Documentary Project Proposals

Due in class, Wednesday, September 8.
Submit a brief, typed, synopsis of 2 ideas for documentary projects. (One paragraph each is sufficient.) Each series should be social in context, involving or related to people in society. Landscape or commercial work is unacceptable. Be prepared to give a brief synopsis of one of your project ideas to the class.

Consider:

- You are looking for a story, not an issue. This almost always means working with either a group of people or an individual.

- Can the subject's story be told as a visual narrative? Is the subject visually interesting?

- Projects should be in a location that can be visited multiple times. A weekend visit to a distant location makes creating a successful documentary unlikely.

- Projects should not be too broad in nature. For example, poverty is too broad a topic to develop into a strong documentary. What about poverty can be discussed with images -- hunger, housing, joblessness? Even these issues are still too broad for a documentary series. The concept could be further narrowed to some aspect of aspect of hunger such as: a food bank, a school's nutrition program, an organic farm, food waste etc.

- What special equipment is required for the project? Will you be working in low light, need supplemental lighting, multiple camera bodies or specific lenses?

- Does the project require special access or permissions? While documentary projects don't generally need model/property releases, do get permission when working with minors, on private property, in hospitals, courtrooms, or classrooms. If you are working with 1 individual they must be willing to let you into their life in an intimate way for the project to be effective. People may be willing to participate until the project becomes more personal or time consuming than they expected. Make sure your subject is aware of your intentions and what type of access and time you require.

- What does the subject represent? The best projects look at small subjects as a way of discussing something on a larger scale. Don’t decide exactly what the perspective is ahead of time, but be aware of this important concept.