in this clip, Nyke highlights several of her everyday fears: failing to hear the fire alarm, being pulled over by police as a Black Deaf woman, messing up when she feels there is no room for error. This scene exposes the ongoing and well-documented fear and mistrust of the police that Black Americans experience while also introducing the experiences of DHH people into this mix. It candidly invites us to consider the intersections between race, disability, deafness, and motherhood.

Before Viewing:

- Highlight the importance of engaging with different people's intimate and vulnerable experiences of how to navigate the world.
- What joys and fears does parenthood or the prospect of parenthood raise for you? For the communities you belong to?

Suggested Discussion Questions:

1. What are the different emotions Nyke discusses in this scene? Where do they come from? Why does she say she is experiencing the “emotional fallout” of her pregnancy?
2. Nyke says, “You could make one small, stupid mistake.” Why does Nyke feel like she has less room for error in her life? How does this reflect her lived experiences? How does motherhood raise the stakes of these everyday experiences?
3. Connect this scene with the conversations that are taking place around race, disability, and policing in America. What are the assumptions that police officers may have when pulling over a motorist who is Black? What if this person is also d/Deaf or hard of hearing? Or disabled? What are some ways that law enforcement can engage proactively and respectfully with these communities?
4. At the end of the scene, Nyke’s father says reassuringly, “We’ll all raise her.” What are the family structures and forms of community you have observed throughout this film? How would you describe Nyke and Nature Boy’s relationship versus the relationship Nyke has with her father?

Resources:

- [National Black Deaf Advocates](#) is the nation’s official advocacy organization for Black DHH Americans.
- Check out the [Black Deaf Center’s website](#) for many vlogs, links, personal stories, and assorted resources for understanding the experiences of Black DHH people in America.
- Read [Black, Disabled and at Risk 2020 article](#) from *TIME* magazine about the problem of police violence against Americans with disabilities.



Tips for Hosting Accessible Events

Contributed by Yaara Kedem

Use this screening opportunity to introduce various accessibility practices to your event that allow participation of audiences with a wide range of disabilities. “Accessibility” can be achieved by considering the access points of individuals with different types of disabilities, including sight, hearing, mobility, neurodivergence, and others.

The following tips can help you plan an accessible and inclusive screening event, as well as future events. Make as many of the following access practices as possible available by default, and be sure to state them clearly and repeatedly online, at the venue, and during the program introduction. Doing so relieves the near-constant pressure on people with disabilities to have to go out of their way to ask for what they need. It also acknowledges that many disabilities are not visible, and people with disabilities should not be required to share.

PRE-EVENT PLANNING

Inclusion and representation

- Include people with disabilities in the planning of your event as leaders, presenters, and panelists. Be sure to accommodate their access points and to compensate them for their work.
- Partner with local organizations related to your program to consult, help plan the event, provide speakers or moderators, and invite their community to attend.

Building and facilities

- When selecting a space to host your event, tour the venue and consider the unobstructed zero-step accessibility of entrances, elevators, restrooms, socializing/reception areas, passageways, and availability of wheelchair and companion adjustable seating spaces.
- If you are hosting receptions, include low-height tables/bars, dietary options, labels, straws, and serving assistance.
- Check the venue's tech capabilities, including microphones, a screen, and assistive listening devices. Ensure that they are compatible with the video segments to be screened.

Venue setup

- Set up an “access desk” at the entrance to the venue with a point person whose tasks are to provide accessibility information and support (e.g. distribute large-print programs, hand out assistive devices) as needed.
- Designate a quiet “sensory relief area” near the event space for attendees who need a break to decompress. Prevent crowding, loud noises, or glaring/flickering lights to alleviate sensory overload.
- Hang signs throughout the venue indicating the following: screening location, check-in area, restrooms, wheelchair/companion/easy access seating, access desk, sensory relief area, assistive device pickup (if applicable), and so on.
- Designate a service animal relief area.

