



AT THE READY



Director: Maisie Crow

Produced by: Hillary Pierce, Abbie Perrault & Maisie Crow

Co-Produced by: Braulio Beltran

96 minutes

USA, 2020 | English & Spanish

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LOGLINE

Home to one of the region's largest law enforcement education programs, students at Horizon High School in El Paso train to become police officers and Border Patrol agents as they discover the realities of their dream jobs may be at odds with the truths and people they hold most dear.

SYNOPSIS

Ten miles from the Mexican border, students at Horizon High School in El Paso, Texas, are enrolling in law enforcement classes and joining a unique after-school activity: the criminal justice club. Through mock-ups of drug raids and active-shooter takedowns, they inch closer to their desired careers in border patrol, policing, and customs enforcement. We follow Mexican American students Kassy and Cesar and recent graduate Cristina as they navigate the complications inherent in their chosen path and discover their choices may clash with the values and people they hold closest.

Through intimate access and a clear-sighted lens, director Maisie Crow takes us inside one of the largest policing education programs in the region, offering a rare portrait of Latinx adolescents grappling with their place within their communities. Unafraid of confronting the difficult questions that lurk at the intersection of identity, immigration, and personal politics, *At the Ready* asks: What is the price of pursuing dreams that have very real ramifications?

A NOTE ON MASON

After the filming of this documentary, Mason (known as Kassy in the film) came out as transgender. For clarity's sake, please note this when referring to him in your coverage, and for subsequent mentions use the name Mason with he/him pronouns.

The filmmakers worked closely with Mason to respect his wishes for how this time in his life would be portrayed in *AT THE READY*. While Mason is comfortable with his portrayal, and the filmmakers worked with him to represent him accurately, the above style guide applies to how to refer to Mason within the context of this film only.

Mason and the full *AT THE READY* team strongly believe that respecting trans people includes referring to them with the name they go by and the pronouns they use, and understanding the use of a trans person's birth name without their express permission is not appropriate.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT - MAISIE CROW

After the 2016 election, I felt I had no choice but to leave New York and return to my home state of Texas to make work about the issues that were becoming political flashpoints in our quickly shifting nation.

Living 60 miles from the Texas / Mexico border, I began seeing the effects of encroaching paramilitarization. In the 100-mile radius from the border, where law-enforcement agencies operate with near impunity, it is not uncommon to come across immigration checkpoints, surveillance blimps and helicopters working from the air. Not to mention local police, state troopers, sheriffs, Texas Rangers, ICE officers and CBP agents that dot the highways, surveilling communities.

As paramilitarization permeates the border, its reach is now extending to Texas' public schools. In 2018, over 900 Texas high schools offered classes in a "Public Safety" track and hosted after-school criminal justice clubs that competed in events like "Active Shooter," "Drug Raid," and "Felony Traffic Stop." Criminal Justice programs grew in number in Texas after the state legislature passed House Bill 5, a law that put more vocational training programs in the high school classroom.

Throughout Trump's presidency, I've wondered how his rhetoric and divisive nature might impact those in their most formative years. Much like my previous film sought to unravel the rhetoric around abortion and show the lives being materially impacted by policy and politicization, AT THE READY turns the lens toward those whose most formative years are molded by life on the border at a time when the region was under a microscope.

Americans tend to go back and forth on these ideological conversations in a vacuum, without taking note or truly understanding the implications it might have on a child growing up on the border and their future career choices. It often ignores how these conversations change the way young adults look at the world and the way they will look at their own community, as it is seemingly being verbally torn apart by politicians.

In an attempt to illuminate challenges that are often not considered, this film doesn't attempt to provide answers. Instead, it sets out to ask questions, reveal experiences and realities that exist and expand viewers' understanding of what America is and looks like.

America is a place of rich complexity and nuance and this film shows one slice of that on a ground level. Until we acknowledge those intricacies and how they can sometimes conflict and interact with one another, we won't understand why we are the country that we are and how we can be better.

