



P.O.V.

Season

17

Discussion Guide

# Thirst

A Film by Alan Snitow and Deborah Kaufman



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



## Letter From the Filmmakers

BERKELEY, 2004

### Dear Colleague,

We had heard some crazy stories about water: Corporations wanted to drag polar ice caps to the Middle East for profit. An entrepreneur wanted to suck water from two wild California rivers and ship it down the Pacific coast to Southern California in bags the size of football fields that he called “giant condoms.” These are the stories you hear at parties and as jokes on late-night TV. But when we learned that scandal-plagued and bankrupt Enron was one of the largest corporations involved in the global water business, we knew something really big was happening.

And then it got personal. How come a bottle of water costs more than a gallon of gasoline? Why doesn't anybody fix the broken water fountains at our public high schools? Why does the Bechtel Corporation—so busy in Saudi Arabia and postwar Iraq—want to run our local water supply, which until now has been under public control?



Filmmakers Alan Snitow and Deborah Kaufman  
Photo by Richard Bermack

There are connections between conflicts for control of water here at home and far from our borders. Private-water lobbyists have declared the 85% of American water systems that are public as a tremendous market opportunity in the next few years. The World Bank is helping to make water privatization a fact in most of the developing world by requiring countries to sell public water supplies as a precondition to get loans. Around the world, water is the oil of the 21st century.

Human-rights activists and environmentalists have been the first to express concern about the future of water. But what's at stake with the privatization of this scarce natural resource goes beyond the work of advocacy groups. It's the notion of democracy itself: Who will actually make the decisions that affect everyone's future, and who will be excluded?

It's striking that in every water story we researched for this film, corporations with household names like Coca-Cola and Nestlé seemed to be hard at work trying to prevent citizens from voting on or even knowing about decisions that would affect their lives. That convinced us to tell the water story from the point of view of the “water warriors,” those opposing corporate attempts to take over global water resources.

One of the most compelling aspects of water is not just its universality, but also the intensity of our involvement with it, and the elegant simplicity of the questions that the new battles over water raise: Is water a human right or just another commodity to be bought and sold in the market? Is it society's role to protect our natural environment or to exploit it? Who gets to decide?

In a revealing moment in our production of *Thirst*, the pro-privatization mayor of Stockton, California, says that it's time to “think of our citizens as customers.” When did this notion take hold? We were taught that government has another purpose beyond supplication to “the market,” that endangered natural resources aren't consumer goods, and that people aren't simply profit-producing consumers, but citizens who rely on one another in caring communities.

*Thirst* is designed to begin a conversation about these questions, and to show the human dimensions—what is at stake for everyday people—of this little-known global struggle for the future of humanity's most essential natural resource. Thanks for joining in and extending the dialogue.

*Sincerely Yours,*

**Deborah Kaufman and Alan Snitow**



**Table of Contents**

**Credits, Acknowledgements**

**4** Introduction  
**5** Key Issues  
**5** Potential Partners  
**6** Background Information  
**6** People We Meet in *Thirst*  
**7** What Is Privatization and Who Is Involved?  
**7** Statistics  
**8** Locations  
**9** Using This Guide  
**9** Planning an Event  
**10** Facilitating a Discussion  
**10** Preparing Yourself  
**11** Preparing the Group  
**12** General Discussion Questions  
**13** Discussion Prompts  
**13** Examining Privatization  
**14** Looking at Democratic Process  
**15** Thinking About the Future  
**16** Taking Action  
**18** Resources  
**20** How To Buy The Film

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## Introduction

Global corporations are rapidly buying up local water supplies. As communities grapple with the sudden loss of control over this precious resource, they are finding themselves in the midst of local conflicts with global implications.

*Thirst*, an hour-long, character-driven documentary without narration reveals how water is the catalyst for explosive community resistance to corporate globalization. Shot in Bolivia, India, Japan and the United States, the film is a piercing look at the conflict between public stewardship and private profit. As it profiles privatization projects, *Thirst* asks viewers to consider a fundamental question: Is water a basic human right, belonging to everyone, or is it a commodity, subject to the control of corporations interested in buying, selling, and trading it for profit?

*Thirst* provides viewers with an opportunity to think deeply about our relationship to a life necessity that most people in the United States take for granted, and about how a democracy best protects and provides essential resources. It is a powerful springboard for community discussion about the proper balance between government, industry, and individual citizens in the caretaking and distribution of a limited and vital resource.



