

Working for Your Life

**90 Minute Documentary
By Franklyn Strachan and Angela Welch**

Proposal for Funding

Last year I was earning \$100,000 at a career that I loved. Last month I had to choose whether to pay for my medications or pay my rent. I didn't lose my job because of the economy – I was diagnosed with Young-Onset Parkinson's disease ten years ago. If you lose your job because of an illness you lose your health care. No one should have to make that choice. Angela's Story by Franklyn Strachan and Angela Welch: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWKici6hOhw>.

The Purpose

A year and a half ago *Organizing for America*, President Barack Obama's policy vehicle sent a call asking for submissions of videos illustrating the need for health care reform. *Angela's Story*, the video that Franklyn Strachan and I submitted, was selected one of twenty finalists from the pool of nearly 1,000 entries <http://youtu.be/0F3SiT56S4o>.

Franklyn and I were thrilled to be part of the movement to make health care affordable for everyone. In addition to being a worthwhile project in its own right, both of us have a personal stake in the outcome. As an independent filmmaker, Franklyn has no employer sponsored health insurance, and I have a chronic illness which excludes me from any affordable insurance plans. As we all know, it has been a year and a half since the health care reform bill was passed into law but the fate of the legislation is still uncertain. The lack of affordable health care, however, is just one of many issues that impact those of us who, for whatever reason, are not part of the traditional work force. Access to unemployment insurance; tax breaks for dependent care, medical expenses and commute costs; employer pension contributions-the list of benefits that those working for a company have come to expect is long. None of these are available for those who are not able to work, who work part-time, or who are self-employed.

Then there are those who are marginalized for other reasons. The segregation of retired folks, our exclusion of the long-term unemployed and underemployed in employment statistics, the difficulty for those who are receiving money for a disabling condition but are still able and wanting to do some kind of work without losing their benefits- the struggle of members of all of these groups illustrate the prevailing attitude in our society that when you are not employed, or "employable," or you are self-employed, you cease to be considered "useful." In many ways you cease to be counted at all.

This corporate model of valuing people only when they are contributing to a company's bottom line and expendable when, for whatever reason, they are not, is damning in what it says about us as a society, and the practical and economic implications that result are not good on any level. It benefits all of us when those who are able, and who deeply desire to continue to be contributing members of society, are given the assistance they need to do just that. If not, then they should at least be given an even playing field. It also behooves us to stop viewing individuals as commodities for the benefit of corporations and

to recognize that people bring value to their community in ways other than being simply earners and consumers.

The Project

Even with the obstacles faced by those in the groups listed above, the number of people working outside of the traditional workforce is increasing. How do these folks manage in spite of the obstacles they face? And how are they making ends meet now after three years in the worst economy since the great depression? Franklyn and I know a bit about that too. We both live in Flatbush, Brooklyn a neighborhood known for its ethnic diversity. A few years ago U.S. News and World Report listed us as the most diverse zip code in the country. But it's not just ethnic diversity that makes this neighborhood what it is; we also have an unusually high percentage of self-employed folks- musicians, artists, writers, filmmakers, freelancers-people intimately familiar with the struggle that goes hand in hand with the freedom inherent in a non-traditional work-life.

When the pundits and politicians discuss marginalized groups it's most often in the context of the burden they place on society-how much those folks cost. But what isn't often discussed is how much they can and do contribute; economically and socially. *Working for Your Life* will tell those stories.

The People

The documentary will be produced by filmmaker Franklyn Strachan of CYPHER Films and writer Angela Welch.

Franklyn Strachan:

Franklyn has been producing films for twelve years and has extensive experience in production and distribution. He is a Brooklyn native, graduating from Edward R. Murrow High School. He received his BA from the Conservatory of Theatre Arts and Film at Purchase College, S.U.N.Y. and an MFA from Emerson College in Boston, MA. Franklyn is the founder of CYPHER Productions, <http://www.cypherproductions.com>, which he started in 1997. Franklyn's vision was to offer a venue for local artists in various fields to connect and pool resources, thus enabling them to create projects that would otherwise be beyond the means of an individual artist. Franklyn has produced several films through CYPHER Productions. His first was a short, *Swings* (1998), followed by *Eyes of NY* (1999) which premiered at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM).

