



A Closer Walk

A Film by Robert Bilheimer

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Background



Photo: Forest McMullin

**Robert Bilheimer,
Director**

The Body is pleased to feature letters from the director of "*A Closer Walk*," the first feature-length film to document the global AIDS pandemic.

A Closer Walk was conceived in 1996 by Oscar nominee Robert Bilheimer, President of Worldwide Documentaries, and the late Jonathan Mann, the visionary public health leader and human rights activist who was the architect of the World Health Organization's program on global AIDS. Dr. Mann died, with

his wife, Mary Lou Clements-Mann, in the crash of Swissair 111 on September 2, 1998. *A Closer Walk* was in many ways inspired by Dr. Mann, and will reflect his lifelong commitment to health, dignity, and human rights.

Dr. Mann and Robert Bilheimer conceived *A Closer Walk* as a bridge between the international AIDS community and the general public -- the first global film and television event to describe not only the breadth and destructive power of the pandemic, but its underlying social causes as well. UNAIDS director, Dr. Peter Piot has called *A Closer Walk* a "critical missing link" in the war against global AIDS.

With support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and others, production of *A Closer Walk* has been underway since February in Africa, Haiti, and Uganda, and continued throughout the year with filming in India and Nepal, Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, Brazil, and various locations in the United States.

During the first three months of filming in South Africa, Haiti, and Uganda, director and producer Robert Bilheimer began to write these letters as a way to sort through the many experiences -- some of them heartbreaking, some inspiring, all very affecting -- he was having on a daily basis as he began to document, with his film crew, the harsh realities of AIDS in the developing world. *A Closer Walk's* crew is small, which allowed filming to be as discreet as possible. Crew members include [Richard Young](#) (Director of Photography), [Craig Braden](#) (Assistant



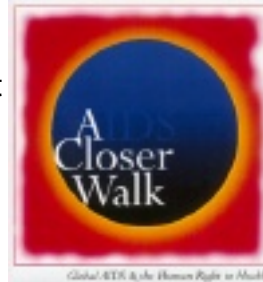
Cameraman), [Lee Edwards](#) (Sound Recordist) and [Diana Hyslop](#) (Production Manager).

[Richard, Craig, Lee, Diana](#) (pictured from left to right)

The Body is pleased to share these letters with our visitors.

A *Closer Walk* has been completed. For more information, go to their [Web site](#). For a schedule of upcoming screenings of the film, click [here](#).

Inquiries and comments are welcome at wwdocs@aol.com. Please be aware that it may not be possible to respond to all e-mails.



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