



## VOTE DEMOCRACY! ACTIVITY GUIDE



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**INDEPENDENTLENS**

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***Public Television Brings Democracy Home.***

## FOREWORD

You live in a democracy, but how often do you think about what democracy means to you?

With a pivotal election on the horizon and many citizens questioning their place in the world and their voice in their communities, the VOTEDEMOCRACY! campaign comes at a critical time. VOTE DEMOCRACY! will provide important opportunities for citizens across the country to come together to discuss their roles in the democratic process.

Harnessing the incredible power of film to transform the way we think about ourselves and the world, VOTE DEMOCRACY! will showcase three important works: PLEASE VOTE FOR ME, IRON LADIES OF LIBERIA and AN UNREASONABLE MAN. Each film examines democracy in very different parts of the world, yet all share a vision of democracy's transformational power, regardless of who you are or where you live. The films show us that democracy is made possible by those who are brave enough to stand up for what is right and just; that democracy can seem elusive and even mythical at times, but that it is always worth fighting for; and that democracy is constantly in a state of flux. In the words of Ralph Nader, from the film AN UNREASONABLE MAN, "The important thing is not to say that democracy is a myth in our country, it's to have better gradations. Democracy is very weak today in our country. We have to make it stronger and stronger until it becomes the profoundly realistic American way of life and crowds out the myths."

We hope this campaign will inspire you and others in your community to participate in our own democracy, whether it's by registering to vote in the upcoming elections, engaging in a service project, or supporting other community members to realize their potential.

Your participation and voice counts!





**Public Television Brings Democracy Home.**

## ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN

You live in a democracy, but how often do you think about what democracy is? What can we learn from emerging democracies around the world? Do citizens have a responsibility to uphold our democratic system here at home? These are big questions, and because we're talking democracy, it's up to you to answer them.

VOTE DEMOCRACY! encourages everyone—particularly young Americans and new voters—to get involved in the democratic process. This national community engagement campaign offers unique opportunities for public television stations, youth and youth-serving organizations, communities of color, civic engagement and other community-based organizations and the general public to address **VOTE DEMOCRACY's three main issue areas:**

- **Voter registration**
- **Civic engagement**
- **Leadership development**

The Campaign includes four main activities that partners, stations and others will be encouraged to plan:

- **Voter Registration Activities** (registration drives, get out the vote events, etc.)
- **Screening and Discussion Events** (featuring full-length films or Campaign video modules and supporting materials)
- **Democracy Teach-Ins** (seminars or forums where issues and ideas related to democracy, civic engagement and/or leadership are the central theme(s))
- **Community Service Projects** (service activities encouraging young people to take a leadership role in community development)

**The goals of the VOTE DEMOCRACY! Community Engagement Campaign are to:**

- **Engage young people and new voters** in reflection, discussion, critical thinking and problem-solving around increasing civic participation in communities across America
- **Provide media and education resources to support the work of local, regional and national organizations** that promote voter registration, civic engagement and leadership development
- **Generate a national conversation** on the idea of democracy—what it means to live in a democracy, what it means to participate in democracy and what we can do to support democracy at home and abroad
- **Provide opportunities to sustain conversations** catalyzed by the films and move audiences from dialogue to action on these important issues
- **Drive new, young, diverse audiences** to the national PBS broadcasts while disseminating resources to these groups
- **Emphasize the positive, creative contributions young people are making** by developing local partnerships with civic engagement organizations that work with young people to make a difference in their communities

*The VOTE DEMOCRACY! campaign is spearheaded by ITVS with support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. National partners are Americans for Informed Democracy, Campus Compact, Common Cause, Declare Yourself, Democracia USA, Demos, Idealist.org and VolunteerMatch.*



### NATIONAL PARTNERS:



## ABOUT THE FILMS



### **PLEASE VOTE FOR ME** (PBS Premiere Date: October 23, 2007)

Want to find out how democracy really works? Then head to China. Three eight-year-old students—a charismatic challenger, a ruthless incumbent, and a thoughtful outsider—all campaign for the coveted position of class monitor in a third grade classroom in Wuhan, China. Hot debates. Backstabbing. Alliances. Move over Little League, real sport is coming and it's called democracy.



