

# DEATH BY NUMBERS

## DISCUSSION GUIDE



DEATH BY NUMBERS

**NOVA** National Organization  
for Victim Advocacy

# INTRODUCTION

## ABOUT THE FILM

**TITLE:** Death by Numbers

**DIRECTOR / PRODUCER:** Kim A. Snyder

**YEAR RELEASED:** 2024

**LENGTH:** 33 minutes

Nominated for an Academy Award for Short Documentary in 2025, **DEATH BY NUMBERS** offers an intimate portrait of school shooting survivor Sam Fuentes as she works to reclaim her voice and agency in the aftermath of profound violence. Through journaling and self-reflection, the film follows Sam's process of confronting trauma and preparing to face her assailant during his sentencing trial. In doing so, the documentary grapples with difficult questions about collective hatred, accountability, healing, and what justice can - and cannot - offer individuals and communities impacted by mass violence.



## PURPOSE OF THE DISCUSSION

This screening is intended to support advocates, educators, practitioners, students, and community members in examining the long-term personal and communal impacts of mass violence. The discussion invites us to look beyond the immediate event and consider how harm continues to shape individuals, families, and communities over time, across personal, cultural, and societal contexts. Together, we will explore how justice is understood and experienced in the aftermath of such harm, while recognizing that justice can mean different things to different people and that institutional responses do not always meet the needs of those most affected. The conversation also encourages us to think critically about the ethical responsibilities involved in telling stories of trauma, and how storytelling can both honor lived experience, influence public understanding, and facilitate collective response.

Ultimately, the goal is not to arrive at simple answers, but to deepen understanding, hold complexity, and consider how reflection, care, and shared responsibility can strengthen our communities moving forward.

## SAMPLE SCRIPT

*“This film screening invites [insert audience] to reflect on the impact of a high school mass shooting on individuals, families, and communities, while examining the systemic, cultural, and institutional forces that shape both harm and response. Our discussion will explore how justice is defined in the aftermath of mass violence, the ethical responsibilities of storytelling, and the role we play when systems feel incomplete or inadequate. We will also consider long-term community impact and the importance of collective care when responding to profound trauma and loss.”*

## CONTENT ADVISORY

This film includes themes that may be difficult to watch and process, including:

- Mass violence
- Trauma and loss
- Court proceedings and sentencing



## SUPPORT RESOURCES AVAILABLE

- Consider highlighting local resources such as counseling centers, victim advocacy offices, or wellness resources, based on your context and location
- 24/7 crisis support options, such as <https://victimconnect.org/>
- Trained support staff available during and after the screening for one-on-one check-ins, emotional grounding, or help connecting to additional resources

## PARTICIPANT CARE AND FACILITATOR PREPAREDNESS

Given that this film addresses sensitive themes, including violence, grief, trauma, and justice system responses, it is natural for strong emotions to surface. Participants are encouraged to prioritize their well-being throughout the session. Self-care may include stepping away, turning off your cameras (for virtual discussions), opting out of a question, journaling instead of speaking, or simply listening. Remember, participation is always a choice. Tending to your own needs is not disengagement; it reflects self-awareness and resilience.

Facilitators should also anticipate that discussions may bring up distress, memories, moral tension, or emotional fatigue - especially for those whose personal or professional lives intersect with violence and loss. Preparation involves acknowledging this possibility at the outset, normalizing a range of emotional responses, and reminding participants that sharing personal experiences is never required.



Ultimately, the goal is not to arrive at simple answers, but to deepen understanding, hold complexity, and consider how reflection, care, and shared responsibility can strengthen our communities moving forward.

Facilitators benefit from planning their own regulation strategies and support systems. Holding space for conversations about trauma can impact facilitators, too. Co-facilitation, post-session check-ins, staying hydrated, and personal decompression practices all contribute to long-term sustainability.

The goal is not to avoid emotion - emotional responses are often part of meaningful reflection - but to ensure the environment remains grounded, choice-driven, and supportive rather than overwhelming.