Photo: Snitow-Kaufman Productions  
Protest outside Stockton City Hall  
before city council vote on privatizing  
Stockton's water system



## Potential Partners

*Thirst* is well suited for use in a variety of settings and is especially recommended for use with:

- **Your local PBS station**
- **Groups of the Sierra Club ([www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org))**
- **Groups focused on any of the issues listed above**
- **Government agencies and utility providers**
- **Faith-based organizations**
- **Academic departments and student groups at colleges, universities, community colleges, and high schools**
- **Community organizations with a mission to promote education and learning such as P.O.V.'s national partners Elderhostel Learning in Retirement Centers; members of the Listen Up! Network; or your local library.**

## Key Issues

*Thirst* is an excellent tool for dialogue because it provides a variety of situations and responses. It will be of special interest to people interested in exploring or working on the issues below:

- agriculture**
- conservation**
- democracy / government**
- ecology**
- economics**
- education**
- environment**
- foreign policy**
- gender**
- globalization**
- human rights**
- poverty**
- social justice**
- sociology**
- sustainable development**



## Background Information

### People We Meet in *Thirst*



**Stockton Mayor Gary Podesto** – advocate for privatization



**Michael McDonald** – Maintenance Supervisor, Municipal Wastewater Plant, public employee against privatization



**Dale Stocking** – Orthodontist organizing for public vote



**Oscar Olivera** – Award-winning Bolivian water activist



**Rajendra Singh** – Indian water conservation leader



**Maude Barlow** – Chair, Council of Canadians



**John Briscoe** – Senior Water Advisor, The World Bank



## Background Information

### What Is Privatization and Who Is Involved?

Privatization is the process of transferring, selling or divesting government (usually state or municipal-owned) services and/or assets to private ownership or control. In the case of water services, it can mean a private corporation contracting with a municipality to maintain and/or operate water delivery services and then charging users enough for that service to earn a profit.



Major companies involved in efforts to privatize water services around the world are: Suez, Veolia (formerly Vivendi), and Saur, (all three French owned), Thames Water (an English company owned by Germany's RWE AG), and Bechtel (U.S.).

A related issue is the commodification of water itself by companies selling it in the marketplace. An example is bottled water. Companies pump water from natural springs or aquifers or rely on municipal water which is then bottled for sale.

The three largest water bottling companies in the world are Nestlé (including Perrier, Vittel, Pellegrino, Arrowhead, Calistoga, Ice Mountain, Deer Park, and Poland Springs brands), Coca-Cola (Dasani), and PepsiCo (Aquafina).

### Statistics

- Over a billion people lack access to safe drinking water. The United Nations says that 2.7 billion people worldwide will face severe water shortages by 2025. The World Water Council puts that number at 4 billion. (PACIFIC INSTITUTE)
- Each year, millions of children die of diseases caused by unsafe water. An estimated 8 to 11 thousand people die every day from water-related diseases. (UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL 2/11/04)
- A lobbyist for the private water industry says "Essentially the total potential is 85% of the utilities out there could be eventually run by private companies." (INTERVIEW WITH PETER COOK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WATER COMPANIES)
- In 2003, 3 million plastic water bottles went into the trash each day in California alone. Only 16% were recycled. (THE WATER BARONS, INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS, 2003.)
- In 1990, 51 million people worldwide got their drinking water from privately operated water companies. By 2002 that figure had grown to more than 300 million people. (THE WATER BARONS, INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS, 2003.)
- From 1990 to 2002, private water companies went from being active in about a dozen countries to operating in at least 56 countries and two territories. (THE WATER BARONS, INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS, 2003.)
- From 1995 through 1998, the water utility industry, its employees and political action committees, spent less than \$500,000 on campaign contributions in the U.S. In the two election cycles from 1999 to 2002, the industry's campaign spending roughly tripled to about \$1.5 million. By contrast, groups that have generally opposed privatization, such as the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies, an industry group for public water utilities, spent about \$200,000 between 1996 and the first half of 2002 to make its case with lawmakers. (THE WATER BARONS, INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS, 2003.)



