

# BETTER THIS WORLD

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## Bullfrog Community Screening & Discussion Guide

**Roll out the red carpet!** Use your film screening of BETTER THIS WORLD as a tool to build community and spark discussion about our rights and specifically the issues of civil liberties and political dissent. This guide offers some background information plus helpful tips and discussion questions for a stirring, informative, and rewarding screening.

**Good Luck!**

For additional resources, visit [betterthisworld.bullfrogcommunities.com/better\\_resources](http://betterthisworld.bullfrogcommunities.com/better_resources)

### About BETTER THIS WORLD

How did two boyhood friends from Midland, Texas wind up arrested on terrorism charges at the 2008 Republican National Convention? BETTER THIS WORLD follows the journey of David McKay (22) and Bradley Crowder (23) from political neophytes to accused domestic terrorists with a particular focus on the relationship they develop with a radical activist mentor in the six months leading up to their arrests. A dramatic story of idealism, loyalty, crime and betrayal, BETTER THIS WORLD goes to the heart of the War on Terror and its impact on civil liberties and political dissent in post-9/11 America.



### About the Directors

Kelly Duane de la Vega is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, 2009-2010 HBO/FIND Fellow and 2010 Sundance Documentary Fellow. Her Emmy-nominated "Monumental: David Brower's Fight for Wild America" opened theatrically nationwide. A 2009-2010 HBO/FIND documentary fellow, Katie Galloway teaches media studies at the University of California, Berkeley, where she is the filmmaker-in-residence at the journalism school's investigative reporting program. She and Kelly are partners in Loteria Films.



# ready to watch!

Here are some ideas and best practices to help make your community screening of BETTER THIS WORLD a success!

- 1. Publicize Your Event!** This is the most important step. Not only can you tell the world about your screening, but you can also let the Bullfrog Community team know about your plans so we can help you publicize your event. Visit [betterthisworld.bullfrogcommunities.com/better\\_screenings](https://betterthisworld.bullfrogcommunities.com/better_screenings) to register your screening of BETTER THIS WORLD.
- 2. Visualize Your Goal!** What do you hope to achieve with your screening of BETTER THIS WORLD? Your goal could be to generate a lively post-film discussion with your audience about our criminal justice system, political protest, and threats to our rights and civil liberties, and perhaps to support or form a local chapter of one of the groups working on these issues. Or, simply provide an opportunity for families to watch and learn together.
- 3. Where To Host?** Consider which locations in your area would be ideal for accommodating a community film screening of the size you anticipate: churches, town halls, private homes and even high schools have been venues for many successful community screenings.
- 4. Find A Partner!** Give some thought to who is already working on these issues in your community. Can they help sponsor the event? Spread the word? Be a part of a panel discussion after the screening? Some potential partners include: academic departments at colleges, universities, and high schools, faith-based organizations and institutions, the local bar association, and organizations concerned with criminal justice reform or threats to our rights and civil liberties.
- 5. Invite A Guest Speaker!** Guest speakers and panels are a great way to encourage discussion and debate after a community screening. When people are a part of a meaningful discussion after a film they are more likely to stay engaged with the issue over the long term. Contact local non-profit representatives, teachers, lawyers, or government officials who have expertise or insight into the issues raised by the film, and invite them to attend and participate in a discussion or Q&A session. The filmmakers are available to appear in person or via Skype for a Q&A. [Contact Bullfrog Communities](#) if you are interested.
- 6. Engage Your Audience!** Included in this handout is a section called Ready to Act! which is meant to be a hand-out at your screening. It will help your audience know what they can do to educate themselves about key issues brought up in the film.
- 7. Spread The Word!** Think about the best methods available to you for publicizing the film screening to people in your community. Sending emails, creating event notifications on Facebook or Meetup, using Twitter, and placing screening announcements in local newspapers and newsletters is a good start. Use the BETTER THIS WORLD screening poster and press photos at [betterthisworld.bullfrogcommunities.com/better\\_resources](https://betterthisworld.bullfrogcommunities.com/better_resources) to help publicize your event around town.
- 8. Tell Us How It Went!** Visit [betterthisworld.bullfrogcommunities.com/better\\_discussion](https://betterthisworld.bullfrogcommunities.com/better_discussion) to tell us about your event. Where it was held? Who attended? What went well, and what was challenging? Your feedback will help others in organizing their own successful events and will energize the Bullfrog Rights Community as a whole.

# ready to talk!

**Your audience will be excited to discuss the issues raised by BETTER THIS WORLD. Here are some questions that will get people talking.**

