

JUST KIDS

Tribeca Film Festival 2025 | World Premiere | Spotlight Documentary | Acquisition



DIRECTED BY

Gianna Toboni

EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY

Samantha Wender, Mathilde Jourdan

PRODUCED BY

Jacqueline Toboni, Samantha Wender, Gianna Toboni

FEATURING

Susan Stryker, Andrea Jenkins

FESTIVAL SCREENINGS

Public 1 (Premiere) In-Person Screening – Saturday, June 7, 2025 at 2:30PM ET at SVA Theatre

Press & Industry In-Person Screening 1 – Sunday, June 8, 2025 at 11:15AM at AMC

Public 2 In-Person Screening – Sunday, June 8, 2025 at 8:15PM ET at AMC

Public 3 In-Person Screening – Friday, June 13, 2025 at 5:45PM ET at AMC

REVIEW EMBARGO

Saturday, June 7, 2025 at 4:03PM ET | 1:03PM PT

RUN TIME

93 minutes

SALES

CAA | amanda.lebow@caa.com

PUBLICIST

42West | JustKids@42West.com

SYNOPSIS

In states where gender-affirming care is banned, three families face an impossible choice: remain in their home communities at the risk of their transgender children's health and safety or uproot their entire lives. Over a tumultuous year, director Gianna Toboni's powerful documentary follows these families as they endure unprecedented challenges and demonstrate extraordinary strength in their fight to save their children's lives. Through intimate access to their daily struggles, we witness the human cost of politically motivated bans that contradict the medical consensus of America's leading healthcare associations.

The film elevates the voices of pioneers in the trans community as well as civil rights experts who contextualize this moment in history, revealing how these laws are part of a broader strategy targeting various marginalized communities for generations. What emerges is not just a timely documentary but an essential historical record of trauma and resilience. The film's most compelling strength lies in its portrayal of the unwavering love these families exhibit in the face of systemic opposition. Particularly moving is the story of a gun-toting Iraq War veteran from South Carolina who proves to be a fierce advocate for his transgender son, challenging stereotypes and expectations. With the Supreme Court set to decide on the constitutionality of these bans, Just Kids offers audiences a deeply human perspective on one of the most urgent civil rights issues of our time.—Jarod Neece

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I'm a journalist and documentarian that's been filming with transgender families since 2015. Back then, their challenge was centered around bathroom bills. I would've never thought that eight years later, nearly half the country would've passed bills outlawing gender-affirming care for these children.

As my sister, and producing partner, Jacqueline Toboni and I watched powerful, well-funded right wing organizations control the narrative around this story, we couldn't help but feel we needed to correct the narrative. We assembled an inclusive team, including folks with trans lived experience, and decided to make this film to inject the truth, and the humanity at the center of this story -- and to reveal this for what it is, an old political strategy.

This is a David and Goliath story. It's one about the strength of the human spirit and the lengths that parents will go to protect their children. It's a story about one community, on a long list, that's been targeted for political gain throughout history. This is a story about America.

FILMMAKER Q&A

Gianna Toboni (Director, Writer, Producer) & Jacqueline Toboni (Writer, Producer)

There are many important stories to tell about the trans community today. Your documentary focuses on the critical issue of gender affirming care for kids. Can you talk about why you wanted to tell this story and focus on kids?

We started to witness how Americans, from all different political, religious and geographic backgrounds, were getting their parental rights stripped from them. Government officials were telling these parents what kind of health care they could – and could not – pursue for their own children, even when they had the full support of their children’s doctors. Some of these parents were Iraq War veterans, who had fought for our freedom, and now they were seeing their own freedom being taken away; others came from families, who had been law enforcement officers for generations, and now feared the police. This blatant government overreach seemed to go against our values as Americans – freedom, liberty, justice – and all at the expense of children’s health.

This is not just a character-follow documentary, it is grounded in historical context. Why was that important?

