

# Citizen George (2024)



Photo of George provided by Bullfrog Films for media about the documentary.

For a time such as this, it's hard to imagine a more helpful film to watch than "Citizen George." This is the documentary about George Lakey, an activist and trainer who has had a huge impact around the world, for causes of peace, justice, human rights, and the environment. Now in his late '80s George is still making a difference and inspiring others to grow in their own contributions to the struggles.

One could highlight his Civil Rights Movement work, breaking through a US Navy blockade to take medical supplies for Vietnamese civilians during the Vietnam War, the early LGBTQ+ movements, and calling banks to ecological responsibility in their investments, all story lines followed in the documentary. What I found most helpful, however, is digging into the roots of George's activism in his spirituality. Many activists become jaded with cynicism as they continue to engage in uphill struggles, especially when it seems that

fascist forces of racism and elitism are on the rise. "Citizen George" intimately shows how Lakey has engaged in those same struggles against unjust powers, but with vibrant hope. His hope is rooted in "Spirit," George's sense of the divine which empowers and guides. For Lakey, hope is not illusionary but is engaged with realism where Spirit is woven into the most difficult issues we may face. The documentary unfolds George's transformative journey with Spirit in huge national and international struggles as well as the intimate journey of discovering major cancer in his body.

The credits are worth scrolling through, as many people contributed to the production of "Citizen George." This reflects the impact of George in people's lives through his training. He's done the heroic actions at the front lines of struggle, but his major contribution to people's movements around the world is in training people how to engage creatively in those struggles. Using experiential education methods and tools, he has equipped thousands of people, multiplying himself through the generations and across the cultures of the world. George has done and continues to do the heroic action, but his major contribution has been to undergird people's movements with skill and understanding. Training for Change, which he founded, continues strong even as the leadership has been passed on to younger outstanding activist-trainers.

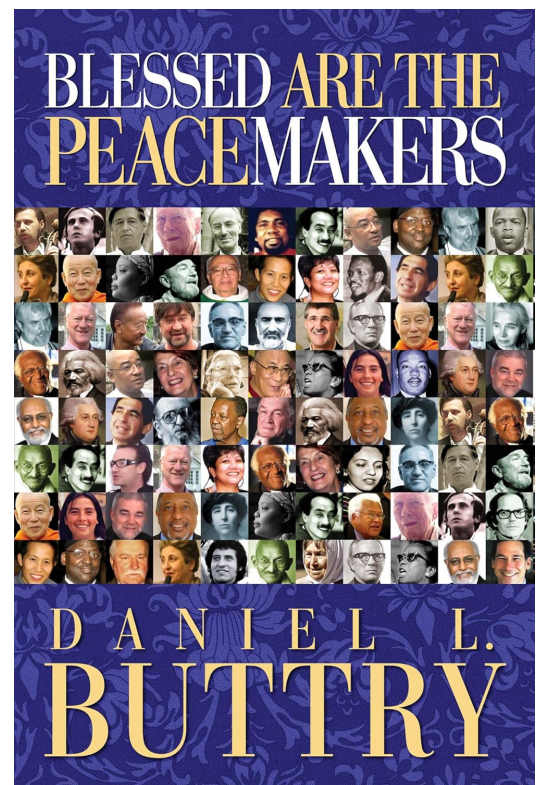
The film is very easy to get into and follow as it weaves together George's own personal life and his activism on the major issues and struggles of the day. Where there were no cameras to document what happened, fantastic artwork draws us into events such as 12-year-old George giving a sermon on racial justice to a cold reception at his home church and his first arrest for a bumbling sit-in at a City Hall. The art is so vibrant that we don't notice the transition of medium as we remain riveted deep in the story line.

The film comes out at a time when President Trump is engaging

in a massive takeover and trashing of so much of the U.S. government. Major issues such as climate change seem pushed to the back burner. “Citizen George” was produced during Joe Biden’s Presidency, but if anything, the documentary’s timing is impeccably vital. Instead of the despair many activists feel, we need George’s clear-eyed, Spirit-infused empowering hope to take on the issues big and small. Hope is how the movement of transformative change will be ignited and sustained. He is that radically gentle apostle of hope for a time such as this. He leads beside us, in our midst. When the time comes when George can’t be present with us, our memories of him, supported and energized by “Citizen George,” will continue to inspire us to creative and courageous action.

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## Care to learn more?



Click the cover to visit the book’s Amazon page.

*Rev. Daniel Buttry lives in Detroit with his ordained activist wife Sharon Buttry. He served as an American Baptist global missionary doing peace and justice work. He and Sharon count George Lakey as one of their foundational mentors. Dan and Sharon conducted 10-day intensive Trainings of Conflict Transformation Trainers with over 500 graduates from 60 nations, utilizing methods and tools they learned from George. Dan has a chapter about George Lakey in his book "[Blessed Are the Peacemakers](#)," a collection of inspiring mini bios of peacemakers from around the world engaged in many different aspects of peace and justice work.*

## ***Visit the filmmakers' website***

*"Citizen George" can be ordered for individuals or for a group at Bullfrog Films (<https://bullfrogfilms.com/orderinfo.html> or telephone 800-543-3764).*

The main website is <https://www.georgelakeyfilm.com/> and includes a link to schedule screenings of the film.