

FRONT

THE

GUIDE

THE

WATER

FRONT

THE

“The Water Front” is available for
purchase through:

Bull Frog Films
372 Dautrich Road
Reading, PA 19606
1-800-543-3764
Tel: 610/779-8226
Fax: 610/370-1978
www.bullfrogfilms.com

THE WATER FRONT THE GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Introduction from the Filmmaker	I
Using the Guide	I
Highland Park, a Post Industrial City	II
Frequently Asked Questions	III
1. Introduction to Water Politics	1
2. Water Privatization	4
3. Water as a Human Right	8
4. Environmental Justice	10
5. Water Conservation	12
6. Citizen Action	14
Appendix I Water Audit Worksheet	17
Appendix II Principles of Environmental Justice	18
Appendix III A National Water Trust Fund	19
Appendix IV Case Study of a Trouble Spot	20
Appendix V Tips on Actions	22
Appendix VI Tips on Conducting Interviews	23

Written by: Liz Miller with support from Lynna Kauchek, Jen Parisi, Michele Luchs, and Sylvia Orduno.

Introduction from the Filmmaker

Most of us take water for granted. My objective in making “The Water Front” was to encourage more people to think about where the water we drink comes from, who is in charge of making decisions about this shared resource, and how to ensure everyone has access to safe, affordable water. In the U.S. today, public water utilities serve 81% of the public, but corporations and private investors understand that aging public infrastructures present new investment opportunities. With diminishing involvement from state and federal government to support municipal water systems, local officials are faced with difficult decisions.

Some of the questions connected to these decisions include:

- *How do local leaders determine what is best for their community?*
- *What does private investment in a water system mean for residents, for water workers, for a community?*
- *Is water privatization a sustainable solution?*
- *What are the alternatives?*
- *How should water rates or taxes be determined for a community?*
- *Does raising rates promote conservation or turn water into a commodity that few can afford?*

To answer some of these questions I chose to follow the situation playing out in Highland Park, Michigan, a city on the verge of turning its system over to private management. I had initially set out to document water struggles taking place internationally but then realized the importance of representing one of the first water battles taking place in the United States. Highland Park is also in many ways like the city where I grew up, Baltimore, Maryland and so it felt especially important for me to tell this story.

I first visited Highland Park in January 2004 after learning that residents were receiving water bills as high as \$10,000 and that almost half of the City had experienced water shut offs. Ironically, unlike any other small city or suburb in the Detroit area, Highland Park has its own water intake into the Great Lakes basin. Henry Ford secured this unique access at the turn of the century and in 1917 built what was then the largest water plant in the world. So here was a city, with a direct intake to one of the largest fresh water supplies in the world and yet residents were being shut off.

During my first visit to Highland Park, I met a group of inspiring individuals addressing the crisis from very different perspectives and I realized Highland Park was the place to tell an American story about water, democracy, and difficult decisions. “The Water Front” presents a community in crisis but it also presents the powerful enactment of local participation in finding solutions to the problems of our times. While many cities do not face the same financial challenges of a post-industrial city, Highland Park foreshadows the challenges cities around the world will face: aging water infrastructures, a lack of resources to update old systems, and an urgent need to address management issues.

Using the Guide

This guide is intended to raise awareness about environmental justice and water politics in schools, after-school programs, with community organizations, non-profits, faith-based organizations, grassroots and student groups, and with local and national leaders. This guide is part of “The Water Front” campaign and the goals of the campaign include:

- *building support for federal investment in water infrastructure*
- *educating and organizing key constituencies about water privatization and related water issues*

- *getting students involved in the broader range of water issues*
- *strengthening community-based water coalitions that include community, labor, faith-based, student, civil rights and environmental organizations*

“The Water Front” film and guide highlight a number of inter-connected themes including: the global water crisis, water privatization, environmental justice, water as a human right, water conservation, and citizen action. Each section is based on one of these themes, and includes questions to discuss and debate, an educational activity, and resources for additional research. Facilitators should feel free to use the sections in the order that best suits their needs and adapt the activities as they see fit. This guide is accompanied by a Activist Guide, which provides support on how to develop and sustain local campaigns around water security. Both guides can be used with the 7-minute, 20-minute, or hour-long version of “The Water Front.”

Highland Park, a Post Industrial City

Highland Park is a small city with a predominately African American population and a soulful past, known by many as the birthplace of Henry Ford’s assembly line. Geographically surrounded by the city of Detroit, Highland Park is warmly referred to as the heart of Detroit and is recognized as the birthplace of mass production and the first U.S. freeway. It was also the former headquarters of two of America’s biggest automakers: Ford Motor Company and the Chrysler Corporation. Once a thriving community of 60,000 people, Highland Park was also known as “The City of Trees”, an attractive bedroom community for working class people – many of whom were African American – with jobs in the automobile industry. It was also the home of labor organizers who devoted their lives to improving conditions in the factories and in their communities.

The exodus of both Ford and then Chrysler created an enormous loss of local tax revenue, and the erosion of small businesses. These factors contributed greatly to a steady decline in population and the financial crisis Highland Park faces today. Today the City’s mere 16,000 residents – a majority of whom are low income, female-headed households, and senior citizens – are burdened with an oversized and aging city infrastructure and the consequences of years of financial mismanagement. This has resulted in a loss of city services such as the closing of the local community college and library, diminishing fire department coverage and the outsourcing of police protection. This City has been unable to meet its pension obligations to retired employees.

Among Highland Park’s remaining public resources, the water department is its most valuable asset. It is in need of major infrastructure repairs and upgrades but its autonomy and location make it a valuable and possibly profitable resource for the city and its residents. This recognition by local officials and has also led to private party speculation and bids.

The Michigan economy has suffered disproportionately from changes in the automotive industry. Along with four other cities in the state of Michigan, the City of Highland Park was appointed an emergency financial manager to get the City out of fiscal crisis. Under Act 72, the emergency manager has the authority to override the decisions of elected city council members and the mayor. Ramona Pearson was the first emergency financial manager of Highland Park (appointed by Republican Governor Engler). Arthur Blackwell is currently the emergency financial manager of Highland Park (appointed by Democrat Governor Granholm). The economic burdens of Highland Park are still plaguing its citizens, who continue to fight for affordable rates. The water plant is currently managed by the City of Highland Park but the new manager has continued to explore the option of privatization.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are the bills so high?