FILMMAKER BIOS

MAISIE CROW (Director)

Maisie Crow is a documentary film director, cinematographer and photographer based in Marfa, Texas. In 2018, her documentary, “Jackson,” an intimate, first-of-its-kind look at both sides of the reproductive health care debate in the Deep South, received a News and Documentary Emmy award for Outstanding Social Issue Documentary. The film had its world premiere on Showtime and won 15 film festival awards for best documentary and audience favorite. Crow’s “The Last Clinic,” a short-film and multimedia collaboration with The Atavist Magazine about Mississippi’s last abortion clinic, was nominated for a News and Documentary Emmy and a finalist for a National Magazine Award in 2014. Maisie is also the editor-in-chief of The Big Bend Sentinel, a nearly 100 year-old, weekly newspaper in Marfa, Texas where she works alongside a staff of reporters covering West Texas. She has taught photojournalism and video storytelling as an adjunct professor at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism and CUNY Graduate School of Journalism as well as the Salt Institute for Documentary Studies.

HILLARY PIERCE (Producer)

Hillary Pierce is an Emmy Award-winning documentary filmmaker who splits her time between the city life of Austin and the small town of Marfa out in far west Texas. She spent several years working in scripted film and television in her native North Carolina before relocating to New York City to begin a career in documentary film under the tutelage of Direct Cinema pioneer Albert Maysles. She has spent the better part of the last decade producing feature documentaries in Texas, including Keith Maitland's 2016 films “Tower” and “A Song for You: The Austin City Limits Story” and Ben Masters' 2019 “The River and the Wall.” “Tower” won the Grand Jury Documentary Prize and Audience Award at SXSW in 2016, broadcast nationally on PBS’ Independent Lens, was shortlisted for an Academy Award, nominated for a Peabody, and won the 2018 Emmy for Outstanding Historical Documentary. “The River and the Wall” premiered at SXSW in 2019 and won the Louis Black “Lone Star” Award. It was released theatrically and digitally in May of 2019 and broadcast on Starz the following October. “The River and the Wall” was nominated for the 2020 Emmy for Outstanding Nature Documentary.

ABBIE PERRAULT (Producer)

Abbie Perrault is a Texas-based documentary producer and journalist. She is the managing editor at The Big Bend Sentinel in Marfa, Texas. She was the Impact Producer on Maisie Crow’s Emmy-award winning documentary “Jackson” (Showtime), and has produced short documentaries for “The Intercept.” Perrault’s work has been supported by IFP, the IDA Enterprise Documentary Fund, the Catapult Film Fund, and the Austin Film Society. She was a 2019 fellow in the New Orleans Film Society’s Southern Producers Lab.

BRAULIO BELTRAN (Co-Producer)

A native of Juárez, Braulio Alfons Beltran Salcido brings more than a decade of experience in Mexico’s film industry to his work. Having attended the prestigious Academia de Música Fermatta in Mexico City, he began his career as a composer, and quickly segued into location and post-production sound. Since then he has branched out into camera work and producing, and has worked on more than 25 films and TV series, including “Hotel Chelsea,” “El Diez” for ESPN and “Guerrero 12.”

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ABBIE PERRAULT
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DIRECTED BY
MAISIE CROW

AT THE READY

[END CREDITS]

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SUPPORTED BY

INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY ASSOCIATION ENTERPRISE DOCUMENTARY FUND

CATAPULT FILM FUND

ECONOMIC HARDSHIP REPORTING PROJECT

THE GUCCI TRIBECA DOCUMENTARY FUND

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VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO

HORIZON HIGH SCHOOL

CLINT INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

MEMBERS OF THE HORIZON HIGH SCHOOL CRIMINAL JUSTICE CLUB

STUDENTS ENROLLED IN LAW ENFORCEMENT CLASSES AT HORIZON HIGH SCHOOL

VERY SPECIAL THANKS TO

PRINCIPAL ELENA ACOSTA

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