This national conversation often revolves around whether gender-affirming care should be legal, despite the American Academy of Pediatrics consistently issuing guidelines that support this care, based on peer-reviewed, unbiased evidence. We wanted to draw on historical context to show that these laws and rhetoric are nothing more than a political strategy, based in fear, that has been incredibly effective against other marginalized groups for generations. The “save the children” playbook has a long history in American politics and we wanted to show viewers that parallel to help reframe this narrative.

How did you select the families featured in the documentary?

We spent months meeting with families across the country, trying to understand who was most critically impacted by these bans on gender-affirming care. We found this issue impacted every kind of family, so we wanted to feature the stories of those who are often overlooked – single parents, lower income families, second amendment advocates, people of color and youth without parents.

It was important that the participants were in a stable environment and understood fully what it means to participate in a film like this. Before the cameras ever came out, we spent time talking through informed consent, the process of filming, the ability for them to opt out at any time, how mental health is priority and how their lives might change once they appear in a film. We wanted to make sure that this process was empowering for them.

GLAAD was involved with the production. Please talk about the role they played and how you worked together?

GLAAD consulted on this project from the beginning. Alex Schmider was a central member of our team, identifying blind spots, advising on safety measures, revising language, reaching out to other GLAAD consultants for feedback and overall advising on the storytelling. We felt strongly about having a veteran documentary producer, who has lived experience and was deeply devoted to getting this story told in the most responsible and powerful way.

The experts you included in the film bring invaluable perspectives and experience to the production. Can you talk about who you included and their contributions to the film?

Susan Stryker is a historian and author with lived experience, and her deeply reported book, *Transgender History*, was fundamental in my research. She helped us frame this story in history and point out the broader themes and impact.

Andrea Jenkins lived through the civil rights movement, and as the first trans woman of color elected to political office, she was able to draw parallels between the political strategies used against the Black and trans communities decades apart. Jenkins helps viewers understand what this conversation is really about.

How did you make sure that you didn't have any blindspots? Did you have any trans crew members?

We very intentionally built an inclusive team of talented editors, shooters, producers, colorists, et al. It was important that at every stage of the making of this film, we had trusted trans colleagues with eyes on it, to ensure we were doing this story justice, telling it responsibly and relying on their insights, which only they could provide given their lived experience.

What challenges did you find in the development and shooting process?

In the year of production, these families' stories took significant, unexpected turns with little notice, from losing care to laws passing to untimely deaths to cross-country moves. We had to move quickly to get on the ground in South Carolina, Texas and New York, to ensure that we were with them as they experienced life-changing news.

We felt strongly about having a person of color in this documentary, because oftentimes, we only see white, middle and upper class families in the media. Many of the contacts we spoke with were fearful of telling their story publicly and felt it wasn't the right time. After an exhaustive search, over the course of months, and with countless phone calls and TikTok searches, we found an inspiring, resilient and motivated young trans woman of color.

What do you hope audiences take away from the film?

We hope audiences are able to reframe this issue in their minds and see it for what it is – an age-old political strategy that wins elections, while stripping parents of their rights and kids of their health care.

Why is this film especially timely?

Prior to President Trump's inauguration, it was safe and legal for transgender youth to meet with doctors and receive gender-affirming care in half of the country (there were bans in the other 25 states). Since he's taken office, he's passed several executive orders restricting this care, including one that has caused hospitals in blue states to halt gender-affirming care for these youth, or risk losing their federal funding; the legality of these orders is playing out in the court system. The U.S. Supreme Court will soon rule on whether it's constitutional to ban this health care. Most recently, the U.S. Attorney General, Pamela Bondi said the U.S. Department of Justice is investigating providers and directing all agencies to rescind the standards of care provided by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH). They have called this health care "child abuse" and signaled they would investigate educators. The fear is that parents are next. The American Academy of Pediatrics, the largest and most reputable pediatric

association, along with other major medical associations, continues to reaffirm and support this care in their guidelines.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

GIANNA TOBONI | DIRECTOR, WRITER, PRODUCER

GIANNA TOBONI is a two-time Emmy-winning documentarian and author with dozens of films that have aired on *HBO*, *Showtime*, *Hulu* and *VICE*. Toboni has traveled to more than 30 countries, including Iraq, Mexico, Somalia, Israel/Palestine/Gaza, Nigeria, Russia, Philippines, and many more, telling stories that highlight the most significant challenges facing each local community and the humanity at the center of them. She's covered the biggest national stories and feels some of the most powerful ones are often hidden right here in America.