Many viewers are shocked and even confused by the high bills Highland Park residents have received. It is important to reinforce that while the rates did increase, the extraordinarily high bills were a combination of many factors:

- *rate increases*
- *undetected leaks*
- *a lack of staff to investigate leaks and verify meter readings*
- *faulty equipment*
- *court ordered water fees from debts owed to the City of Detroit*
- *dysfunctional systems of management*
- *a new system of penalties on unpaid bills*

For example, imagine a resident had been paying his or her water bills regularly but the City was issuing “estimated bills,” instead of an actual meter read. When the meter is finally read, the bill could be exceptionally high as a result of an undetected leak. It may be unclear who exactly is responsible for the leak depending on where it originated. Without sufficient means to investigate the issue, the problem grows worse and is exacerbated by fees for late payments. The outrageous water bills raise the question of who ultimately should shoulder the burden of under-funded, under staffed and outdated systems – the local government, the national government or individuals?

What happened with the Affordability Plan?

The Water Affordability Plan is presented in the film as a solution put forth by local residents and community organizers to protect low-income residents in the face of ongoing water rate increases and billing uncertainties. The plan is an alternative to water shut offs, which many residents experience as a violation of a basic human right. An affordability plan calls for more citizen participation in the determination of fees, penalties and long-term decisions regarding the plan. The plan also calls for the establishment of an emergency fund for residents facing un-payable bills. This plan would be funded by voluntary contributions and by annual funding from the City and would be maintained in a separate account.

The Affordability Plan was presented to both Highland Park and Detroit officials and passed the approval of Detroit City Council in August 2006. Despite this victory, implementation has been an ongoing struggle. Highland Park officials have been hesitant to adopt the plan due to the city’s fiscal situation. In the face of rising water rates the plan has served as a model for cities around North America to protect publicly owned water systems and control rate increases.

For answers to additional questions raised in the film we have developed a Frequently Asked Questions section on the website:

<http://www.waterfrontmovie.com/node/18>

RESOURCES ON THE FILM:

The work of Welfare Rights and the Water Affordability Plan –

http://www.mwro.org/new_page_1.htm

- *Highland Park Updates – <http://hpfolks.com/>*
- *“The Water Front” website – <http://www.waterfrontmovie.com>*

1

INTRODUCTION TO WATER POLITICS

“The scarcity at the heart of the global water crisis is rooted in power, poverty, and inequality, not in physical availability.”

(Human Development Report, 2006).

Many viewers of “The Water Front” are shocked to discover that water scarcity is taking place in an American city located so close to The Great Lakes, one of the largest sources of fresh water in the world. The film brings home the issue that water scarcity is not only due to shortages in physical supply, but can be the result of poverty, inequality, and flawed water management policies. The film is also a frightening reminder that water struggles are happening everywhere.

We are currently facing a global water crisis. Worldwide, 1.1 billion people do not have access to clean drinking water. In other words, only 83% of the world’s population has sustained access to water, and in less developed nations the number is much lower. It is estimated that by 2025, 2 out of 3 people won’t have enough water.

Despite the fact that we are a water-rich planet, much of this water is too salty for drinking or bathing, and is frozen in glaciers, sitting in clouds, or rests deep beneath the earth’s crust. Only 2.5 percent of the world’s water is fresh water and of this supply, less than 1% is readily usable. The Great Lakes hold 20% of the earth’s available, surface, fresh water and are a one-time gift from glaciers that retreated over 10,000 years ago. Now, the Great Lakes are replenishing only 1% of what is lost each year. Water ecosystems are being overused and degraded by human activity and further threatened by climate change. The United States and many other countries do not have a national strategy to address urgent water issues as most policies predate our knowledge of climate change.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- *What did you learn about water by watching “The Water Front”?*
- *Did the information presented conflict with or confirm your ideas on the subject?*
- *What did you learn about democracy in this film?*
- *What did you learn about the power of different actors, e.g., residents, activists, officials?*
- *If you could ask anyone in the film a question, whom would you ask, and what would your question be?*
- *What are the parallels between Highland Park and your own city?*
- *What concerns you the most about a global water crisis? Why?*
- *What are the similarities and differences in water struggles between first world nations like the United States, and third world countries like Bolivia?*
- *What is something you could do on a regular basis to confront the global water crisis?*

ACTIVITY – RESEARCH TROUBLE SPOTS

Objective:

This activity will help individuals to find parallels between domestic and international water struggles.

Preparation:

Collect articles in the paper or on the Internet to identify water *Trouble Spots*, or areas facing water security concerns. Preview a copy of “The Water Front” DVD and decide which version to show.

Activity:

Step 1: Review the water challenges list and discuss the issues addressed in “The Water Front” (water rate increases, aging infrastructures etc). Use Appendix IV - The Highland Park Sample Case Study to explain a “Case Study.”

Step 2: Divide individuals into small groups, and provide groups with examples of national and international *Trouble Spots*. Using the water challenges list and the sample case study as examples, have the groups come up with their own case studies.

Step 3: Groups should then report back to share the case study and to explore commonalities between the struggles and the interconnections between local and international water issues.

Step 4: Groups can also map the trouble spots on-line (Google Earth, Flickr) or on paper to make visual connections between different communities facing water concerns. Show the groups examples of how this can work by referring them to online maps:

1. Massachusetts Global Action has mapped U.S. water struggles <http://www.massglobalaction.org/home/conf-2006/3q/flash/ourcommunitiesourwater1.swf>

2. The BBC has created a map of water hot spots at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in_depth/world/2000/world_water_crisis/default.stm

Groups can also conduct a comparative media analysis of how specific news sources are covering water issues in a given community. A useful online resource to help students or groups authenticate on-line information can be found at: Evaluating online information - http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers/wa_teachers/wa_workshops/index.cfm

RESOURCES ON HOT SPOTS AND GLOBAL WATER CONTEXT

- *Food and Water Watch has extensive information on trouble spots organized by continent.*
<http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/private-vs-public/usa>
- *The Color of Water Campaign has identified trouble spots in places including: Arizona (USA), Kolkata (India), New York (USA) Boston (USA) <http://massglobalaction.org/water/>*
- *United Nations Human Development Report on Water. (2006). Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global Water Crisis.*
<http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/pdfs/report/HDR06-complete.pdf>
- *Barlow, Maude. 2008. Blue Covenant: The Global Water Crisis and the Coming Battle for the Right to Water.*

2

WATER PRIVATIZATION – PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE CONTROL OF MUNICIPAL RESOURCES

With two-thirds of the world's population expected to run short of fresh drinking water by 2025, water has come to be known as "the oil of the 21st century."