1. Were McKay and Crowder entrapped? Or, as the government claims, were they “willing and able and intending to use those Molotov cocktails on the night of Sept 2nd” and was Darby simply a tool the government used to prevent it from happening?
2. Putting aside the question of whether this was a case of entrapment or not, why do you think McKay and Crowder found Darby persuasive?
3. There are a number of different viewpoints in the film: the FBI’s, Darby’s, McKay’s, Crowder’s, and the prosecution and defense attorneys’. In what ways do each person’s or group’s actions in the film reflect their intentions to “better this world”?
4. Crowder says in the film: “The prosecution has unbelievable amounts of power in the negotiation process. . . Going to trial is like you’re a liar and you don’t want to take responsibility, when what you want to do is lay out all the evidence and say, look, this is the whole story . . . If I am guilty then convict me, but don’t give me dozens of years more just because I wanted to have the full story laid out.” Did you learn anything new about the justice system in watching the film? What surprised you the most?
5. What was your reaction to each of the various attempts by the government to convince Crowder and McKay to testify against each other?
6. In a heated discussion with his family McKay says, “This isn’t about justice, and this isn’t about doing the right thing, and it’s not about them taking responsibility for anything. You know, this is about there being a winner and a loser.” What does this statement illuminate about the adversarial system? What do you see as the benefits or drawbacks of such a system?
7. Crowder and McKay say they wanted to do something ‘effective.’ Why didn’t they see talk or non-violent protest as being effective? In your view, is violence ever an appropriate or effective response when government is failing its citizens? If so, under what circumstances?
8. Crowder says, “I wanted to go to the RNC to protest because I want to change the world and I believe it can be changed.” Do you share Crowder’s belief? If so, what do you think needs to change and what might you do to foster that change?
9. In the film, McKay and his father both speculate as to why the federal government so adamantly pursued prosecution of this case. What do you think?
10. Do you think that there is an effective way for law enforcement to distinguish between a David McKay and a Timothy McVeigh?
11. What questions do you have about the government’s use of informants? What do you see as just or unjust uses of informants?
12. What role does protest and dissent play in a democracy?
13. Do you think the threat of terrorism justifies the curtailment of civil liberties and the crackdown on dissent?

# ready to act!

handout

## Share this handout with your BETTER THIS WORLD screening audience!

### **1. Let lawmakers know that we want them to protect our rights and civil liberties.**

The American Civil Liberties Union is a national organization advocating individual rights and restrictions on government outreach, by litigating, legislating, and educating the public on a broad array of issues affecting individual freedom. Investigate and get involved with campaigns and petitions at the ACLU targeting our lawmakers at [www.aclu.org/action-center](http://www.aclu.org/action-center)

### **2. Become aware of instances of spying on first amendment-protected activity.**

The ACLU offers a map of places, state-by-state, where US law enforcement agencies are known to have spied on or are currently spying on American citizens and activist groups. Law enforcement agencies continue to monitor and harass groups and individuals for peacefully exercising their First Amendment rights. [www.aclu.org/maps/spying-first-amendment-activity-state-state](http://www.aclu.org/maps/spying-first-amendment-activity-state-state)

### **3. Support free speech and open discussion.**

Consider displaying the ACLU's "Dissent is Patriotic" poster in your window, posting it on Facebook and sharing it with friends. Poster found at [action.aclu.org/site/PageServer?pagename=dissent\\_is\\_patriotic&emsrc=Nat\\_Appeal\\_AutologinEnabled&s\\_subsrc=bor](http://action.aclu.org/site/PageServer?pagename=dissent_is_patriotic&emsrc=Nat_Appeal_AutologinEnabled&s_subsrc=bor)

### **4. Learn how to organize a peaceful, legal, and effective protest.**

Community and political groups of all kinds use marches, rallies, vigils and peaceful protests to focus attention on causes they feel passionately about. Effective protests, however, require careful planning, thought and organization. The ACLU has designed a downloadable "Right To Protest" pamphlet ([www.aclutx.org/documents/righttoprotestpamphlet.pdf](http://www.aclutx.org/documents/righttoprotestpamphlet.pdf)) that can also be found at [www.aclutx.org/2011/02/02/free-speech-and-the-right-to-protest/](http://www.aclutx.org/2011/02/02/free-speech-and-the-right-to-protest/)

### **5. Get up to date on the work of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's).**

The Daily Activist is an international collaboration of writers, journalists and online contributors, seeking to promote awareness of social, civil, and human rights issues. Found online at [www.thedailyactivist.com/](http://www.thedailyactivist.com/)

### **6. Help those whose rights have been violated find assistance.**

Organizations around the world that advocate, monitor, and protect freedom of expression are featured on the Human Rights Education Associates resources page at [www.hrea.org/index.php?base\\_id=117&language\\_id=1&category\\_id=342&category\\_type=2&group=](http://www.hrea.org/index.php?base_id=117&language_id=1&category_id=342&category_type=2&group=)

### **7. FOIA Yourself!**

Use the Freedom of Information Act to find out whether any government agencies have been collecting information about you. The Act gives any person the right to request and receive access to any document, file, or other record in the possession of any federal government agency, subject to exemptions. You can request that the FBI and other agencies let you know what information they have on you, or your political group. See how at the Defending Dissent Foundation website [www.defendingdissent.org/program/foia.html](http://www.defendingdissent.org/program/foia.html)

### **8. Find out more – informative organizations working on issues of rights and civil liberties are:**

- Bill of Rights Defense Committee – <http://www.bordc.org/>
- The National Lawyers' Guild – <http://www.nlg.org/>
- Human Rights Watch – <http://www.hrw.org/>

# ready to act!

handout

- Amnesty International – <http://www.amnestyusa.org/>
- Center for Constitutional Rights – <http://ccrjustice.org/>
- Prison Activist Resource Center – <http://www.prisonactivist.org/>
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) – <http://www.naacp.org/>
- Open Society Justice Initiative – <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/justice>
- People for the American Way – <http://www.pfaw.org/>
- Vera Institute of Justice – <http://www.vera.org/>
- The Center for Community Alternatives (CCA) – <http://www.communityalternatives.org/>
- American Democracy Project (AASCU) – <http://www.aascu.org/programs/ADP/>
- Ella Baker Center for Human Rights – <http://www.ellabakercenter.org>
- Forefront: A Global Network of Young Human Rights Advocates – <http://orgs.tigweb.org/forefront-a-global-network-of-young-human-rights-advocates>
- The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights – <http://www.civilrights.org/>