



## SYNOPSIS

*Trouble in Paradise* is the people's history of Election 2000. It is a feature-length, real-life drama unfolding over a two-year period in the chaotic landscape of Florida politics, from Election 2000 to Election 2002. Set amidst a backdrop of current events, the film follows a diverse group of Floridians who, compelled by a sense of civic responsibility after the outcome of Election 2000, become centrally involved in politics. Outraged and motivated into action, they become determined to challenge the system that disenfranchised between four and six million Americans nationwide in 2000. These people volunteer on campaigns, file lawsuits, and even run for office. Their journeys shed light on the systemic flaws that caused widespread voting problems in 2000 and 2002 — particularly among African-Americans and other minorities.

Florida was at the epicenter of the debacle of Election 2000. Its story occupies one of the strangest and most troubling chapters in American electoral politics. The confusing ballots, disgruntled voters, recounts and protests culminated in voter disenfranchisement, investigations and lawsuits. The shaky outcome resulted in national disillusionment and international embarrassment. Many citizens were plagued by questions of how things could change "so this doesn't happen again." But Florida was unique only because the race there was so close. Voting mistakes and inequities occur nationally and annually. It is relevant not only to all Americans but also to democracies worldwide that the problems brought to light by Election 2000 be faced and repaired. Although other films have been made about the details of Election 2000, "Trouble in Paradise" is the first to follow the stories of ordinary people who decide to take extraordinary action in order to bring about change. It challenges the viewer to revisit the disturbing facts and unanswered questions of Election 2000. It focuses on the role individuals play in a democratic system and it reminds us that change can happen, although often only by way of a steady, arduous process.



[www.troubleinparadise.org](http://www.troubleinparadise.org)

## THE CHARACTERS

### DEIDRE NEWTON ♦ RELUCTANT ACTIVIST



A native Floridian who owns her own real estate company, Deidre's first involvement in politics was during Election 2000. She volunteered on Election Day for the Gore campaign and witnessed

first hand the extent of voting problems. This compelled her to dive head first into the post-election protest movement where she speaks passionately before a crowd of 3,000 on Inauguration Day in Washington. Deidre's story takes us back to the problems of Election Day 2000 and carries us through the gubernatorial campaign of 2002 as she volunteers for Democratic hopeful Bill McBride.

### THOMAS JOHNSON ♦ MAN OF HOPE

Thomas Johnson is an ex-felon and a pastor who moved to Florida from New York to run the House of Hope, a program that reintegrates former felons into the



community. After completing his sentence, Johnson's right to vote was restored in New York. When he went to register in Florida, he learned that he had to appeal to the governor for clemency. As a result of Election 2000, Florida's voting laws have been under intense scrutiny and Johnson's situation has been illuminated as an example of one of the most widespread mechanisms of voter disenfranchisement in the state. Johnson and his legal counsel at the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University speak about their lawsuit to reinstate the voting rights of 620,000 ex-felons. Johnson's case sheds light on the error-plagued voter rolls purge overseen in 2000 by then Secretary of State Katherine Harris.

## LARRY WINAWER ♦ FIRST TIME CANDIDATE

A 33-year-old Long Island transplant, Larry Winawer is a teacher and private tutor. After Election 2000,



he can no longer sit on the sidelines and decides to throw his hat into the political ring. Brimming with enthusiasm, energy and humor, Winawer begins his political career with a run for Palm Beach County Commissioner in 2002. Making his case for a fresh new voice in Florida politics, Winawer finds himself up against opponents with bankrolls and name recognition. Touting the Tip O'Neil quote, "all politics is local," he and his campaign crew set out to meet constituents anywhere they can — at supermarkets, neighborhood meetings and door to door.

## MYRTLE RAINS ♦ VOICE FROM THE GLADES

Myrtle Rains lives in Belle Glade, a small town on the western edge of Palm Beach County bordering the Everglades. Myrtle was the first president of the newly formed Glades Democratic Club and is a local



champion of voter registration and voter participation. With her help, Belle Glade had a huge turnout for Election 2000, but unfortunately, many first-time voters encountered problems at the polls. Despite Myrtle's work to lift the spirits of the disenfranchised while fighting for the African-American voice to be heard in Florida politics, she is up against a system that "ignores and exploits" places like Belle Glade.

## BOB KUNST ♦ THE BUSH STOPS HERE

When he was nine years old, a vandal bombed his synagogue and Bob Kunst became an activist. In the



1970's he founded the Oral Majority and led the fight against orange-juice icon and gay foe Anita Bryant. In response to what he saw as the lack of follow-up by politicians after Election 2000, he decided to run for

governor himself. Kunst leads protests, gives speeches and demands action from fellow Floridians. Struggling with his lack of funding and media attention, he continues to shout his campaign slogan: "No More Bushit!" Kunst's confrontational demeanor alienates him from party politics yet garners respect from the grassroots constituency. What he lacks in etiquette he makes up for in chutzpah and candor.

## THE FILMMAKER



Laurel Greenberg's previous film, *94 Years and 1 Nursing Home Later* (1999), is an intimate view into the difficulties of elderhood. In addition to being broadcast on PBS stations WGBH and

WYBE, it also received three Best Documentary awards, one Best of Festival and was named Best Boston Documentary of 2000 by Gerald Peary in the Boston Phoenix. Greenberg also served as the principal cinematographer for *My Father the Genius* (2002), winner of Best Documentary at Slamdance, the Newport Film Festival, winner of the Grand Jury Prize at the Atlanta Film Festival, and recently seen on the Sundance Channel. Greenberg began making Super 8 films at age 16, and graduated from Brown University (1980) with a BA in Semiotics. She launched her professional career at Fox Television in New York as a cameraperson and audio engineer. She freelances as a cameraperson and video editor for corporate and broadcast clients, and teaches video production in Boston. For *Trouble in Paradise*, Greenberg traveled to Florida seven times over the course of a two-year period, shooting most of the footage herself. During Election 2002, two additional camera people provided coverage on Primary Day and Election Day. She also shot on three occasions in Washington DC and once in New York City.



*Greenberg shooting at a campaign rally for Bill McBride attended by special guest President Bill Clinton.*

Photo: Jane Newman



[www.troubleinparadise.org](http://www.troubleinparadise.org)

## CREDITS

---

Producers: Laurel Greenberg, Jane Newman  
Director: Laurel Greenberg  
Cinematographer: Laurel Greenberg  
Editor: Laurel Greenberg  
Music: Martha Bourne

Original version length: 73 minutes  
Classroom version length: 43 minutes  
Copyright © 2004 Laurel Greenberg & Magic Couch  
Pictures

Made in cooperation with the Center for Independent  
Documentary


## CONTACT

---

Laurel Greenberg  
7 Halifax Street  
Boston, MA 02130 USA  
(617)983-1177  
laurel.greenberg@alumni.brown.edu  
www.troubleinparadise.org

## PURCHASE

---

Home Use  
VHS or DVD: \$30 plus \$3 shipping. Massachusetts residents  
add \$1.25 (5% sales tax). 73 minutes (DVD includes 35  
minutes of extra scenes). Purchases of the video or DVD  
can be made securely at [www.troubleinparadise.org](http://www.troubleinparadise.org) via  


Educational Use  
43 minute version with educational materials. To Purchase,  
please contact us directly.



[www.troubleinparadise.org](http://www.troubleinparadise.org)