(Food & Water Watch)

The water plant in Highland Park was once a model plant but today is in desperate need of repairs. The financial manager sought to remedy the problem by looking for bids to privatize management of the plant. The circumstances of outdated and under-funded water systems are not unique to Highland Park, nor is the threat of privatization.

Water is our most precious natural resource, but who has the right to make decisions about how it is used? According to public trust laws in the United States that date back centuries, everyone owns the water. Publicly owned resources are finite but can be replenished and must be used responsibly in order to remain available and accessible to everyone. Impending concerns about water scarcity have peaked the interest of corporations and investors looking to make a profit on water through water exports, the bottled water industry, and municipal water and sewage systems to name a few. Water is rapidly becoming a commodity, which threatens the concept of a shared resource or a basic human right. The 'tragedy of the commons' describes a situation where individuals acting solely for their own benefit exclude others from accessing commonly held resources, such as air and water.

Municipal Systems

Some of the water treatment and distribution systems in the United States date back to the early 20th century and about 72,000 miles of the main distribution pipes in the U.S. are more than 80 years old. The EPA estimates a \$22 billion per year shortage of funds to adequately maintain water infrastructure. And, as pipes and treatment systems age, the incidence of sewage spills into public water sources increases the possibility of creating serious public health hazards.

Public officials often look to privatization as a solution to what seems like a difficult and overwhelming situation. However, when water is turned over to private corporations, profit incentives may take precedence over peoples' right to water. While private companies have expertise in cutting costs, water quality may decline because a corporation's priority is to earn profits, not to ensure that water remains accessible. For example what if the fire hydrant in your neighborhood was overlooked as a result of cutting costs? This is a problem the Highland Park Fire Department has struggled with during fires as hydrants have had low water pressure or have been broken. As a way to resolve infrastructure problems like this in the United States, there is a growing interest in a Water Trust Fund, which represents a dedicated funding source and a sustained commitment to clean and safe public water. (See Appendix III).

Bottled Water

The \$60 billion global bottled water industry has exploded over the last few years and to keep up with their growth, companies must seek out new water sources. Companies like Nestle are staking ownership to groundwater in small and large communities that is then bottled and sent hundreds and even thousands of miles away from the watershed to which it once belonged. This practice has been proven to devastate wetlands, creeks, and groundwater sources. Bottled water companies claim they will bring jobs and promote economic growth in a community, but residents worry about the long-term environmental effects on their drinking and agricultural water supplies, the limited sustainability of these promises, and the limited jobs that are offered. The growth in the bottled water industry is connected to the other forms of privatization as bottled water places a commercial value on water and lowers our expectations of public water resources like drinking water fountains. Consumers are willing to spend up to 1000 times more on bottled water than they do for public water because it is convenient. The bottled water industry has done terrific campaigning and marketing to convince us that bottled water is safer and tastes better. In fact no government agency, with the exception of occasional tests by the FDA, is testing bottled water and in most cases the water is coming directly from the tap. Many groups and schools are working to limit the sale of bottled water in public spaces because choosing tap water over bottled water is a meaningful and relatively easy thing to do and saves money. For sample resolutions on promoting tap water, banning bottled water and other additional facts visit:

- http://www.polarisinstitute.org/sample_resolution_to_ban_bottled_water
- <http://www.takebackthetap.org/>
- <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/bottled/facts/>

Water Exports

The United States, Canada, and Mexico plan to build dedicated water pipelines to transport water from the north to the south. Researchers warn that this may exacerbate water issues by reducing water quality, fragmenting ecosystems, reducing farmland, and threatening water rights. Bulk water exports from the Great Lakes will permanently remove water from the ecosystem, thereby changing the entire region. With glaciers melting at alarming rates worldwide, and the Great Lake's water levels at historic lows due to climate change, water security is in jeopardy.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Do you believe that water is a natural resource that is shared and owned by all, or that water is a commodity that can be bought and sold like oil or ore? Explain your position.
- It is argued that private corporations can run municipal water systems more efficiently and at a lower price. Do you believe this to be true? Why or why not?
- What roles do the media play in raising issues about water rights?

- What should the media be reporting in regard to educating the public about water?
- Can you think of alternatives to privatization?

ACTIVITY - STAGE A DEBATE

Objective:

This activity will help individuals understand and articulate the various arguments and positions around water privatization, conservation, and alternatives to privatization.

Preparation:

Preview a copy of “The Water Front” DVD and decide which version to show.

Download fact sheets on privatization to fuel the debate:

Top Ten Reasons Why Water Privatization Fails

<http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/private-vs-public/reasons-water-privatization-fails>

ACTIVITY

A debate is a powerful way to explore all sides of an argument and can be used with any section of this guide.

Sample debate themes might include:

Increased water rates promote conservation:

- Transnational corporations argue that if people pay more, they will conserve more.
- Citizens groups worry about excessive rate increases and that access to water could be jeopardized.

A private company will remedy the water problems in a given community:

- Transnational corporations argue they will bring efficiency and funding to outdated water facilities.
- Residents worry that corporations will cut corners in ways that will impact the quality of their water and its rates. Workers worry they will lose their jobs

Step 1: Have participants assume the role of diverse stakeholders involved in a critical decision regarding water management in a community. This could include council members, citizens, and corporate representatives. Assign individuals roles they wouldn't typically identify with, and have them argue either for or against the issue. If you chose to debate privatization provide some sample positions.