## Background Information

### Locations\*

**2003 Third World Water Forum in Kyoto, Japan** — 24,000 people attended this event organized by the World Water Council, a group heavily influenced by private water companies. Officials included U.N., government, industry, banking and global finance leaders. Water activists from around the world spoke out and disrupted the conference to demonstrate that there was no consensus supporting privatization. Despite the protest, in January, 2004, the World Bank announced an increase in funding from \$1.3 billion in 2003 to \$4 billion in 2004 for controversial water projects, including privatization and large dams.

**Bolivia** — A water privatization contract between the Bolivian government and the U.S.-based Bechtel Corporation led to protests in which tens of thousands of people battled police and the army to protect their water rights. After a sharpshooter killed 17-year-old Victor Hugo Daza, the government was pressured to expel Bechtel.

**Stockton, California** — Mayor Gary Podesto proposed to give control of the city's water system to a global water corporation. Stockton residents worried about price hikes, water quality, and layoffs of public employees (who tend to be disproportionately women and people of color). They created a grassroots coalition, Concerned Citizens of Stockton, to demand that citizens be allowed to vote on the decision. Before a public vote could take place, the City Council voted 4-3 to award a contract to the OMI-Thames consortium. However, Concerned Citizens of Stockton, together with the Sierra Club, is waging a court case to reverse the takeover on the grounds that the company failed to comply with California environmental laws.

**India** — A grassroots movement for water conservation by harvesting rainwater has rejuvenated rivers, literally changing the desert landscape. Led by Rajendra Singh, whom locals call "a modern day Gandhi," the movement opposed government efforts to sell water sources to companies like Coca-Cola and PepsiCo.

\* Additional details on each place, including time lines, are available at the film's website (see Resources).



Photo: Snitow-Kaufman Productions  
*A young girl carrying a jug of water in Rajasthan, India*

Those interested in the process of privatization as it has played out in other U.S. municipalities might investigate the experiences of New Orleans or Atlanta. For additional sites, check: [www.citizen.org/cmep/Water](http://www.citizen.org/cmep/Water).



## Using This Guide

**This guide is designed to help you use *Thirst* as the centerpiece of a community event. It contains suggestions for convening an event as well as ideas for how to help participants think more deeply about the issues in the film. The discussion questions are designed for a very wide range of audiences. Rather than attempt to address them all, choose one or two that best meet the needs and interests of your group.**

### Planning an Event

In addition to showcasing documentary films as an art form, screenings of P.O.V. films can be used to present information, get people interested in taking action on an issue, provide opportunities for people from different groups or perspectives to exchange views, and/or create space for reflection. Using the questions below as a planning checklist will help ensure a high-quality/high-impact event.

- **Have you defined your goals?** With your partner(s), set realistic goals. Will you host a single event or engage in an ongoing project? Being clear about your goals will make it much easier to structure the event, target publicity, and evaluate results.
- **Does the way you are planning to structure the event fit your goals?** Do you need an outside facilitator, translator, or sign language interpreter? If your goal is to share information, are there local experts on the topic who should be present? How large an audience do you want? (Large groups are appropriate for information exchanges. Small groups allow for more intensive dialogue.)
- **Have you arranged to involve all stakeholders?** It is especially important that people be allowed to speak for themselves. If your group is planning to take action that affects people other than those present, how will you give voice to those not in the room?
- **Is the event being held in a space where all participants will feel equally comfortable?** Is it wheelchair accessible? Is it in a part of town that's easy to reach by various kinds of transportation? If you are bringing together different constituencies, is it neutral territory? Does the physical configuration allow for the kind of discussion you hope to have?
- **Will the room set up help you meet your goals?** Is it comfortable? If you intend to have a discussion, can people see one another? Are there spaces to use for small break out groups? Can everyone easily see the screen and hear the film?
- **Have you scheduled time to plan for action?** Planning next steps can help people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic, even if the discussion has been difficult. Action steps are especially important for people who already have a good deal of experience talking about the issue(s) on the table. For those who are new to the issue(s), just engaging in public discussion serves as an action step.
- **Are you planning on serving refreshments?** Carefully, consider what type(s) of water (if any) you plan to offer. The choices you make can underscore or conflict with the message of your event.



## Using This Guide

### Facilitating a Discussion

**Controversial or unusual topics often make for excellent discussions. By their nature, those same topics also give rise to deep emotions and strongly held beliefs. As a facilitator, you can create an atmosphere where people feel safe, encouraged, and respected, making it more likely that they will be willing to share openly and honestly. Here's how:**

### Finding a Facilitator

Some university professors, human resource professionals, clergy, and youth leaders may be specially trained in facilitation skills.