### **AN UNREASONABLE MAN** (PBS Premiere Date: December 18, 2007)

Whoever said, "One person can make a difference" must have been talking about Ralph Nader. For over 40 years, Nader has taken on big business and corporate America all in the name of the people. But lately this consumer advocate's halo has been a bit tarnished. Is he a hero? A villain? A principled man? Or an egomaniac? You decide.



### **IRON LADIES OF LIBERIA** (PBS Premiere Date: March 25, 2008)

She's already overcome tremendous obstacles to become the first woman ever elected president in Africa—now all she has to do is turn around Liberia—a country devastated by unemployment, debt, corruption and the legacy of civil war. Follow Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf through her first year in office as she faces angry mobs, ambitious political rivals and high-ranking members of the international community. Her story is inspiring a new generation of leaders in Africa and around the world.

To learn more about these films,  
visit <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/votedemocracy>.

# Activity 1:

Organize a Voter Registration Drive



**“Democracy is not something you believe in or a place to hang your hat, but it’s something you do. You participate. If you stop doing it, democracy crumbles.”**

Abbie Hoffman

## ACTIVITY 1: ORGANIZE A VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE

Our leaders and representatives make their decisions based on the opinions and thoughts of the people they hear from. The more you speak up and the more you exercise your right to vote, the more influence you can have on policies that impact you and your community.

Because of people who spoke up about the barriers to voter registration for low-income communities and people of color, the National Voter Registration Act was passed in 1993, expanding opportunities for citizens to participate in federal elections.

Now, more and more states are embracing user-friendly practices such as early, absentee and mail-in voting, and are keeping polls open longer hours. Help bring even more people out to the polls by organizing a voter registration drive and educating your community on how it all works.

Whether it's you and a friend with a clipboard and a stack of voter registration forms, or a larger group of volunteers, registering people to vote is easy and is also a fun way to connect with new people in your community. Here's how:

### 1. Review the key action steps for organizing a successful drive

One person or a committee of other concerned community members can successfully organize each of the action steps below.

- coordinating event logistics and venue
- gathering voter registration and education materials
- recruiting partner organizations
- promoting the event to local media
- conducting community outreach to mobilize participants
- recruiting and leading volunteers on the day of the event to assist with registration

### 2. Partner with other groups to reach your target audience

VOTE DEMOCRACY! Registration Drives can be conducted in partnership with other nonpartisan organizations. Conduct research on voter turnout in past elections in your community to help you identify communities where you can focus your efforts. Your local election office should have information on voter turnout for your city and county or be able to provide guidance on where to find this information.

For example, a search on the City and County of San Francisco Department of Elections website showed that the Bayview/Hunters Point, Visitation Valley and South of Market neighborhoods had the lowest percentage of registered voters turnout for the 2004 Primary Elections. Therefore, community members in San Francisco looking to help increase voter turnout in the next primaries might consider focusing on these neighborhoods in upcoming voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts.

Seek out partner organizations that provide services to communities that have traditionally been under-represented at the polls. With their support and assistance, you will be able to reach out to populations with whom you wouldn't normally have a connection and encourage expanded participation and turnout in coming elections.

Your local League of Women Voters chapter may also be willing to partner with you on your voter registration efforts or be able to provide guidance on getting started.

### 3. Research local regulations for voter registration

Contact your local election office (usually a county and/or state level office) to find out the regulations for voter registration in your community. Some states require you to take an oath to become an honorary registrar. You can find information on your local election office at <https://www.overseasvotefoundation.org>.

