



## SYNOPSIS

*BATTLE for BROOKLYN* is an intensely intimate look at the very public and passionate fight waged by owners and residents facing condemnation of their property to make way for the controversial Atlantic Yards project, a massive plan to build 16 skyscrapers and a basketball arena for the New Jersey Nets in the heart of Brooklyn. Shot over seven years and compiled from almost 500 hours of footage, *BATTLE for BROOKLYN* is an epic tale of how far people will go to fight for what they believe in.



The film focuses on graphic designer Daniel Goldstein, a vocal opponent of the project who stands to lose his home via eminent domain. Daniel's apartment sits at what would be center court of the new arena. A reluctant activist, Daniel is dragged into the fight because he simply can't believe that the government should use its constitutional power to condemn his home and hand it off to a private developer.

As some of Daniel's neighbors, afraid of losing their homes, begin to sell to the developer, Daniel refuses to leave and takes on a leadership role in the fight to stop

the project. He helps to start the group *Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn* in an effort to come up with alternative development options and expose the deceit at the heart of the plan.

Along the way he meets a fellow activist, Shabnam Merchant, they fall in love, get married and have a child while living as the only occupants in a 32 unit condo building.

Dan and the opposition, which includes lifelong residents, business owners, and local officials, face off against a triumvirate of billionaires as they take their case from the court of public opinion to New York State Court of Appeals.



While the film is character-driven verite, the broader social, economic, and political ramifications of the condemnation and urban planning are addressed through interactions with individuals from all sides of the issue. Featuring appearances by Michael Bloomberg, Architect Frank Gehry, Jay Z, Bruce Ratner, Steve Buscemi and others, *BATTLE for BROOKLYN* is a primer on grassroots activism that will inspire people to look deeper into the stories that affect their lives.

## BACKGROUND

When most people hear the words eminent domain, they think of the government seizing private property for "public benefit" - usually in the form of a park, a hospital, or a highway. However, the landmark *Kelo vs. New London* (2005) decision by the U.S. Supreme Court made it clear that "public benefit"

can be as simple as generating higher tax revenue. Currently, eminent domain abuse is running rampant throughout the United States as tax payers continue to pay for private real estate deals that don't necessarily benefit the public.

As filmmakers who live and work near the project site, we first became interested in the story because the initial announcement in the *New York Times* read like a glossy press release. It failed to substantively deal with any of the negative issues related to the project's impact and the level of tax payer subsidies. With a little digging, we started to uncover a vastly more complex story.

It was clear nobody had bothered to discuss the idea with the those living in the neighborhood it was going to be built on top of. The project was declared a done deal before the developer even owned the land. Further, for the government to condemn the property via eminent domain, it would have to determine that the area was blighted at the same time that property values were rocketing skyward. Both supporters of the project and the opposition were determined to have their voices heard, so we trained our cameras on everyone involved. Over the next seven years, what emerges is a portrait of the battle for the soul of Brooklyn.

**To view the trailer visit [rumur.com/battle](http://rumur.com/battle)**

## **A RUMUR Inc Production**

### **CAST**

Daniel Goldstein  
Shabnam Merchant  
Patti Hagan  
Letitia James  
Norman Siegel  
Marty Markowitz  
Bruce Ratner  
Michael Bloomberg  
Bruce Bender

### **CREW**

Suki Hawley - Director/Producer/Editor  
Michael Galinsky - Director/Producer/Director of Photography  
David Beilinson - Producer  
Adam Galinsky - Associate Producer  
Susan Littenberg - Associate Producer  
David Reid and Derek Bermel - Original Music  
Tracy Collins and Jonathan Barkey - Additional photography

**SUKI HAWLEY** - Director/Producer/Editor



A partner in Brooklyn-based multimedia studio RUMUR, filmmaker Suki Hawley has been collaborating with husband Michael Galinsky for almost 20 years. She recently directed and edited the documentary feature *Battle for Brooklyn*, her fifth feature with Galinsky. Prior she edited a series of documentary features for cable networks including *Miami Manhunt*, *American Cannibal* and *Mardi Gras: Made in China*.