### Preparing Yourself

**Identify your own hot-button issues.** View the film before your event and give yourself time to reflect so you aren't dealing with raw emotions at the same time that you are trying to facilitate a discussion.

**Be knowledgeable.** You don't need to be an expert on child welfare, addiction, foster care, depression, or poverty to facilitate a discussion, but knowing the basics can help you keep a discussion on track and gently correct misstatements of fact. In addition to the Background section, you may want to take a look at the suggested websites in the Resource section on p. 18.

**Be clear about your role.** You may find yourself taking on several roles for an event, e.g., host, organizer, projectionist. If you are also planning to serve as facilitator, be sure that you can focus on that responsibility and avoid distractions during the discussion. Keep in mind that being a facilitator is not the same as being a teacher. A teacher's job is to convey specific information. In contrast, a facilitator remains neutral, helping move along the discussion without imposing their views on the dialogue.

**Know your group.** Issues can play out very differently for different groups of people. Is your group new to the issue or have they dealt with it before? Factors like geography, age, race, religion, and socioeconomic class can all have an impact on comfort levels, speaking styles, and prior knowledge. If you are bringing together different segments of your community, we strongly recommend hiring an experienced facilitator.



## Using This Guide

### Preparing the Group

**Consider how well group members know one another.** If you are bringing together people who have never met, you may want to devote some time at the beginning of the event for introductions.

**Agree to ground rules around language.** Involve the group in establishing some basic rules to ensure respect and aid clarity. Typically such rules include no yelling or use of slurs and asking people to speak in the first person (“I think....”) rather than generalizing for others (“Everyone knows that...”).

**Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard.** Be clear about how people will take turns or indicate that they want to speak. Plan a strategy for preventing one or two people from dominating the discussion. If the group is large, are there plans to break into small groups or partners, or should attendance be limited?

**Talk about the difference between dialogue and debate.** In a debate, participants try to convince others that they are right. In a dialogue, participants try to understand each other and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening to each other actively. Remind people that they are engaged in a dialogue.

**Encourage active listening.** Ask the group to think of the event as being about listening, as well as discussing. Participants can be encouraged to listen for things that challenge as well as reinforce their own ideas. You may also consider asking people to practice formal “active listening,” where participants listen without interrupting the speaker, then re-phrase to see if they have heard correctly.



Photo: Snitow-Kaufman Productions  
*Vandana Shiva at a protest press conference at the  
Third World Water Forum in Kyoto*

**Remind participants that everyone sees through the lens of their own experience.** Who we are influences how we interpret what we see. So everyone in the group may have a different view about the content and meaning of the film they have just seen, and all of them may be accurate. It can help people to understand one another’s perspectives if people identify the evidence on which they base their opinions as well as share their views.

**Take care of yourself and group members.** If the intensity level rises, pause to let everyone take a deep breath. You might also consider providing a safe space to “vent,” perhaps with a partner or in a small group of familiar faces. If you anticipate that people may be upset, be prepared to refer them to local support agencies and/or have local professionals present. Be sure to make it clear whether or not members of the press are present and whether comments are “on the record” or if there is a reasonable expectation that requests for confidentiality will be honored.



## General Discussion Questions

**When people begin to think about something as basic to survival as water, reactions can be intense. You don't want to suppress passion, but you do want participants to be thoughtful as well as emotional, to reflect and not just react. So, immediately after the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen or pose a general question and give 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 people 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 ask and what would you ask them?**
- **What insights or new knowledge did you gain from this film?**
- **If you were going to tell a friend what this film was about, what would you say?**
- **Two months from now, what do you think you will remember from this film and why?**



Photo: Snitow-Kaufman Productions  
*Filming Rajendra Singh during production of "Thirst"*



