



## PROJECT SUMMARY

Terra Livre (Free Land) is a documentary film about the struggle, strength, and organization of a cooperative farm in southern Brazil developed and supported by the Landless Workers Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, MST). Terra Livre will activate and inspire viewers as they connect with the people who have made this the largest social movement in Latin America and "the most important and exciting popular movement in the world". (Noam Chomsky, World Social Forum, 2003).



Nicole recording Noam Chomsky at a Via Campesina - MST event, World Social Forum, 2003

Terra Livre is the story of 12 families who came together to build a community and discover the balance between self-sufficiency and cooperation. Armed with a tenuous piece of legislation and backed by the MST, this group, comprised of landless farmers and activists, petitioned for a piece of land. For over ten years they resisted often violent opposition from landowners and navigated bureaucratic mazes while living under black plastic tarps in harsh conditions. Over time, and with help from the MST, these families managed to succeed and create both a name and a territory for themselves. In 1995, the Cooperativa Assentamento Terra Livre (Cooperative Settlement of Free Land, COOPCAL), was born. . .

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*Brazil, with a population of 170 million people, has the second most unequal land distribution rates in the world. According to the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform, less than three percent of the population owns two-thirds of the arable land. As a reaction to this unbalanced environment, the MST has grown to over a million strong.*

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*"Without a better distribution of land, there will never be a solution to the hunger and misery that wrack our nation. It doesn't make sense for people to go hungry in a country like Brazil, which has the potential to feed all of Latin America. Brazil spends billions of dollars a year importing food, while less than 20 percent of our agricultural land is being used." - Benedita da Silva*

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The people of COOPCAL speak of their land with affection and respect. It is a source of work - the fruits of which offers them both sustenance and dignity. Terra Livre is free land that extends beyond a monetary connotation; it is paid for with unrelenting determination and struggle. The cooperative is an example of a community that the movement believes can be a model for progressive development worldwide. The film portrays how this particular cooperative works and why, after eight years of settlement, it is still very difficult. The members of the community of COOPCAL tell their story from the beginning, providing a brief history of the MST, and highlighting the impact it has had on their lives. As the story unfolds, the film documents the complex nature of cooperative life.

The MST slogan, "Resist, Occupy, and Produce" has already activated over 1.5 million people. The depiction of one cooperative farm's experience within the larger movement will enlighten American audiences to the kinds of challenges they face and the power of the grassroots. By transferring this spirit and revealing why the fight is so essential, the film aims to ignite further social change.

