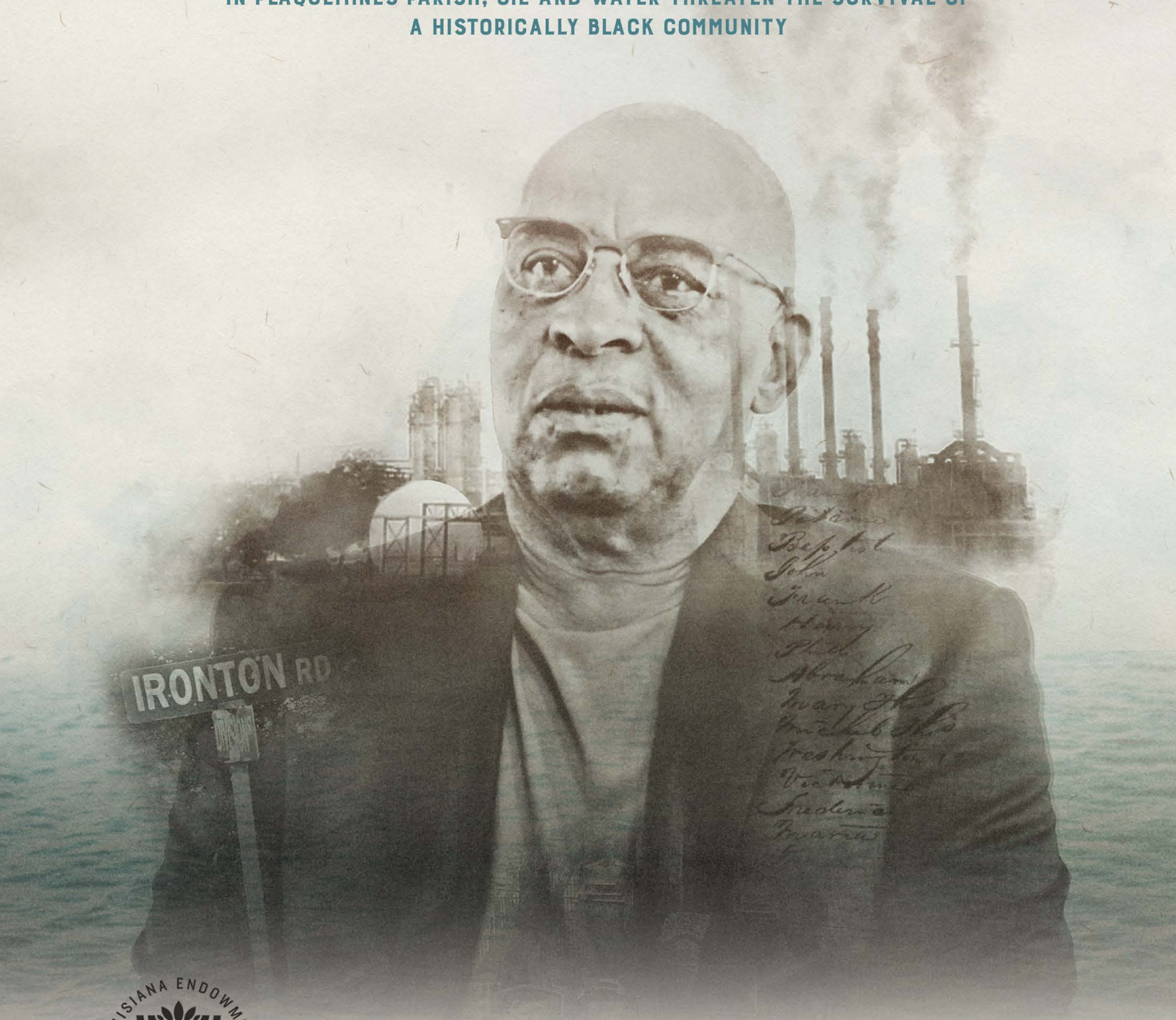




Directed by John Richie

# IRON SHARPENS IRON

IN PLAQUEMINES PARISH, OIL AND WATER THREATEN THE SURVIVAL OF  
A HISTORICALLY BLACK COMMUNITY



## DISCUSSION GUIDE

# IRON SHARPENS IRON

Directed by John Richie

Produced by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities

Runtime: 28:03

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Ironton, Louisiana, located along the lower Mississippi River in Plaquemines Parish, traces its history back to emancipation, with many of the community's founders having once been enslaved at nearby St. Rosalie Plantation. Their descendants have remained in the area, maintaining a community despite decades of racial segregation and economic injustice. *Iron Sharpens Iron*, a documentary directed by John Richie and produced by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, captures Ironton's struggles against racism, industrial encroachment, and extreme weather.

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## COMMUNITY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The film's title comes from Proverbs 27:17, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." What might this mean in the context of the film?
2. What does home mean to you? Do all homes have equal value? Why or why not?
3. Rest is a theme that Ironton residents bring up several times in the film. What does it mean to be at rest? Should burial grounds be sites of eternal rest? Why or why not?
4. A "sacrifice zone" is a geographic area located in close proximity to sites of significant industrial pollution. In the United States, these zones are often home to low-income and minority communities. Can South Louisiana be considered a sacrifice zone? Why or why not? If so, who or what has been or is being sacrificed and why?
5. Considering Ironton's history, what is the significance of Tallgrass Energy selecting the former grounds of St. Rosalie Plantation as the development site for the Plaquemines Liquids Terminal (PLT)?

## IRON SHARPENS IRON

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6. Councilman Carlton LaFrance says that companies pacify communities by talking about jobs. What does he mean? Are petrochemical companies a net benefit for South Louisiana or not?
7. Councilman Richie Blink says that in the process of developing the PLT and similar projects, “democracy is just short-circuited for economic gains.” What does he mean? How could economic development be more democratic?
8. Pastor Irvin Ross says, “The old folks that are buried up there can’t speak for themselves.” What responsibility, if any, do we have to our ancestors?
9. Tallgrass Energy intended to build a memorial on the proposed PLT site dedicated to enslaved people who had lived and worked at St. Rosalie Plantation. What functions do memorials like this serve? Are they an effective way to preserve and protect history?
10. The film connects present-day concerns in Ironton to the legacy of former Plaquemines Parish President Leander Perez. What are those connections, and do you think they are relevant to Ironton’s current struggles?
11. If there are hundreds of unmarked burial grounds for enslaved people in Louisiana, what should be done about them? Whose responsibility is it to discover, protect, and preserve them? Should they be preserved and protected? Why or why not?
12. The people of Ironton have faced many injustices. How might these injustices be addressed for the betterment and healing of the community?
13. Does your community share any of the challenges facing Ironton’s residents? If so, how has your community responded?