

NO PLACE LIKE HOME

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST HATE IN KANSAS

A FILM BY KEVIN WILLMOTT
narrated by Melissa Etheridge

PRESS KIT

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SYNOPSIS:

No Place Like Home: The Struggle Against Hate in Kansas is a 60-minute documentary film produced by Do Good Productions, directed by Kevin Willmott and released in 2023. The legacy of free state battles in Kansas continues with modern-day friends of Dorothy who find that home is a hostile place. This film explores the challenges for acceptance and compassion that LGBTQ people face through stories of gains and losses, love and hatred, and the willful ignorance that continue to make this effort so arduous yet vital for the very soul of our humanity.

Directed by Oscar winner Kevin Willmott and narrated by Melissa Etheridge, *No Place Like Home: The Struggle Against Hate in Kansas* takes you on a tour of a deep red state, to meet people who have found themselves in a battle for LGBTQ rights in the most unlikely places. In Trego County, Manhattan, Dodge City, Wichita, Topeka and several rural communities, you'll meet some of the people C.J. Janovy profiles in her book *No Place Like Home: Lessons in Activism from LGBT Kansas* as well as emerging activists—ordinary people doing extraordinary things, all because they're committed to securing justice for everyone in their home state.



TRAILER: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QToDXxNaQR0>

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DO GOOD PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS NO PLACE LIKE HOME
WRITTEN BY MELISSA ETHERIDGE PRODUCED BY SAM ZEFF AND SCOTT RICHARDSON
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER C.J. JANOVY DIRECTED BY KEVIN WILLMOTT EDITED BY MARK VON SCHLEMMER
NARRATED BY MELISSA ETHERIDGE
MUSIC BY KEVIN WILLMOTT
COSTUME DESIGNER MATT JACOBSON
PRODUCTION DESIGNER ERIC J. SMITH
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY KEVIN WILLMOTT
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS MELISSA ETHERIDGE, SAM ZEFF, SCOTT RICHARDSON
PRODUCED BY SAM ZEFF, SCOTT RICHARDSON
WRITTEN BY MELISSA ETHERIDGE
DIRECTED BY KEVIN WILLMOTT
EDITED BY MARK VON SCHLEMMER
NARRATED BY MELISSA ETHERIDGE
MUSIC BY KEVIN WILLMOTT
COSTUME DESIGNER MATT JACOBSON
PRODUCTION DESIGNER ERIC J. SMITH

GENRE: DOCUMENTARY

RUNTIME: 56:46

FORMAT: HD (1080P)

DIRECTOR: KEVIN WILLMOTT

NARRATOR: MELISSA ETHERIDGE

EDITOR: MARK VON SCHLEMMER

PRODUCER: SCOTT RICHARDSON

PRODUCER: SAM ZEFF

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER: C.J. JANOVY

WEBSITE:

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DIRECTOR

KEVIN WILLMOTT



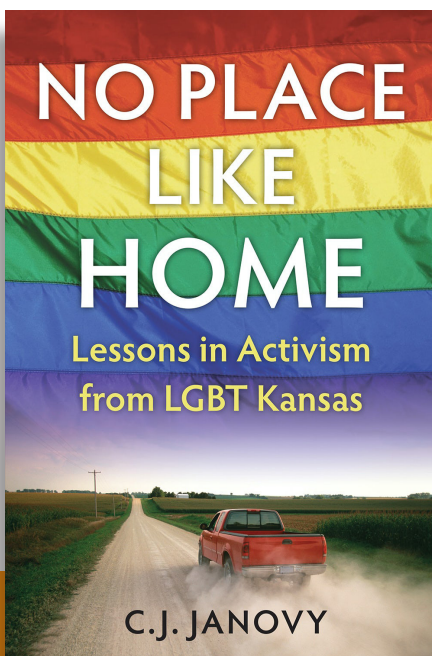
KEVIN WILLMOTT won an Academy Award for co-writing the screenplay for Spike Lee's 2019 film *BlacKkKlansman*. He also co-wrote Lee's films *Chi-Raq* and most recently, *Da 5 Bloods*.

