

# *Trouble the Water* Film Guide

*Trouble the Water* is a powerful new tool for mobilizing on the ongoing human rights crisis of post-Katrina New Orleans. This guide will help you watch, discuss, and act.





# ***Trouble the Water***

## **ABOUT THE FILM**

*Trouble the Water* is coming to a theater near you!

Winner of the Grand Jury Prize at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival, *Trouble the Water* tells the story of two people trapped in New Orleans by deadly floods, who survive the storm and then seize a chance for a new beginning. A redemptive tale of self-described street hustlers who become heroes, it takes you inside Hurricane Katrina in a way never before seen on screen. The film opens the day before Katrina makes landfall, as Kimberly Rivers Roberts turns her video camera on herself and her 9th Ward neighbors trapped in the city. As the hurricane begins to rage and the floodwaters begin to rise, Kim and her husband Scott continue to film, documenting their harrowing voyage to higher ground. Directed by award-winning Tia Lessin and Carl Deal, the film follows the couple as they survive the storm, cope with the aftermath, and begin to rebuild their lives.

Distributed by Zeitgeist Films, with crucial support from Executive Producer Danny Glover, *Trouble the Water* will be shown across the country throughout the fall of 2008.

Find screening venues and dates, and more information about the movie, at:  
[www.troublethewaterfilm.com](http://www.troublethewaterfilm.com)

## **MEET UP AT A SCREENING OF *TROUBLE THE WATER***

Host or attend a meetup at a screening of *Trouble the Water*!

When you go to see *Trouble the Water*, make it a date and take your student or local group, or friends, family or community members. Ask your local theater if you can table or flyer at the film screening. Or just use this guide for an informed, lively discussion. But don't forget to take action!

Sign up on-line so folks in your area can join you. Register to organize a meetup, or find a meetup near you, at: [www.amnestyusa.org/troublethewater](http://www.amnestyusa.org/troublethewater)

If you'd like to table and need materials, contact your regional office at 1-866-A-REGION (1-866-273-4466).

## **TIPS FOR YOUR MEETUP**

*Plan.* Know your goals: to inform, to act, and to generate membership. Set a goal for how many people you might want to attend and invite twice that number. Remember that personal invitations, whether through email, a paper invitation, or a phone call, are the most effective way of getting the word out. Once guests have accepted, reminder phone calls made a few days before the meetup make a big difference in attendance.

For help planning your event, contact your regional office at 1-866-A-REGION (1-866-273-4466).



*Follow up.* Amnesty International wants to hear from you! Contact your Regional Office and let them know how things went, or email AIUSA's Katrina team at <katrina@aiusa.org>. This feedback helps improve future screenings and campaigns.

Upload digital photos to AIUSA's *Trouble the Water* Flickr account:  
[www.amnestyusa.org/troublethewater](http://www.amnestyusa.org/troublethewater)

Also, send a quick follow-up thank you note to your attendees. A week or two later, you can also send them a follow-up action along with information about becoming a member of AI.



# 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 does President Bush say is government's responsibility during the hurricane? Is 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

## URGE YOUR CONGRESSPEOPLE TO UPHOLD HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE GULF COAST

Under well-established human rights standards, the federal government is ultimately responsible for guaranteeing the resettlement and reintegration of every Katrina survivor.

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

Write or call (202-225-3121) your Senators and Representative and urge them to support all legislative efforts to uphold human rights in the Gulf Coast. For example:

Dear Congressperson,

I urge you to fulfill your commitment to upholding human rights of every person displaced by Hurricane Katrina. As you know, August 29th marks the third anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, and yet thousands of residents remain displaced. Under well-established human rights standards, every person displaced by Hurricane Katrina has the right to return home.

We deeply appreciate your leadership in Congress to ensure that much-needed funds have already reached the Gulf Coast. However, as most of those funds were spent by FEMA and other agencies during the initial disaster response, serious shortfalls remain in addressing the more than \$100 billion in damages to housing and infrastructure. Chief among the challenges survivors face is a lack of access to affordable, safe, and habitable housing. The federal government is ultimately responsible for ensuring the rights of individuals after disasters such as Katrina. We urge you to support legislative efforts to uphold the human rights of every survivor of Hurricane Katrina.

The legislative landscape is changing rapidly. For information on what other groups are doing on current specific bills, see the next section of this guide.

For more, go to: [www.amnestyusa.org/katrina](http://www.amnestyusa.org/katrina)

## STAY INFORMED WITH AIUSA EMAIL

Sign up at: [www.amnestyusa.org](http://www.amnestyusa.org)

## BECOME AN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL MEMBER!

Join the millions of us worldwide who are working to uphold human rights everywhere.

For more information, go to: [www.amnestyusa.org/join](http://www.amnestyusa.org/join)





# Other Initiatives

Besides Amnesty International, many other advocacy groups are working on important legislation to help rebuild the Gulf Coast.

## **DOMESTIC SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS BILL**

As of late August, a domestic supplemental appropriations bill, S. 3181, was pending in the Senate Appropriations Committee. The Katrina Housing Group has called for the bill to include funding crucial to the recovery of the Gulf Coast states of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas.

For more information: Equity & Inclusion Campaign, <http://www.equityandinclusion.org/> (from August 29th)

## **GULF COAST CIVIC WORKS PROJECT**

The Gulf Coast Civic Works Project is the national effort to pass H.R. 4048, the Gulf Coast Civic Works Act, which would create 100,000 jobs for Gulf Coast residents and evacuees to rebuild their communities.

For more information: <http://www.solvingpoverty.com/>

## **GULF COAST MULTIFAMILY AND ASSISTED HOUSING RECOVERY ACT**

The Gulf Coast Multifamily and Assisted Housing Recovery Act, S. 2975, funds affordable housing for low-income seniors, disabled people, and others who lost their homes in Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

For more information: PolicyLink, <http://www.policylink.org/>

## **GULF COAST HOUSING RECOVERY ACT**

The Gulf Coast Housing Recovery Act of 2007, S. 1668, addresses the many housing needs in the areas affected by the hurricane, including affordable housing for those severely impacted by the storm. The House has already passed its version of this bill, H.R. 1227.

S. 1668 has yet to be passed out of the Senate Committee for Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.





# Background

## 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, go to: [www.amnestyusa.org/katrina](http://www.amnestyusa.org/katrina)

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