

**Using *Race to Execution* in Your Community:
Leveraging the film to raise awareness and move people to action!**

“Race is the most important factor in the justice system, no matter which side you’re on.”
-- Scott Turow, Author & Lawyer

Race to Execution, produced and directed by Rachel Lyon of Lioness Media Arts, Inc., is a gripping documentary that offers a compelling investigation of America’s death penalty, probing how race discrimination *infects* our capital punishment system. The film traces the fates of two Death Row inmates – Robert Tarver in Russell County, Alabama and Madison Hobley in Chicago, Illinois. Their personal stories are enlarged and enriched by testimonies of attorneys who fought for these men’s lives, and by prosecutors, criminal justice scholars and experts in the fields of law and the media. These varied voices contribute to a thoughtful examination of the factors that influence who lives and who dies at the hands of the state.

Race to Execution provides a close examination of the criminal justice system, and shines light upon the racial disparities that persist in our society. **The film can be used in a variety of settings to enhance your work in the fields of death penalty abolition, criminal justice reform, legal education, civil rights and community organizing.** By putting a human face on a range of social justice issues, *Race to Execution* can also help you better communicate your messages, train staff, do a local fundraiser, and raise your visibility in the community.

<p>Why Use <i>Race to Execution</i> in Your Community?</p>

Race to Execution can be used in a range of ways to meet any number of objectives, and it can be particularly effective in stirring people toward action. Barry Scheck of the *Innocence Project* states, “*Race to Execution* shows us all just what we need to do ... win the original trial! We need to demand diverse juries, solid investigation and well-trained attorneys to represent people charged with murder. It’s too late by the time we [at the Innocence Project] get the case ten years later.”

Consider your organization’s goals and needs – let the film work toward meeting your immediate needs in a realistic way:

- As a public awareness tool to raise consciousness in your community about race bias in the criminal justice system.
- As an educational tool to give high school, college and law students a snapshot of the interconnectedness of race and justice. It can also be a tool for journalism students to analyze how race bias influences reporting and public perception.
- As a recruitment tool to recruit pro bono attorneys, legal interns and volunteers to work for a fairer justice system.
- As an advocacy tool to educate legislators and other decision makers on the implications and effects of criminal justice policies.
- As an organizing tool to mobilize underserved populations around the importance of actively participating in our democracy.
- As a training tool for legal staff, advocates and journalists to learn about the myriad factors that influence death sentencing.

Getting Access to *Race to Execution*

***Race to Execution* will air on the Emmy Award-winning series, *Independent Lens* on PBS on March 27, 2006.** Over the next few months, Lioness Media Arts, Inc. and Active Voice will be working together to heighten the impact of the film and help various groups raise awareness in their communities. To purchase the film or rent it for a screening, contact Lioness Media Arts, Inc. for more information.

Between now and the broadcast, there are a range of opportunities for you and your organization to get involved:

- **Get the Word Out**
Tell your colleagues, friends and family about this important film and the issues it raises. You can also spread the word to others in your community by writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper or even to local policymakers. Contact shaady@activevoice.net for a sample of what this could look like.
- **Before the Broadcast: Support Community Cinema Events, or Organize an Event of Your Own!**
The Independent Television Service (ITVS) will be supporting 26 screenings across the country one month prior to broadcast as part of its Community Cinema initiative. To find out if there is an ITVS screening happening in your town, contact Chi Do at chi_do@itvs.org. If your city is not one of the 26, or if you'd like to host a screening before the ITVS events, contact Lioness Media at racetoexecution@gmail.com.
- **Night of Broadcast: One Million Americans Will Be Watching!**
The film will be shown nationwide on PBS on March 27, 2006. Host an informal screening event that night, or invite neighbors in for a house party! Check www.itvs.org, for further information and resources.
- **Spring into Action: Use *Race to Execution* Where and When It Has Impact!**
Consider ways to ensure that the film's message has a sustained impact beyond broadcast. You can incorporate it into your work, bring it to the attention of policymakers, or spread the word to other organizations and institutions that might benefit from it. Feel free to contact Active Voice to discuss your ideas or to advise on relevant policies or upcoming legislation: shaady@activevoice.net.