In 2002, Hawley and Galinsky released their first documentary



feature, *Horns and Halos*, which followed the efforts of an underground publisher to release a discredited biography of George W. Bush. The film was hailed for its even-handed look at media, politics, and humanity. Matthew Tempest, of The Guardian UK, described the film as “a rolling master-class on the disturbing complicity of media, money and mendacity.” *Horns and Halos* screened at the Flaherty Film Seminar, Rotterdam, The Toronto Film Festival and over 30 festivals, winning many awards including Best Documentary at The Big Sky Documentary Festival, The New York Underground Film Festival, The Chicago Underground Film Festival, and Melbourne Underground Film Festival. In addition, it screened on Cinemax, and was distributed theatrically in over 25 markets.

In 1999, Suki directed the 16-mm color feature, *Radiation*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and went on to play at over 40 international festivals, winning numerous prizes including the Grand Chameleon for Best of Festival at the Brooklyn International Film Festival.

She first teamed up with Galinsky in 1994 on the 16-mm B&W feature, *Half-Cocked*. This film, which combined aspects of documentary and classical narrative storytelling, was praised by critics such as Godfrey Cheshire in *Variety* and Manohla Dargis in the *LA Weekly* – the latter stating that, “...together, Hawley and Galinsky know how to make pictures shudder with feeling.”

After graduation, Suki moved to LA where she worked in the cutting room of Roger Corman’s legendary studio. A native of Dallas, she studied film at Wesleyan University under the tutelage of film historian Jeanine Basinger, with a focus on classic American Cinema of the 1940’s and ‘50’s.

#### FILMOGRAPHY

**Battle for Brooklyn** (2011, Documentary Feature) Director/Editor  
**Miami Manhunt** (2006, Documentary Feature) Director/Editor  
**American Cannibal: The Road to Reality** (2006, Documentary Feature) Editor  
**Mardi Gras: Made in China** (2006, Documentary Feature) Co-Editor  
**Code 33** (2004, Documentary Feature) Director/Editor  
**Horns and Halos** (2002, Documentary Feature) Director/Producer/Editor  
**Lee Hazlewood in New York** (2001, Documentary Short) Director/Editor  
**Insound Presents** (2000-2001, Documentary Shorts) Editor  
**Radiation** (1999, Narrative Feature) Director/Producer/Editor  
**Half-Cocked** (1995, Narrative Feature) Director/Producer/Editor

**MICHAEL GALINSKY** - Director/Producer/Director of Photography



A partner in Brooklyn-based multimedia studio RUMUR, Michael Galinsky is a filmmaker, photographer and musician, and has spent the last 20 years collaborating with wife Suki Hawley. He recently directed and shot the documentary feature *Battle for Brooklyn*, his fifth feature with Hawley. Prior he co-directed and shot the true-crime special *Miami Manhunt* (A&E), which follows the epic investigation of a notorious Miami serial rapist and the documentary feature *August in the Empire State* which tracks events surrounding the 2004 Republican National Convention.

In 2002, Hawley and Galinsky released their first documentary feature, *Horns and Halos*, which

followed the efforts of an underground publisher to release a discredited biography of George W. Bush. The film was hailed for its even-handed look at media, politics, and humanity. Matthew Tempest, of The Guardian UK, described the film as “a rolling master-class on the disturbing complicity of media, money and mendacity.” *Horns and Halos* screened at the Flaherty Film Seminar, Rotterdam, The Toronto Film Festival and over 30 festivals, winning many awards including Best Documentary at The Big Sky Documentary Festival, The New York Underground Film Festival, The Chicago Underground Film Festival, and Melbourne Underground Film Festival. In addition, it screened on Cinemax, and was distributed theatrically in over 25 markets.

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Michael has been a contributing editor for *International Documentary Magazine* since 2005, writing articles about filmmaking and distribution. A native of Chapel Hill, Michael graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a BA in Religious Studies from New York University.

#### FILMOGRAPHY

**Battle for Brooklyn** (2011, Documentary Feature) Director/Cinematographer  
**Miami Manhunt** (2006, Documentary Feature) Director/Editor  
**August in the Empire State** (2006, Documentary Feature) Co-Director  
**Code 33** (2004, Documentary Feature) Director/Cinematographer  
**Horns and Halos** (2002, Documentary Feature) Director/Producer/Cinematographer  
**Living Portrait Series** (2001-2002, Video Portraits of Artists) Artist  
**Lee Hazlewood in New York** (2001, Documentary Short) Director/Cinematographer  
**Insound Presents** (2000-2001, Documentary Shorts) Director/Cinematographer  
**Radiation** (1999, Narrative Feature) Director/Producer/Cinematographer  
**Slim** (1997, Documentary Short) Co-Director  
**Covers** (1997, Documentary Short) Co-Director  
**Half-Cocked** (1995, Narrative Feature) Director/Producer/Cinematographer

#### **DAVID BEILINSON** - Producer



A partner in Brooklyn-based multimedia studio RUMUR, David has collaborated with husband and wife filmmaking team Michael Galinsky and Suki Hawley for the past 10 years.