## Discussion Prompts

### EXAMINING PRIVATIZATION

- As you view the film, jot down a list of the arguments you hear in favor of privatization and the arguments against privatization. Then review your notes. Which column seems more convincing to you and why? If a corporation were trying to privatize your municipal water services, would you support or oppose it?
- Peter Woicke of the World Bank underscores the high cost of providing individual access to potable water. What are the potential differences to a community if end users pay a private company or pay a public utility? What are the potential differences to a community if a private company or public utility makes the initial investment needed to finance necessary construction or repair? What are the potential differences to a community in public or private maintenance and operation of water facilities?
- The choice between public and private ownership is also often a choice between local control and control by a corporation headquartered far away. Stockton municipal employee Michael McDonald says, "I don't like the idea of my water being controlled by a private company, especially in these times. I'd rather it stay here under our local control. And our employees live here. Most of them have gone to school here. They're raising their children here. It's important to them that they do a good job. And we don't have to think about how we're going to make a profit here. All we have to think about is how we can ... provide a good service to the citizens." What difference do you think local control makes?
- Gary Podesto explains that some citizens of Stockton oppose his attempts to contract out water services to a private corporation by saying, "They confuse this with this globalization issue." In your view, are the citizens confused? Why might they think there is a link between what happened in Stockton and corporate globalization?
- In Stockton, as in many communities, one of the consequences of privatization is a downsizing of the municipal workforce. Because of the history of discrimination and hiring in the U.S., such downsizing affects different groups of people differently. In your community, who would be most affected by layoffs of workers at water and sewer facilities? What weight should a city give to preserving jobs in considering whether or not to privatize? What did the city of Stockton lose when Michael McDonald left the Water Department?
- At the World Water Council, John Briscoe says, "What does it mean to say water is a human right? As those who proclaim it so would say that it is the obligation of the government of X to provide free water to everybody. Well, that's a fantasy." Is free water what people are requesting, or are they requesting public provision of water? What is the difference? Considering that people need water to live, what should be done in situations where individuals cannot afford to pay? Many cities need to upgrade their water delivery and/or sewage systems. In your opinion, who should cover these costs and how should they be paid for?
- Rajendra Singh says, "Just as we won our independence from colonial oppression, I hope we will be successful one day in ending the privatization of water." How is this struggle similar to and different from the struggle against colonial rule?
- Many people in the film make reference to "rights." Make a list of all the different entities you can think of that are entitled to and that grant "rights." Examples might include the UN Declaration of Human Rights or divine rights. Those would apply to all people. Or the U.S. Constitution, which grants rights to the category of people who are citizens. Let each person in the group share your list. Do corporations appear on any of the lists? In your view, what rights should corporations have?



## Discussion Prompts

- The United States has a long tradition of private ownership of land. But what if a landowner allows private companies to use water on their land? Does the ability to pump water automatically confer the right to control water?
- Rajendra Singh observes, "In our childhood, we never imagined buying bottled water ... And now, water is selling at the cost of milk. A poor person cannot afford to buy it." What is the relationship between a company's choice to promote and sell bottled water and a community's desire to provide universal, affordable, tap water? How does the production of bottled water affect the motivation for providing safe and accessible tap water? What are the costs to the community of each of those alternatives (including the costs of dealing with the waste products of the processes)?
- Is profit a good motivator to provide good service? Can you think of specific examples where this is true? Can you think of specific examples where it is not true? Do market forces work the same way for resources like water, a resource absolutely necessary for basic human survival and a service that tends to be a monopoly, than for other kinds of goods or services? Should basic necessities be governed by their own set of rules, and if so, what kinds of rules? If you had to make a list of basic necessities, what would you include?

### LOOKING AT DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

- Imagine that you were responsible to convene the World Water Forum in Kyoto to discuss how to "provide access to all the unserved peoples for an affordable price." If you wanted to be sure that all the "key players" would be represented, who would you invite and why?
- Canadian Maude Barlow lays out the conflict this way: "On one side, those who see water as an economic good want to put water on the open market for sale to the highest bidder. On the other hand, you're going to hear the voice of a growing civil society movement who has a vision of water as part of the global commons and treat it as a public trust for all time by governments everywhere." In your view, are these the only two possibilities, or can you think of others? How might advocates for these two positions reach a compromise, or are their positions mutually exclusive?
- In Stockton, Vice Mayor Gloria Nomura reminds people that, "It says in the Constitution that you will elect representatives to vote and to make decisions that are best for you." In contrast, Council Member Larry Ruhstaller says, "There comes a time when the people become so involved in an issue that it is important that they be heard by way of ballot." Which do you think best fits situations similar to the one faced by Stockton, direct or representative democracy? Why? What are the potential long-term consequences if citizens feel shut out of the process of government?
- Mayor Podesto used funds, in part supplied by OMI/Thames, to send out mailers and for automatic phone calls asserting that his opponents were lying. You hear the phone call in the film. Is this part of open government and healthy political debate, or, as Dale Stocking says, "a very expensive effort to thwart our citizens' approach to open government"?



