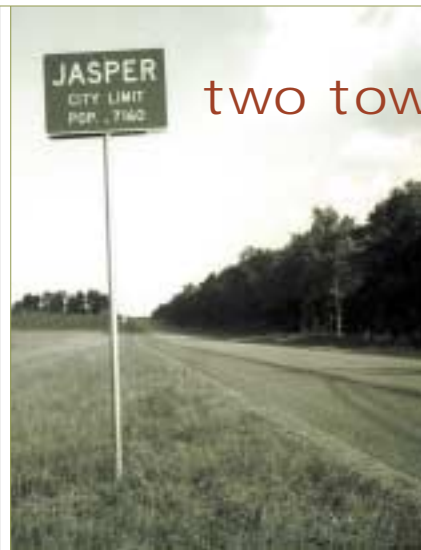


REPORT FROM THE ROAD



LINKING FILM
WITH
COMMUNITY
CHANGE

WORKING FILMS AND TWO TONE PRODUCTIONS

OCTOBER 2003

On January 21, 2003, the PBS series *POV* aired its highest rated documentary in five years — *Two Towns of Jasper*. This film, about the trials of the Texas men who chained James Byrd, Jr. to a truck and dragged him to his death, struck a raw nerve across America. The television premiere garnered more than 1,200 stories in the media. *Nightline* and *The Oprah Show* did companion programs. In total, 32 million Americans saw a significant portion of the programming related to *Two Towns of Jasper*.

This PBS broadcast was the cornerstone of a national outreach campaign that has, in the first year, had an impact in 80 cities. On the road, *Two Towns of Jasper* is sparking change one city at a time. >>>>



"This film is something I would recommend to any community...
People are still talking about it now, three months later."

—J. W. Cleary, President
Paducah NAACP Chapter



>>>> In 1998, filmmakers Marco Williams and Whitney Dow set out on a journey of filming and editing the acclaimed documentary *Two Towns of Jasper*. In a novel approach to the subject of race, each filmmaker followed the trials of the Jasper men accused of the murder with a racially segregated film crew: Dow, who is white, filmed in the white community with a white crew, while Williams, who is black, filmed in the black community with an all-black crew.

From the beginning, Williams and Dow wanted to create a documentary that would spark meaningful dialogue and action in communities around the nation. They started thinking about the outreach campaign that would surround the documentary almost two years before they completed the film and they developed a team of strategic partners. Co-producer of the overall campaign is Working Films, a non-profit founded by filmmaker Judith Helfand and media educator Robert West that serves as a bridge between high quality documentaries and serious grassroots organizing.

The filmmakers and Working Films worked closely with POV and with other key organizations supporting the film — Independent Television Service (ITVS), Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), Television Race Initiative (TRI) and National Black Programming Consortium (NBPC) — to develop an extremely successful pre-broadcast campaign and launch. NPR, *The New York Times* and other major dailies covered the launch of the film. Campaign partners organized

On the Road

Thanks to collaborations between the filmmakers and Working Films with ITVS, POV, the National Coalition Building Institute, the National Conference of Community and Justice, and other non-profit organizations, universities, community colleges, museums, churches, libraries, theaters and local media, the 80 cities listed throughout this report have hosted community screenings and discussions of *Two Towns of Jasper*.

Akron, PA Albuquerque, NM Allston, MA
 Austin, TX Baltimore, MD Binghamton, NY
 TX Denver, CO Des Moines, IA Cary, NC
 PA Fargo, ND Fort Collins, CO Hampton, VA
 TX Huntington, NY Jacksonville, FL Jamaica
 Lawton, OK Lehigh Valley, IL Lexington, VA

nearly 30 pre-broadcast screenings and TRI developed an extensive Facilitators/Study Guide for use in group discussions.

Working Films secured commitments from key partners for the post-broadcast outreach campaign — national organizations already working on the issue of race in America who would use the film as a community-organizing tool in their local chapters. Original campaign partners include:

National Conference of Community and Justice (NCCJ), National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI), and the United Methodist Church, including the Civil Rights office and the national Women's Division. Facing History and Ourselves, a non-profit devoted to helping teachers use social issue media in the classroom, came on board as the outreach partner for students and educators. Outreach consultant Karen Hirsch provided strategic planning and grantwriting.

The Ford Foundation committed \$250,000 to year one of the post-broadcast campaign. Since March 2003, this grant has made it possible for the campaign to:

- Provide training, support and materials to groups in more than 50 cities that have used *Two Towns of Jasper* to organize events addressing local solutions to racial tension.
- Award 20 mini-grants to chapters of our national partners to build specific community events around *Two Towns of Jasper* (see Future Destinations on back cover for details).
- Complete a 28-page/five day teacher curriculum developed by Facing History and Ourselves.
- Underwrite travel expenses for the filmmakers to attend screenings in more than 24 cities around the nation.
- Produce a preview tape inviting new communities into the campaign.
- Provide for free distribution of the film to hundreds of organizations and community groups

Florida, Georgia, Arkansas, Vermont and Montana with new statewide associations and chapters coming on board every week.

