



# P.O.V.

Discussion Guide

Season 20

## Revolution '67

A Film by Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiorno



[www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov)



## Letter from the Filmmakers

Newark, June 2007

### Dear Colleague,

We live in Newark, New Jersey. And it's a city — like so many other American cities — that's suffering.

Most people associate Newark with its airport or its violent history. They especially remember the Newark riots of 1967, during which 26 people died, hundreds were injured and the city endured millions of dollars in property damage. People assume that it was this one event that left the city in a state from which it has never fully recovered.

We started researching Newark's past for our short thesis film at NYU's Graduate Film School. The film, "1967," was fictional, an interracial love story set during that hot, turbulent summer in Newark. With Spike Lee as a teacher/mentor and later as an executive producer, we sought to write a longer, more substantial screenplay and needed to ask lots of questions. We also wanted to record the answers. This work became **Revolution '67** the documentary film.

Our first interviews with eyewitnesses Amiri Baraka (who in '67 was known as LeRoi Jones), former Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) president Tom Hayden (who had lived in Newark from 1964 to 68) and historians Ken Jackson and Clement Price brought many surprises. The most startling was the myth of the black sniper. According to newspaper articles of the time, and even today, most of the riot's casualties were said to have been caused by black snipers from the Newark community. This was information that we dramatized in our NYU thesis film. But our interviewees presented evidence that black snipers didn't exist and that most of the killings were committed by law enforcement: Newark police, New Jersey State Police and the National Guard.

Another revelation was that the riots were a rebellion against deplorable conditions stemming not from a single day, or from months or years, but from decades of corruption and neglect. This led us to a reexamination of how slavery, the economic motives of the Civil War, Jim Crow laws, unscrupulous real estate and banking practices, the civil rights era, the Vietnam War and the veracity of media coverage factored into Newark's revolution of '67. As Newark's history unfolded, so did America's.

Tom Hayden states in our film: "To recover, you have to know what happened." Forty years later, after numerous Newark officials have been indicted and/or imprisoned, and the vital signs of the city are still poor, we recognize that Newark has not learned from its past. The greatest lesson of the 1960s is that the people must empower themselves in order for that change to occur.



Filmmakers Jerome Bongiorno and Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiorno

Photo Jerome Bongiorno

### Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiorno and Jerome Bongiorno

Filmmakers, **Revolution '67**



## Table of Contents

<b>4</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Background Information</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Newark Before the Riots</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>The Riots</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Newark After the Riots</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Newark Today</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Selected People Featured in     <i>Revolution '67</i></b>
<b>11</b>	<b>General Discussion Questions</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Discussion Prompts</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>Taking Action</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>Resources</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>How to Buy the Film</b>

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*Filmmaker, **Revolution '67***





## Introduction



It was 1967. Dozens of cities across the U.S. had already exploded in violence, and more would soon follow. For six days in July, Newark, New Jersey, was among them. **Revolution '67**, a feature-length (82-minute) documentary, reveals how events in Newark began as spontaneous revolts against poverty and police brutality and ended as fateful reminders of America's history of racism and injustice. Even forty years later, the tension, pain and loss still shape people's lives and beliefs.

The film is especially powerful as an outreach tool because it features voices from across the spectrum. Activists, scholars, journalists, politicians, National Guardsmen, law-enforcement

*The Newark Community Union Project (NCUP) Police Brutality March  
across Broad and Market Street in Newark, NJ, 1965.*

Photo Doug Eldridge Collection

officers and citizens share their diverse perspectives about how and why a relatively minor skirmish erupted into violent chaos. As they try to make sense of their experiences, these witnesses recall hard-learned lessons about race relations and the struggle for social justice. Viewers will find that many of these lessons still resonate today.



## Background Information

### Newark Before the Riots

Newark, New Jersey, is an industrial city and major commercial port ten miles west of New York City. From the early 1800s through the mid-twentieth century, the city was a successful urban economic center. Between 1900 and 1960, more than 100,000 African Americans looking for economic opportunities and relief from Jim Crow laws moved to Newark from the rural South. At its peak, Newark was home to more than 400,000 residents.

After World War II the Federal Housing Administration guaranteed low-cost mortgages to returning soldiers. However, the FHA redlined<sup>1</sup> nearly all of Newark, sending white soldiers and their families to almost exclusively white suburbs. Between 1950 and 1967, the white population of Newark dropped from 363,000 to 158,000, while the black population tripled, from 70,000 to 220,000.