#### 4. Gather voter registration materials

Get in touch with your local election office and your local League of Women Voters office. They can provide you with basic nonpartisan registration materials (flyers, buttons, booklets) and other resources for organizing a voter registration drive. The League of Women Voters may also be able to assist with the actual set-up of a voter registration booth at your event.

Your local election office can provide you with voter registration forms. The number of Voter Registration Forms distributed to an organization is at the discretion of the Chief State Election Official.

You can also download the National Voter Registration Form from the United States Election Assistance Commission's website at <http://www.eac.gov/voter/Register%20to%20Vote>. The national form contains voter registration rules and regulations for each state and territory.

#### 5. Find a high-traffic area to hold the drive

Identify a spot in a high-traffic area that is well-known and trusted by your target audience, like a public park, shopping center, mall or community center. Community members should be able to find their way to your venue easily by car or public transit. Free and easy to find parking is a must! (Important: find out the official means for obtaining permission, if needed, to table at your selected location. Don't jeopardize all of your hard work and planning by leaving out this crucial detail.)

Your partner organizations may also have recommendations for the best way to reach your target audience. They may suggest tabling at an event where there will already be a large turnout from the community(ies) you are trying to reach, such as a community festival, concert, performance or even after a service at places of worship.

#### 6. Get the word out

Set up a table or booth at conferences, neighborhood fairs and other events to inform members of your community about your voter registration drive. Ask your partner organizations to assist with promotion by posting flyers, sending e-blasts to their contacts, including announcements about the event at other functions and in their newsletters, websites, etc. Posting flyers and posters at shops, restaurants and other businesses near your venue is also an effective method of promotion. Take some time to engage the proprietors in conversation about your voter registration drive and why it's so important for the community—word of mouth is a powerful tool.

#### 7. Be prepared for special language needs

Does your target audience have a need for in-language assistance to complete their registration, such as translated forms or bi-lingual volunteers to answer questions? Your local election office will have information on languages that your State Form is available in. The Election Assistance Commission website includes a Glossary of Election Terms in Spanish at <http://www.eac.gov/voter/language-accessibility-program-1/glossary-of-election-terms/>.

#### 8. Arrive early to prep on the day of the drive

- Gather all of your volunteers together at least one hour before the start of the drive to review duties and ensure everyone knows what their responsibilities are.
- Set up your table or booth with all forms and supplies readily accessible and clearly labeled for volunteers assisting with registration.
- Make sure there is clear signage at all access points for people driving, taking public transit or walking to the event.



Important: If you are a non-profit organization, be sure to place clear signage at the registration table or booth that informs registrants that this is a nonpartisan registration event. Here is suggested language:

Our voter registration services are available without regard for the voter's political preference. Information and other assistance regarding registering or voting, including transportation and other services offered, shall not be withheld or refused on the basis of support for or opposition to a particular candidate or particular political party.

If you are providing registration forms, there are two options for submitting completed forms to the local election office:

- a) Collect the forms and then mail or take them in person to the local election office.
- b) Have registrants take the form and mail it in themselves.

If you plan on mailing the forms in, be sure to factor the cost of postage into your budget. Should you choose to have registrants mail the forms in, be sure to inform them of the deadlines. Finally, registering to vote is just a first step in increasing voter turnout in your community: make flyers with information on the dates of the primary and general elections in your area to give to registrants and encourage them to exercise their right to cast a free ballot!