## Discussion Prompts

- Reflecting on their failure to defeat the contract with Thames, Stockton opponents of privatization reflected on strategies. Consider the following positions mentioned in their conversation:
  - No one has ever won one of these fights without civil disobedience
  - We took the high road and “did not run in the mud with the rest of them”
  - We may have taken the high road, but we lost, so what good is the high road?

What do you think about the group’s strategy decisions? If the decision were yours, what would you have done and why?

### THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE

- Imagine that you ran the World Water Council or you were creating your own organization to formulate a global water policy. Work together in small groups to write a mission statement for your organization.
- If you had been able to address the World Water Forum, what would you have said?
- In your view, should anyone “own” a resource like water? On what do you base your belief? If you adhere to a religious tradition, research your religion’s teachings about water. How might these teachings inform a debate about privatization?

- Bolivian Oscar Olivera addresses those gathered in Kyoto by saying, “Many of the companies represented here have stained the water with the blood of our compatriots.” What do you think he meant? If you were asked to write a set of ethical guidelines for corporations involved in providing water services, what would the guidelines say?



Photo: Snitow-Kaufman Productions  
 Michael McDonald, Maintenance Supervisor of the Stockton water department at a protest outside Stockton City Hall before city council vote on privatizing Stockton’s water system



## Taking Action

- Rajendra Singh says, “Let me tell you one thing: local action, small local action, can change global thinking in a second.... Starting from such a small spot, it spreads in the village, in the country and the world.” What small, local thing might you start?
  - o Who are the largest consumers of water in your community? Farmers? Golf courses? Factories? Laundries? Car washes? Others? How might you work with these entities to conserve water?
  - o Do institutions in your community invest pension plan or other funds in companies involved in water privatization? How might you approach those institutions to invest in ways that reflect your position on privatization?
- One of the issues around privatization has been a lack of information or the existence of misinformation. You and your group might conduct and disseminate research in your community to answer any or all of the following questions:
  - o Who runs your municipal water system?
  - o What is the condition of your local water delivery and/or sewer systems? If repairs or upgrades are needed, what plans are in place to finance those repairs?
  - o Has your local government been approached by a water corporation offering to take over operation of the water system?
  - o If so, what was the response? What has the corporation promised? Do its promises square with its track record in other places?
  - o What rates do people in your community pay for water? Compare this with rates charged by public and private utilities in similar communities.
  - o Where do local officials running for re-election stand on the issue of privatization of water?
  - o Check labels of locally sold bottled water. Where does the water come from? Have water samples tested and compare the results of those tests to the results of required tests performed on your community’s tap water. Which water is consistently safer?
  - o What policies or laws are in place to protect water sources in your area (rivers, streams, aquifers, lakes, etc.) from pollution?
  - o What policies or laws are in place to protect water sources in your area (rivers, streams, aquifers, lakes, etc.) from depletion?
- Before a crisis situation arises, work with local politicians to create processes for public input on decisions about critical matters such as privatization of utilities.
  - o Investigate the status of current legal protections for the water source(s) that provides drinking water for your community. Work with local politicians, municipal employees, and community groups to ensure the implementation of these protections or the creation of new laws where necessary.
  - o Organize forums or work with local media to give voice to:
    - People distributing information about privatization
    - Union leaders or other representatives of your local water and sewer workers
    - Discussions about which community resources should remain as part of the public trust or as civic spaces and which things are okay for private companies to own or control.
  - o Conduct blind taste tests to see if people can tell the difference between tap water and bottled waters. A “Good Morning America” test of its studio audience found that people chose New York City tap water as a heavy favorite over such brands as Evian and Poland Spring. Hold the taste tests at public events and use the event to distribute information about privatization. ++



## Taking Action

- Survey residents who purchase bottled water and brainstorm alternatives to help them meet the needs you find. If, for example, people are fearful that their tap water is not safe, arrange for water testing or spearhead a campaign to ensure that the community's public water supply is safe or supply residents with filters. If the problem is identified as one of availability or convenience, work with local civic groups to install, maintain, and/or repair drinking fountains in key locations.
- Scarcity drives up cost, so conservation is often an important part of the conversation about water. Brainstorm ways to help people and institutions in your community conserve water (e.g., create a fund that would provide people with grants to install low-water-use toilets or shower heads; help people find alternatives to planting lawns; conduct a teach-in on how to harvest rainwater; or create public policy that prevents watering during parts of the day when evaporation is most likely to occur, etc.).
- Review how you use water in the course of your daily routine. Commit to one change you could make to use water more efficiently. Share your resolution with others in the group. Think about things you could ask others to do that would support you in keeping your resolution and how you might help them in keeping theirs.
- Find out which organizations in your community are currently working on privatization issues. Investigate the possibility of working with those organizations.

