



## Film Screening & Discussion Guide

A powerful tool for mobilizing on the ongoing human rights crisis of post-Katrina New Orleans.

This guide, developed in partnership with Amnesty International USA, will help you watch, discuss, and act.



**ELSEWHEREFILMS**

## **ABOUT *TROUBLE THE WATER***

***[A]n endlessly moving, artlessly magnificent tribute to people the government didn't think worth saving.***

**—Richard Corliss, *Time Magazine***

Nominated for an Academy Award® for Best Feature Documentary, and winner of the Grand Jury Prize at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival, *Trouble the Water* tells the story of an aspiring rap artist and her streetwise husband who are trapped in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina, survive the deadly floods, and then seize a chance for a new beginning.

Directed and produced by award-winning filmmakers Tia Lessin and Carl Deal, the film follows Kimberly and Scott Roberts through the storm, its aftermath, and into a new life. Incorporating 15 minutes of harrowing ground zero home video shot by Kimberly the day before and the day the levees failed, the film takes you on a journey that is by turns heart-stopping, infuriating, inspiring and empowering.

*Trouble the Water* is not only about the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina, but also takes on the underlying issues that remained when the floodwaters receded—failing public schools, record high levels of incarceration, poverty, lack of government accountability and structural racism.

Distributed by Zeitgeist Films and executive produced by Joslyn Barnes and Danny Glover of Louverture Films, *Trouble the Water* opened theatrically to outstanding reviews in August of 2008, and is now available on a limited edition DVD for community screenings. For more about upcoming screenings, community activities, news, and information about the movie, go to the website: [www.troublethewaterfilm.com](http://www.troublethewaterfilm.com).



### **Human Rights For Hurricane Katrina Survivors**

This Film Guide was developed by Amnesty International USA.

International human rights standards protect victims of disasters like Hurricane Katrina. AIUSA calls upon authorities in the local, state and federal government to uphold the rights of all Katrina evacuees to return to their homes. We urge officials to provide long-term, healthy, and affordable housing so that survivors can exercise their right to return.

For More on Amnesty's Gulf Coast Recovery Campaign:

**The Facts: The Right to Return *Rebuilding the Gulf through the Framework of International Human Rights***

[http://www.amnestyusa.org/us/AIUSA\\_Rebuilding\\_the\\_Gulf\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.amnestyusa.org/us/AIUSA_Rebuilding_the_Gulf_fact_sheet.pdf)



***Trouble the Water* Film Guide**

# Discussion Questions

Use some or all of these questions to engage your group in a deeper discussion about human rights, housing, displacement, and the needs of the Gulf Coast. For background information on Hurricane Katrina and applicable human rights standards, see the last section of this guide.

- What scenes stood out to you in this movie? Why?
- Why don't Kim and Scott evacuate New Orleans? Who was able to evacuate New Orleans? Who is responsible for helping evacuate those who can't leave on their own?
- What did President Bush say is government's responsibility during the hurricane? Was he right? That is, what is government's responsibility during the hurricane?
- Should every kind of building be evacuated during a disaster like Katrina? Should hospitals? Should prisons?
- Did Katrina change your perception about racism in the U.S.? Did this film?
- How is displacement by Hurricane Katrina a human rights issue?
- How does the availability of housing affect the right to return?
- When Kim and Scott return to the Lower Ninth Ward a few weeks after Katrina hit, he says, "If they rebuild it, it's not going to be the same." Has New Orleans been rebuilt since Katrina? Is it the same?
- What services does the government -- whether FEMA or other agencies -- attempt to provide for Kim, Scott, and others displaced by Katrina? Is that enough?
- At one point, Kim says the neglect by the government during and after the storm made her feel "as if we lost our citizenship". How did Kim's view make you feel?
- Should citizenship matter in this case, or are non-citizens equally entitled to protection by the government during and after a disaster like Katrina? Are all citizens entitled to the same protections -- for example, are prisoners entitled to the same protections as non-prisoners?
- What role does a chronic lack of information play in prolonging Kim and Scott's displacement?
- If another storm of the same magnitude as Hurricane Katrina happened next week, what do you think would happen differently this time? Would anything happen differently?
- What difference, if any, can a film like *Trouble the Water* make to the ongoing human rights crisis in the Gulf Coast?
- How will you make a difference?



# Take Action

## **STAY INFORMED! JOIN THE TROUBLE THE WATER EMAIL LIST:**

Sign up at: [www.troublethewaterfilm.com](http://www.troublethewaterfilm.com).

And visit the website to learn more about the issues, and to find out what you can do to support the movement for racial and economic justice, sustainable and equitable development and youth empowerment on the Gulf Coast, and elsewhere.