**More information on organizing a nonpartisan voter registration drive can be found on the following websites:**

- **American Association of People with Disabilities**  
<http://www.aapd.com/dvpmain/voterreg/vrguide.html>  
 An online guide to voter registration for non-profits.
- **Election Assistance Commission**  
<http://www.eac.gov/>  
 The U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) was established by the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA). The EAC maintains the national mail voter registration form developed in accordance with the National Voter Registration Act of 1993.
- **Harvard University Institute of Politics**  
[http://www.iop.harvard.edu/pdfs/voter\\_registration\\_guide.pdf](http://www.iop.harvard.edu/pdfs/voter_registration_guide.pdf)  
 A guide to voter registration and mobilization on college campuses.
- **National Association for the Education of Young Children**  
<http://www.naeyc.org/policy/toolbox/pdf/gotv.pdf>  
 The NAEYC's 2004 Guide to Nonpartisan Voter Registration & G.O.T.V. Drives includes helpful guidelines for non-profit organizations organizing voter registration drives.
- **National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities**  
[http://www.naicu.edu/publications/ID.338/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.naicu.edu/publications/ID.338/pub_detail.asp)  
 A biannually published guide to conducting voter education and registration efforts on campus.
- **Peace Voter**  
<http://www.peace-action.org/2006/voterreg.html>  
 Peace Voter is a nonpartisan campaign that brings critical foreign policy issues to the election-year debate. Their website has useful tips and considerations for planning a voter registration drive.

**Sample approaches to voter registration drives:**

**Shopping Center or Mall**

ACORN, in partnership with Project Vote, ran a non-partisan voter outreach program in the 2004 election cycle which succeeded in registering 1.15 million low-income and minority citizens in 26 states and contacting 2.3 million through get-out-the-vote efforts. ACORN and Project Vote staff registered voters at high-traffic locations, such as grocery stores, farmers markets and concerts, and contacted registered voters with reminders to vote by going door-to-door and calling them on the phone. "We're standing out there in front of grocery stores with clipboards because we know that is the only way to make sure that politicians pay attention to our neighborhoods," said an ACORN member in Columbus, Ohio.

**VOTE DEMOCRACY! Film Screening**

ITVS Regional Outreach Coordinator Roseli Ilano partnered with the Chinese American Voters Education Committee, a nonpartisan organization dedicated to mobilizing the Chinese American community to become more engaged in civic activities. At screening events for PLEASE VOTE FOR ME in Oakland and San Francisco, the Committee set up tables and registered dozens of community members who came for the screening to vote.

# Activity 2:

## Screening and Discussion



**“We will surely get to our destination if we join hands.”**

Aung San Suu Kyi

## ACTIVITY 2: SCREENING AND DISCUSSION

Take going to the movies to the next level and organize a panel discussion or facilitated audience discussion to delve deeper into the issues and ideas presented in one (or all three as a series) of the VOTE DEMOCRACY! Campaign films (PLEASE VOTE FOR ME, IRON LADIES OF LIBERIA, AN UNREASONABLE MAN).

By inviting local leaders, community-based organizations, service organizations and issue experts, you can create a meaningful opportunity for audience members to discuss their viewpoints on democracy and brainstorm what people can do as a community to strengthen democracy in their own backyards and beyond. Here's how:

### 1. WATCH THE FILM

- Take notes on the important issues presented in the film. Are there hot points or controversial topics?
- Think about possible partnerships with local organizations or speakers that work on these issues.
- Think about who your audience is. Is the film appropriate for all ages?
- Become an expert on the film, watch it twice if you have to!

### 2. FIND A VENUE

Location, location, location! The venue is as important as the promotional package in either bringing people in or keeping them away. Public libraries, museums, large community centers and other community-oriented spaces are generally good choices.

### 3. RECRUIT EVENT PARTNERS

Recruit participation from organizations with diverse missions: issue-based or advocacy organizations, direct service providing organizations, nonpartisan community organizations, governmental organizations and/or faith-based organizations. Be careful about opposites: although it is tempting to bring two adversaries to the table to debate in public, these can often be difficult situations to manage.

Local public television stations should be invited to “co-present” this screening and discussion with you. You can find contact information for the community outreach staff at your station by visiting <http://nationaloutreach.org/stationinfo/stationDirectory/index.cfm>. Explore the contacts your local public television station partner may have. They've been in the community a long time and may be able to connect you to relevant partners for your event.

### 4. CONFIRM

Confirm your screening date(s) and partner organizations! Give them a call or send them an email confirming their participation and next steps.