++ Idea adapted from *Thirst, A Guide for Discussion Leaders and Teachers*, produced by **The Sierra Club**.



Photo: Snitow-Kaufman Productions  
Oscar Olivera at a protest press conference  
at the Third World Water Forum in Kyoto



## Resources

### Websites

#### **P.O.V.'s Thirst Website**

**[www.pbs.org/pov/pov2004/thirst](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2004/thirst)**

#### **General Overview**

Access the *Thirst* website at [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov) to find out more about water privatization across America and around the world including a history of water delivery systems, a list of the corporations in the water business, the issues involved and the future of water in the 21st century.

#### **History of Water Privatization in California**

Water historian Norris Hundley, author of "The Great Thirst: Californians and Water," draws lessons from California's 19th century water privatization schemes in an exclusive essay.

#### **A Harvest of Water**

We look at innovative techniques used around the world to harvest drinking water from rain, fog, and clouds. In an exclusive outtake from the film, Rajendra Singh explains how community effort in Rajasthan, India has transformed the desert landscape.

#### **Resources**

Find links to interviews with characters from the film, learn more about the key players in the water privatization debate and visit related PBS and NPR programs and websites.

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

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



## Resources

**www.thirstthemovie.org**

The website for the film *Thirst* includes information about the filmmakers, a list of relevant articles and books, as well as other links and resources.

**www.cseindia.org**

The Centre for Science and Environment, based in India, was started in 1980 by a group of engineers, scientists, journalists and environmentalists to catalyze the growth of public awareness on vital issues in science, technology, environment and development. The site includes several resources related to water, including rainwater harvesting, pollution, water treatment, and more.

**http://www.servicesforall.org**

The Citizens' Network on Essential Services (CNES) works to democratize national and global governance by supporting citizens' groups that are engaged in influencing policy decisions about basic services: water, power, education, and health care. Their website includes a valuable virtual library of anti-privatization policy papers, profiles of relevant organizations, and a useful glossary.

**www.citizen.org**

Public Citizen's Water for All Campaign is dedicated to protecting water as a common resource, stopping water privatization and bulk water sales, and defending access to clean and affordable water around the world. Their website includes case studies and overviews of debates about privatization.

**www.worldwatercouncil.org**

The website of the pro-privatization convener of the Kyoto conference shown in the film includes statistics on water usage and availability.

**www.waterpartnership.org**

An advocacy organization created by the major private water companies in the United States. The group promotes "public private partnerships," the term the group prefers to use instead of "privatization."

**www.imf.org**

The International Monetary Fund is an organization of 184 countries working to foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty. The IMF supports the privatization of water, and their website includes policy papers on the issue, particularly as it relates to developing nations.

**http://rru.worldbank.org/Documents/PapersLinks/511.pdf**

The World Bank provides toolkits for those interested in pursuing privatizing water. From their homepage, you can also click on their Resources section to find statements on what the World Bank considers "best practice" in water privatization.



## How to Buy the Film

To buy or rent *Thirst*, please contact Bullfrog Films either online at [www.bullfrogfilms.com](http://www.bullfrogfilms.com), by email at [video@bullfrogfilms.com](mailto:video@bullfrogfilms.com), or call 1-800 543-3764



Now entering its 17th season on PBS, P.O.V. is the first and longest-running series on television to feature the work of

America's most innovative independent documentary storytellers. Bringing over 200 award-winning films to millions nationwide, and now a new Web-only series, P.O.V.'s *Borders*, P.O.V. has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent non-fiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues.

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### **P.O.V. Interactive**

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

P.O.V.'s award-winning Web department produces our 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 and viewer resources, and information on the P.O.V. archives as well as a myriad of 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. Through two divisions, *P.O.V.* and *Active Voice*, AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture; developing collaborative strategic engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, on line, and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback, to educational opportunities and community participation.

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Front cover photo:  
*Indian women gathering water in Rajasthan, India*