Despite the enormous reduction of Newark's white population, positions of property ownership and political power remained in white hands. For example, in 1960, 83 percent of Newark's police force was white, while 60 percent of its population was black.

In addition to the loss of population, flight meant a loss of financial resources. In a 1966 application for federal aid, 40,000 of Newark's 136,000 housing units were classified as substandard or dilapidated. The Hughes Commission reported that more than a third of black men ages 16 to 19 were unemployed.



*In 2003, Tom Hayden returns to his old Jelliff Avenue neighborhood in Newark, where he lived and worked from 1964 to 1968.*

Photo Jerome Bongiorno

#### Sources:

"Ethnic Succession and Urban Unrest in Newark and Detroit During the Summer of 1967." Herman, Max. Cornell Center Publication Series, July 2002, 33. [www.cornwall.rutgers.edu/pdf/Herman-July%202002-Report.pdf](http://www.cornwall.rutgers.edu/pdf/Herman-July%202002-Report.pdf)

"Newark Riots-1967." Herman, Max. Riots-1967. The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers, Newark. [www.67riots.rutgers.edu/](http://www.67riots.rutgers.edu/)

<sup>1</sup> To withhold home-loan funds or insurance from neighborhoods considered poor economic risks. ([www.m-w.com/](http://www.m-w.com/))





## Background Information



### The Riots

Prior to the uprising in Newark, there had been riots in dozens of U.S. cities. The most famous was in Watts (in Los Angeles) in 1965, but there had also been racial violence in nearby Paterson, Elizabeth, Jersey City and Plainfield in New Jersey and in Harlem.

Newark's violence began on July 12, 1967, and continued for six days, leaving 26 dead and 1,100 wounded. Over 1,000 citizens were jailed, most without charges or bail. No one was ever indicted or prosecuted for the killings.

*Burning automobile during the riots.*  
Photo donated by Corbis-Bettmann

#### Sources:

"Ethnic Succession and Urban Unrest in Newark and Detroit During the Summer of 1967." Herman, Max. Cornell Center Publication Series, July 2002, 33.  
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"Newark Riots-1967." Herman, Max. Riots-1967. The State University of New Jersey, Rutgers, Newark. [www.67riots.rutgers.edu/](http://www.67riots.rutgers.edu/)



## Background Information



*Store owners cleaning up after riots.*

Photo donated by Corbis-Bettmann

### Newark After the Riots

In the years immediately following the riots, Mayor Hugh Addonizio and several other city leaders were convicted of corruption and sentenced to prison. Police Director Dominick Spina was indicted for failing to enforce anti-gambling laws, but was acquitted.

In 1970, Newark elected its first black mayor (Kenneth Gibson) along with a strong group of African-American city council members. Despite their efforts, by 1980 the city had lost more than 50,000 residents, including most of what was left of its middle class. Continued cutbacks included more than a quarter of its municipal work force. According to the Urban and Regional Research Center at Princeton, Newark's economy grew by only a third of the national urban average.

Since 1986, when Sharpe James (one of the African-American city councilors elected along with Gibson) was elected mayor, Newark's report card has been mixed. There has been

economic development, especially downtown, but construction in this part of the city is not a new phenomenon and has never had much resonance with most Newark residents. New housing has been built with an emphasis on low-rise townhouses rather than 1960's-style high-rise "housing projects," however, this has done little to alleviate poverty. In 1995 the city's failing school system was taken over by the state.

#### Sources:

"Ethnic Succession and Urban Unrest in Newark and Detroit During the Summer of 1967." Herman, Max. Cornell Center Publication Series, July 2002, 33.  
[www.cornwall.rutgers.edu/pdf/Herman-July%202002-Report.pdf](http://www.cornwall.rutgers.edu/pdf/Herman-July%202002-Report.pdf)

"Generational Conflict in Urban Politics: The 2002 Newark Mayoral Election."  
 Kraus, Jeffrey. *The Forum*, 2004, Vol. 2: No. 3, Article 7.  
[www.bepress.com/forum/vol2/iss3/art7](http://www.bepress.com/forum/vol2/iss3/art7)





## Background Information



### Newark Today

Newark's population has finally stabilized at approximately 275,000. Just over 25 percent of city residents live below the poverty line, compared with 18.4 percent in 1970. Unemployment hovers around 9 percent, compared with a national rate of 4 to 5 percent. The median income for a household is \$26,913, and fewer than 9 percent of adults have a college education.

