

A How-To Guide for Your Mueller Report Reading Event

Prepared by New Neighborhood

On June 1, 2019 New Neighborhood, DMNDR, and Slightly Altered States presented **FILIBUSTERED AND UNFILTERED: AMERICA READS THE MUELLER REPORT**, the first 24-hour public reading of the entire redacted Mueller Report, in Queens, New York. Our entire aim was to create a joyous and patriot event that encouraged as many citizens as possible to read and engage with the Mueller Report and to come to their own conclusions without relying on others to tell them what to think and feel. We paid for it... we should know what it says!

Our readers, many of whom were theater, film, and television artists, were asked to avoid “performing” or commenting on what they were reading. They read their sections of the Report as simply and as straightforwardly as possible.

Since then, other readings have been scheduled in cities across the country. Many organizers have reached out to us with questions or advice, so we have prepared this brief set of suggestions based on our own experiences. We hope the following information helps as you plan your own Mueller Report event.

Of course, this is only how we produced *our* event. We encourage autonomy. You may want to focus your event on only part of the Report, as Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., did. You may only want to read it for the camera and not have a live audience. You may want to read the entire thing yourself in front of your iPhone in true filibuster style. All are fine. It can be a lot of work, but it is also an unforgettable experience worth every second of your efforts. Don't hesitate to call or write us with any questions you may have. Good luck!

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Producers

- The forming of your team is very important. Make sure you have a group of dedicated and dependable people whom you trust. While putting together this event is exciting and joyous, it is also a huge amount of work. Make sure your team is not only inspired by the

opportunity to engage with their fellow American citizens, but will follow through on their tasks and responsibilities.

- Reaching out to readers: use your team's contacts and connections. Appeal to others to post on their social media platforms to let people know of the event and how to sign up to read and attend. We set up a special email address for people to use to sign up to be a reader. This allowed our stage manager to schedule and communicate with people easily.
- Accessibility: We designed our space to be accessible so that citizens with disabilities could attend and participate. Make this a part of your call for readers and invitations to attend.

Stage Management

- Having a top-flight stage manager is imperative. It's even better to have a production stage manager and two additional assistant stage managers. The stage manager and assistant stage managers will do all the pre-event scheduling of readers (no small task), check them in at the event, ensure that the media release form is signed prior to taking the stage (* more on this later), and stage manage the event in real time.
- Scheduling readers: We asked our readers to identify two-hour time spans they could commit to being physically present at the event. This allowed us to schedule them within a two-hour time slot without having to give them a more specific time, which is not possible given the unpredictability of a live reading with a variety of individual reading rhythms. This also determined how long each reader would read. For example, if we had six people committed to a particular two-hour time span they read for 20 minutes each. If we had twelve readers for a two hour time slot, they read for 10 minutes each. We didn't turn anyone away, which meant that, at times, people read for only 5 mins in order to accommodate everyone.
- We estimated the length of time it would take to read the Mueller Report by using the length of a recently available audio book recording online and by timing ourselves reading a few pages.

Production Manager

- Having a Production Manager is key. Luckily in our case, our fellow producers, who own the space we used, served in this role. There are many things for the production manager to oversee such as the stage, lighting, sound, chair rentals, bathroom facilities, trash, deliveries, security, filming and live streaming. Some of these things will obviously not be necessary depending on what space you are using for your event.

Stage/Scenic

- We found keeping the space simple to be very powerful. We had a very simple stage area that included a microphone on a stand, a music stand for the Mueller Report and a side table for a timer clock and water glass. A clip light illuminated the text. Our mic stand was adjustable and also moveable to accommodate readers using wheelchairs. We had patriotic bunting hanging on the back wall behind the readers as our backdrop.
- Keeping the stage set-up simple made the individual reader the main event which we felt honored and celebrated the voice of the American citizen.

Lighting

- We lit our entire space in a very simple way, but in a manner that had a touch of theatricality and visual interest. We made sure the exits were illuminated well. We had lights focused on the stage as well as a clip light for the text.
- We received a donation of lights from a generous film and tv lighting company in the area, which made our lighting design possible. Make sure to reach out to your contacts for possible donations and volunteers to help hang and design the look you are hoping to achieve.

Live Streaming

- We had three cameras at our event and an excellent sound operator making adjustments for various readers and musicians in real time. There were times we took short pauses in our live feed to accommodate the set up of musicians or when a section of the text was moving more quickly than anticipated and we needed to slow down a bit to stay on schedule.
- If you need help or instructions on live streaming we are happy to help. Please contact our fellow producer, John Belitsky, at john@dmndr.com

Release forms

- You will need everyone, including yourselves, to sign a media release form. This will cover you for the event, live streaming, all media and future use.
- If you need a copy of the release form we used, please contact Jackson Gay at jackson@newneighborhood.net

Filming of Event and Future Documentary

- DMNDR and New Neighborhood hope to create a documentary using footage from as many Mueller Report events as possible across the nation that will illustrate the power of engaged American citizens across our country. If you wish to be a part of this, it is necessary that you get everyone to sign a release form and send them our way with your footage. For specs, required formats and helpful instructions on all things involving recording and filming your event in a way that can be included in this documentary please contact John Belitsky at john@dmndr.com

Printing

- Mueller Report: the format in which the Mueller Report was released publicly presents printing challenges. We found we had to break up the printing into smaller sections. The format also does not allow you to enlarge the text so we also needed to blow up the text and print it on larger paper.
- Make sure your text is large enough for all readers to read easily. Everyone is reading cold, so make it as easy as possible.
- Make it easy for people with sight impairments to read at your event. A reader with a vision impairment was our first reader, which allowed her to know what she was going to read in advance. (It's very hard to guarantee exactly where you be in the text with complete certainty.) She prepared her own copy of her portion of the text in a way that worked very well for her.