### 5. FORM YOUR POST-SCREENING PANEL

Invite your event partners to suggest a moderator and speakers who will lead a panel and audience discussion. Collect a bio and some background information to confirm that your speakers and moderator will fit with the screening event you are creating. It is also wise to recruit a moderator who can manage the panel discussion and field questions from the audience. Provide every speaker and your moderator with a copy of the discussion guides produced by ITVS Community or direct them to the Independent Lens web site to download the guide in PDF format from [www.pbs.org/independentlens/getinvolved](http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/getinvolved). These discussion guides contain useful background information related to the films and a list of questions that can spark discussion between panelists and audience.

## 6. INVITE! PROMOTE! CREATE YOUR BUZZ!

You cannot invite too many people, and you cannot do too much publicity and promotion. That event planning disaster they tell you about where way too many people show up and there aren't enough seats: pray for that! Be sure to access customizable promotional materials at <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/votedemocracy>.

PARTNERS CAN PROMOTE THE EVENT THROUGH:

- Mailing lists
- Email lists
- Newsletters
- Website

REACH OUT TO LOCAL MEDIA, INCLUDING:

- Daily newspaper
- Local PBS station
- Weekly alternative paper
- College/University papers
- Niche papers (LGBT, Latino, etc.)
- Local radio PSAs

REACH OUT TO YOUR POTENTIAL AUDIENCE:

- Speak at other events
- Contact local college professors
- Hand out postcards
- Post flyers
- Talk to "opinion makers"

## 7. THE DAY OF YOUR EVENT!

BEFORE THE AUDIENCE ARRIVES

- Arrive at least one hour early for set-up and audio visual checks
- Provide a place for VOTE DEMOCRACY! materials and partner organization materials to be displayed. Two tables that are six to eight feet long should be ample space for literature.
- Depending on the venue, the set-up for the panel discussion will vary, but in general, a table for panelists to sit at is preferable.
- If there is a PA system, make sure to check the microphones before the event.
- Do a general tech check of all audio and visual equipment, and run a small segment at various points on the screening DVD to make sure there's no trouble once the lights go down.
- Try to have everything in place BEFORE your guests begin to arrive. Ask your featured guests (public television station reps, partner reps, other featured speakers) to arrive at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start time and review the event schedule with them.
- ALWAYS bring a back-up copy of the film in case the DVD copies fail!

## 8. IT'S SHOWTIME!

Once your guests have arrived, the event should start as close to the advertised time as possible. Begin with an introduction from the front of the room. Write out your remarks and introductions ahead of time to help you remember important details.

## YOUR INTRODUCTION

Make sure to:

- Thank the audience for coming.
- Formally acknowledge and thank partners.
- Thank the venue.
- Thank other sponsors or supporters.
- Recognize and thank your local public television station if they were involved.
- Check with your local public television station to find out any upcoming airdates for the film(s) you are screening and announce the information at your event.
- Keep opening remarks and introductions concise—ideally five minutes or less.

## MANAGING THE DISCUSSION

- After the film, while credits are still rolling, assemble your speakers and moderator and get them in place. When the lights come up, your moderator should provide brief remarks to transition the screening to the panel discussion.
- Make sure there is time for audience participation, whether it is Q&A with a panel, small group discussions or an open forum to share reactions to the film.
- Monitor the discussion and the energy level in the room. If it seems like the audience is getting restless, give your moderator a cue to move the conversation in a new direction.
- After the discussion, make sure you thank everyone for coming and announce the resources and information available from partner organizations and the VOTE DEMOCRACY! Campaign on the literature tables.

**Refer to the **COMMUNITY CINEMA PROGRAM TOOLKIT** available at <http://pbs.org/independentlens/getinvolved/organize/> for more tips on planning a successful screening and discussion.**

**Organize a film screening** followed by a teach-in, instead of a panel discussion. See Activity 3 for ideas on topics and setting an agenda.