Sample arguments for privatization include:

- A private company will attract funding to upgrade water systems.
- A private company will increase efficiency in management of water services.
- A private company will help increase service coverage.

Sample arguments against privatization include:

- A private company will increase water rates and low-income people will suffer accordingly.
- A private company is more interested in making a profit than improving a water infrastructure and will do anything to cut costs.

WATER CHALLENGES

aging infrastructures
 agro-business
 bottled water marketing
 budgets: local, state, national
 climate change
 competition for shared resources
 drought
 gravel mining
 human rights
 infected water
 laws and policies
 pollution
 poor utilities management
 privatization
 water affordability
 water exports
 water speculation

- Monies made by a private company are not reinvested in the community.
- A private company will not listen to the concerns of users, especially low-income people.

Step 2: Following the debate, allow participants to reflect on their roles and the arguments discussed.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITY - MAKING YOUR OWN MEDIA STATEMENT

A terrific way to get individuals thinking about water privatization is to have groups make their own media including:

- A photo-exhibit
- A public service announcement (PSA's)
- A short video
- A song remix.

It's important to imagine both a target audience and an exhibition venue for the work and there are many on-line venues to consider. For example, Food & Water Watch launched a "I Heart Tap Water" national video contest which challenged college students from around the U.S. to make shorts on the theme. Two of the winning videos are available on "The Water Front" DVD as well as on-line at <http://www.takebackthetap.org/>

Food & Water Watch will be launching a new campaign with "The Water Front" to remix the theme song of "Please Mr. Waterman," which was written by blues artist Joe L. Cater. Details about the competition can be found at <http://waterfrontmovie.com>

Citizen Shift of the National Film Board of Canada has compiled a guide to make media shorts (PSAs) for educators and has a collection of video shorts and water facts available under their water dossier at citizen.nfb.ca/onf/info?did=2404

RESOURCES ON PRIVATIZATION

- *Defending Water For Life, efforts to keep water resources in the public trust* <http://www.thealliancefordemocracy.org/campaigns.html>
- *Food and Water Watch* <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/private-vs-public>
- *Hardin, Garrett. "The Tragedy of the Commons" Science, 162, 1243-1248, 1968* <http://dieoff.org/page95.htm>
- *International civil society movement begun by The Council of Canadians on privatization* <http://www.blueplanetproject.net/>
- *Map of the bottled water industry developed by Polaris Institute:* <http://www.insidethebottle.org/mapping-the-industry>
- *The Center for Public Integrity, The Water Barons: How a few powerful companies are privatizing your water* Washington, D.C.: Public Integrity Books, 2003w

PRODUCTION RESOURCES:

- *Witness has made their production book Video For Change available for download in several languages* <http://www.witness.org>
- *Make Internet TV -* <http://makeinternettv.org>.
- *Citizen Shift -* <http://citizen.nfb.ca/node/1138>
- *Center for Digital Storytelling -* <http://www.storycenter.org/resources.html>

3

WATER AS A HUMAN RIGHT

Everyone has the right to clean and accessible water, adequate for the health and well being of the individual and family, and no one shall be deprived of such access or quality of water due to individual economic circumstance.

Article 31: U.N Committee on Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights

The United Nations has declared 2005-2015 as “The Decade of Water.” The human right to water has

In “The Water Front” the citizens of Highland Park are struggling to maintain access to a safe, affordable water supply. They are not alone. People all across our planet are struggling to maintain access to water.

been recognized in international treaties and national constitutions since 2002. However, this right is being eroded by the inclusion of water and other essential services as commodities in international trade treaties and conventions. Many groups are involved in launching a petition asking the United Nations to add the Right to Water to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- *Are you surprised to learn that people all across the U.S. and especially in the Great Lakes don't have access to safe, affordable water? Why?*
- *What are the local, national and international laws that protect the right to water?*
- *Would you sign a petition for the United Nations to add the Right to Water to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? Why? Why not?*

ACTIVITY: EXPLORE WATER IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Objective:

This activity will help participants consider the role of local policies, stakeholders and politicians in managing shared resources and upholding water as a human right.

Preparation:

Preview a copy of “The Water Front” DVD and decide which version to show. Do some preliminary local research on local leaders and existing legislation on water concerns such as penalties, rates, etc.

Activity:

Step 1: Have participants map out the major players or stakeholders managing water in a given community including but not limited to: the mayor, a city council member, a representative from the department of public works or the water department, or a citizen advocacy group.

Step 2: Break up participants into groups to determine what role each stakeholder plays in making sure water is safe and affordable. Have groups explore the following questions; Are these stake-holders doing their job? Who are they accountable to? Who determines policies for payments, penalties, and rates? Is there anything like the Affordability Plan in Highland Park, which advocates for a fund for low-income individuals facing temporary challenges in paying bills?

Step 3: Have participants find out if any part of the water system is privatized (sewage, account management etc). If not, have them find out if the city has ever considered privatization. Have groups explore the following questions; If the city were to privatize who would make that decision? Would citizens be consulted? Is there a way for the public to vote on a proposal to privatize? Are local water workers unionized? What are the workers’ thoughts on the challenges facing the plant? How do they feel about water privatization as a solution?

Step 4: Have participants schedule an interview with one or more of the community stake-holders.

Step 5: Have participants report back to the group and put together a presentation on their findings.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITY

Explore how countries have incorporated the right to water in their constitutions.

Have participants explore recent legislative victories over the right to water in South Africa, Tanzania, Ecuador or Uruguay and compare campaign strategies.

http://www.uusc.org/content/international_human_right_water

RESOURCES ON THE RIGHT TO WATER

- *Food & Water Watch has a resource page on the right to water including a list of constitutions respecting the right to water - <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/world-water/right#documentContent>*
- *World Health Organization has a 47 page downloadable document with case studies and extensive documentation on the right to water - http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/rightwater/en/*
- *Environmental Protection Agency features water regulations and laws - <http://www.epa.gov/OW/laws.html>*
- *The Right To Water site, created by Water Aid and Rights and Humanity provides case studies and resources - <http://www.righttowater.org.uk/code/homepage.asp>*
- *Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) has a unique bibliography on water as a human right. http://www.uusc.org/content/uusc_right_water_law_bibliography*
- *U.N.Charter art. 55 - <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/>*

4

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Environmental Justice seeks to help the public and policymakers use scientific information to build sustainable communities world-wide.