CONTACT INFORMATION**The Film**

Lioness Media Arts, Inc.
382 Burns Street
Forest Hills
New York, NY 11375
(718) 261-8185
rachelvl@aol.com

Long-term Strategy

Shaady Salehi
Active Voice
2601 Mariposa St.
San Francisco, CA 94110
(415) 553-2841
shaady@activevoice.net

Broadcast & Outreach

Chi Do
ITVS
651 Brannan St, Suite 410
San Francisco, CA 94110
(415) 356-8383
chi_do@itvs.org

Tips for Every Kind of Screening

Type of screening	How to make it successful
<p>Large Public Screenings are good for raising your organization’s visibility, broadening the reach of your message, and even attracting unlikely allies.</p>	<p>For large events and screenings that are open to the public, it is very important to have a coalition of partner organizations to help broaden the reach of your message. Start by inviting a select group of individuals to pre-screen the film -- and initiate conversation about how the film can be a powerful way to draw attention to what’s happening on the ground locally. Once you have a coalition of organizations, widely publicize your event. Draw upon any media connections within your organization or your partner organizations, and take advantage of multiple listservs.¹ With a large event, your screening venue is key. Holding it in a local theater or movie house can lend credibility and draw unlikely allies. Also, be ready to offer your audience fact sheets and ways to get involved in the movement or issue you are focused on.</p>
<p>Small Community Screenings are good for coalition-building, cross-sector dialogue, advocacy and community organizing.</p>	<p>When holding a small community screening, a coalition of partner organizations is as important as it is for a large screening. See above for more information on how and why you should develop your partner base. Once you have your partner base, you can take advantage of your various listservs and websites to get the word out about your event. Make sure to bring in local speakers who are well-known in your field and who can address the issues in the film and raise visibility of your organizational message. Also allow plenty of time for dialogue with the audience, as this type of event can provide a platform for sharing knowledge and ideas across sectors.</p>
<p>Internal Screenings are good for training, problem-solving, action-oriented dialogue and motivating staff.</p>	<p>When holding an internal screening within your organization, the most important thing is encouraging open discussion. Film is an excellent way to open up dialogue around complex issues, and <i>Race to Execution</i> can be particularly helpful in getting viewers to recount personal stories, discuss their own preconceptions, and think critically about the range of issues in the film. For this reason a good facilitator is extremely important to make sure viewers feel comfortable expressing their opinions. After the discussion, be ready to provide the group with some action steps, i.e., some tasks for the group based on the discussion after the film. These will vary based on the services your organization provides, but examples include: encouraging staff members to critically examine racial disparities in your field of work, adopting new lobbying efforts for a more just criminal justice system, or creating a pro-bono recruitment program.</p>

¹ See the Guide to Planning a Screening section for more information on media outreach and getting the word out.

Guide to Planning a Screening

Before you hold a screening, no matter how large or small, you must consider three things:

- 1) What are your objectives for showing *this* film, *now*?
- 2) Who is your target audience?
- 3) How will you “frame” the film event so that your objectives will be met? Will you choose to focus on one particular issue, or a range of issues? Will you have a discussion afterwards? Will you bring in a speaker to expand upon some of the issues in the film? Will you supplement the film with a presentation of statistics and data?

Once you have a general sense of your target audience, objectives, and framing, you can begin planning for your event. The checklist below is meant for large public screenings, but many of the points can be adapted for small community screenings as well:

- 1) Preliminary planning
 - Book the venue and date for your screening.
 - Confirm goals and format for event: will there be a reception, panel discussion, entertainment, etc.? Consider logistics such as scheduling, agenda, reception space, food, staffing for the event, decorations, etc.
 - Create a flyer to publicize your screening. ITVS will be creating a template that you can customize.
 - Get the word out about the event through email blasts to your and your partners' listservs and websites. We suggest you send out email blasts one month, two weeks and several days prior to the event.
 - Confirm the appropriate format for your screening (VHS, DVD, Beta SP, Digi-beta). If you don't have the right format, contact Lioness Media Arts, Inc. to obtain the format you need.
- 2) Media outreach
 - Create a press release and make sure to emphasize any local hook (e.g. your organization's efforts to reduce racial disparities in death sentencing, a local initiative to diversify jury selection, etc.).
 - Issue the release to a wide range of mainstream and ethnic media. Make sure to send to reporters covering law and criminal justice issues. Try to get calendar listings as well.
 - A couple of days prior to your event, contact the people to whom you sent press materials and encourage them to attend the event. Pitch the value of this unique screening and the importance of educating people about race and death penalty issues.
- 3) Final planning
 - **Important: Be sure to test-screen your copy of the film before the event.**
 - Make copies of handouts: information about the film, literature from your organization, local statistics, opportunities for getting involved.
- 4) At the event itself
 - Ask attendees to sign-in so that you can follow up with them.
 - Don't forget to make a funding pitch for your organization!
 - Have a timekeeper so that panelists/speakers remain within their time constraints.
 - Ask your moderator to use pre-written questions in order to have well facilitated, concise discussion (if discussion is part of your event).
 - At the end of your program, offer the audience information about how to stay in touch.