Liability Insurance

- You may be required to purchase liability insurance to cover your event including the space, the public, and your participants. Because the liability insurance we purchased didn't cover "performers," we made sure every person that entered the space obtained a ticket. Our readers were not performers but simply American citizens that were both audience members and readers. Obtaining liability insurance is non-negotiable in order to protect yourself and the public. Ours was purchased for under \$500.

Security and Fireguard Requirements

- You will be required by law to have security and to meet fire safety requirements. The number of security guards with fireguard training and the cost of this will depend on your local laws and the number of people anticipated at your event. This may not be necessary depending on what space you are using for your event, as it is possible the

space already covers this. We ended up hiring thirteen security guards with fireguard certification for the 24 hours.

- Although this was by far the biggest expense for us, it is required by law. Additionally, given the state of our political environment, it's something you don't want to short-change or not take seriously.

Bathroom Facilities

- You will be required to supply a certain number of bathroom facilities depending on the number of anticipated attendance at your event. We rented 13 porta-potties for our event, several of them were ADA compliant. Your space may have this covered already allowing you to skip this expense.

Seating

- Chair rental: We budgeted \$500 for our seating (\$1/chair). Your space may come with seating already included.

Trash/Garbage Carting

- Depending on the space you have for your event, you may need to pay to have your trash picked up. You will also need to have numerous trash receptacles and bags throughout the space. You will need to walk through the space often during the event to collect trash and recyclables left by guests.

Resting/Napping Areas

- If possible, having a place where people who are present for long periods of time (or for the entire event) can take a short nap is a wonderful idea. Our producing team took turns laying down for less than an hour each; we also had an audience member lie down for two hours.

Art Activities Area for Adults and Children

- We had an area with canvases, poster board, surfaces to draw and write on with watercolor paints, markers, etc. for people to express themselves creatively. This was appreciated by both adults and children at the event as a way to write their thoughts down or simply take a break from sitting and listening. Another idea that was considered was a collective piece of art that was being constructed through the entire 24-hour period and used in some finale to the event.

Musicians

- We had musicians ranging from rock, folk, jazz peppered throughout the event. The audience appreciated this immensely as a break from the attention demanded by the text of the Report. We ended with an a capella singing of “This Land Is Your Land,” which was quite moving as a simple, straightforward expression of our hopes and an honoring of what we had just done. Other musical ideas we bounced around were beginning with a single soloist, an opera singer, to set the tone for the reading ritual to follow. We would’ve liked to end the 24 hours with a Mardi Gras band taking us from the site of the event out into the streets of New York City.
- One important note about music with regards to the live feed: make sure the rights to the music being played have been obtained or play only original work. Facebook and YouTube can immediately flag a song you have not cleared the rights to and shut down your live feed immediately.

Press and Marketing

- If you are a part of a theater or arts company, leverage your existing local, regional, and national press contacts. Your reading may not be a traditional piece of theater, but it’s a great example of theater artists doing what they do best: reading a written text aloud for their community.
- Beyond reaching out to your existing contacts, reach out to the news, arts and culture, and community affairs desks of your local print, broadcast and digital media outlets.
- Position your reading as a non-partisan event which encourages as many Americans as possible to read and engage with the contents of the Mueller Report. Individual organizers and readers will of course have their own political points of view, but your reading should be positioned as a public service.
- Your press release should include all of the most important details: what you’re doing (reading all or a portion of the Mueller Report), when you’re doing it, where you’re doing it, who’s reading (if you know), ticket/admission details, and contact information.
- Social media: create an event page on Facebook with all of these same details. If you have a budget to promote your event, be aware that Facebook will likely flag the promotion as relating to “politics or of national importance” and will require additional steps, including confirmation of your identity (driver’s license, passport, phone, mailing address) in order to advertise the event.

- Get all readers to sign media releases. Please let us know if you need an example release form.
- Provide area(s) at space for interviews and real-time media events.

Box Office

- Online Ticketing: we used Eventbrite (eventbrite.com) to handle our advance sales. This allowed us to track sales to date in order to help forecast attendance, and also allowed those who could not attend to make donations to help cover expenses.
- On-site Box Office: We also had a cash-only ticket table at our event. In addition to selling walk-in tickets, this also allowed us to check-in everyone efficiently.
- We kept our ticket price as low as possible, starting with a suggestion donation of \$10. We did not turn anyone away because they couldn't pay, and many ticket buyers gave more.

Concessions

- It is important to have large amounts of water and coffee for everyone at the event and to have all kinds of snacks, healthy and not, available for a small donation.
- Our event was alcohol-free because our space did not have a liquor license. This was not a problem in the least.

Volunteers

- We set up a separate email address for people who wanted to volunteer to work the event. Volunteers are very important, especially if you're doing a 24-hour event. For our 24-hour event, most of us slept less than an hour the entire time, so you can see how having volunteers can be a huge help.
- Some of the tasks we needed assistance with were running concessions, emptying trash cans and replacing bags, help with the box office, running errands off-site, and helping people through the check-in process.

Questions?

We're happy to discuss any of our experiences or answer any questions that arise as you plan your own Mueller Report reading event. Feel free to email Jackson Gay at jackson@newneighborhood.net and John Belitsky at john@dmndr.com