

Close to Home

Scenes from a Recession



1 X 60 HD



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As the U.S. unemployment rate hits a 25-year-high, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average hits a six-year-low, award-winning FRONTLINE producer Ofra Bikel (*The Hugo Chavez Show*, *The Case for Innocence*) chronicles the recession's impact on one unlikely American neighborhood—New York's Upper East Side.

In *Close to Home*, Bikel decides to set up her cameras in the hair salon she's frequented for 20 years. It is an intimate space where she has come to know well the surprisingly diverse clientele—from athletic trainers and housewives to high-end bankers, actors, and opera singers. Despite expectations that this neighborhood is a secure bastion of privilege, these days, when clients get in the chair, they offer a window into America in recession—some are broke, others do not have a plan, and they are all looking to commiserate.

Deborah Boles, the owner and sole hairdresser at Deborah Hair Designs, started the business in 1985. "I wanted a place where people can go and they can feel comfortable. They know they belong here." But it is all on the line with the current downturn—clients come less often, some skip coloring, or skip the trim—and as Deborah watches her neighboring businesses go under, she wonders how long she can survive.

Barbara, Deborah's sister, helps out at the salon, but has been struggling with her own economic crisis. After buying a home in Florida at the height of the market, she now has a subprime mortgage that she can no longer afford. Unable to pay the exorbitant interest, she has had to take in four tenants—each with their own stories of foreclosure and unemployment.

Through the microcosm of this little neighborhood salon, Bikel's intimate documentary reveals how the recession has affected people from every walk of life, and how close the impact of the financial meltdown is to everyone's home.

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CREDITS

Written, Produced, and Directed by: Ofra Bikel

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Photo Credit: Claire Holt



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