

High Definition Documentary Proposal

40000 LIVES

An in-depth investigation of cultural attitudes toward criminal conduct on the road that cost our society more than \$230 billion and over 40,000 lives every year.

Introduction

Do you remember those first few months after September 11, 2001? Do you remember how people's driving habits changed? I remember. Drivers were more patient, more considerate of others, even more respectful of traffic laws. But as time passed those aggressive, reckless, and illegal driving habits returned to our roads. It was then that I conceived of this documentary and began researching statistics about the losses associated with illegal conduct by drivers and the accidents that such conduct causes.

In July of 2004 I received a sudden, brutal reminder that this project is worthwhile. I was on my way home for the evening when my vehicle was struck from behind by a racing pickup. The impact caused my vehicle to flip at least three times, landing in a grassy area between the service road and the freeway, upside down. I was unconscious. To learn more about my accident, view the three minute introduction video on the DVD included with this proposal.

After the accident, as I recovered from my injuries, the idea of creating this documentary became paramount to me. I truly believe that this documentary can bring about change. It has the potential to begin to correct our society's tolerance for illegal, criminal driving practices. It can reduce the human and financial costs associated with traffic accidents. It will save lives.

Thank you for taking the time to review this proposal.



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Executive Summary

Concept

On average, more than 42,000 people in this country are killed in traffic accidents every year, and the vast majority of these accidents are caused by someone committing a crime. Criminal acts behind the wheel result in over six million reported accidents, over three million injuries, and cost over \$230 billion per year. Despite these terrible statistics we tend to consider most criminal acts behind the wheel to be tolerable, even acceptable; to be far less serious than other kinds of crimes against society. We, as a culture, are both victim and villain.

Format

This documentary will be a first-person narrative presentation that will feature interviews with a diverse range of people including lawmakers, law enforcement officials, paramedics, behavioral scientists, victims, the general public, and others. This feature length, High Definition production will be created for national audiences and suitable for HD and standard broadcast, theatrical release, film festival competition, and commercial distribution media.

Content

This documentary will first define the importance of law by reminding the audience of the crucial role that law plays in any society. The documentary will then identify the *casual criminal* who fails to recognize that violating a traffic law is a criminal act and the *cultural consent* that tolerates this behavior. The documentary will then explore the tremendous losses that our society suffers because of these crimes, and the failure of law enforcement to prevent them. The documentary will then explore some solutions that have proven to reduce traffic accidents, often while reducing traffic congestion at the same time. The documentary will conclude by restating the key points of the story, and by reminding the audience that we as a society are responsible for this problem, and that each of us can contribute to a solution.

Production Timeline

This documentary will require approximately eight months to complete. Research has already begun, and will be continuous throughout the production process. Shooting interviews and field footage for this documentary will take place in five US cities and in Paris, France (to reference the accident that killed Princess Diana), and will require three months. Final scriptwriting, based on the results of the interviews, will require two months, and editing will require about three months.

Funding

This documentary will cost approximately \$211k to produce. We are soliciting funding for this project from insurance companies, automobile manufacturers, private industry and others. Our preference is to find a single source for funds. However, we expect that funding for this project will come from several sources.

Concept

More than 42,000 people in this country are killed in traffic accidents every year, and the vast majority of these accidents are caused by someone committing a crime. These criminal acts also result in injuries to more than three million people annually, including more than 350,000 who suffer permanent disabilities each year. Despite these terrible statistics we, as a culture, tend to consider most criminal acts behind the wheel to be far less serious than other kinds of crimes against society. We frequently regard traffic laws as a nuisance rather than the life preserving protections they are.

Format

Produced for a National Audience

The information in this documentary will have national relevance, and will include interviews and footage acquired from at least five major US cities. Each city will be selected based on type (densely urban, sprawling, southern, western, etc.), to more accurately represent the diverse environmental and cultural differences found within this country. The reason for this diversity is to enable any audience to easily identify similarities between the presented environments and their own.

The documentary will also feature footage and interviews from smaller towns and cities. The production crew will drive to each of the selected major cities, so the environments encountered along the way will provide opportunities for additional interviews and visuals.

High Definition Video

This documentary will be produced in High Definition (HD). The HD format produces an amazingly crisp, captivating image that is far superior to other video formats and is ideally suited for theatrical presentation, film festival competition and broadcast.

The HD format gives this documentary a significantly enhanced potential for distribution and exposure. The pool of quality HD productions available to broadcasters is still relatively small. High Definition broadcasters are starved for quality content. Some HD broadcasters frequently repeat programs because of this shortage of original HD productions. Additionally, the HD format can easily be down-converted to standard, NTSC format for other broadcast applications and distribution on DVD.

