


LIMELIGHT CINEMA GROUP PRESENTS

BEGGING FOR BILLIONAIRES

The Attack on Property Rights in America

A pig with a human-like face, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a striped tie, is shown from the chest up. It is holding a fan of US dollar bills (including \$100 and \$50 bills) in its right hand. The pig is looking towards the left. In the background, there is a demolition site with a large, multi-story building being dismantled by a red excavator. Debris is scattered on the ground. A small figure of a person is visible in the distance on the left.

**When billionaire developers
want your property, they'll take it
- with help from their friends
at City Hall.**

LIMELIGHT CINEMA GROUP PRESENTS

PRODUCED BY POLSFUSIAN PICTURES & PHILIP KLEIN FILM "BEGGING FOR BILLIONAIRES"
DIRECTED BY PHILIP KLEIN EDITOR/POST PRODUCER DANIEL POLSBUSS SECOND UNIT DIRECTOR ROBERT VOLRATH
COLOR GRADING CRASH AND SUE'S AUDIO MIX THE ECHO BOYS MUSIC BY TOMI GOODKIND

"BEGGING FOR BILLIONAIRES" THEME BY PHIL SOLEM



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The Attack on Property Rights in America

For Immediate Release

Aug 15, 2009

Trailer at <http://www.beggingforbillionaires.com>

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Documentary *Begging for Billionaires* exposes how politicians use eminent domain to take private property from constituents and give it to billionaire developers

Film sends warning of full-scale attack on basic property rights 'guaranteed' by the 5th Amendment

KANSAS CITY, MO. – A new feature-length film titled *Begging For Billionaires* takes a hard look at the issue of eminent domain "abuse," which has displaced hundreds of thousands of property owners in cities across the nation. (See trailer and clips at <http://www.beggingforbillionaires.com>)

Using Kansas City, St. Louis, and other cities in Kansas and Missouri as a backdrop, the film chronicles the plight of families and small business owners struggling to protect their private property against the threat of eminent domain (i.e., government seizure of private property) to make way for luxury housing developments, shopping malls, corporate office towers, professional sports facilities and other profitable, private projects. This despite that fact that eminent domain is supposed to be used for important public projects like schools, highways and bridges.

"Eminent domain abuse has become a big issue across the country," says Director/Producer Philip Klein. "I made the documentary to make people aware of how important this issue is and to expose them to how eminent domain is being used to benefit private developers and big corporations rather than the public."

"The film exposes the truth about the so-called 'economic development,' Klein says. "Few people realize that their city officials can take homes and business away for any purpose - as long they say they're doing it to benefit the local economy." Vague, elusive definitions of "blight," tax breaks for fat-cat developers and multi-billion dollar corporations, and outright corruption are all part of the equation.

Begging For Billionaires was an 8-year project that had its challenges, Klein says. At one point, he was even arrested and removed from a public meeting for having a video camera. The film is today making its way through the national film festival circuit and has been screened at three festivals, winning "Best Documentary" in Texas and making "best of fest" in Minneapolis.

Begging For Billionaires is edited by Daniel Polsfuss, whose past documentary projects include *The Barbed Wire Club*, about a group of international men imprisoned in Japanese POW camps, *Gen-X*, which investigates Gen-x-ers' outlook on media advertising, and *Imagination Reality*, a profile of Chinese T'ai Chi Master T.T. Liang.

The film's sound track heralds the return of Grammy-nominated artists Tom Goodkind and Phil Solem. Solem is one half of the of the top 40 alt-pop duo the Rembrandts and is perhaps best known for the theme song to the hit NBC-TV sitcom *Friends*. Goodkind was made famous in the 1980s while recording and touring with the internationally acclaimed folk band Washington Squares.

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Two Grammy-nominated artists featured on *Begging for Billionaires* soundtrack

Rembrandts front-man Phil Solem, who recorded the theme for NBC's "Friends", joins renown folk musician Tom Goodkind on documentary's soundtrack.

LOS ANGELES, CA. – With his recording of the *Begging for Billionaires* theme song, singer/songwriter Phil Solem joins folk musician Tom Goodkind on the *Begging for Billionaires* soundtrack. Both artists received Grammy nominations for their past work – Solem with the Rembrandts and Goodkind with the Washington Squares.



Solem

Solem sings and plays acoustic guitar on the self-titled theme song. Goodkind sings, picks the banjo and plays 12 string guitar on his contributions .

Solem emerged onto the national pop scene in the early '90s as the lead singer and guitarist of The Rembrandts., whose self-titled album included the Top 20 hit *Just The Way It Is, Baby*. The album received a Grammy nomination for "Best Pop Performance By A Duo Or Group With Vocal."