Professor Bunyan I. Bryant Jr., coordinator of the Environmental Justice field of study at University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

The water challenges faced by Highland Park residents are an example of environmental injustices. Unannounced increases in water rates and water shut-offs have had a particularly dramatic impact on the majority of low-income residents.

An environmental injustice exists when members of a disadvantaged group suffer disproportionately from environmental risks or from a violation of human rights caused by environmental factors. If a community is denied access to information or participation in decision making this is an example of an environmental injustice. Environmental justice as a social movement emerged in the 1980's and has grown rapidly in the United States and internationally in response to environmental burdens shouldered by racial minorities, women, economically disadvantaged communities, and developing nations. The movement makes connections between environmental concerns and systems of oppression such as institutional racism and the commodification of public resources, which includes land, water, energy, and air. President Bill Clinton brought attention to the term by signing the Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898, which required all federal agencies to design and implement programs to address environmental justice issues. A key advocacy component of the environmental justice movement is a demand for more participation in decision-making around environmental concerns.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- *What are the repercussions of having someone's water turned off in Highland Park?*
- *Do you know where else this is happening?*
- *What happens in your community if a family cannot pay their water bill?*
- *What are the social factors that contribute to the environmental crisis in Highland Park?*
- *Identify and discuss instances of environmental injustice in your community or nearby communities.*

ACTIVITY - RESEARCH ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICES

Objective:

This activity will help individuals to articulate a working definition of environmental justice and become familiar with the Principles of Environmental Justice.

Preparation:

Preview a copy of “The Water Front” DVD and decide which version to show. Make copies of the Principles of Environmental Justice to share with participants. Use resources below to bring in examples of other cases of environmental injustices.

Activity:

Step 1: Have participants watch “The Water Front” and discuss how an application of the Principles of Environmental Justice would have changed the course of events for residents in the film (see Appendix II).

Step 2: Have participants break into small groups to discuss additional environmental health issues and identify a community facing an environmental injustice (see list of issues and groups below). Ask groups to explore the strategies that citizens have taken or could take to resolve this issue.

Step 3: Have groups present their findings and draw out comparisons.

Step 4: Facilitate a discussion around lessons from other people’s struggles and how the Principles of Environmental Justice could be applied in each community.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ISSUES:

Agricultural chemicals and human health
Animal waste and water pollution
Bioaccumulation of heavy metals in seafood
Birth defects
Cancer/cancer clusters
Children’s environmental health issues
Diesel pollution from school buses and other vehicles
Food contaminants
Historical uses of heavy metals (lead, mercury, etc.)
Lead exposure in children
Local hazardous waste sites
Nuclear radiation
Pesticide residues on former agricultural sites
Toxic chemicals in the food chain
Utility shut offs
Waste incineration

RESOURCES:

- *Bryant, Bunyan I. Environmental Justice: Issues, Policies, and Solutions. Island Press, 1995.*
- *Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCA EJ) is a resource group based in California - <http://www.ccaej.org/>*
- *Community Coalition for Environmental Justice (CCEJ) - This Seattle organization provides community education and a resource library. <http://www.ccej.org/>*
- *Environmental Justice Coalition on Water based in California <http://www.ejcw.org/>*
- *Environmental Justice Resource Center of Clark Atlanta University. Resource for reports, news, and books - <http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/>*
- *Indigenous Environmental Network - <http://www.ienearth.org/>*
- *National Black Environmental Justice Network - <http://www.nbejn.org/>*
- *Principles of Environmental Justice - <http://www.ejnet.org/ej/>*

5

WATER CONSERVATION

The frog does not drink up the pond in which he lives
Native American Saying.

Many people suggest that the only way people will conserve water is if the price goes up. Highland Park is an example of why this argument is flawed. When prices increase low-income families are the first impacted. Those who can afford water can also afford to waste water. Conservation starts with education.

Public demand for water in the U.S. has grown faster than population growth, with each person using an average of 100 gallons of water each day. Within the next five years, at least 36 states in the United States anticipate water shortages, as water supplies and distribution systems are put under stress. Lower water levels can lead to higher concentrations of heavy metals or human pollutants. Efficient water use helps maintain supplies at a safe level. Reducing water use through better water practices is one way to help the problem, and improved infrastructures also help limit water leaks. Every drop counts!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- *Is raising rates the only way to encourage people to conserve water? Why or why not?*
- *How else can people conserve water?*
- *How does urban sprawl affect water quality and availability?*

ACTIVITY - WATER AUDIT

Objective

This activity will help students analyze how water is used, the ways it is wasted, and how it can be conserved. A water audit worksheet is available for this exercise.
(see Appendix I)

Activity

Water conservation is important for several reasons. The more water we conserve, the more we have for other uses and the less money we spend on treatment and facilities.

Step 1: Use the water audit worksheet in Appendix I to increase awareness of water usage and conservation. (Adapted from the American Water Resource Association, US Environmental Protection Agency and Project Learning Tree).

Step 2: Discuss findings following the water audit:

In which category is the most water used? What can you do to decrease the amount of water you use?

Step 3: Have participants come up with a new water use plan based on the areas where they used the most water.

Step 4: An extension of this exercise would be for participants to create posters with water conservation messages that can be posted at drinking fountains, and bathrooms in schools, community centers, and churches for example.

RESOURCES

- *Environmental Protection Agency. (1997). Water pollution, prevention, and conservation. <http://www.epa.gov/reg5rcra/wptdiv/p2pages/water.pdf>*
- *Environmental Protection Agency. WaterSense. <http://www.epa.gov/watersense/index.htm>*
- *American Rivers. (2002). Paving our way to water shortages: How sprawl aggravates the effects of drought. <http://www.americanrivers.org/site/DocServer/PavingOurWayToWaterShortages.pdf?docID=164>*
- *List of Wise Water Tips <http://www.awwa.org/Resources/Waterwiser.cfm?ItemNumber=29269&navItemNumber=1561>*

6

CITIZEN ACTION

We had no idea that we would be involved in this horrific fight to have water recognized as a human right.