In September 2003, the AFL-CIO launched the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride, a nationwide series of bus tours to raise awareness of immigrants' civil rights. *Two Towns of Jasper* is being shown on all 15 buses in the tour with facilitated discussions following the film.

"We think there is an artificial timetable around the lifecycle of independent documentaries," says Robert West of Working Films. "Good films should have long lives. The problem this film addresses is not going to be solved in nine months or even two years. But we know this film can be a catalyst now and two years from now for the hard work we all need to do around dismantling racism."

"There was a story to be uncovered in Jasper, not just about the town, but about America, and ultimately, each one of us."
—Oprah Winfrey



Anchorage, AK Ann Arbor, MI Atlanta, GA
 Boise, ID Boston, MA Buffalo, NY Denton,
 Chicago, IL Cleveland, OH Eliot, ME Ephrata,
 VA Hartford, VA New Haven, CT Houston,
 ica Plain, MA Lake Tahoe, CA Laramie, WY
 Little Rock, AR Long Beach, CA Los Angeles,

not affiliated with the national partners. As the campaign progresses, new partners are joining all the time. After a highly successful weekend of screenings sponsored by United Way in Paducah, KY, (see Case Study, page 4) Working Films contacted United Way state associations inviting them to present the film in community screenings. As a result, Working Films is currently organizing screenings with United Ways in Alabama,



One afternoon in the winter of 2002, Richard Williams was driving home listening to NPR on his car radio. He found a story about the documentary film *Two Towns of Jasper* riveting.

Richard and his wife, Kristin, watched the film on PBS the next week and were struck by its extremely honest depiction of racial tension beneath the surface of a small town.



In the story of Jasper, they heard and saw their own racially divided community and the couple became determined to bring *Two Towns of Jasper* to Paducah, Kentucky. They hoped the film

nearly 50 partners from city and county government, major local employers and churches.

“Some whites came to the planning meeting afraid the film would make them feel bad about what someone else had done and some African-Americans came afraid the film would be depressing,” says Williams. “But people felt it was a very honest, balanced discussion about racism– the segregated crews helped a lot. We wound up with a very unique partnership. Never before had these groups joined together on this issue.”

After the planning meeting, they decided to concentrate the events into one weekend in June 2003 with eight free screenings: a kick-off, invitation-only event and panel discussion for community leaders where the filmmakers would be present, a special screening for youth and six screenings for the public. Local leaders would conduct audience discussions after each screening. Area businesses and organizations contributed funds to underwrite these activities and Working Films contributed materials and trainings.

The film struck a chord in Paducah.

CA Louisville, KY Madison, WI Minneapolis, MN
NY New Orleans, LA New York, NY Old Bridge, NJ
PA Pittsfield, MA Portland, ME Portland, OR
NV Research Triangle Park, NC Salt Lake City, UT
Springfield, MO St. Louis, MO St. Paul, MN
Watertown, NY Westby, WI Wilmington, NC

would start an honest conversation about race. They had no idea the film would have the impact that it did.

“People were starved for a different discussion about racism and this film seemed a good venue to provide that,” says Kristin Williams. To build broad community support for the film and related outreach activities, Kristin worked from the start with the local United Way. With its backing, she organized a screening which was attended by

Every seat was filled at every screening. The kick-off event drew the mayor, representatives from African-American churches, white churches, education, government, law enforcement, business and non-profits. The panel discussion, moderated by Washington, DC based NBC producer Ken Strickland, received extensive local press and the NBC local affiliate ran free PSAs promoting the weekend activities. Out of a total population of 25,000 in Paducah, more than 1,000 people

attended the screenings, about ten times the audience anticipated.

“The experience of bringing the film to Paducah was an eye opener for a lot of people, particularly in the white community,” says Rev. Jerry Jeffords, District Superintendent of the United Methodist Church. “Whites did not believe those kinds of feelings existed in the black community. People thought ‘we’re fine, we don’t have prejudice here’ but there is a division in the city and we became more aware of that through the dialogue we started with the film. It got us started on a good path.”

“This film is something I would recommend to any community,” says J.W. Cleary, president of the Paducah NAACP chapter. “Race is a hot issue that’s not discussed very often. Having the discussions after the film, we got to the nuts and bolts of how we can relate the film to our every day lives. People are still talking about it now three months later.”

Several weeks after the screenings, an Impact Committee was formed to take action on issues raised by the community dialogue on race. A four-step plan to significantly increase diversity on Boards of Directors throughout Paducah was created. “The diverse group of people on our Impact Committee would never have sat down to take action on board diversity if it had not been for the screenings,” says Williams. “It’s pretty amazing that a movie can do that.”

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On the Horizon

Two Tone Productions and Working Films are currently raising funds for year two of the *Two Towns of Jasper* outreach campaign.