# Activity 3:

## Teach-Ins



**“The spirit of democracy cannot be superimposed from the outside. It must come from within.”**

Mahatma Gandhi

## ACTIVITY 3: TEACH-INS

Portions of this section are reprinted from *Organizing a Teach-In or Townhall Meeting*, with permission from Global Exchange, <http://www.globalexchange.org>.

### What's a Teach-in?

Teach-ins are a powerful way to educate and activate both members of your community and the policy makers that represent them. By offering qualified speakers, a teach-in provides a way to explore important issues facing your community. Teach-ins are most effective when they supply real solutions and give opportunities to build powerful citizen coalitions. The best teach-ins are those that at once give a boost to your existing organizing efforts while also attracting new people to your campaign. Here's how to get started:

### 1. IDENTIFY THE TOPIC FOR YOUR TEACH-IN

Select a moderator(s) and a topic your group is interested in and decide on the appropriate speakers and/or elected representative(s) to invite. The moderator should be knowledgeable on the topic at hand, such as a university professor or a journalist. The moderator must be someone you can trust to be professional, well-spoken and able to control a rowdy crowd or heckler in the audience.

#### Suggested topics for a VOTE DEMOCRACY! teach-in:

- Does voting matter to people in your community? What influences low voter turnout and what can be done to improve this in your community?
- What does democracy look like? What are the different forms of democracy, e.g. representative, parliamentary, liberal, direct?
- How does democracy differ in multicultural societies vs. homogeneous societies?
- The electoral college: what is it and why do we need it?
- Fairness vs. effectiveness in democracy

Consider showing a ten-minute clip from one of the VOTE DEMOCRACY! films as a launching point for discussion. If you will be inviting elected officials, make sure the topic is one they will be comfortable discussing.

### 2. THINK ABOUT YOUR AUDIENCE AND OUTREACH

What are you trying to accomplish by inviting an elected representative? Who do you want to attend the event? How will you conduct outreach? Flyers, events, calendars, direct mail, email, phone calls, public service announcements, press releases and word-of-mouth are all good ways to get people to the event. Distribute the flyers as much as possible among friends and colleagues to be disseminated publicly at coffee shops, community centers, cultural centers, other events, churches, schools, universities, etc. Also use the press as a tool to get the word out. Write a press release and send it to campus and local media to get the press to cover the event. Send a flyer as well to make sure the event gets announced on radio stations and included in the community calendar or events section of local newspapers and magazines. The sooner you have materials ready, the better, especially in regards to media.

### 3. THINK ABOUT POSSIBLE COSPONSORS

Brainstorm and ask other members of your group for suggestions of other groups (student, community, religious, etc.) that may be willing to cosponsor the event with you. Keep in mind that cosponsors are a key component to generating an audience and sharing the workload and cost of organizing an event. A broad, diverse group of cosponsors will be added incentive for a representative to agree to attend.

### 4. PLAN THE EVENT: THE WHEN, WHERE, WHO AND HOW

#### Select a Date

The date should be chosen based on availability of speakers and/or elected officials and availability of a venue. Consider organizing your event around a date that has some significance in relation to the theme. (For example, if the topic is related to the electoral process, your event may have added resonance around local primaries.) Research other events that may be taking place near the proposed date/time of your event that may impact turnout.

### Find a Venue

Public libraries, museums, large community centers and other community-oriented spaces are generally good choices.

### Confirm Your Cosponsors

There is no such thing as too much group participation or too much outreach. The point is to get as many people to the event as possible. A larger audience will be generated with outside help. Contact the organizations you think would be interested in being part of the event. Explain to them that you are inviting an elected official to a teach-in and that you would like for them to be a cosponsor. When they say “yes,” suggest that they help with outreach by inviting their members. Among other things, they may be able to help publicize the event by putting it on their website, or adding their name to a press release. Offer in return to include their name on any publicity materials that will be produced.