Her debut book, *THE VOLUNTEER*, a story about her relationship with a death row inmate, who volunteered for execution, and the broader story of America's death penalty, will be published by Atria Books, a Simon and Schuster imprint, in 2025. Toboni was honored on Forbes' 30 Under 30 list for Media. She was named a TEDx Speaker on truth and storytelling. Toboni has won two Emmys, a du-Pont Columbia Award, a GLAAD, Gracie, two Front Page Awards, and a Webby for *Best Documentary Series*. Her documentary on student debt was named a Peabody finalist. She works alongside her sister, Jacqueline Toboni, to bring both scripted and unscripted projects to the screen through their production company, Mother Media.

JACQUELINE TOBONI | WRITER, PRODUCER

JACQUELINE TOBONI is an accomplished actor, writer, and producer. Before graduating college, Toboni was tapped by NBC for "Grimm," one of the network's top series, running for six seasons. As Theresa Rubel, she captivated audiences for four seasons with her unique portrayal of an atypical female protagonist. Since then, she has been consistently cast in major television series and films, including indie auteur Joe Swanberg's "Easy" for Netflix, alongside Sophia Bush and Kiersey Clemons. After three seasons on the Netflix breakout series, Toboni signed on to do "The L Word: Generation Q" for Showtime, playing fan favorite, Finley. Her work has garnered six GLAAD Award nominations, reflecting her dedication to portraying diverse and complex characters with authenticity and depth.

As a writer and producer, she has been a vocal advocate for inclusive narratives and has actively sought to bring underrepresented stories to the forefront. Current projects include her scripted feature, a queer, sports rom com, optioned by Village Roadshow, as well as an unscripted feature documentary shedding light on the experiences of families affected by recent anti-trans laws. She works alongside her sister, journalist Gianna Toboni, to bring both scripted and unscripted projects to the screen through their production company, Mother Media.

Beyond her industry endeavors, Toboni has actively used her platform to advocate for comprehensive representation, garnering her speaking opportunities at the University of Michigan and Modern Health's annual summit, Elevate, discussing the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. Her commitment to fostering positive change in the world of entertainment is evident through her advocacy work, amplifying marginalized voices and promoting diversity in storytelling.

SAMANTHA WENDER | EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Samantha M. Wender has been creating award-winning and nominated stories for two decades. She's a multi-Emmy Award winner that has traveled to every state in the U.S. and more than one-hundred countries.

In addition to producing for the CBS Evening News franchise "Eye on America, as an Executive Producer at CBS News, Samantha holds a key editorial position leading development, production and execution of multi-part live and taped series as well as studio and field-based special projects for CBS News.

While a Senior Producer at Vice News, she oversaw and produced smart, in-depth and contextual storytelling that married people and their voices to global headlines and stories.

In response to the growing demand for quality video, Samantha launched Carry-on Media, a full-service content shop that works with people from all backgrounds and global brands.

At NBC News, she wrote and produced feature stories for TODAY, TODAY Food and Sunday Today with Willie Geist. She also produced breaking news and pitched, developed and booked much of her work, spearheading multi-platform series and sponsored content.

From 2005-2012, at ABC's News Magazines (Primetime & 20/20), Samantha produced, field produced and supported major newsmaker interviews and process hours including Diane Sawyer's Hidden America series. She spent the better part of two years following the lives of five homeless teens, eight months on the Lakota Sioux Pine Ridge Reservation and several months with the Amish, heroin addicts and foster youth, chronicling the stories of those living in poverty, out of the mainstream and on the fringes of society.

