

## **Empire's Sky: A Chicago Documentary Project**

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Behind the jargon and complex systems of the modern economy, global markets create a fundamental connection among all of us. Every act of commerce engages the market – from the lunch you bought this afternoon to the collection of stocks in a 401k. In this sense, everyone in America participates in the market economy.

For better or worse, these markets are the facilitator of global capitalism – they are the glue that holds modern commerce and civilization together. Markets link your interests to mine, and they link our interests to those of representatives and businesses. This is part of a larger chain that links everyday citizens, small business, big business, farmers, banks, students, homeowners, employees, countries, and even entire governments.

Over the past several years, new volatility in these world markets has radically changed the way we think about and experience the economy. Rapid technological development has increased the speed of the financial markets; it has also made the markets increasingly interconnected and complex. Now it seems possible that a series of individual problems may have summed into a much more complicated problem for society at large.

The primary goal of this project is to explore how individual people in different sectors of society experience the economy right now. We also hope to uncover how economic events in the past may have shaped these experiences. And because society at large is probably too big for our consideration, instead we will focus on one of the most economically and culturally diverse cities in America: Chicago, IL.

The project will be split into two phases, each with its own set of guidelines. The first stage is the interview process, in which we wish to achieve the following objectives:

- Interviewees must be Chicagoans willing to talk about how the economy has affected their lives
- The mix of interviewees must strive to reflect diversity in all regards but city of residence

- In an effort to maintain objectivity, a uniform question list will be developed
- In the spirit of discovery, this question list can be overruled but only in the direction of the interviewee's testimony

Our aim is to complete the first phase of the project by the end of March 2011 – roughly six months from now. This project is designed as a snapshot of our current economic situation, so it is essential to limit the interview period. Our ideal target is 2-3 interviews a month, for a total of 12-18 interviews by the end of filming.

The second phase covers the B-Roll shooting, editing, and post-production process. In editing, the interviews will be arranged into some narrative form. While we can't yet know what this narrative will entail, we do assume that this stage will be marked by the following constraints:

- Supplementary video material will be photographed to aid the existing narrative of the documentary
- Key creative personnel will collaborate to accurately reflect the experiences of both the interviewed subjects and the narrative drive of the documentary
- It is naïve to assume that we will be able to maintain objectivity at this stage, instead we will focus on forming conclusions based on findings and **not** on preconceptions

In this sense, the first phase of the project – the filming of the interviews – is field research. While we approach this filming with an eye for narrative organization, we strive to avoid a definite thesis or argument before the research is completed. The second phase, the editing process, involves organizing our research to create an informative and relevant film. At this point we will draw our conclusions about the current state of the economy for Chicagoans, and possibly for Americans at large.

Beyond these constraints, though, there is vast territory to explore. The global market economy is an institution so massive and diverse that we hardly expect to draw any universal conclusions about how it functions or where it's headed. But we know there's a story here, amidst the wide range of Chicagoans who experience the market economy every day, at varying levels of socioeconomic exchange. It's a story we want to discover with a dedicated and professional filmmaking team, in the spirit of creative collaboration and excited curiosity: the forces that drive our films, and all of our inquiries into the human experience.

*- The Atassi Productions Team*