A prolific independent filmmaker, Willmott has directed 14 feature films, including two that premiered at The Sundance Film Festival: *C.S.A: Confederate States Of America*, and *The Only Good Indian*, starring Wes Studi. Willmott's other films include *The 24th* starring Trai Byers of *Empire*; *Destination: Planet Negro!*; *Jayhawkers*, about how the recruiting of Wilt Chamberlain by legendary basketball coach Phog Allen modernized basketball and changed a community; *The Battle for Bunker Hill*, starring James McDaniel and Saeed Jaffrey; *Ninth Street*, starring Martin Sheen and Isaac Hayes; and the documentary feature *William Allen White: What's The Matter With Kansas*.

Willmott grew up in Junction City, Kansas and attended Marymount College receiving his BA in Drama. He attended graduate studies at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, receiving several writing awards and his M.F.A. in Dramatic Writing. Willmott is a Professor in the Film and Media Studies Department at The University of Kansas.

AUTHOR

C.J. JANOVY



C.J. JANOVY is a longtime journalist with deep roots in Kansas City. She's currently director of content at KCUR, the city's NPR affiliate, where she's also overseen digital news and reported on arts and culture. She was the founding opinion editor at *Kansas Reflector*, and for many years served as editor of Kansas City's alt-weekly *The Pitch*.

Her book *No Place Like Home: Lessons in Activism from LGBT Kansas* (University Press of Kansas, January 2018) is the epic story of how a few disorganized and politically naive Kansans, realizing they were unfairly under attack, rolled up their sleeves, went looking for fights, and ended up making friends in one of the country's most hostile states. Or, as she likes to say, a love story. It won the 2019 Stubbendieck Great Plains Distinguished Book Prize, was a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award in LGBTQ nonfiction and was honored as a Kansas Notable Book for 2019.

THE FILMMAKERS:

DIRECTOR: KEVIN WILLMOTT

Kevin is an Academy Award-winning, two-time Sundance Film Festival director, and co-writer, with Spike Lee, of *BlacKkKlansman* and *Chi-Raq*. His last project for Do Good Productions was the award-winning documentary *Gordon Parks Elementary*.

NARRATOR: MELISSA ETHERIDGE

Melissa Etheridge is a two-time Grammy Award-winning, five-time GLAAD Media Award-winning rock musician whose breakthrough album *Yes I Am* earned an RIAA certification of 6x platinum. She also won an Academy Award for her song "I Need to Wake Up" from the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. She was born in Leavenworth, Kansas.

EDITOR: MARK VON SCHLEMMER

Mark is a television producer, filmmaker and professor. He was an editor on such feature films as *Destination: Planet Negro!*, *The Only Good Indian*, *CSA: The Confederate States of America* and *AIR: A Musical*. His documentary film work includes serving as editor and co-writer on *Kansas vs. Darwin*, *William Allen White: What's the Matter with Kansas*, and *Gordon Parks Elementary*.

PRODUCER: SCOTT RICHARDSON

Scott has produced several independent feature films and documentaries. His professional experience includes executive positions at ABC News and A&E Television Networks, and his writing has been published in *The New York Times Magazine*. Scott was a producer on *Gordon Parks Elementary*.

PRODUCER: SAM ZEFF

Sam is the *Morning Edition* news anchor for KCUR, Kansas City's NPR affiliate. He produces the history podcast *Archiver*, and has produced documentaries for PBS stations in Pennsylvania and on A&E Network. He was also a producer on *Gordon Parks Elementary*. Sam has held leadership positions in TV newsrooms in Minneapolis, Kansas City and St. Louis.

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER: C.J. JANOVY

C.J. is a veteran journalist and the author of *No Place Like Home: Lessons in Activism from LGBT Kansas*, winner of the 2019 Stubbendieck Great Plains Distinguished Book Prize, finalist for a 2019 Lambda Literary Award in LGBTQ Nonfiction and 2019 Kansas Notable Book.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Kevin says, "Working on the film *No Place Like Home* has been a wonderful experience for me. Most of my films deal with the Black struggle in American history. This film allowed me to expand upon my belief that all these struggles have the same opponent -- ignorance. The lawmakers, politicians and others that fight progress with African Americans, Women and immigrants are the same ones that battle the LGBTQ community.

