

# More than a Roof

## Documentary Discussion Guide

*More Than a Roof* is a model of grassroots media making and movement building, created by people living in crisis who believe that something better is possible. The footage gathered of Ms. Rolnik's journey contain the powerful testimonies she witnessed from people facing homelessness, foreclosure, and the destruction and neglect of our affordable housing stock in communities across the United States. The film is part travelogue, part call to action.



## How to Use the Film

*More Than a Roof* was made to be used as a springboard to conversations and actions led by communities organizing for human rights, in particular housing rights in the United States. The following are some questions and prompts you might consider using to get the conversation in your community started.

**1) How does the narrative of the film differ from the mainstream media's story about the "housing crisis" we face as a nation?**

**2) How did the film explain what "human rights" means? What do "human rights" mean to you?**

Or, as Martin Luther King, Jr. said in 1965, "What good does it do to be able to eat at a lunch counter if you cannot buy a hamburger?"

Human rights are based on universal basic human needs -- the need for housing, healthcare, an education, for instance -- and these needs create obligations on the part of our governments to respect, protect, and fulfill these rights.

**3) What human rights violations did you observe in the film?**

**4) Identify three ways that human rights, and in particular, the right to housing, might have been or currently is being violated in your community.**

In the United States it often takes a lot more than "being human" to access basic goods and services; it usually requires having the economic means to purchase the goods and services in the private market.

**5) Is the private market able to provide for everyone's basic needs?**

**6) What basic goods and services in your community are provided publicly and free of charge? Which are not?**

**7) In your community, are there basic goods and services that used to be provided publicly that now you can only find in the market? How has this privatization impacted you and your community?**

The United States does not recognize or enforce human rights, particularly economic and social rights, at home. Therefore, we have no legal right under law to appeal to the government for enforcement of these rights, but that doesn't mean a human rights violation has not taken place. However, human rights offer us more than just a legal framework; they offer a dynamic vision that places people before profits, which has inspired and guided social movements around the world.

**8) What is the relationship between community organizing, social movements, and human rights explained in the film?**

**9) Why fight for a human right to housing and not just housing?**

**10) What might a human right to housing in the United States look like to you?**

## Focusing Your Discussion

The following chart shows the section of the DVD you may choose to highlight in order to focus your discussion around certain topics and issues.

| If you want to focus on this issue... | Watch these chapters or special features...   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Homelessness                          | - New York<br>- Chicago   |
| Public Housing                        | - Chicago<br>- Town Hall & Site Visits during D.C. stop of U.S Mission (Special Feature)  |
| Foreclosures                          | - Wilkes-Barre  |
| Native American Lands                 | - Pine Ridge Reservation  |
| The Mission of the Special Rapporteur | - Introduction<br>- New York<br>- Summary Comments on U.S. Mission (Special Features)<br>- Findings from U.S Mission presented to the UN Human Rights Commission (Special Features) |
| Grassroots Organizing                 | - Conclusion<br>- Lessons from the National Homeless Union in the 1980s (Special Features)  |

## Share Your Story

In *More Than a Roof*, over 2,000 people participated in town halls and site visits in 7 cities, many providing testimonies of their own personal experiences with housing that, when woven together in this film, help to bring light to the true nature and depth of the human right to housing crisis -- its not just a "housing crisis" -- that continues to touch every community throughout the United States. These stories are of both the struggle and fight of individuals, families and communities!

We want to hear from you! To submit audio-only testimony you can call Housing is a Human Rights' toll-free recording line at (888) 955-6653. If you would prefer to submit a video testimony, please contact us at [mtar@nesri.org](mailto:mtar@nesri.org)