Goodkind

Solem is best known for recording "I'll Be There For You", the theme to the hit NBC-TV sitcom "Friends". Solum today leads the rock trio Thrush an releases first solo album this year.

Goodkind's career began in the 1980s when he recorded and toured with the folk group The Washington Squares. In 1987, the band's self-titled album attracted glowing reviews and earned a Grammy nomination for "Best Contemporary Folk Recording." Their second album, *Fair and Square*, followed in 1989. Both albums sold in excess of 150,000 – a rare feat for the genre.

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BEGGING FOR BILLIONAIRES

The Attack on Property Rights in America

Philip Klein

Director / Executive Producer



Growing up in the family carnival business, Philip Klein was thrust into the world of entertainment as a young boy, raised on a steady diet of magic, clowning, and entertainment. He went on to attend the world-famous Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Clown College, where he graduated in 1980.

His first film, a black and white comedy short called *Easy Business*, is a tribute to Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy. That won acclaim with the Kansas Film Festival's Ozzie Award and the MoKan Film Festival's top honors.

The inspiration for *Easy Business* came while Klein was performing a comedy and magic act for the "Ringling Bros. & Barnum Bailey Clown College's 20th Anniversary Special" on NBC (hosted by Dick Van Dyke). He bumped into Stan Laurel's widow backstage, and the idea of a tribute came up.

When Klein decided to tackle the weighty issue of eminent domain abuse in his second film – a hard-hitting, feature-length documentary called *Begging for Billionaires* – it was a dramatic departure from *Easy Business*.

The project was inspired by Klein's film school internship on the set Oscar-nominated *Mr. & Mrs. Bridge*. Parts of the film were shot in Kansas City's historic President's, a 1920s art-deco building that had been shuttered for more than a decade.

As a set dresser, Klein spent many hours exploring the abandoned hotel, fascinated with its history. With its spiral staircase, crystal chandeliers and marble floors, he was awestruck by its haunting beauty despite years of neglect.

So when developers eyed the hotel with plans to demolish it, Klein was outraged. He became a citizen activist and joined a local, grass roots effort to save the building. The movement to save the President's Hotel ultimately prevailed. But the political corruption and dirty dealing Klein witnessed had inspired him to tell the stories of real people struggling to save their homes and businesses from being taken by eminent domain.

He found that city governments far and wide were abusing eminent domain, taking private property from small businesses and everyday citizens, and then handing it to billionaire developers and corporations for profitable, private projects; all the while handing them millions of dollars of public money and shady tax breaks.

After seeing how city government was being used as a machine for inside dealing and graft, he became even more compelled to tell the story of the innocent victims whose lives have been destroyed eminent domain and began work on *Begging for Billionaires*.



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The Attack on Property Rights in America

Synopsis

As children, we were taught that only foreign governments could take private property from one citizen and give it to another. But the 5th Amendment property rights that once defined us as a nation have virtually disappeared.

Begging for Billionaires: The Attack on Property Rights in America is the first documentary to expose how city governments seize private property from everyday citizens and give it to billionaire developers and Fortune 500 companies, absurdly justifying their actions as “community economic development.”

Poor and disadvantaged families are forced out of their homes, sometimes with little notice. Good, hard-working Americans hold back tears as family histories are bulldozed to smithereens. Frantic homeowners scramble to rescue their life’s possessions as heartless demolition crews pulverize the walls around them. Historic neighborhoods, rich with ethnic history, are systematically wiped away despite their beautiful homes and carefully maintained gardens. And it’s all happening against their will.

The film’s action takes place in cities and towns throughout Kansas and Missouri, two nation’s worst abusers of eminent domain power. Middle-class neighborhoods are leveled for luxury housing developments. Homes and family businesses are taken by force to make way for trendy shopping centers, glitzy entertainment districts and gleaming office towers. Meanwhile, traumatized citizens fight in vain to protect their homes, businesses, and dignity from being taken by smug politicians and heartless developers.

Begging for Billionaires uncovers the tricks and schemes city leaders use to snatch property from their most vulnerable citizens. Harassment, intimidation, media manipulation and hush money are all part of this dirty game. And for all their misdeeds, developers reap millions in tax credits and government subsidies before paying off their servants in City Hall with generous campaign contributions designed to keep them in power and at their disposal.

It’s happening in Missouri, and it’s happening all over America.

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Begging for Billionaires movie stills



Director Philip Klein and the Sprint Arena. The facility would bring NHL and NBA teams to Kansas City, Mo., city officials told taxpayers. It has brought neither.



Eminent domain abuse victim JoAnne Bailey of Richmond Heights, Mo.



Penelope Marth fights to protect the home her grandfather built.



Marth's back yard.



Kansas City-backed supporters of the Sprint Arena, today dubbed the "stadium without a team." If we build it, they will come, dreamed Kansas City Officials.



