

## Political Will Starts at Home

Worldwide Documentaries' premiere blog highlights the work of Director Robert Bilheimer, featuring his thoughts on the worsening situation on the border, and what we can do to help.

As politics continue to unravel in Washington, the urgency around the crisis at the border is increasing. Hundreds of thousands of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers' livelihoods are affected by our nation's lacking immigration system. The advocacy groups and individuals that have dedicated their lives to reduce some of their suffering are continuing to do so, but the situation doesn't seem to be getting better, and the narrative surrounding these men, women and children who only want a safe life in our country remains toxic.

"We gave the Biden administration more than enough time to fix any problems left behind by the Trump administration, but it has left us no choice but to return to court. Families' lives are at stake," Lee Gelernt, Deputy Director of ACLU's Immigrants' Rights Project, said regarding their return to court following the recent continuation of Title 42 (Sandra Sanchez, [Border Report](#)).

Since *Oh Mercy*'s February 2021 release and the exceptional response to it, Robert Bilheimer, Academy Award nominated director and president of Worldwide Documentaries, remains in touch with key advocates on the border, including Sister Norma Pimentel.



Photo by Verónica Gabriela Cárdenas

"I think in general, across the board, everything is worse. There are more people showing up. We just learned that Title 42 is going to stay in place indefinitely. Care facilities like Sister Norma's are overflowing to the point where she has to turn people away," Bilheimer said in regard to how the situation has progressed.

Bilheimer described the scene as discouraging, and recounted a conversation with Sister Norma where the two of them agreed that the leadership from the politicians in

Washington aren't pulling through in the way she and others working on the border had hoped. He also noted that the topic of immigration will likely be used politically as a wedge in 2022 and beyond, with right-wing politicians and Donald Trump plausibly leading that sort of behavior.

The hope for a better immigration system lies in many factors, one being the tireless and brave volunteers and advocates that give their time and energy every day to maintain human dignity on the border. Another factor is the politicians, lawmakers and organization leaders who *do* care, and who skew their agendas toward this timely and important issue. Another factor, however, and one where Dir. Bilheimer comes in, is the narrative that surrounds the border crisis.

“I think what we can do through film is to create awareness and compassion and a commitment among the general public, who then in turn can influence political will.” Though the people that have the power to change these dehumanizing policies and to really put immigration reform into effect are the lawmakers and the politicians, Bilheimer believes that the general public has the power and the obligation to do better as well.

Bilheimer noted that one of the capabilities of the film medium is to reach out to large numbers of people and to try and create a consensus of what’s really happening. He’s grateful to have the outlet of documentary filmmaking, where he can tell a narrative that is truthful rather than dishonest, accurate rather than stereotypical. He’s especially grateful that he can create a narrative that features people like Sister Norma, who are leaders in the fight for human rights on this issue. In his words, Sister Norma is a “*she-ro*.”

**“Political will starts at home,” he noted.**

“What the general public can do is put pressure on the politicians and the decision makers and the lawmakers to create just, equitable, fair, and compassionate immigration reform. It’s a defining human rights issue,” Bilheimer said. “In the end, it has to do with what kind of people we are and what kind of country we want to be.”