In 2012, Samantha left ABC News to produce a 90-minute feature documentary for MTV while simultaneously producing for their True Life series at Gigantic! Productions. She also spent time helping to develop series, pilots and special pitches for a variety of networks and outlets including Yahoo! Where she produced sponsored digital video content.

Samantha lives in New York City and is a lover of food and travel.

MATHILDE JOURDAN | EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Mathilde Jourdan is a Los Angeles-based writer and producer whose work spans television, documentary, and digital media. Her career in television began in 2011 on the Emmy Award-winning children's series Mother Goose Club, where she contributed to the development and production of over a dozen episodes—collectively garnering more than a billion views on YouTube.

A graduate of Northwestern University's prestigious MFA Screenwriting program, Mathilde has built a diverse portfolio across international and U.S. markets. She has served as a writer's assistant on Barry Humphries' Dame Edna: Eat, Pray, Laugh Australian tour, a production assistant on multiple Univision telenovelas, and an agent's assistant at William Morris Endeavor.

Her production credits include co-creating and developing a reality series with NBC's Peacock, and serving as Executive Producer on the acclaimed documentary On the Line: The Richard Williams Story, which premiered at the 2022 Tribeca Film Festival.

In 2023, Mathilde and her partner Mal Glowenke created Made It Out, a breakout podcast praised for its raw, unfiltered storytelling and celebration of queer narratives. The series quickly gained a devoted

following of over 500K and was named a 2024 Webby Honoree for Best Video Podcast Series. It has since earned additional nominations from the GLAAD Media Awards, Webby Awards, and Shorty Awards.

Building on the success of the podcast, Mathilde and her partner Mal Glowne launched Made It Out Media in 2025—an inclusive digital media company dedicated to amplifying the voices of queer women through bold, authentic storytelling. Their work continues to break ground and foster representation across platforms.

DANIEL HOLLIS | DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Daniel Hollis is a British American Director of Photography based in Los Angeles. He has a decade and a half of experience working in long form documentaries across the United States, Europe, Syria, Papua New Guinea and Kazakhstan.

SASHA PERRY | EDITOR

Sasha Perry is a documentary editor based in Los Angeles. Their films have premiered at international festivals and have found homes on Netflix, Hulu, National Geographic and PBS. They are a fourth year Rabbinic student who focuses on stories that elevate the experience of being alive in this moment and struggle for justice in the world.

END CREDITS

DIRECTED BY

Gianna Toboni

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Samantha Wender

Mathilde Jourdan

PRODUCERS

Jacqueline Toboni

Samantha Wender

Gianna Toboni

EDITED BY

Sasha Perry

Yasu Tsuji

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Daniel Hollis

CAMERA OPERATORS

Jes Gallegos

MJ Johnston

Wil Hughes

Carissa Henderson

Jika Gonzalez

Madeleine Peters

Alyza Enriquez
Alex Rosen
Andy Maser
Martin Rosas
Brendan Gilliam

CONSULTING PRODUCERS

Alex Schmider
Alyza Enriquez
Mel Mel Sukekawa-Mooring

FIELD PRODUCER

Jika González

SOUND

Ramsay Davila
COMPOSER
Taul Katz

POST PRODUCTION AUDIO

Full English Post

SUPERVISING SOUND EDITOR

Kieran Kaye

RE-RECORDING MIXER

Charles Atangana
Ben Steiner

CO-EDITOR

Mike Wallace

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Jarrel Lynch
GRAPHICS
Rio Roye
Mariah Tarvainen

COLOR

Esmé Smith

“SUPERHUMAN”

Written by Sarah McLaughlin,
Sherwyn Nicholls, John Ryan,
Andrew Haas and Ian Franzino
Performed by Bishop Briggs
Courtesy of Universal Music
Enterprises