### Develop an Agenda and Assign Roles

This is best done with representatives from the cosponsoring organizations. Typically an event like this should not last for more than two hours. The agenda should provide ample time for audience participation and also enough for the speakers and/or elected officials to offer some remarks or comment on what he or she has heard. When inviting the representative it is key to clarify that the primary purpose of the meeting is for the representative to hear from the audience and not the reverse. The moderator should be prepared to control the discussion so no audience member monopolizes the time. You will also want to assign someone to greet speakers and elected officials and stay with them until the event begins. You should also identify one or two people to serve as press contacts.

**Refer to the COMMUNITY CINEMA PROGRAM TOOLKIT available at <http://pbs.org/independentlens/get-involved/organize/> for more tips on planning successful events.**

**The Amnesty International USA website** includes a detailed how-to guide to organizing teach-ins and related how-to documents:

[http://www.amnestyusa.org/Plan\\_Events\\_and\\_Activities/How\\_to\\_Hold\\_a\\_TeachIn/page.do?id=1101326&n1=4&n2=63&n3=128](http://www.amnestyusa.org/Plan_Events_and_Activities/How_to_Hold_a_TeachIn/page.do?id=1101326&n1=4&n2=63&n3=128).

## SAMPLE AGENDA

### Welcome and Purpose: 5 Minutes

The moderator welcomes everyone to the meeting, thanks the organizers, the group that provided the space, the speakers, elected officials and most importantly the community members for attending. The moderator provides brief remarks about the importance of the issue, the goals for the evening and the procedure that will be followed.

### Screening of film clip (if appropriate): 10 Minutes

### Speaker(s) and Elected Official(s) Remarks: 15 minutes

### Community Comments: 45-60 Minutes

This is the bulk of the event. This is where audience members speak about why they are concerned with this issue and identify potential solutions that everyone can contribute to. It is a good idea to set a time limit of two minutes per person. Think about identifying representatives of the cosponsoring organizations, religious or other recognizable community leaders and asking them to come prepared to share brief remarks from the perspective of the work they do in the community. For example, a religious leader might want to begin by saying that he or she is representing the concerns of his or her congregation of 2,000 people. A representative of a cosponsoring organization will want to mention that he or she is speaking on behalf of the group's 12,000 members.

OPTIONAL: Consider adding an interactive element into your teach-in by incorporating small group discussions or activities into the Community Comments portion of the agenda. This will allow everyone to have time to speak. Representatives may be appointed from each group to report key issues or recommendations back to the entire assembly.



**Summary Statement: 5 Minutes**

The moderator should summarize the outcome of the meeting and outline the next steps if appropriate to do so. Close with a final round of thanks to everyone involved in the event, including the audience.

**Evaluation and Follow-up**

After the event has ended, re-group with those who worked with you to organize it and discuss the positive outcomes as well as the challenges. Identify steps to wrap up the event, such as compiling recommendations from the discussion and sharing with organizers and participants for further action. Send thank you letters to cosponsors, your members and anyone who helped to make the event a success. Finally, send a thank you letter to your speakers and any elected officials who attended.

# Activity 4:

## Community Service Projects



**“An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.”**

Martin Luther King, Jr

## ACTIVITY 4: COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

Voting isn't the only way to participate in a democracy—you can make a big impact in your own community by contributing your time and energy towards the issues you care about most. Help strengthen your local public schools. Protect an environmental resource in your neighborhood. Find out what you can do to support adequate health care services for the uninsured. Whatever your concerns are, there are organizations out there waiting for volunteers with your courage, skills and dedication.

### VOLUNTEER FOR ISSUES YOU CARE ABOUT WITH PEOPLE YOU CARE ABOUT!

Gather a group of friends, family, co-workers and/or members of your faith community and commit to working together on a project or issue that everyone in the group cares about. The commitment could be a one-time activity, like restoring a playground at a community center, or could be ongoing, like getting together once a month to help distribute food to community members in need.