Program accessibility

- The film’s screening files include open on-screen captions. When setting up the screen, test to make sure captions are visible from all seating areas.
- For the live-speaking portions of the event:
 - Provide ASL interpreters standing in a well-lit part of the stage directly visible to audiences.
 - Provide 1-2 interpreters - if conversation doesn’t include speakers from the signing Deaf community (interpretation is for general audiences) and/or is under 20 minutes.
 - Provide two alternating interpreters if there is more than one speaker/audience member using ASL and/or conversation is more than 20 minutes.
 - If several members from the signing Deaf community will be in attendance, for breakout activities you may need to consider providing more interpreters for interactions with people who do not sign.
 - For more information on working with ASL interpreters, check out [this tip sheet](#) from the Vera Institute.
 - Consider using CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) to make live transcription available on a side or main screen for participants who have hearing loss, but do not sign.
 - Share program information, such as event run time, program description, terminology, and name spellings, with access providers in advance.
- Ask presenters and audience members to remain scent free.
- If possible, offer a hybrid event, allowing virtual as well as in-person attendance options.

Digital accessibility

- Use high contrast for text and offer a magnifying tool.
- Don’t use flashing animation (or post a warning if it is unavoidable).
- Add alt text and/or image descriptions for images and infographics, and add captions and video descriptions to videos.
- Use descriptive link text, for example, “Animal pictures here” rather than “Click here,” so users of screen readers can understand where the links will take them.
- Include your organization’s accessibility policy and information about event accessibility on the website.
- [WebAIM.org](#) offers tools and tutorials for making websites accessible.

Communication

- Publicize all available accessibility practices in your promotional materials, in your online event registration, and upon arrival at the event.
- Include film content and trigger warnings (if applicable).
- Include an option for submitting advance accessibility requests, preferably through multiple means of communication (email, phone, text, in person).
- Include options for virtual as well as physical event tickets.
- Use inclusive language that avoids glorifying or victimizing people with disabilities. If you aren't sure, use person-first language ("person with/who is X" [disability]) as an overall guideline and/or ask people what their preferred terms or needs are.
- Train volunteers on the available accessibility practices and on inclusive language and behavior.
- Create a visual "what to expect of your event" guide and make it available in advance on the online event page. Use venue images with alt text and/or image descriptions, simple, clear language, and step-by-step descriptions of the event experience.

DURING EVENT

- Position staff in various areas of the venue to answer questions and assist audiences. *Always ask before providing assistance.*
- When handing out assistive devices (if applicable), test that they are operating properly and instruct attendees on how to use them and where to return them to.
- Assume disabled people are in the room, even if they aren't immediately apparent.
- Make sure all speakers, including audience members, use a microphone.
- Announce the event's available accessibility options during the introduction. Invite attendees to alert the planners of any specific needs throughout the event.
- When speaking for the first time, people should state their name ("This is Annie," "Annie speaking," etc.) and include a short visual description of themselves ("I'm xxx").

AFTER EVENT

- Create an accessibility survey and share it with attendees to receive feedback on how to improve your next event. Alternatively, you can share the [Film Event Accessibility Scorecard Survey](#) (more info at [FWD-Doc](#)).
- Provide attendees with follow-up resources to learn more about the film and to connect with local disability-led organizations who work on advocating for accessibility and inclusion in the community.
- Explore ways to incorporate accessibility practices in other events and programs.

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INDIE LENS POP-UP

Indie Lens Pop-Up is a neighborhood series that brings people together—virtually and in-person—for film screenings and community-driven conversations. Featuring documentaries seen on PBS's Independent Lens, Indie Lens Pop-Up draws local residents, leaders, and organizations to discuss what matters most, from newsworthy topics and social issues to family and community relationships. Since its inception in 2005, more than 6,700 Indie Lens Pop-Up events have brought an estimated 400,000 participants together to discuss issues that impact local communities. For more information, visit the [Indie Lens Pop-Up website](#).

INDEPENDENT LENS

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning PBS documentary series. With founding executive producer Lois Vossen, the series has been honored with 10 Academy Award nominations and features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, *Independent Lens* is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Acton Family Giving, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and National Endowment for the Arts. Stream anytime on the PBS app. For more information, visit the [Independent Lens website](#).

Join the conversation with #TubaThievesPBS on X, Facebook, and Instagram at @IndependentLens.

ITVS

Independent Television Services (ITVS) is the largest co-producer of independent documentaries in the United States. For more than 30 years the San Francisco non-profit has funded and partnered with documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning titles and premieres them on our Emmy® Award-winning PBS series, *Independent Lens*. ITVS titles appear on PBS, WORLD, NETA, and can be streamed on various digital platforms including the PBS app. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Acton Family Giving, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, Wyncote Foundation. For more information, visit the [ITVS website](#).

CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

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