Maureen Taylor, Michigan Welfare Rights

The fight to save Highland Park's water system from being privatized was spearheaded by several active residents, primarily women. Their dedication and the relentless pressure they keep on the Highland Park city council and financial manager are testaments to what can be done when people get organized and take action. Organizing people in a community is not without challenges. Residents can feel a sense of hopelessness facing what seems like an overwhelming situation. There is not only shame in admitting that you can't pay a bill, but there are also risks in speaking out. In Michigan, for instance, if a person's water is shut-off, that home is considered condemned and the residents can then lose custody of any minor children to local child welfare authorities.

One of the biggest obstacles a community organizer faces is a combination of fear and apathy among members of the community they are working with. Most people believe that their one letter, phone call or vote will not make a difference. Many are concerned that politicians are corrupt and more loyal to the corporations that fund their political campaigns than to the people they represent. It's difficult to know where to begin, but collective action is a way to reduce the fears of individuals facing complicated circumstances. Organizing a film screening, writing a "Letter to the Editor" or joining a local campaign can be a first step in confronting apathy and making a difference.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- *What are the organizing strategies played out by community members in "The Water Front"?*
- *What role should our elected officials play in protecting water supplies?*
- *Women like Vallory Johnson, Marian Kramer, and Maureen Taylor are examples of community leaders. What qualities are necessary to assume leadership or run successful community campaigns?*
- *How can you keep people motivated to keep moving ahead on an issue when there are losses or setbacks along the way?*
- *What can be done to get people outside of the community involved?*

ACTIVITY: PLANNING AN ACTION

Objective:

This activity will help individuals consider ways that citizens can help make positive changes in their communities.

Preparation:

Visit the web sites of organizations involved in water campaigns:

- *Clean Water Action* - <http://www.cleanwateraction.org/mi>
- *Food and Water Watch* - <http://www.foodandwater-watch.org>
- *Council for Canadians* - <http://www.canadians.org>
- *Polaris Institute* - <http://www.polarisinstitute.org>
- *Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)* - <http://www.uusc.org>
- *Sierra Club* - <http://www.sierraclub.org>

EXAMPLES OF ORGANIZING STRATEGIES IN HIGHLAND PARK:

- Organizing public protests to pressure local representatives.
- Attending municipal meetings and voicing their concerns.
- Building strategic alliances
- Taking their concerns to the governor
- Sending video testimony on shut-offs to the United Nations
- Creating alternatives -
- The Water Affordability Plan.

Activity:

Step 1: Discuss activities that have worked in other communities or campaigns.

Step 2: Have participants come up with a goal – what they want to achieve and who they want to reach – their target audience. To arrive at goals it is usually helpful to have a “brainstorm” session where participants come up with a range of ideas.

Step 3: Determine what resources are available (a friend at a local radio station, someone who could donate water bottles etc).

Step 4: Come up with strategies or actions.

Step 5: Create a timeline for action and try to coordinate with other community or international events (like the *Great Lakes Film Tour*).

Step 6: Find out if volunteers will be needed and discuss recruitment.

Step 7: Make a list of what “follow up” is required.

Examples of Objectives:

Raise awareness, build bridges, prompt decision makers, educate local/state/national communities

Examples of Action/Audience/Objective:

1. Write a “Letter to the Editor”

Target audience – general community.

Objective – state your position on the issue and try to create new alliances in the community; inform residents of an upcoming town hall meeting.

2. Host a town hall meeting

Target audience – residents

Objective – inform community of city’s position on water, listen to participants’ concerns, and brainstorm actions to take collectively.

3. Organize door-to-door canvassing

Target audience – neighbors

Objective – reach individuals who cannot/would not attend a town hall or city council meeting, share and collect information about the local problem(s).

4. Attend city council meetings

Target audience - local leaders

Objective - monitor how city councilors address water issues and inform them of community concerns and actions.

5. Plan a screening of "The Water Front"

Target audience - community members (including residents, business owners, and political representatives), and other community at-large participants, e.g. local college students, local media.

Objective - to facilitate a social event and discussion

RESOURCES

- See Appendix V for additional actions
- Research your lawmakers in Congress: <http://www.progressivepunch.org>
- Visit "The Water Front" website for ideas at <http://www.waterfrontmovie.com/getinvolved>
- Download "The Water Front" Activist Guide developed by Food & Water Watch. This guide offers tools on how to develop and sustain local campaigns around water politics and is available at <http://www.waterfrontmovie.org> and <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/films/the-water-front>

APPENDIX I WATER AUDIT WORKSHEET

Water Audit Worksheet

Bath

1. Volume of water used (circle one): (Use answer in A3)
1/3 of tub = 15 gallons of tub = 20 gallons 2/3 tub = 28 gallons
Number of baths taken daily: _____ per day. (use answer in A3)
Daily water usage for bathtub: $A1 \times A2 =$ _____ gallons per day.

Toilet

1. Gallons per flush = _____ (Use answer in B3)
Low-flow toilet uses 1.6 gallons/flush. Conventional toilet uses 3.5-7 gallons/flush.
Count the number of times you flush the toilet a day: _____ (Use answer in B3).
Daily water usage for toilet: $B1 \times B2 =$ _____ gallons per day.

Shower

1. Average length of shower: _____ minutes (Use answer in C3).
2. Flow rate of water used in shower: _____ gallons per minute.
Low-flow shower uses 2.5 gallons/minute. Conventional shower uses 3-8 gallons/min
3. Average shower water use $C1 \times C2 =$ _____ gallons. (Use answer in C5)
Number of showers taken daily: _____ per day. (Use answer in C5)
Daily water use for shower: $C3 \times C4 =$ _____ gallons per day.

Faucet

1. Flow rate of faucet: _____ gallons per minute.
To measure the flow rate of a faucet record the time it takes to fill a gallon jug of water and convert the measurement to gallons per minute.