Key goals for year two include:

Support for Facing History and Ourselves to develop training materials and workshops tailored to the use of *Two Towns of Jasper* in the classroom and for the presentation of these materials at their Summer Teacher Institutes in 2004.

Continued and expanded support of national partnerships with NCCJ, NCBI and the United Methodist Church.

Support for partnerships with new non-profit organizations that have emerged during year one of the campaign including the AFL-CIO and United Ways nationwide.

Continued support for the filmmakers as they travel to screenings and community events.

Continued support for Working Films as they manage the day-to-day outreach campaign, meeting all the needs of the national partners and developing new engaged community initiatives.

“People thought, ‘we’re fine, we don’t have prejudice here’ but there is a division in the city and we became more aware of that through the dialogue we started with the film.”

—Rev. Jerry Jeffords
Paducah District Superintendent
United Methodist Church

Filmmakers Marco Williams
and Whitney Dow



National campaign partners including The National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ), National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) and the United Methodist Church have exciting plans to use *Two Towns of Jasper* in the months to come. Here are highlights from dozens of events currently in the works:

In **Denver, CO** the local chapter of the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) will use the film as part of a new training program to create Clergy Response Teams. Working in partnership with local law enforcement, clergy will be trained to help quell potential violence in the event of a hate crime. *Two Towns of Jasper* will be part of the curricula for the on-going project.

In **New Jersey**, The New Jersey State Office of Bias Crime and Community Relations, The New Jersey Division of Civil Rights, the U.S. Dept. of Justice and the New Jersey chapter of NCCJ, will host *Two Towns of Jasper: A Community Response to Bias, Bigotry and Racism*, a state-wide forum for law enforcement agencies, business leaders, educators, government officials and Human Relation Councils that will have the film as a cornerstone for the event.

In **Woolwich, ME**, where the Mayor recently wrote a letter to Somalia asking that no more Somalians relocate to his community, NCBI will use the film to launch a discussion about race relations and attempt to diffuse racial tension among selected members of the community, including prominent Somalians.

In **Atlanta, GA**, NCBI will hold at least three screenings of *Two Towns of Jasper* in partnership with the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, the Southern Regional Council, United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta, Cascade United Methodist Church, Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church, St. Luke's Episcopal Church and the Institute for Self-Transcendence. Each viewing will be followed by a dialogue session facilitated by the local Black/African Heritage Constituency Leader and a senior NCBI chapter leader.

In **St. Louis, MO**, the United States Attorney's Hate Crimes Task Force which includes 70 representatives from federal, state and local law enforcement in Missouri and Illinois as well as educators and organizers, will use *Two Towns of Jasper* as part of a special screening and discussion to promote effective dialogue on preventing hate crimes.

In **Des Moines, Iowa**, the NCCJ chapter together with the Mayor's Task Force on Hate and Hate Crimes will use the film as part of a town meeting on race. The film will be used by community leaders to confront institutional racism and create more inclusive policies and practices.

In **Long Beach, CA**, the NCCJ chapter will use the film as part of the City of Long Beach Human Dignity Program, which educates the community about hate crimes, assists victims of hate crimes and addresses intergroup/interracial conflict in the city. The film will be screened at a Hate Crime Educational Forum and as a training resource for City of Long Beach Hate Crime Response Teams.

In **Washington, DC**, the National Capital Area NCCJ is incorporating *Two Towns of Jasper* into Youth Building Bridges, an on-going program which brings together teens, educators, community volunteers and parents to identify and resolve issues resulting from isolation in schools and neighborhoods caused by various elements of prejudice. The first screening and discussion, one of a number that will engage seven area high schools, will take place at the Washington, DC City Museum.

In **Lehigh Valley, IL**, NCBI will invite youth from diverse communities in the Lehigh Valley area to watch the film, followed by discussions facilitated by Lehigh Valley NCBI chapter members. They will collaborate with youth groups from various surrounding congregations including synagogues and mosques.



two
tone

WORKING FILMS AND TWO TONE PRODUCTIONS

Two Towns of Jasper premiered in competition at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival. The film was the winner of the 2002 Pan African Film Festival Outstanding Documentary Award, the Toronto Hot Docs Silver Award for Best International Documentary, the 2002 DoubleTake/Full Frame grand prize, the Center for Documentary Studies Filmmaker Award, and the 2002 Independent Feature Project Third Annual Anthony Radziwill Documentary Achievement Award. The film was broadcast nationally in Canada in July 2003 on CBC NewsWorld and in England on the BBC's *Storyville*.

To organize a community or classroom screening, contact:

Working Films
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Wilmington, NC 28401
(910) 342-9000
rwest@workingfilms.org
www.workingfilms.org

To learn more about the film and the outreach campaign visit:

www.twotownsofjasper.com
www.pbs.org/pov/pov2002/twotownsofjasper
www.workingfilms.org