In 2006, Cory Booker was elected mayor on a reform-focused platform. Some of his policies have been controversial, including an 8.4 percent hike in property taxes designed to close a budget deficit as well as the appointment of a white police director who had worked for the New York Police Department while it faced serious allegations of racist practices.

Despite an overall reduction in violence, the current homicide rate—there were 105 murders in 2006—is the highest Newark has seen since 1990. One out of every 800 residents is hit by gunfire each year.

*Newark Riots "Remembrance" held by POP (People's Organization for Progress) and led by Larry Hamm in Newark, NJ, 2003.*

Photo Jerome Bongiorno

### Sources:

2002 American Community Survey Profile: Newark, NJ.

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"A New Mayor Tests His Promises on Newark's Harsh Reality,"  
Jacobs, Andrew. *The New York Times*, October 19, 2006.

"Crime drops in Newark, but Murders Keep on Rising."  
Jacobs, Andrew. *The New York Times*, April 2, 2007.

"Newark Census." *USA City Link: For any City*. 1994.  
<http://newarknj.usl.myareaguide.com/census.html>

"Newark's Failing Dream." Span, Paul. *The New York Times*. October 2, 1983.

"Three Deaths Put Newark Murder Rate at Highest in Over a Decade."  
Ortega, Ralph and Alexi Friedman. [Newark] *Star-Ledger*. December 4, 2006.

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Last revised: Tuesday June 28, 2005.

[www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/Profiles/Single/2002/ACS/Narrative/160/NP16000US3451000.htm](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/Profiles/Single/2002/ACS/Narrative/160/NP16000US3451000.htm)





## Background Information

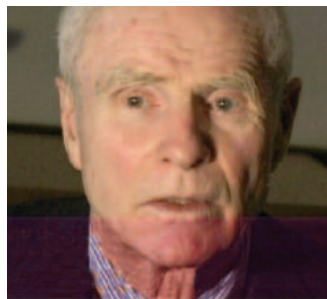
### Selected People Featured in *Revolution '67*



**Stephen N. Adubato**  
Director, North Ward Center



**Amiri Baraka**  
Activist, writer



**Brendan T. Byrne**  
Former New Jersey Governor



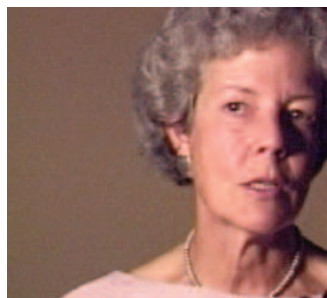
**Richard Cammarieri**  
Activist



**Charles F. Cummings**  
Historian



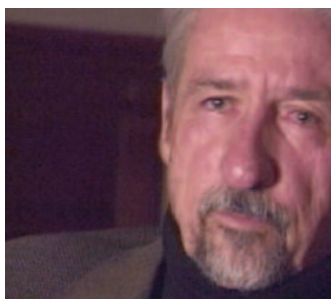
**Armando B. Fontoura**  
Essex County Sheriff



**Carol Glassman**  
Activist



**Larry Hamm**  
Activist



**Tom Hayden**  
Activist



**Bob Herbert**  
Journalist



**Kenneth T. Jackson**  
Historian



**Sharpe James**  
Former Newark Mayor



## Background Information

### Selected People Featured in *Revolution '67*



**Bud Lee**  
Photographer



**Harold Lucas**  
Former Director,  
Newark Housing Authority



**Michael Murphy**  
Attorney



**Nell Irvin Painter**  
Historian



**Clement A. Price**  
Historian



**George Richardson**  
Activist



**Ronald Smothers**  
Journalist



**Paul Zigo**  
National Guardsman,  
Historian





## General Discussion Questions

Immediately after the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen. If the mood seems tense, consider posing a general question and giving people some time to themselves to jot down or think about their answers before opening the discussion.

Unless you think participants are so uncomfortable that they can't engage until they have had a break, don't encourage them to leave the room between the film and the discussion. If you save your break for an appropriate moment during the discussion, you won't lose the feeling of the film as you begin your dialogue.