He recently produced *Battle for Brooklyn*, a feature documentary which chronicles the seven year fight waged by owners and residents facing condemnation of their property to make way for the controversial Atlantic Yards project, a massive plan to build 16 skyscrapers and a basketball arena for the New Jersey Nets in the heart of Brooklyn.

In 2005 he directed and produced the true-crime special *Miami Manhunt* (A&E), which follows the epic investigation of a notorious Miami serial rapist. He first teamed up as a producer with Galinsky and Hawley in 2000 on *Horns and Halos*, which followed the efforts of an underground publisher to release a discredited biography of George W. Bush. The film was hailed for its even-handed look at media, politics, and humanity. Matthew Tempest, of The Guardian UK, described the film as “a rolling master-class on the disturbing complicity of media, money and mendacity.” *Horns and Halos* screened at the Flaherty Film Seminar, Rotterdam, The Toronto Film Festival and over 30 festivals, winning many awards including Best Documentary at The Big Sky Documentary Festival, The New York Underground Film Festival, The Chicago Underground Film Festival, and Melbourne Underground Film Festival. In addition, it screened on Cinemax, and was distributed theatrically in over 25 markets.

Prior to joining RUMUR, David produced a dozen episodes for PBS' acclaimed reality series *In the Mix*. His show *Ecstasy* was the recipient of the Entertainment Industries Council Prism Award. He first worked as an associate in Business Affairs at Miramax.

A native of Miami Beach, David graduated from NYU's Gallatin School.

#### FILMOGRAPHY

**Battle of Brooklyn** (2011, Documentary Feature) Director/Cinematographer

**Miami Manhunt** (2006, Documentary Feature) Director/Producer

**Code 33** (2004, Documentary Feature) Director/Producer

**Horns and Halos** (2002, Documentary Feature) Producer

**In the Mix** (2000 - 2002, Documentary TV Series) Producer/Editor

#### **RUMUR**



As an award-winning multimedia production studio based in Brooklyn, RUMUR has collaborated with such high profile clients as HBO, A&E, IFC, PBS, AOL, The New York Times, The New York Public Library and the NYC Department of Education to produce feature films, mini-series, industrial commercials, and web applications.

Partners David Beilinson, Suki Hawley and Michael Galinsky bring a extensive array of skills and a tireless commitment to creating excellent and innovative work, regardless of medium. As the lines between film, television, and the web continue to blend together, RUMUR integrates its productions across multiple platforms starting at the early development stages through final product and distribution.

For more information visit [rumur.com/about](http://rumur.com/about)



## Atlantic Yards saga put into focus

BY [Erin Durkin](#)

Updated Tuesday, August 25th 2009, 1:30 PM

It's [Atlantic Yards](#) - the movie.

For six years, [Clinton Hill](#) filmmaker [Michael Galinsky](#) has been filming scenes from the fight over developer [Bruce Ratner](#)'s proposed [Nets](#) basketball arena and 16 residential and commercial towers - and now he's working to turn more than 300 hours of footage into a documentary dubbed "The Battle of [Brooklyn](#)."

The [Prospect Heights](#) project caught Galinsky's attention soon after it was announced in 2003.

"I got a sense there's a lot more here than I'm reading," he said.

He kept shooting so long because it remained uncertain how the project, bogged down for years by lawsuits and economic troubles, would turn out.

"You can't really edit a documentary until you kind of know the end of the story," he said.

Galinsky, 40, plans to wrap up shooting in the coming months - as Ratner scrambles to get financing, beat back remaining lawsuits and break ground by an end-of-year deadline, and begin screening the documentary at film festivals next year.

"We don't know the end, but we do have a sense of an arc, and the end is coming," he said. "By Dec. 31, either shovels will be in the ground or they will not, and that will be the end of the story."

A trailer released last month opens with shots of photographers swarming and strobes flashing as Ratner and elected officials unveil ambitious models for the project, and ominous music plays in the background.

"Brooklyn, as everyone knows, is a world-class city," [Borough President Marty Markowitz](#) intones. "It deserves a world-class team playing in a world-class arena designed by a world-class architect."

