

UNSETTLED: Seeking Refuge in America

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ABOUT THE FILM

Unsettled is a feature-length documentary revealing the untold stories of LGBT refugees and asylum seekers who have fled intense persecution from their home countries and who are resettling in the U.S. As new leadership in America continues to demonize immigrants and drastically restrict the flow of refugees and asylum seekers into the U.S., *Unsettled* humanizes a group few people know who are desperately trying to create new and safer homes.

Subhi, a gay Syrian refugee who, having survived multiple death threats from Islamic terrorists, beatings by a homophobic father, and a nation devastated by war, finds his voice as a leader for refugee rights in the U.S. **Cheyenne and Mari**, a lesbian couple from Angola who, having faced brutal harassment from family and neighbors, seek uncertain asylum through the American immigration courts while pursuing their dreams of becoming musicians. **Junior**, a gender non-conforming gay man from the Congo, struggles to find even basic housing and livelihood while exploring a more fluid gender identity.



Unsettled takes place largely in the **San Francisco Bay Area**, historically a beacon for dislocated LGBT people in the U.S. While cultural narratives of a “queer promised land” still persist, the film asks whether Northern California is even practical as a place to resettle LGBT refugees, especially given the enormous gentrification, increased costs of living and scarcity of housing in recent years -- a set of problems present in many American cities. What are the costs persecuted immigrants pay for seeking refuge in America? And how are everyday Americans stepping forward to help those most in need?

THE FILMMAKING TEAM



DIRECTOR/PRODUCER, Tom Shepard

For over 20 years, Filmmaker Tom Shepard has produced, directed, edited, and distributed documentary films. Four of his feature projects – SCOUT’S HONOR, KNOCKING, WHIZ KIDS and THE GROVE – have aired nationally on PBS (including POV, Independent Lens and PBS Plus). Coverage of his work has been featured prominently in the U.S. and foreign press, including reviews of three of his films in The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, Washington Post, and Boston Globe among others. Shepard’s films have played in more than 150 film festivals worldwide – including Full Frame, Silver Docs and the Sundance Film Festival (where he won two top awards in 2001.) Shepard has raised over two and a half million dollars for production of his own work and has received funding from the Independent Television Service (ITVS) four times. He is the former Chairman of New Day Films and regularly teaches documentary film in California and Colorado. In 2013, he founded the Youth Documentary Academy which he currently directs. He graduated from Stanford and lives in Colorado Springs and San Francisco.



PRODUCER, Jen Gilomen

Jen Gilomen is an award-winning documentary producer, director, and cinematographer who has created nationally and internationally distributed films, including [LIFE ON THE LINE](#) (PBS, 2014, distributed by New Day Films), [IN MY SHOES](#) (Audience Award, [Frameline](#) / distributed by Frameline), and [DEEP DOWN](#) (Independent Lens, 2010, distributed by New Day Films), which was funded by ITVS and MacArthur Foundation, participated in the U.S. State Department’s American Documentary Showcase, and received an Emmy nomination in 2011. In 2015-16, Jen was a Supervising Producer and programmer at [ITVS](#), where she oversaw a \$3 million portfolio of over fifteen feature documentaries and interactive media projects. She is an Associate of the U.C. Berkeley Investigative Reporting Program, Member-Owner of [New Day Films](#), and co-founder of the [Collective of Documentary Women Cinematographers](#).

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER Tom Shepard PRODUCER Jen Gilomen EXECUTIVE PRODUCER Stu Harrison
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER FOR ITVS Sally Jo Fifer EDITOR Eva Brzeski CONSULTING EDITOR Jim Klein
COMPOSER Justin Melland DIRECTORS OF PHOTOGRAPHY Andrew Black, Jen Gilomen, Mike Seely
COLOR GRADING Gary Coates MOTION GRAPHICS Sylvia Roberts ASSISTANT EDITOR Eric Risher
SOUND EDIT & MIX Skywalker Sound SUPERVISING PRODUCER FOR ITVS Michael Kinomoto

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Full credits will soon be available at opendoorproductions.org.

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BACKGROUND

Currently, there are over 25.4 million refugees globally.¹ LGBT refugees and asylum seekers, in particular, face brutal conditions from which they've fled. It is illegal to be LGBT in over 70 countries; eight of those employ the death penalty.²

Before 2016, the U.S. was regarded as a beacon for refugees, resettling more asylum seekers and refugees than any other country. Since taking office, President Trump has decreased the number of refugees allowed to enter the country by 70% to the lowest level in history.³ His vehement push for building a wall and constant maligning of asylum seekers and other immigrants raise fundamental questions about America's role in protecting the persecuted.

Challenges abound, too, for LGBT refugees, whose resettlement trajectories are often quite different from those of their non-LGBT counterparts. In the U.S., resettlement is predicated largely on families: a family flees a conflict zone and is resettled in an area connected to communities of their diaspora. An Iraqi family, for instance, is introduced to a local mosque or community center of other Iraqis and Iraqi Americans. LGBT refugees, on the other hand, are often fleeing from their families, and fear any contact with their countrymen upon arriving. This unique experience leaves LGBT refugees isolated and at higher risk for PTSD, depression, and internal displacement. While Americans have been fed extensive news coverage of the refugee crisis (particularly the Syrian conflict), few actually know any refugees personally or how persecuted people become resettled. Unsettled provides an occasion to learn intimately about the experiences of some of the world's most vulnerable people.



Junior, Subhi, Cheyenne, and Mari face San Francisco's many challenges in Unsettled

¹ "Figures at a glance," [UNHCR](#).

² "Gay relationships are still criminalized in 72 countries, report finds," [The Guardian](#), July 27, 2017.

³ "Trump to Cap Refugees Allowed Into U.S. at 30,000, a Record Low," [N.Y. Times](#), September 17, 2018.