One way to get a discussion going is to pose a general question, such as:

- If you could ask anyone in the film a single question, who would you choose and what would you ask them?
- Two months from now, what do you think you will remember from this film? What is it about that person, thing or moment that is particularly memorable?
- What insights or inspiration did you gain from this film? What did you learn about the film's subjects and/or about yourself?



*CORE Anti-Police Brutality demonstration in Newark, June 1965.  
Photo by Jim Lowney. Doug Eldridge Collection*



## Discussion Prompts



*Hearing for the Newark Human Rights Commission  
on police review board at Newark City Hall, August 1965.*

Photo Doug Eldridge Collection

### Differences in Perspective

- People in the film use different words to describe the events in Newark, including “riot,” “rebellion” and “revolution.” What do you notice about who uses each of these words? In your view, which word best describes the events? Which would you use and why?
- Describing who opposed him, Tom Hayden says, “It was as if the people that live and were raised in Newark felt that anyone in their right mind who could get out of there would. So anybody who would move to Newark intentionally had to be a Communist or a really dangerous and conspiratorial person.” Contrast the activists’ view of their own work with the way that others viewed them.
- What kinds of sources did the film use to tell its story? What similarities and differences did you notice among how those sources told the story? For example, how did media coverage compare to eyewitness accounts, or citizens’ with politicians or law enforcement?

- In the film, members of the same ethnic or racial group sometimes differ in their views of what caused Newark to erupt in violence in 1967. Compare the perspectives expressed within different racial and ethnic groups: How are they the same, and how do they differ? What factors do you think contribute to these differences of opinion?
- Some people in the film suggest that Newark’s police and its black citizens were at war prior to the riot. Describe what that war may have looked like from both sides. How might the existing animosity have contributed to the riot? What kinds of things might have been done to reduce the animosity? How does your own city’s or town’s police department build positive relationships with the citizens it serves?





## Discussion Prompts



*Cab driver John Smith with attorney.  
Photo donated by Corbis-Bettmann*

### Roots of Violence

- Newark's history, like many cities', is filled with stories of political corruption. How were citizens affected by this corruption and how did political corruption contribute to Newark's riot? What kinds of structures promote or discourage corruption? Which of those structures are present in your town?
- Officials accused the activists of wanting to overthrow the government. Was overthrowing the government a reasonable goal for people who had substantial evidence that the government was failing to meet the needs of many of the citizens of Newark? How else might activists have achieved responsive government in Newark?
- There were many different categories of people who contributed to Newark's violence, including police, National Guard members, residents and outside activists. In your view, what were the sources of rage for each of these groups? Instead of the use of violent action, what might have been done to mitigate that rage?
- Historian Clement Price said that he was not surprised that Newark had a riot, only that the riot had not occurred sooner. Given what you saw in the film, what caused Newark to

transform from a thriving city into the one depicted in the film?

- Recount each of the steps where the violence escalated (police brutality, violent protest to police brutality, violence used to stop the violent protest, troop escalation, violent response, etc.). What alternative actions might have been taken to interrupt the pattern of escalation?
- What do you think it would feel like to have your street patrolled by armed soldiers? Would it make you feel safer? Why or why not? In your view, are there ways to respond to the kind of street violence you saw in the film that would not involve the use of force?
- In Newark, city officials resisted federal programs that might have helped the poor. In terms of helping people in dire situations, what should the balance of power be among municipal, state, and federal government? Should federal aid programs have the right to bypass city or state government? Why or why not?



## Discussion Prompts



*Amiri Baraka and Tom Hayden as featured in "Revolution '67" in Newark, NJ, 2003.*

Photo Jerome Bongiorno

### Race Relations

- In the film, activist George Richardson comments, "I don't think NCUP understood the black community when they came here. The black community were not interested in overturning the government, they were not looking to be revolutionaries or anarchists outside the system. They were looking for housing. They were looking for political power. They were looking for a piece of the pie. They were looking for a piece of America. They wanted to be a part of the system that represented them and gave them what they were looking for." After watching the film, what do you think the strengths and weaknesses were of the approach used by the Newark Community Union Project (NCUP)?
- Tom Hayden accepted the label "outside agitators" because, he argued, "there was no one agitating from the inside." Does this statement reflect what you saw in the film in terms of action by blacks? How would you characterize the role of white activists?