Cut to six years later - that "world-class" architect, [Frank Gehry](#), has been removed from the project and work has been delayed time and again.

In between, there are hundreds of hours of public hearings, rallies, and interviews to sort through.

"It's such a humongous story," Galinsky said. "There's all these ups and downs, and you just can't fit that in a 90-minute film."

Galinsky admitted he has an angle - his "main character" is leading Atlantic Yards opponent [Daniel Goldstein](#), whose Pacific St. apartment sits where the Nets' arena would rise - but said he tries to be fair to both sides.

"One of the people who was screaming in the back of the room, 'Build it now' - there's no way they're going to like the film," he said. "But someone who's thinking jobs and economic growth are important, if they watch it with an open mind, might learn something from it."

"We're not trying to be activist filmmakers. The intention isn't so much to influence the story," he said.

Instead, he wants to bring the battle to an audience beyond Brooklyn.

"Hopefully, someone in [Topeka, Kan.](#), would be as interested in this movie as someone who lives in [Park Slope](#)," he said.

SEE THE TRAILER AT <http://www.rumur.com/battle>



# The New York Times

**City Room**

Blogging From the Five Boroughs

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APRIL 21, 2010, 3:41 PM

## Daniel Goldstein, Last Atlantic Yards Holdout, Leaves for \$3 Million

By [ANDY NEWMAN](#) and [CHARLES V. BAGLI](#)

Updated, 4:53 p.m. | The last man standing in front of the Atlantic Yards bulldozer has stepped aside.

Kathy Willens/The Associated Press  
Daniel Goldstein in December, 2009.

Daniel Goldstein — founder of the anti-Atlantic Yards group Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn and plaintiff in numerous unsuccessful suits against the \$4.9 billion project — has reached an agreement with the project's developer, Forest City Ratner, to move out of his condo on Pacific Street in Prospect Heights.

Mr. Goldstein confirmed that he would receive \$3 million from Forest City. He bought his condo in 2003 for \$590,000, but the state seized title to it [under eminent domain last month](#), leaving Mr. Goldstein facing eviction. Mr. Goldstein said he would move by May 7.

He had [told The Brooklyn Paper](#) in an article published Wednesday morning that his lawyer would fight the condemnation or “get fair market value and just compensation” for the apartment, as eminent domain law requires when the state seizes property. He had said the state had previously made a lowball offer of \$510,000 to him.

According to executives who have been briefed on the negotiations, Mr. Goldstein also agreed to a highly modified form of the gag agreement that Forest City had initially imposed on those it bought out, under which he would step down as spokesman for Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn.

Mr. Goldstein said that he retains his right to free speech but is no longer allowed to “actively oppose the project.”

“There's no end to the criticism and opposition to the project,” he said.

The release from Forest City was short on specifics and did not even speak Mr. Goldstein's name.

“We are not going to discuss the details of the agreement,” Joe DePlasco, a spokesman for the developer, said in the statement. “Forest City Ratner has from the start worked very hard to compensate and to assist residents who owned or rented homes in the footprint. They made that commitment at the start of the project over six years ago and today are very pleased that



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as construction is in full force they were able to accomplish that goal.”

On Tuesday, Forest City Ratner announced that it had reached resettlement agreements with the seven remaining residents of the footprint of the project’s basketball arena, besides Mr. Goldstein.

Forest City was also The New York Times’s development partner for its new Manhattan headquarters.

Michael Galinsky, a filmmaker who has been making a documentary about Mr. Goldstein and Atlantic Yards called “[Battle of Brooklyn](#),” said that “to not have made some kind of agreement at this point would have been irresponsible.”

He added: “It was either move out in two weeks, or move out in two months and take what the state offered.”

**ESPN****NETS ARE SCORCHING**

## **NAS Interview: “Battle for Brooklyn” Filmmaker**

Posted on [October 13, 2009](#) by [Mark Ginocchio](#)

In anticipation of Wednesday’s Court of Appeals hearing in Albany, where opponents of the Atlantic Yards development will argue about the proposed use of eminent domain for the building of the Nets new home in Brooklyn, NetsAreScorching has spoken to filmmaker Michael Galinsky, who is working on a documentary about the Atlantic Yards process entitled “Battle for Brooklyn.”

Galinsky, who resides in the Clinton Hill section of Brooklyn, has been working on the film for nearly six years now, amassing more than 300 hours of footage. One of the focal points of his film is Daniel Goldstein of Develop Don’t Destroy Brooklyn, whose Pacific Street apartment sits where the Nets’ Barclays Arena would be built.