Example: gallons per minute = 60 seconds time to fill your gallon jug of water

Determine the time you spend running water during the day for the following:

- Tooth brushing _____ minutes per day
Drinking _____ minutes per day
Cooking _____ minutes per day
Cleaning _____ minutes per day
TOTAL _____ minutes per day

Daily water use for faucet: $D1 \times D2$ (total) = _____ gallons per day.

Dishwasher

1. Loads done for your whole family each week: _____ loads per week.
2. E1 divided by 7 = _____ loads per day. (Use answer in E3)
3. Daily water used for dish washing: $E2 \times 15$ gallons per load = _____ gallons per day.

Clothes washer

1. Loads done for your whole family each week: _____ loads per week.
2. F1 divided by 7 = _____ loads per day. (Use answer in F3)
3. Daily water used for dish washing: $F2 \times 38$ gallons per load = _____ gallons per day.

Total daily water use = _____ gallons per day.

($A3+B3+C5+D3+E3+F3 =$ Total daily water use)

APPENDIX II PRINCIPLES OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

WE THE PEOPLE OF COLOR, gathered together at this multinational People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities, do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth; to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to insure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and land and the genocide of our peoples, do affirm and adopt these Principles of Environmental Justice:

1. Environmental justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.
2. Environmental justice demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.
3. Environmental justice mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.
4. Environmental justice calls for universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons and nuclear testing that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water, and food.
5. Environmental justice affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.
6. Environmental justice demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.
7. Environmental justice demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.
8. Environmental justice affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment, without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.
9. Environmental justice protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.
10. Environmental justice considers governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration On Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.
11. Environmental justice must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.
12. Environmental justice affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and providing fair access for all to the full range of resources.
13. Environmental justice calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.
14. Environmental justice opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.
15. Environmental justice opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.
16. Environmental justice calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.
17. Environmental justice requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to insure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.

Adopted today, October 27, 1991, in Washington, D.C.

APPENDIX III A NATIONAL WATER TRUST FUND

According to a recent poll, nine out of ten Americans believe that clean and safe water is a national priority that deserves federal investment. Congress agreed when it passed the Clean Water Act in 1972: “It is the national policy that Federal financial assistance be provided to construct publicly owned treatment work.” And in amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act, “The Federal Government needs to provide assistance to communities to help the communities meet Federal drinking water requirements.”

The Water Trust Fund, currently being drafted in Congress would provide a consistent source of funding to individual states to support the replacement, repair, and rehabilitation of clean and drinking water infrastructures. The eligible fund recipients are being debated in Congress. It is critical that the funding must be available only to publicly-owned and operated water systems. The Trust Fund should not become an incentive to privatize. Similarly, the funding mechanisms remain a source of contention and it's important that consumers don't end up paying for the Fund; resources should come from those parties that most burden the systems. For example funds could come from a corporate environmental income tax or a tax on agricultural chemicals.

Making funding available at the federal level will improve water quality in all of our communities. Growing, wealthy communities may be able to afford needed infrastructure upgrades. But there is a much higher burden on small, rural communities and cities with large service areas and relatively poor populations. Poor wastewater treatment upstream means higher costs for safe drinking water downstream - and we're all downstream from someone.

The notion of a public trust fund has precedents. There's a National Botanic Garden Trust Fund and a South Dakota Terrestrial Wildlife Habitat Restoration Trust Fund. So while dedicated funding sources ensure that the Butterfly Weed and Texas Prickly Pear are blooming the federal government has yet to establish a trust fund to protect something all people need to survive: water.

As the debate over the Water Trust Fund continues critical questions have to be resolved: Where will the funding for the Trust Fund come from? Will it be available to private corporations or only public utilities? The answer to these questions is critical to the future of communities in dire need of support. Learn more about the Water Trust Fund by calling Food & Water Watch at (202) 683-2500 or visiting <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org>.

APPENDIX IV HIGHLAND PARK TROUBLE SPOT CASE STUDY

Demographic Information on the city of Highland Park:

Highland Park is recognized as the place where Henry Ford invented the Assembly Line. During its height, the city had a population of 66,000 but now has less than 16,000. The city suffered from the exodus of the car industry in the late 1960's and through decades of an eroding tax base and the reduction of city services. Today many residents are under-employed or on fixed incomes and often unable to meet their basic needs..

Is the water department managed by the city or privately?

While the water plant is owned and managed by the City, the local government has been considering privatized management for several years.

What is the nature of the water conflict in this community?

1. Aging infrastructures are compounded by a lack of staff and resources to run and upgrade the water plant; and most residents cannot afford the cost of extensive plumbing maintenance at their homes.
2. Extraordinary water rate increases have been introduced without any form of community consultation or dispute resolution process. Additionally, harsh penalties were enacted to ensure payment despite "estimated" water reading bills. These new measures conflict with due process and the economic means of the individuals living in the community.
3. Privatization was introduced as an economic solution to an aging infrastructure, and a political answer to the incapacity of local officials to manage this problem. Negotiations took place without an examination into the business' expertise or citizen accordance.
4. Water Exports in the form of bottled water and bulk water to surrounding communities were introduced as a solution to the economic concerns of the community.

Who is the most impacted by this struggle?

Low-income homeowners, families with young children, water department workers.

How big is the problem?

In 2003, over half of the city's residents (and several businesses) had their water shut off. This crisis created a multitude of family hardships and underscored public health concerns for communities across the region. It also accentuated the flagrant violation of basic human rights that residents and activists alike called for assistance with.

What solutions did the community present in response to the water crisis?

At the outset of the problem, residents gathered at a local school to discuss their concerns and problem-solving strategies. Many of them began canvassing their streets and talking to neighbors about their water bills. These residents formed a local group called The Highland Park Human Rights Coalition. With the assistance of a local poverty law attorney, they collected water bill data and presented their findings and demands to local officials. When shut offs began they attended city council meetings and protested in front of city council. They used a local radio station and flyers to get the word out. Working with residents in Detroit who were experiencing similar water bill problems, they consulted a utilities expert to create an alternative billing draft, "The Affordability Plan." When confronted with the privatization proposal they contacted local and national organizations for support and information. They later took their concerns to the governor of the state by calling for a moratorium on shutoffs.

Where else is this happening?