Franklyn's next film the documentary *In a World by Myself* (2001) <http://blip.tv/file/2921008>, also premiered at BAM. *In a World by Myself* featured young urban poets of various backgrounds, and explored the forces that drive them to create and compose. The film also looked at the social and political issues impacting the lives of these young artists and featured commentary and performances from internationally recognized SLAM Poets Jessica Care Moore, Willie Perdomo, and Suheir Hammad, as well as a plethora of underground personalities. Franklyn followed with *Kid Flicks* (2002), a collaborative project with the NYC Board of Education, which was written by and starred seventh grade students in the South Bronx. His next project was the short *Adoration* (2004), then *Crossroads* (2004), and *Fade* (2005), which won best film of 2005 at the Emerson College Graduate Departmental Awards. Franklyn's most recent film is the Brooklyn-based feature *Last Night in Brooklyn* (2008). He is currently in production with another feature.

In addition to CYPHER Productions, Franklyn's other work has benefited communities in Brooklyn in many important ways. He has produced music videos for artists throughout Brooklyn, has participated in the creation of large scale community murals geared to children, and through his film production company, encourages CYPHER artists to participate in neighborhood cleanups. Franklyn is determined to make a world that visually stimulates a child's imagination. He also organized a Community Youth Day concert with the 67th police precinct and CYPHER Productions. He is also co-founder of The People Against Censorship (2007), an organization designed to fight corporate censorship in the arts.

When not directing, Franklyn lends his talents as a producer and editor to XM/Sirius radio's *Ron Bennington Interviews* <http://www.ronbenningtoninterviews.com/> and *Unmasked*. He is also an on air personality on *The Ron and Fez Show* (2008). Because of his experience and active presence in the independent film community, Franklyn will have many opportunities for promotion of *Working for Your Life* during all phases of the documentary production.

Angela Welch:

Angela grew up in the Bay Area, but has lived in Brooklyn for twelve years, and counts both Oakland and Brooklyn as her home towns. Angela has a BA in International Relations, an MA in Clinical Psychology, and a Certificate in Mediation and Conflict Resolution. She spent the majority of her career as a CFO and consultant in the not-for-profit sector, handling finance, administration and operations. She has always considered writing her true calling.

Angela was diagnosed with Young-Onset Parkinson's disease in 2000 at the age of 38. She chronicles her experiences in her blog, <http://www.nadgb.com>, which currently has over 1,700 unique users and over 4,300 visits. Through her life stories, Angela is providing insight into life with a significant illness to people she has never met. She is currently writing a nonfiction book of essays for and about people living with chronic illnesses, and several other projects. Angela is thrilled that she can finally bring all of the disparate elements of her history together in the production of *Working for Your Life*. From her twenty five years in the not-for-profit field, she also brings significant experience in project management, grant proposal writing, reporting and budgeting.

As mentioned above, Franklyn and Angela collaborated in 2009 to produce the short film "Angela's Story" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWKici6hOhw>. The impact of the video was evident through the number of hits (to date, almost 200,000) and the comments received on the video. "Angela's Story" was rated as number one by readers of The Huffington Post, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/10/28/20-powerful-health-care-r_n_336764.html.

The Crew:

In hiring crew members for the project, first priority will be given to artists from the Brooklyn environs. Priority will also be given to artist/contractors who have a chronic illness or disability.

The Details

Time-line:

Total production time will be approximately seven months:

- Pre-production (one month)
 - Find fiscal sponsor.

- Finalize comprehensive fundraising plan. (Finding funders will be ongoing throughout the length of the documentary production.)
- Submit grant proposals.
- Hire production and administrative crew.
- Procure equipment.
- Find subjects.
- File all release forms for subjects.

- Production (three months)
 - Record all interviews at subjects' location.
 - Record all "Day in the Life" footage for subjects.
 - Record any follow up interviews.
 - Obtain necessary stock footage.

- Post Production (three months)
 - Editing.
 - Sound engineering.
 - Score composition.
 - Final edit.

Budget:

Total cost for *Working for Your Life* is budgeted at approximately \$98,000. A detailed budget is available on request.

Funding:

We have identified several potential funding sources, primarily through foundations and organizations which specifically fund individuals who are producing documentary films.

Final Note:

Thank you for taking the time to read our proposal. We hope you will consider contributing to the production of *Working for Your Life*. Please contact us if you would like further information.

Angela Welch
angela@awelch.com

Franklyn Strachan
franklynofcypherfilms@gmail.com