What if there are no organizations in your community working on the issues you care about? Consider recruiting like-minded people to start a project or a community action group. Visit [Idealist.org](http://Idealist.org)'s Community Action Center to find tools to help you move from ideas to action to impact.

### JOIN OR START A GIVING CIRCLE

Giving circles are a form of philanthropy in which groups of individuals pool their funds and other resources to donate to community causes. Members of giving circles decide together where to donate their combined funds. Many circles, in addition to donating their money, also contribute their time and skills to supporting local causes. Donations may range from spare change to thousands of dollars each year. To learn more about how to join or start a giving circle, visit <http://www.givingforum.org> and <http://www.givingcircles.org>.

### Volunteer resources:

Following is a list of organizations that support and organize community service projects on an ongoing basis in communities across the country. Whether you start your own service project or participate in one organized by another group, we want to hear about it! Email your stories and pictures to us at [outreach@itvs.org](mailto:outreach@itvs.org) or complete the enclosed report form.

- **Hands On Network**

<http://www.handsonnetwork.org>

Hands On Network brings people together to strengthen communities through meaningful volunteer action. They are a growing network of more than a half-million volunteers changing communities inside and outside the United States. Hands On Network creates and manages nearly 50,000 projects a year, from building wheelchair ramps in San Francisco to teaching reading in Atlanta, to rebuilding homes and lives in the Gulf Coast communities.

Hands On Network is currently made up of 58 national and international volunteer organizations that act as entrepreneurial civic action centers.

(Resources continued on next page)

**Organize a screening** for one of the VOTE DEMOCRACY! films and invite a group of co-workers, friends and family and/or members of your faith community. Use this gathering as a launching point for a discussion on what you can do together as a group to serve the needs of your community. Develop a plan of action and stick to it! Refer to Activity 2 for tips on organizing a screening.

- **Idealist.org**

[http://www.idealist.org/volunteer/vol\\_resources.html](http://www.idealist.org/volunteer/vol_resources.html)

Idealist.org's website offers personalized email updates for volunteer opportunities, information on international volunteering, resources specific to children, teens, families and more.

- **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service**

<http://www.mlkday.gov/>

The King Day of Service is a way to transform Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life and teachings into community service that helps solve social problems. That service may meet a tangible need, such as fixing up a school or senior center, or it may meet a need of the spirit, such as building a sense of community or mutual responsibility. How ambitious you choose to be depends on you—and on your community's resources. Visit their website for project ideas and information on what may already be under way in your community.

- **VolunteerMatch**

<http://www.volunteermatch.org>

VolunteerMatch offers a variety of online services to support a community of nonprofit, volunteer and business leaders committed to civic engagement. Their service has become an Internet recruiting tool for more than 50,000 nonprofit organizations.

## ABOUT ITVS COMMUNITY

ITVS COMMUNITY is the national community engagement program of the Independent Television Service (ITVS) and the Emmy Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*. Through Community Engagement Campaigns in support of groundbreaking, independent films, our innovative educational product ITVS Community Classroom and our flagship community outreach program Community Cinema, ITVS Community works to bring communities together and connect them with information, resources and opportunities for education, engagement and positive change. ITVS Community builds on our 15-year legacy of community engagement activities and makes public broadcasting into a powerful resource for individuals, communities and organizations working on key social issues around the country.

## ABOUT ITVS

The Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web and the Emmy Award-winning weekly series *Independent Lens* on Tuesday nights at 10 PM on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by media activists, citizens and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing TV audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans. More information about ITVS can be obtained by visiting [itvs.org](http://itvs.org). ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people.

## ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS

*Independent Lens* is an Emmy Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 PM on PBS. Hosted this season by Terrence Howard, the acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community or moment in history. Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites, and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. Further information about the series is available at [pbs.org/independentlens](http://pbs.org/independentlens). *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.