- Consider these observations about how whites viewed blacks as "inherently dangerous":

— *"There was a good deal of bigoted stereotyping of young black people. It was as if they were already a mob even when they were peaceful and apathetic."*

Tom Hayden, activist

— *"Oh, yeah, that's just what black people do."*

Nell Painter, historian on violence

How did these attitudes and stereotypes impact events in Newark?

- Compare the "fear of the black sniper" recounted in the film with reports about snipers in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. Why might the image of the black sniper persist?





## Discussion Prompts



### Healing

- The film notes that no one was indicted for killing Newark's citizens. What do you think justice might look like following an event like a riot?
- List things that happened in the immediate aftermath of the riot (for example, no one was indicted, many white activists left, government promised better housing, white politicians were indicted for corruption and ultimately black politicians rose to power, much-needed jobs never materialized, etc.). Which of these events were meant to help the community heal? Which actually did so? If you had the power, what might you have done to help a community like Newark heal from a riot?

*The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Police Brutality March at Newark City Hall; Protesters with signs, February 1965.*

Photo Doug Eldridge Collection

- What did you learn from the film about grassroots organizing?
- In your view, is it likely that an urban riot or rebellion like the one that happened in Newark could happen in a U.S. city today? Why or why not? What can be done to prevent riots?
- The film suggests that most of the riots have been quietly forgotten. What did you know about them prior to the film? Why aren't they well remembered? What lessons are lost by not remembering them? Why is it important to remember?



## Taking Action



*Activist group.*

Photo courtesy of "Revolution '67"

- Convene a round-table discussion and/or town hall meeting to discuss the impact of using violence as a method of social or political protest.
- Work with existing community organizations to create an anti-poverty initiative in your town.
- Research President Johnson's "War on Poverty." Assess the impact of various programs on people living in poverty in your community and make recommendations to legislators about which programs should be abolished, continued, or restarted.
- Create an exhibit of photographs, media, artifacts and/or personal narratives about the civil rights movement that includes information on the nation's race riots.
- Use the conclusions of the Kerner Commission Report about the causes of urban unrest in the 1960s and 1970s to assess the state of race relations and racial equity in your town or city.
- Start a personal blog to report on your community's "vital signs" in terms of healthy race relations, efforts to combat poverty and government responsiveness to the needs of citizens.
- Organize house screenings of this film in your community.





## Resources

### FILM-RELATED WEB SITES

#### Original Online Content on P.O.V. Interactive ([www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov))

**P.O.V.'s *Revolution '67* Web site**  
[www.pbs.org/pov/revolution67](http://www.pbs.org/pov/revolution67)

The *Revolution '67* companion Web site offers a streaming video trailer of the film, an interview with filmmaker Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiorno (video, podcast and text); a list of related Web sites, organizations and books; a downloadable discussion guide and classroom activity; and the following special features:

#### FILM UPDATE - DIRECTORS' CUT

Watch a special video update from the filmmakers about Newark today.

#### SPECIAL PODCAST – NEW JERSEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY PANEL

The New Jersey Historical Society is holding a special exhibition this summer in observance of the 40th anniversary of the Newark Riots. The museum hosted a special screening of *Revolution '67* and assembled a panel of historians and activists to discuss the 1967 riot and its aftermath. Listen to an audio podcast or read a transcript of the conversation.

### What's Your P.O.V.?

*P.O.V.'s online Talking Back Tapestry is a colorful, interactive representation of your feelings about **Revolution '67**.*

*Listen to other P.O.V. viewers talk about the film and add your thoughts by calling 1-800-688-4768. [www.pbs.org/pov/talkingback.html](http://www.pbs.org/pov/talkingback.html)*

### Newark

#### P.O.V.'S STREET FIGHT WEB SITE

[www.pbs.org/pov/pov2005/streetfight/](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2005/streetfight/)

The Web site of the P.O.V. film *Street Fight* includes a range of information about Newark, from history to contemporary issues facing the city.

#### WNET: A WALK THROUGH NEWARK

[www.thirteen.org/newark/index.html](http://www.thirteen.org/newark/index.html)

The Web site of the PBS "Walking Tour" series episode focused on Newark includes overviews of the city's history, with many photos.