## **SAMPLE SCRIPT**

*"Before we begin, I want to acknowledge that this film addresses mass violence and loss. It's normal for our bodies and emotions to react in unexpected ways. There is no 'right' way to feel—numbness, sadness, anger, or quiet are all valid responses."*

*"You are welcome to step away, or pass on any question at any time. Your well-being comes first."*

*"Our goal is not to analyze the tragedy, but to explore its impact, the systems involved, and what justice can mean in complex and painful situations. Resources are available if you need support."*

Share local and national resources (see [NATIONAL RESOURCES](#)).



# DISCUSSION GUIDE



## OPENING GROUNDING AND REFLECTION

### 5 minutes

Before beginning the discussion, invite participants to pause and reflect.

#### Options may include:

- 1–2 minutes of grounding (focused breathing, feet on the floor, noticing the body)
- Silent writing or reflection
- Chat-based reflection (for virtual settings)

#### Use one or two low-stakes prompts to gently open conversation:

- What stood out to you most while watching the film?
- What emotions or reactions surfaced for you?
- Was there a moment that stayed with you after the film ended?



## SAMPLE SCRIPT

*“Let’s take a moment before we talk. Feel your feet on the floor or your back in the chair. Notice one thing you can see, one thing you can hear, and one thing you can feel. Just allow yourself to arrive.”*

Pause for 10-15 seconds.

## KEY THEMES AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

### 25-30 minutes

The following themes and questions are designed to guide a layered, reflective conversation about the film. The themes move intentionally from human experience to systems, from harm to response, and from reflection to practice. Below is a selection of questions to choose from. We encourage you to choose the questions that best fit your group’s needs, energy, and available time.

### 1. HARM, LOSS, AND COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

This theme invites participants to reflect on how the film conveys the enduring impact of violence. This film interweaves personal memory and lived experience into its exploration of loss, reminding us that trauma often lingers in everyday recollection.

As Sam says, *“I was never good at math, but I remember every number,”* highlighting how moments from that day remain vivid and deeply felt long afterward.

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How did the film portray the impact of the shooting on individuals, families, and the broader community?
- What forms of harm extended beyond the immediate event?
- Where did you notice unresolved grief or long-term impact?



## 2. FRAMING JUSTICE

This part of the discussion explores what “justice” means after violence and whether the legal system can fully meet survivors’ needs. The film shows that justice may look different depending on who you ask, raising questions about the difference between punishment, accountability, healing, and prevention.

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How did the film define or complicate the idea of “justice”?
- Whose understanding of justice was centered—and whose felt absent?
- Did justice appear as punishment, accountability, healing, prevention, or something else?

## 3. SYSTEMS, INSTITUTIONS, AND RESPONSIBILITY

Building on what we have explored, this conversation examines the roles of schools, courts, and other systems in what happened before and after the incident. We encourage you to notice where institutions offered support, where they fell short, and who continued to carry the impact when systems couldn’t fully respond.

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What roles did systems (schools, law enforcement, courts, media, policy) play before and after the shooting?
- Where did institutions respond effectively—and where did they fall short?
- How did systemic responses shape who felt seen, supported, or further harmed?



## 5. VALUES AND IMPACT

When Sam’s mom tells her, “***your words are your power,***” it underscores how voice and storytelling can be forms of agency when so much feels out of one’s control. This theme invites reflection on the emotional weight of working in trauma-impacted spaces, the tensions of navigating imperfect systems, and the core values—care, dignity, accountability, and community—that sustain individuals even when change feels slow.

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How did this film resonate with your values?
- What moments of moral distress, fatigue, or helplessness felt familiar?
- Where do you sit when justice systems do not align with the needs of survivors or communities?

## 6. FROM REFLECTION TO ACTION

Finally, we shift to what we do with what we have seen and felt. This film encourages us to think about how these conversations might shape the way we talk about violence, support others, and work toward safer, more caring communities.

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What questions about justice will you carry into your work/community?
- How might this film influence how you think or talk about violence, prevention, or accountability?
- What feels within your control and what requires collective or systemic action?



# CLOSING AND GROUNDING

## 5 minutes

Close with intention, care, and containment.