First Person Narrative

This documentary will feature a first-person narrative style that will flow smoothly from point to point with a direct, common sense kind of perspective that will connect with the broadest audience possible. The effectiveness of this narrative style has been demonstrated by the impact of films by Michael Moore. While the accuracy of his films may be subject to debate, the success of his films is indisputable.

The value of this first-person narrative style is that it will draw the audience into the story, and will effectively direct the audience's perspective to identify with that of the narrator. Ultimately, because of the narrative style, the audience will realize that we all are victims of, and contributors to, this important social issue.

Content

Opening

The pre-title opening to this documentary will present the significance of this social issue by example, through a re-produced, high resolution version of the introduction on the DVD included with this proposal.

Part 1 – The Importance of Law

The documentary will begin by defining law and reinforcing the important role law plays in any society. The viewer will learn, or be reminded that, laws protect everyone, and that the laws in this country reflect the will of the people – they are our laws. The information and visuals in this section will focus the audience's perspective to that of contributing lawmakers, as we all are, so that they will be more receptive to the information presented through the rest of the documentary.

Interview Subjects

Educators
Federal and State
Lawmakers

Judges
Attorneys
Victims

Supporting Visuals

US Constitution preamble
Historical, law-related art
US Capitol
Supreme Court building

Relevant Washington DC monuments
State Capitol buildings
Courtrooms
Law enforcement agencies at work

Part 2 – The Casual Criminal

This part of the documentary explains how most offenders are somewhat typical drivers who simply fail to recognize that violating traffic laws is, in fact, criminal conduct. This part the presentation will identify the, “oh, it’s not that big of a deal,” attitude toward traffic crime that is common among problem drivers, and illustrate how this attitude is socially and morally wrong.

Interview Subjects

Psychiatrists
Sociologists
Behavioral scientists
General public

Drivers
Law Enforcement officials
Victims
Religious leaders

Supporting Visuals

General roadway scenes
Examples of distracted driving
Examples of reckless driving

Examples of aggressive driving
Questionable driving by law enforcement
Existing law enforcement footage

Part 3 – Cultural Consent

This part of the documentary explores the careless cultural attitudes toward traffic laws and toward safe driving in general. This is the very heart of the matter. An example of Cultural Consent can be found on the toll ways in Houston, Texas that issue electronic tags to drivers so they can pay their tolls without stopping at the toll booths. These tags are read by sensors in unobstructed lanes at each toll plaza and the drivers are charged the appropriate toll as they pass through. The information collected by these sensors could be used to identify drivers who speed between toll plazas, but it is not.

Another example of Cultural Consent is television commercials produced by automobile manufacturers that depict their products being misused in outrageous, dangerous ways. The manufacturers produce these kinds of commercials because they sell cars. We, as a culture, accept this kind of advertising and are even captivated by it because of Cultural Consent.

A third example of cultural consent is public perceptions regarding the most famous traffic accident in history – the accident that killed Princess Diana. Despite popular opinion, the cause of that accident was not pursuing paparazzi, not blinding photo strobes, not even alcohol; the cause was speed. Her car was traveling at more than double the posted limit. If the driver had obeyed the posted speed limits this tragedy probably would not have happened.

Interview Subjects

Law enforcement officials
Toll way administrators
Behavioral scientists
General public

Drivers
Diana accident scene visitors
Law Enforcement officials

Supporting Visuals

Television commercials
Street racer type vehicles
Toll way scenes

General traffic scenes
Diana accident scene photos
Diana accident location

Part 4 – The Costs and Casualties

This part of the documentary explores the tremendous costs due to traffic accidents in terms of lives lost, lives damaged, and property losses, and compares these losses to other social problems such as gun violence and illegal drugs. We will transform these issues from abstract concepts to intimate reality for the audience by tracing the financial impact to the audience's checkbook, and by tracing the human impact to the audience's family and friends.

Interview Subjects

Accident victims	Emergency room staff
NTSA officials	US DOT officials
Insurance adjusters	Law Enforcement officials
Paramedics / firefighters	

Supporting Visuals

Traffic accident scenes	Insurance adjusters at work
Mangled vehicles in storage lots	Hospitalized victims
Ambulances responding to accidents	Funerals / gravesites

Part 5 – The Failure of Law Enforcement

This part of the documentary explores the problems that law enforcement agencies face regarding the enforcement of traffic laws. We will illustrate the frustration of law enforcement agencies and officers who have to deal with the hypocritical, contradictory messages they often receive from the public they serve. We will also explore the relationship between traffic enforcement and overall crime rate.

