



A Road Out

A DOCUMENTARY FILM BY KARIN SHAPIRO

Building a road out of illness, of poverty, of hopelessness.

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About the film

Unlikely as it sounds, public health in the American South was profoundly shaped by a handful of progressive doctors in flight from apartheid South Africa. Their ideas lie at the heart of this film.

A Road Out explores how the experiences of these community-focused physicians in deeply divided societies changed our understanding of how race, poverty, and socioeconomic status shape health outcomes. The transmission of ideas from South Africa to the American South occurred amidst the Civil Rights Movement and U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson's "war on poverty."

In today's era of growing mistrust in medical expertise, this remarkable chapter in public health history reminds us what medicine can be when healthcare professionals are embedded in and accountable to the communities they serve.

Karin Shapiro

Director, Producer, Writer, Editor

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Karin Shapiro is a professor in the Department of African & African American Studies at Duke University, where she teaches courses on the histories of the American South and South Africa. She has a long-standing interest in public history, with film as a powerful medium.

Shapiro has previously directed three short documentary films: *Double Vision*, about the South African diaspora in North Carolina; *Fulbright Revisited*, about the history of the Fulbright Program; and *John Henry Lives On: Sherman James and the John Henryism Hypothesis*, highlighting a Duke epidemiologist's groundbreaking research into social health disparities.

A Road Out (2025) is her first full-length documentary. It tells the story of a small group of health practitioners who left apartheid South Africa and reunited at universities in the American South. Drawing on lessons from rural South African communities, they reshaped public health in the United States and beyond.

Martin Brown

Editor / Director of Photography

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Martin Brown is an accomplished lighting cameraman and director. Brown directed and shot the Emmy-nominated documentary *Athletes: Back in the Game* for Discovery Health. His broadcast credits include series such as *Beyond the Glory* (Fox), *The Operation* (TLC), *21st Century Medicine* (Discovery Health), and *Breed All About It* (Animal Planet). His work on single-episode documentaries includes *February 1st: The Story of the Greensboro Four* (PBS Independent Lens), *Change Comes Knocking* (Best Documentary, Appalachian Film Festival), and *Landscapes of the Heart* (PBS).

Eric Kuhn

Composer

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Eric Kuhn is a multi-instrumentalist composer based in Ypsilanti, MI. He has created music for film and television for over a decade, with a passion for documentaries addressing social justice issues. His work for film includes scores for award winning documentary features *Any Given Day*, *Raising Bertie*, *While I Breathe I Hope*, *All The Queen's Horses*, and *The Immortalists*; as well as a piece for the Oscar nominated documentary *Crip Camp*.