We’ve included the “Battle for Brooklyn” trailer for your viewing pleasure. For more information about Galinsky’s work, please [visit his site](#).

**NAS:** Given that the eminent domain hearing in Albany is considered by some to be a last legal stand for opponents to the Atlantic Yards development, do you plan to capture any footage for your film that day? If so, what’s your planned filming approach for the day?

**Michael Galinsky:** We will certainly be shooting on the day of the hearing. While it’s the last stand for the opponents to fight the eminent domain issue, I think that there are several other law suits in the works regarding the process.

Our film is a character-driven, verite documentary that mostly follows a few of the people fighting the project, so we’ll want to get their take on the situation. The idea of a verite documentary film gets confusing because most people are used to Michael Moore or old school PBS docs. We aren’t journalists and we’re not activists either. The idea of this film isn’t to get to the bottom of everything that’s happened along the way but instead to follow characters as they deal with some of the situations that they face. Not even Norman Oder could put together a book that covers everything and is still readable. As such, we have to be very selective in what scenes to focus on. So the short answer is: yes we’ll be shooting, but who knows what will end up in the film. With over 350 hours of footage shot, only about 0.5% of what we shot has any chance of making it in to a 90 minute film.

**NAS:** Does the announcement that Russian billionaire Mikhail Prokhorov is looking to take ownership of the Nets change the narrative of your film at all? What about the recent Barclays Arena renderings?

**Michael Galinsky:** These announcements have very little narrative force as far as the story is concerned. It’s very difficult to figure out how to fit all of the crazy events that have transpired over 6 years into a 90 minute film. If the investment does actually keep things going then it will probably go in but like everything else- the PR story is pretty straight forward – billionaire buys team!!!- but the reality is so complex that it’s really hard to figure out how to get into it.

**NAS:** You have said in previous interviews that you’re trying to keep this film unbiased. Have you reached out to the Nets front office at all while making this documentary and how cooperative have they been?



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**Michael Galinsky:** Honestly, from our perspective, this isn't a story about basketball. I think it was clear from the beginning that the basketball team was only interesting to the developer as a way to do a big real estate deal. The real story is that big real estate deal. As such, basketball doesn't have a lot to do with our film. At the same time, we did want the perspective of the developer, and Bruce Bender was kind enough to sit down with us at the beginning of our process and talk about their plans. I grew up going to see UNC play every home game including all 4 seasons of Jordan when I was in jr. high school. I love basketball, and like our main character, I think it would be great to have a Brooklyn team. I was excited when I read the first reports. However, the process of making this film has made me question the costs associated with it at this location.

**NAS:** There seems to be an unofficial deadline of December 31 for ground to be broken if this development is going to be built. Do you get the sense that your film is headed towards a resolution based on these facts?

**Michael Galinsky:** I wish it were so. It was my impression that ground had to be broken before the 31st in order for the developer to take advantage of the tax free bonds. However, I have been told that the developer simply needs to sell the bonds before then. So it may not be the end after all.

**NAS:** Describe a few things that have surprised you in the making of this film. Some things you learned about the project, or the people involved that you didn't expect.

**Michael Galinsky:** Honestly, working on this project has had an enormous impact on me and my view of the world. I would have to say that I considered myself pretty liberal when I started shooting, but my faith in government has been severely shaken by the process of working on this film.

I started this project because I read the initial article in the New York Times and I was struck by the fact that it sounded like a press release. As such, I was curious about what was really going on. I don't live right by the footprint, but my daughter was going to daycare two blocks away so I was very familiar with the area.

A few years before the project was announced, my wife and I bought a beat up house and spent the next few years learning how to fix it up. When you go from being a renter to a home-owner you take a little bit more interest in your community because you become invested in it. After about 3 years we had a baby. With a baby you really start to meet the people around you- and you rely on them for information about day care, etc – You really start to build roots. Still, I didn't even know what a community board was until I started to shoot.

As I followed the story, I saw how the government and the community interacted and it wasn't pretty. On a basic local level, there was some responsiveness to what the community wanted; but when the politicians who made the decisions had less connection with the community, they could take the community for granted more easily.

With a project of this size, the impacts on the surrounding communities promises to be profound, yet nobody who was affected by the project was given any *real* opportunity to have their opinions taken into consideration.