This part will also examine the perceptions and priorities of the agencies responsible for enforcing traffic laws. We will illustrate how traffic patrol and traffic law enforcement is considered by some agencies and officers to be nuisance duty and, in some cases, is even assigned to officers as a form of punishment.

We will also address how some officers demonstrate the same disregard for traffic laws and public safety as civilian offenders, and we will explore the effect that witnessing this conduct by those entrusted with enforcing these laws has on civilian drivers.

Interview Subjects

Educators	Journalists
Lawmakers	Patrol officers
Law enforcement officials	Victims
Judges	Drivers

Supporting Visuals

Traffic accident scenes	Traffic law enforcement scenes
Law enforcement on patrol	Law enforcement violating traffic laws

Part 6 – Solutions / Success Stories

Despite the problems discussed in previous parts, there are some impressive success stories and some very viable solutions. This concluding part of the documentary will present examples of how communities, law enforcement agencies, traffic engineers and others have found ways to reduce dangers on the road and save lives.

Examples of success stories include how:

- Red light cameras reduced the accident rate in New York City, even at intersections that weren't equipped with cameras (the "halo" effect).
- Coordinated traffic signals in Lexington, Kentucky reduced accidents by 31% while reducing traffic congestion by 40%.
- Ramp metering on a road in Seattle, Washington reduced accidents by 38% while traffic volume doubled over a six year period.

Additionally, some corporations have developed their own driver safety programs, which have proven to be very successful in reducing accidents among employees.

Interview Subjects

Public officials	NTSA officials
Law enforcement officials	Insurance adjusters
Traffic specialists	Patrol officers
City planners	Corporate safety executives

Supporting Visuals

Red light camera installations	Traffic law enforcement scenes
Metered entrance ramps	Driver training programs
Speed monitoring road signs	

Part 7 – Conclusion

The documentary will conclude by restating the key points of the story, and by reminding the audience that we as a society are responsible for this problem, and that each of us can contribute to a solution. We, as a culture, are both victim and villain.

Production Timeline

Research/Script Development – ongoing

Research has already begun, and will be continuous throughout the production process. Data from credible sources such as NTSB, NHSTSA, DOT, IIHS, and from individual state studies, along with the extensive information that will come from on-camera interviews, will be reviewed and evaluated for relevance and included in the script when appropriate. With this type of project the script is a living document that will evolve throughout the production process.

Existing Footage Acquisition – ongoing

Video footage from news media, law enforcement agencies, traffic management agencies, and other resources will be gathered and reviewed throughout the production process.

Field Production – 12 weeks

Field production will require extensive travel time. To achieve national appeal, the production crew will shoot in five major US cities. The crew will consist of a director / cinematographer and a field producer / project manager. This streamlined, diversely skilled two-person crew will drive to each location and will gather additional footage along the way, providing this project with a breadth of visuals that would be impossible if traveling by plane. Additionally, at least one location will require a helicopter charter to shoot topic specific aerals.

Final Scriptwriting – 8 weeks

The final script will be written once all of the interviews and other footage has been shot.

Post Production – 12 weeks

The post-production process assembles all of the components of the production. This is the point at which the writing, shooting, editing and scoring all come together to form the finished program. It is here the total becomes greater than the sum of its parts.

Promotion

This documentary will be promoted as social commentary. It will be entered into national film festivals in the documentary category and will also be promoted to the broadcast industry as a feature length HDTV documentary. Elevating the social awareness of this subject is the strategy of this production. To take this from the misconception of being a mundane daily event to the level of social consciousness and responsibility that it deserves, we must change the way people look at this subject. The first step toward that end is to change the way that it is presented to the public.

Budget

Producer/project management	8000
Research/script development – 200 hours at \$60 per	12,000
Field Production	
Shooting 4 days per location – 20 days at 5 locations	42,000
Lodging – 20 shoot days, 8 travel days	8,400
Travel days – 2 per location – 10 days	9,000
Meals – 28 days	2,240
Mileage at .50 per mile for 10000 miles	5,000
Production supplies (batteries, tape, bulbs, etc.)	1,200
Paris– air fare x2	3,000
Paris – ground transportation	200
Paris– lodging x2 – 3 days	1,200
Paris– meals	240
Paris – travel 2 days	1,800
Paris– shooting 2 days	3,600
Post Production	
Stock footage acquisition	10,000
Standard footage processing and conversion to HD	4000
Offline HD edit – 6 weeks	36,000
Original music score	8,000
Image processing and color correction	5,500
HD title sequence, credits and graphical treatments	6,000
Audio sweetening	8,000
Online HD edit – 1 week	24,000
Promotion	
	12,500
Design and packaging, festival competition entry fees and attendance, press kit creation and distribution, direct mail campaign.	
TOTAL	\$211,880.00