Invite participants to share one of the following:

- One word you're leaving with
- One value this film reaffirmed or challenged
- One hope or question you want to hold

Conclude by clearly restating available support and resources.

# CALL TO ACTION

## 5 minutes

This screening is not meant to end when the discussion concludes. We invite participants to continue reflecting, learning, and engaging in ways that honor survivors, strengthen communities, and support long-term change.

Encourage participants to:

- Share what they learned with colleagues, classmates, or community members, using care when discussing sensitive material.
- Reflect on how this film challenges or affirms their understanding of justice, accountability, and healing.
- Consider how collective responsibility, ethical storytelling, and sustained care can shape responses to mass violence beyond moments of crisis.

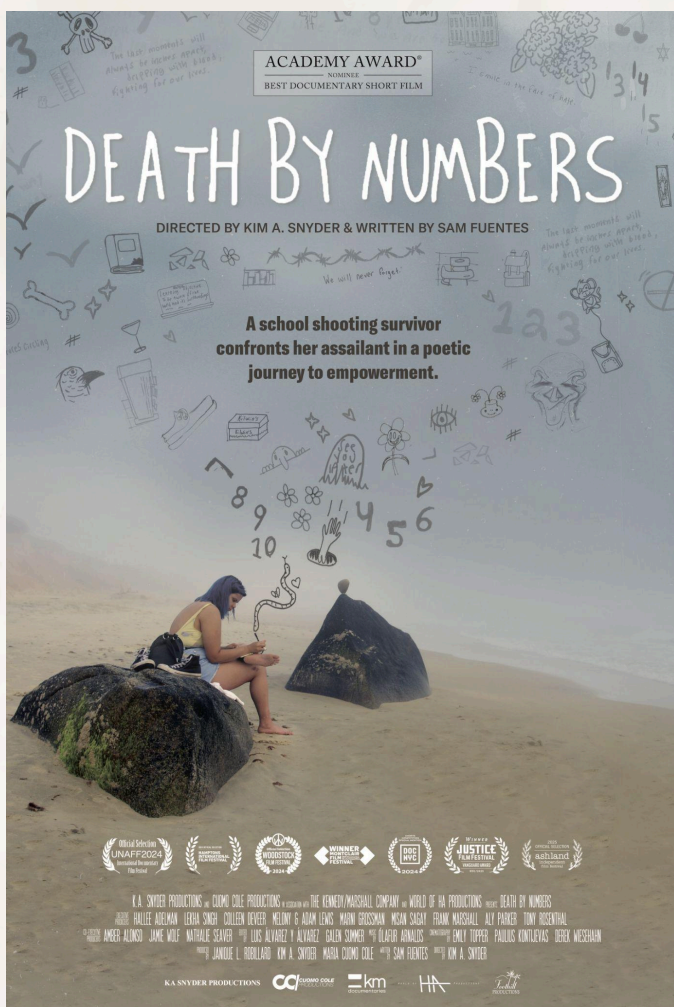
To learn more about the film and how it is being used to spark dialogue and reflection, visit the official website for [DEATH BY NUMBERS](#), where you'll find background on the film, the filmmaker's intent, and additional context.

To explore education, training, and policy leadership focused on advancing rights and support for people impacted by crime, visit the [National Organization for Victim Advocacy \(NOVA\)](#). Please note that NOVA does not provide direct crisis services. Any hotline or support resources shared through this screening are provided separately to support immediate needs.



# NATIONAL RESOURCES

- [National Organization for Victim Advocacy: Community Crisis Response](#)
- [National Mass Violence Center](#)
- Disaster Distress Helpline, 24/7 national hotline: 1-800-985-5990
- [Sandy Hook Promise](#)
- [Victim Connect Resource Center](#)
- [988 Lifeline](#)



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### DEATH BY NUMBERS FILM

[deathbynumbersthefilm.com](http://deathbynumbersthefilm.com)

[@deathbynumbersfilm](https://www.instagram.com/deathbynumbersfilm)

### NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR VICTIM ADVOCACY (NOVA)

[trynova.org](http://trynova.org)

[tta@trynova.org](mailto:tta@trynova.org)