Detroit, Michigan | Roxbury, Massachusetts | Phiri, South Africa (see below)

In Phiri, South Africa new water policies were introduced without citizen consultation. The rates conflicted with the needs and resources of the community members. The citizens launched a campaign and court case around water as a human right.

Prepaid water meters were forcibly installed by the utility company in Phiri, South Africa, 2003. The company also took the initiative to determine a “daily water allocation.” If citizens did not agree to the meters, they would be unable to access any water at all. But the right to water is guaranteed by the South African constitution, so community members organized to bring a court case against the meter system in front of the High Court of South Africa. In May 2008, the court ruled that the forced meter installation was unconstitutional, and significantly increased the daily water allocation. Unfortunately the City of Johannesburg has appealed the decision so the struggle for the right to water continues.

For more info: The Push for Water and Justice in South Africa <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/world/publications/reports/the-push-for-water-and-justice-in-south-africa>

APPENDIX V TIPS ON ACTIONS

1. Host a screening of “The Water Front.”

The first step is to identify your objective and your target audience. You will also want to spend enough time to get the word out. And finally you want to make the event a success and leave people on a positive note with suggested follow up steps or actions. We have developed extensive resources for easy download on our website to ensure you have the necessary materials to use a screening strategically. <http://www.waterfrontmovie.com/great-lakes-tour>

The documents include:

- How to Host a Screening
- Screening Timeline and Checklist
- Sample Screening Agenda
- Audience Feedback Form
- Organizer Feedback Form
- Press Release Template
- Getting Press for Your Event.
- Frequently Asked Questions

2. Letter to the Editor:

- Keep letters to 250 words
- Refer to a recent article published in the paper
- Sign the letter and print your contact info (make sure to include phone number and address – this is important.
- Follow the instructions on the editorial page of the newspaper
- Share your letter with others

3. Letter to Government officials

- Know your audience – do research on the person you are writing
- Write an individual letter instead of a form letter
- State your purpose in the first paragraph and stick to the point
- Keep the letter to one typewritten page
- State how the issue will impact you and others
- Suggest an alternative solution
- Refer them to additional sources of information (e.g., links, media)
- Formulate meaningful questions and ask them to respond in writing

A terrific resource on writing a press release can be found at:
<http://spinproject.org/downloads/PressReleases.pdf>

APPENDIX VI TIPS ON CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

Preparation

- Learn as much as you can about the person before the interview and plan a general outline of questions.
- Always check your equipment beforehand, bring extra batteries and tapes and arrive early.
- Find a location with good lighting and sound to conduct your interview (usually shooting outdoors has better lighting but it is also noisier). If possible choose a location that has some relevance to the issue that will be dealt with in the video.
- Unplug any machines that may vibrate or hum in the background (Refrigerators, computers, air conditioners). Shut windows to avoid cars or sirens, turn off cell phones and disconnect the phone.
- If appropriate ask your interviewee to remove hats, sunglasses or change a shirt. Its best to avoid clothing that is thinly striped, bright white or red. Ask to remove jewelry that may reflect light or create noise during the interview.

Setting Up an Interview

- It is best to use a tripod to record your interview and always wear headphones.
- Use a lavalier microphone to achieve the best possible audio. Make sure that the microphone is not obstructed by any clothing and will not be disturbed by any possible movement of your interviewee.
- Set the camera at eye level for your interviewee; and position the interviewer so that the eye line between interviewee and interviewer is close to the camera. You want your interviewee to be looking close to, but not directly into the camera.
- Always remember the rule of thirds when filming interviews. In close-up shots, keep your interviewee's eyes a third of the way down from the top of the frame.
- Make sure your interviewee has enough talking space. If they are looking over to the left of the frame you should move them further to the right of your viewfinder, and vice versa.
- Before recording pay close attention to your camera's image to make sure that your interviewee is not too dark or bright and that their face is in focus.

Before the Interview Begins: Recording Consent

- Before beginning your interview it is important to record your interviewee providing consent. While recording consent make sure that you are getting good sound.
- Press record and introduce yourself. Explain your project, the issues being discussed, where the video will possibly be screened and to whom. Ask your interviewee if they understand and to state that they give their permission for the interview. Confirm that there aren't any restrictions to any information they may provide or if they want their name or identity concealed. Inform them that they can stop the interview at anytime and that their participation is completely voluntary.
- Always have your interview subjects identify themselves by name (including spelling), position or title, location, date and time.

Conducting an Interview

- Avoid "yes" or "no" questions. Remember that you are aiming to get your interviewee to give full and complete answers that you can use to tell your story. The best way to do this is to ask open questions that do not require a yes or no in response.
For example "Can you tell me about...?"
- Explain to your interviewee how to incorporate your questions into their answers. Explain that this is important for the editing process.
For example, Question—How long have you worked for the water plant?
Answer—I have worked at this plant for over five years.

- Be careful not to ask leading questions like “Wouldn’t you say that privatization is a bad thing?” It’s better to ask, “What are your thoughts on privatization of the water plant?” The first question reveals your bias and can elicit a yes or no answer. The latter question invites a more detailed answer.
- Always keep silent during the interview. Avoid using encouraging sounds to your interviewee like, “Aha” or “I see”. Use visual responses to communicate with your interviewee during your interview- nods, smiles, etc.
- Allow space between questions and answers. A long pause after your interviewee has finished speaking may encourage them to contribute more detail to their answer.
- Ask follow up questions. Use your outline questions as a guide but feel free to explore relevant topics that your interviewee might introduce. Ask for more detail from your interviewee if you feel like you are missing important information or ask them to repeat an answer if it is not clear.
- Do not be afraid to stop the interview if you are experiencing technical problems or if there is distracting noise in the background. You may only have one chance to film an interview so make sure that everything you need is recorded properly.
- Always ask your interviewee at the end if there is anything else that they would like to say, and that you haven’t addressed.

This resource was developed in consultation with Witness - www.witness.org. For additional resources download chapters from Video For Change on their website.

**THE
WATER
FRONT
THE
GUIDE**

THE WATER FRONT | THE GUIDE

FRONT

THE

GUIDE

THE

WATER

FRONT

THE