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**AMERICAN DOCUMENTARY, INC./KCET/WGBH/WNET**

## **P.O.V.'s Borders | American ID | Request for Proposals**

*P.O.V.'s Borders* is P.O.V.'s critically acclaimed Web-original series exploring the borders in our lives with new themed installments launched annually. Each episode asks users to consider an aspect of their everyday lives in ways that expand their "borders" of understanding. *P.O.V.'s Borders: Environment*, ([www.pbs.org/pov/borders](http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders)) has won several awards, including the Webby Award, the Batten Award for Innovative Journalism, the Online Journalism Award for Creative Use of the Medium, the Parents' Choice Award, the Bronze Idealist.org Design Award, and has been cited by Time Magazine as one of 2004's "50 Coolest Websites."

Episode Three is entitled *American Identity (American ID)*. At home and abroad, the question of what makes an American has become the question for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Through four to five interactive features, *P.O.V.'s Borders'* newest episode explores the myths and realities of being American in the world today. How do Americans define themselves? How do others see Americans? How do the myths and realities relate to each other?

### **Introduction**

Since September 11th, America's role in the world, and the way that others view America and its people, has changed dramatically. Some see Americans as custodians of democracy, others see oppressors, and still others see the opportunities of the free market. In this episode of *P.O.V.'s Borders*, we want to explore the multi-faceted identity of an American in the 21st century. How do Americans see themselves and how do Americans want others in the world to see us? Are Americans living up to the ideals of democracy; the promise of citizens self-governing in the common interest while allowing for individual advancement?

P.O.V. seeks producers who want to explore this territory with fresh, new perspectives in engaging and interactive ways. Some examples of the sorts of projects that would be considered for *American ID* include the following.

### America Is...

In a global culture, everyone has an idea of what an American is, and what America stands for. This collection of global 'to camera' impressions will range from an immigrant to the U.S. who has received amnesty to a Canada rancher fighting beef bans to a Vermont senior traveling on buses to get cheaper Canadian prescription drugs to a Chinese grade school student to a Peruvian farmer who has received subsidies because of American aid. The possibilities are endless and will continue to grow, using P.O.V.'s trademark 'Talking Back' online 'Tapestry.'

### Overheard Online

Just how is American "identity" evident on the Web? Are we a nation of ployplot bloggers with vastly differing views of ourselves, or do we form a collective unconscious that is itself evident on the Web? By trawling and screen-scraping webpages, examining RSS feeds, and reading tag "folksonomies" and meta descriptions on a regular basis, "Overhead Online" parses in Web-time the type and tenor of the language and imagery that we use within proximity to key terms such as "American," "America," and "U.S." to form a snapshot of how we communicate our "American-ness" -- real or imagined -- in our dialogue online.

### I Pledge Allegiance...Really, I Do

Imagine that you had to convince someone that you are an American. What would you offer up as proof? What ideals, psychological traits, cultural tastes and personal experiences would you invoke? This riff on "Mr. Mind," a popular PBS Online feature from the late 90s that asked visitors to prove they were human to an AI (Artificial Intelligence) bot -- <http://www.mrmind.com/mrmind> -- pits you against a disbelieving bot in a battle to prove you're an American. The bot might ask you questions or argue with you about American characteristics. Once you're through, browse the conversations of other "Americans."

### **Objective**

The goal of the *P.O.V.'s Borders* series is to offer provocative, thoughtful and unusual ways to explore the theme of the current episode. Past episodes have focused on issues like the environment and immigration policy. *P.O.V.'s* second episode, *Environment*, began with the simple premise that everyday we make choices about what we eat, drink and breathe and then asked the question, "What do you choose?" as a starting point for exploration on how personal choices affect global environmental realities. *American ID* will start with the premise that America is currently the world's dominant political and cultural force, and then pose the question, "What does 'being American' mean to you?"

*P.O.V.* welcomes proposals that will enhance Americans' and non-American's understanding of the qualities and attributes of "American-ness," and contemplate the role America is and could play in the world in the 21st century.

### **Proposal Guidelines and Criteria**

The series will commission two original interactive features exclusively designed for the *American ID* episode, based on proposals received by **June 30, 2005**.

Proposals should:

- \* **Target a general audience** and be appropriate for a diverse audience, including high school and college classrooms.
- \* **Relate to the theme *American ID*** (as described above) and stay away from earlier themes already addressed in *P.O.V.'s Borders* episodes, specifically the environment and immigration issues.
- \* **Focus on storytelling** as the main component of the feature. *P.O.V.'s Borders* was conceived as an online-only series where new media producers could experiment with storytelling in a digital environment. We are looking for producers to utilize the two-way

capability of the Web to tell stories in engaging and truly interactive way. We want to explore ways of telling stories that are only possible online.

\* **Consider the visitors' role** in the creation of the content. *P.O.V.'s Borders* provides a powerful model for connecting with and engaging individuals in a direct manner -- one in which they become co-creators of the content. Collaborative projects that emphasize engagement and dialogue with site visitors will receive special attention from *P.O.V.'s Borders* editorial committee.

\* **Keep it real.** Some of our most successful features have been around storytellers with a unique life experience rather than celebrities. Although we do have an interview with "Seinfeld" creator Larry David about his love of hybrid vehicles in our *Environment* episode, most of our more popular features have focused on regular people and the stories of their lives.

\* **Consider experiential models** for content. One example of this from *Environment* is the use of [an experiential game](#) to present the perspective of a 73-year old Canadian farmer in his legal battle with Monsanto. Users can read the story in text form on the launching page, but the main idea of the feature is for users to click on the game and to "be" the farmer and then go talk about the issues in the community garden, which they build with their actions and opinions.

\* **Showcase different media:** including audio, interactive community spaces, games and video, along with text and HTML-based components. Tie-ins to high school and college classrooms with suggestions for lesson plans would also be appreciated.

Before applying, please familiarize yourself with the features in *P.O.V.'s Borders | Environment*. Budgets range from \$3,000 - \$8,000 depending on the project as it is contracted. Production would need to be completed and the project delivered by **early October 2005**.

### **Format**

Proposals should include the following information.

#### 1. Narrative.

At a minimum, narratives should include a summary statement (approx. one paragraph), background and needs, vision and objectives, and an explanation of how this feature would work for *P.O.V.'s Borders*.

#### 2. Attachments.

- A. Bios of producing team
- B. Detailed budget
- C. Timeline

Proposal should be emailed to P.O.V. at [triley@pov.org](mailto:triley@pov.org). Questions may also be addressed to Theresa Riley at the same email address or by calling 415.558.2127.