"The film reflects how abolitionists like Frederick Douglass went from fighting to end slavery to the right of women to vote and then child labor, stopping foreign wars, and the fight against poverty. It is important to look at all these struggles as one experience. History tells us that is how those that manufacture and sell hate always look at it.

"In particular, the attack on trans youth is one of the most shocking and hateful episodes in recent history. Since the bloody battles of the civil rights movement, America likes to believe it has settled how we look at one another. The interracial and gay couples on television commercials sells the corporate illusion that we have reached the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. However, that is far from our actual national reality. Hate crimes are up and the Federal Bureau of Investigation states that domestic terrorism is currently the biggest threat against American citizens.

"The lack of compassion and the willingness of lawmakers to dismiss the lost lives of these trans youth can only be called heartless. None of the Kansas opponents of LGBTQ rights we contacted were willing to be interviewed for the film. This left us to make what some would call a one-sided documentary.

"I believe these politicians and others do not want to be interviewed because they know their positions make them appear like bigots and hate mongers. They save their comments for news services that are also anti-LGBTQ and for the safe confines of the floor of the House and Senate. We would have welcomed their comments and used them in a fair and proper context. Since they did not, we have some satirical fun with their positions.

"This shying away from positions opposed to their own is in the long tradition of those that have always fought civil rights. They like to vanish from the opposition public and issue only controlled attacks. Our film shines the light on the hate and struggle here in Kansas. But Kansas is just a reflection of the rest of the United States, no better and no worse.

"I am proud to be a Kansan and believe this film is one step in revealing the negative attitudes and policies that make being young and queer in the state a difficult existence.

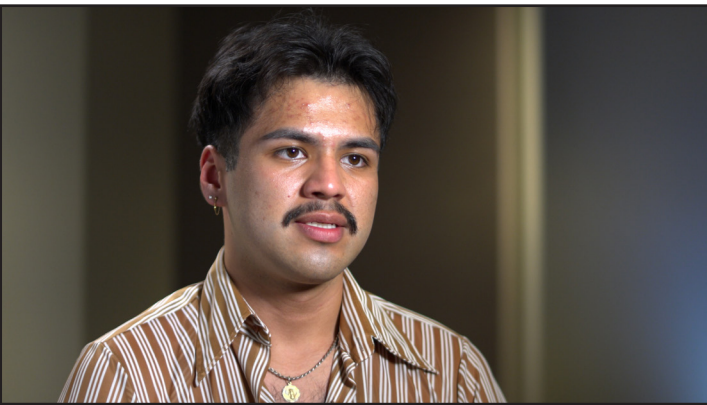
We believe fighting back makes their lives a little better."

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

C.J. says, "*No Place Like Home: Lessons in Activism from LGBT Kansas* chronicles a decade of struggle and success for equality in Kansas. After it was published in 2018, LGBTQ Kansans celebrated victories: the passage of local ordinances protecting them from discrimination in key population centers, the election of a Native American lesbian to Congress and two openly gay representatives to the Kansas House. But the backlash had already begun, with conservative politicians punishing LGBTQ people for this progress—and transgender people, particularly children, made for easy targets. I wish the book didn't need a sequel, but there's no better person to pick up this part of the story than Kevin Willmott.

"What's happening in Kansas is playing out all over the country. I'm so grateful to the brave Kansans who speak up in *No Place Like Home: The Struggle Against Hate in Kansas*—everyday people who show so much more courage than the politicians who are willing to risk young people's lives in their craven culture wars. The film is a powerful reminder of all the ways in which love wins."

PHOTOS & STILLS



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INQUIRIES/BOOKINGS:

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MORE INFORMATION:

noplacelikehomedoc.com