#### THE OFFICIAL WEB SITE OF THE CITY OF NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

[www.ci.newark.nj.us](http://www.ci.newark.nj.us)

The official Web site of the City of Newark provides statistics, history and other general information.

#### THE NEW JERSEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

[www.jerseyhistory.org](http://www.jerseyhistory.org)

The Web site of The New Jersey Historical Society includes information from its exhibition "What's Going On? Newark and the Legacy of the Sixties."



## Resources



### RACE & POVERTY

*Burning building.*  
Photo courtesy of "Revolution '67"

#### **REPORT OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON CIVIL DISORDERS**

**[www.eisenhowerfoundation.org/docs/kerner.pdf](http://www.eisenhowerfoundation.org/docs/kerner.pdf)**

The full text of the 1968 "Report of the National Commission on Civil Disorders," better known as the Kerner Commission, reveals the government's assessment of the causes of racial violence in cities like Newark.

#### **THE EISENHOWER FOUNDATION**

**[www.eisenhowerfoundation.org/media\\_forum.php](http://www.eisenhowerfoundation.org/media_forum.php)**

Video and audio from distinguished panelists at a contemporary conference on "Poverty, Inequality and Race: Forty Years After the Kerner Commission".

#### **NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE**

**[www.nul.org](http://www.nul.org)**

The mission of the Urban League movement is to enable African Americans to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power and civil rights.





## How to Buy the Film

To order *Revolution '67*,  
go to [www.bongornioproductions.com](http://www.bongornioproductions.com) or email [Revolution67@verizon.net](mailto:Revolution67@verizon.net).



Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and entering its 20th season on PBS, the award-

winning P.O.V. series is the longest-running series on television to feature the work of America's best contemporary-issue independent filmmakers. Airing Tuesdays at 10 p.m., June through October, with primetime specials during the year, P.O.V. has brought over 250 award-winning documentaries to millions nationwide, and now has a Webby Award-winning online series, P.O.V.'s Borders. Since 1988, P.O.V. has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. More information about P.O.V. is available online at [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov).

Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by the John D. and Catherine T MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, the Ford Foundation, the Educational Foundation of America, PBS and public television viewers. Funding for P.O.V.'s *Diverse Voices Project* is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, with additional support from JPMorgan Chase Foundation, the official sponsor of P.O.V.'s 20th Anniversary Campaign. P.O.V. is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KCET Los Angeles, WGBH Boston, and Thirteen/WNET New York. Simon Kilmurry is executive director of American Documentary | P.O.V.

### P.O.V. Community Engagement and Education

P.O.V. provides Discussion Guides for all films as well as curriculum-based P.O.V. Lesson Plans for select films to promote the use of independent media among varied constituencies. Available free online, these originally produced materials ensure the ongoing use of P.O.V.'s documentaries with educators, community workers, opinion leaders and general audiences nationally. P.O.V. also works closely with local public-television stations to partner with local museums, libraries, schools and community-based organizations to raise awareness of the issues in P.O.V.'s films.

### P.O.V. Interactive

[www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov)

P.O.V.'s award-winning Web department produces a Web-only showcase for interactive storytelling, P.O.V.'s Borders. It also produces a Web site for every P.O.V. presentation, extending the life of P.O.V. films through community-based and educational applications, focusing on involving viewers in activities, information and feedback on the issues. In addition, [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov) houses our unique Talking Back feature, filmmaker interviews, viewer resources and information on the P.O.V. archives as well as myriad special sites for previous P.O.V. broadcasts.

### American Documentary, Inc.

[www.americandocumentary.org](http://www.americandocumentary.org)

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia company dedicated to creating, identifying and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream-media outlets. AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture, developing collaborative strategic-engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, online and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback to educational opportunities and community participation.

Front cover: Blacks jeering at National Guardsmen.  
Photo donated by Corbis-Bettmann



**The P.O.V. 20th Anniversary Collection is a limited-edition DVD collection produced in partnership with Docurama. The collection contains 15 titles reflecting the range and diversity of P.O.V. films, including the series' inaugural broadcast, *American Tongues*, by Louis Alvarez and Andrew Kolker.**

Available at [www.amdoc.org/shop](http://www.amdoc.org/shop).

20th Anniversary Sponsor