## **URGE YOUR CONGRESSPEOPLE TO UPHOLD HUMAN RIGHTS AND TO SUPPORT THE EQUITABLE REBUILDING OF THE GULF COAST**

The injustices along the Gulf Coast didn't begin when Hurricane Katrina made landfall, and there is still so much work to be done to restore and rebuild the region. More than three years after the levees in New Orleans failed, they remain vulnerable; tens of thousands of residents are still struggling to return home; and there is a critical lack of affordable housing, health care, quality education, and living wage jobs.

It's past time for Congress to do its part. You can help.

Send a letter directly to your Senators or Representative, asking them to take action:

Use our easy form: [www.troublethewaterfilm.com/congress](http://www.troublethewaterfilm.com/congress).

Please help bring these issues to the forefront in Washington and demand legislative action to equitably rebuild New Orleans and the Gulf Coast.

## **SHARE YOUR STORIES**

Write to us at [action@troublethewaterfilm.com](mailto:action@troublethewaterfilm.com) and tell us about your community screening.

Let us know what you are doing to advance racial and economic justice along the Gulf Coast, and in your community.



# Katrina and Human Rights

## ABOUT HURRICANE KATRINA AND THE GULF COAST

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina, one of the strongest hurricanes to ever hit the United States, caused flooding to most of the low-lying areas of the Gulf Coast, including New Orleans, Louisiana and Biloxi, Mississippi and the surrounding communities.

According to Federal government figures, approximately 200,000 people were evacuated from the Gulf Coast Region to places such as Texas, Florida, Georgia, and Washington, D.C. Of the more than 400,000 residents who lived in New Orleans prior to Katrina, the overwhelming majority lived in areas that were damaged by the storm and about a third lived below the federal poverty line. Thousands of former residents of low income housing have not yet been able to return to their homes and continue to live in temporary housing or even emergency shelter far from their homes. The Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development continues to demolish public housing developments without adequate replacement plans, but residents, advocates, and some experts believe the existing public housing units could be renovated and reoccupied by the former residents in a much shorter timeframe.

There are also environmental concerns. Soil samples taken in the months after the storm showed signs of hazardous substances in the ground, the result of spills in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. In the meantime, many internally displaced persons live in unsafe conditions in federal trailers provided or in a state of limbo in other areas, never knowing if they can return and how.

## INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

An internally displaced person (IDP) is someone who has been forced to leave their home for reasons such as religious or political persecution, war or natural disaster, but has not crossed an international border. The United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement set out non-binding but authoritative standards for human rights. The United States Agency for International Development has recognized the Guiding Principles as a useful tool for dealing with displacement.

The Guiding Principles promulgate (1) protection from forced displacement and, if displacement does occur, (2) protection to IDPs during displacement, including (3) during resettlement and reintegration. Authorities have a duty to create conditions

that allow IDPs to return safely, voluntarily, and with dignity to their homes. Authorities also must ensure that any solutions for return are sustainable and do not lead to cycles of displacement. Relocating IDPs to places of insecurity or to places where they cannot enjoy basic economic, social and cultural rights and are therefore unsustainable may breach a range of human rights standards.

The U.N. Human Rights Committee has urged the United States to review its practices and policies to ensure the full implementation of its obligations to protect life and of the prohibition of discrimination against IDPs. It further urged the United States to increase efforts to ensure that the rights of poor people and African-Americans are fully taken into consideration in the post-Katrina reconstruction plans with respect to access to housing.

## **THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE HOUSING**

The right to adequate housing guarantees access to a safe, habitable, and affordable home with protection against forced eviction. Without adequate housing, an individual is vulnerable to human and natural forces, compromising other human rights including family life, health, education, employment and privacy. The right to adequate housing is found in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

The UDHR was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, by a unanimous vote by all member countries, including the United States. The right to adequate housing has been reaffirmed in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, to which the USA is a party.

The right to adequate housing is also protected by other international laws -- for example, Article 14 of the International Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Article 27(3) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The United States has signed, but not ratified, all of these. States' obligations related to the right to adequate housing include:

- (1) *respecting* that right through non-interference,
- (2) *protecting* it from interference by third parties, and
- (3) *fulfilling* the right through concrete, targeted and effective steps to achieve progressively the full realization of the right. Fulfilment includes prohibiting and eliminating discrimination in the realization of the right, and prioritizing the most vulnerable, including those affected by natural disasters.

For more information on human rights and Katrina: [www.amnestyusa.org/katrina](http://www.amnestyusa.org/katrina)