Dentist Homer Tourkakis fighting to save his 23-year dental practice, in Arnold, Mo., which is threatened with eminent domain.



Rev. Jim Roos' protest mural sparked an on-going federal first amendment suit against the City of St. Louis. Roos is an affordable housing advocate.



Just like Tourkakis and Bailey, Rev. Roos wears the strained expression – the result of decades of worry, fear, frustration and humiliation.



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BEGGING FOR BILLIONAIRES

The Attack on Property Rights in America

Tales of hardship and loss...

A sampling of the stories told by the victims of eminent domain abuse in the new documentary film *Begging for Billionaires - The Attack on Property Rights in America*.

Jim Roos, a Lutheran minister from St. Louis, Mo., who founded the non-profit group Sanctuary in the Ordinary. Roos' life-long mission has been to provide clean, safe and affordable housing to deserving families of moderate means. Again and again since 1990, he has watched in dismay as city officials have taken Sanctuary in the Ordinary's affordable housing properties and replaced them with private, high-end housing and retail developments. In all, more than 45 Sanctuary in the Ordinary buildings have been taken. Unable to make his voice heard by city officials and mainstream reporters (who sometimes worked together to villainize him), Roos resorts to painting a giant, two-story protest mural on a Sanctuary in the Ordinary building in a highly visible area of St. Louis. Citing a "sign ordinance," city officials responded with brazen demands that he take down the mural or have it removed by force. The city's threat to free speech is being met with a first-amendment lawsuit from Roos and The Institute for Justice, a property rights legal aid group. The mural is still up, and the case is still being decided.

JoAnne Bailey, a retiree who lives in a beautiful home in a mostly-black middle class neighborhood in Richmond Heights, Mo. The neighborhood was established in the late 19th century when the nearby Evans and Howard Fire Brick factory was built. During the days of segregation, the company was given a "zoning permit" allowing black workers to live on land adjacent to the factory. Evans & Howard then built a company town, leasing residential units to factory workers. Over time, workers who had saved their money began buying land outside the factory town and began building their own homes in what is now Richmond Heights. Today, Richmond Heights city officials intend to destroy the town's roots by declaring the quiet neighborhood's highly-maintained homes and beautiful gardens "blighted", thereby authorizing them to take homes by eminent domain and raze the neighborhood.

Homer Tourkakis, D.D.S., who built a successful family dental practice in suburban St. Louis over 23 years. His recently renovated commercial building has served him and his employees well, and nearly all of their patients live or work in the surrounding area. But a shopping mall was deemed the "best and highest use" of neighborhood's real estate. When Tourkakis fought the city officials and won, he was afterwards clearly being harassed. When construction began on the adjoining properties, workers encircled the entire building with mountains of dirt, making almost impossible to see. Meanwhile, nearby vacant land that was perfectly suitable for dumping remained undisturbed. Whether intentionally or not, construction workers made it incredibly difficult for patients to drive through the construction site to get to the clinic. According to Tourkakis, it was a clear message: sell your property or lose your life's work and financial sustenance.

Darryl Penner, a third-generation men's clothing retailer in downtown Kansas City, Mo., who endures the humiliation of watching indignant city officials take his family-owned men's clothing store to make way for the Power and Light District redevelopment. The development includes a glitzy corporate office tower for a Kansas City-based Fortune 500 company, retail stores, restaurants a sports arena. Penner and his father are eventually forced out of the area his family has done business in since the 1930s. For their life's work and investment in downtown Kansas City, the family is paid a meager sum that couldn't even buy a nice home in the suburbs. Adding insult to injury, the development today includes a national men's retail clothing store while

the Penners' run their men's clothing retail store from leased space on the outskirts Kansas City. Sadly, the Power and Light District redevelopment was sold to taxpayers as a project that would bring an NHL hockey and/or NBA basketball team to Kansas City, although today – eight years later – the impressive steel and glass structure sits mostly vacant with no NBA or NHL tenants speak of. Meanwhile, city bond payments that were supposed to be funded by the development's forecasted tax revenue are instead being paid with money designated for essential city services. The project is said to be headed for bankruptcy.

About *Begging for Billionaires*

Begging For Billionaires was shot in locations throughout Missouri and Kansas, considered two of America's worst offenders when it comes unjust eminent domain seizures. The film shows how city governments seize private property from everyday citizens and hand it to billionaire developers for highly-profitable private developments. Once relegated to public projects like schools, courthouses and highways, the film shows how eminent domain is today being used to aid private enterprise, presumably in exchange for political contributions and support. Vague, elusive definitions of "blight," tax breaks for Fortune 500 companies, government harrasment and shady back room deals are all part of the equation.

See trailer and more at: <http://www.beggingforbillionaires.com>.

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