

BATTLEGROUND

A film by Cynthia Lowen



Anti-choice students rally at the U.S. Supreme Court for the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett.

*****World Premiere – Documentary Competition – 2022 Tribeca Film Festival*****

Directed by Cynthia Lowen

Produced by **Rebecca Stern** and **Cynthia Lowen**

Executive Produced by **Jeff Sobrato**, **Dexter Braff**, **Nicole Shipley**, **Ryan Harrington**, and **Ruth Ann Harnisch**

RT: 105 minutes

For more information, please contact:

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[Link to director Cynthia Lowen's headshot](#)

[Link to photo of full team at the Tribeca Film Festival](#)

[Link to photo of creative team at the Tribeca Film Festival](#)

SHORT SYNOPSIS

'Battleground' is an urgently timely window into the intersection of abortion and politics in America, following three women who lead formidable anti-abortion organizations to witness the enormous influence they wield. As the nation faces the end of Roe, the film also depicts those on the front lines of the fierce fight to maintain access.

LONG SYNOPSIS

This June, the Supreme Court overturned Roe versus Wade, ending 50 years of constitutional protections for abortion in the United States. How have we arrived here, when 7 in 10 Americans support access to legal abortion? 'Battleground' follows three women who lead formidable anti-abortion organizations in their single-minded quest to overturn Roe v. Wade, as they face down forces equally determined to safeguard women's access to safe and legal abortions.

Who are anti-abortion people? What are they driven by, what do they believe, how do they operate and what are their goals? 'Battleground' gets inside the anti-abortion movement as never seen before to answer these questions, with many surprises: they are women, young people, even Democrats. With close access, the film shows how the anti-choice movement is strategizing and organizing, and their determination to overturn Roe at any cost. As their power and influence propels the Supreme Court sharply right, and states race to enact unconstitutional abortion bans, the film also depicts those on the front lines of the fierce fight to maintain access.

In the wake of Roe, 26 states stand poised to ban abortion, catalyzing unprecedented legal, medical and social upheaval. 'Battleground' is required viewing for anyone with a stake in the future of abortion in America.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In June of 2022, the Supreme Court ended 50 years of constitutional protections for abortion in America with their decision on Dobbs versus Mississippi, which overturned Roe versus Wade. In the absence of Roe, 26 states are poised to ban abortion and states such as Texas and Oklahoma have already done so. It is impossible to overstate the healthcare crisis this is triggering as states where abortion remains legal are inundated by patients from anti-abortion states, and those who cannot afford such travel will remain pregnant against their will.

How have we arrived at the end of Roe, when 7 in 10 Americans support access to abortion and 1 in 4 women will terminate a pregnancy? I began this film with genuine curiosity: how has the anti-abortion movement been so successful at advancing their goals, when they are so blatantly outnumbered? In filming over the most pivotal year for abortion since Roe was decided, I discovered an anti-abortion movement that is highly organized, deeply motivated, very politically savvy and willing to go to great lengths to get what they want.

The creative team has met the challenges of this film with nuance and journalistic integrity, depicting its subjects' views accurately while applying a sharp critical lens. 'Battleground' respects that people have come to their deeply-held positions on abortion from diverse backgrounds, experiences and beliefs. Viewers from all sides will probably strongly disagree with some of the voices in the film, and that's OK - hearing from people with different points of view is a healthy part of our democracy. However, imposing one's personal beliefs on others' healthcare decisions through gerrymandering, stigma, voter-suppression, misinformation and other methods is not.

'Battleground' is fundamentally the story of how a minority of people are manipulating the levers of power to subvert our democracy and advance their agenda against the will of the majority. While the film depicts the clash of abortion and politics in America, it is really about the erosion of our democratic systems and the disintegration of the separation between church and state.

The team behind this film are unwilling to accept an America where women's lives are gambled with for political gain. If people do not understand the motivations and machinations that have created this situation, we will be unable to change it. That means fostering civic engagement at all levels, shifting culture, engaging the next generation with the same vigor as the anti-abortion movement is and exposing the detrimental outcomes when abortion is politicized.

As the producer and writer of 'Bully' and the director of 'Netizens,' I have a record of creating films that transcend political affiliations and catalyze measurable change. 'Battleground' is a unique opportunity to unleash a national dialogue about the future of American democracy and abortion rights – and inspire audiences to effective and focused action.

BIOGRAPHIES

Crew

CYNTHIA LOWEN | Director



Cynthia Lowen is an Emmy-nominated filmmaker and award-winning writer whose work uses the power of story to catalyze meaningful change, confronting timely social issues from bullying to online harassment to reproductive rights. Most recently, she is the director and producer of the feature documentary ‘Battleground,’ a bold and urgent wakeup-call on the power of the anti-abortion movement in the United States, premiering at the 2022 Tribeca Film Festival.

Cynthia is also the director and producer of ‘Netizens’ (HBO), a feature documentary about women and online harassment. “Bristling with rightful fury,” says Teen Vogue of the film, ‘Netizens’ follows three women – Carrie Goldberg, Tina Reine and Anita Sarkeesian – as they confront digital abuse and strive for justice online. The film had its world premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival and has screened at top film festivals around the world, including the Bergen International Film Festival, the Cork Film Festival, the Denver Film Festival, Hot Docs, the Milwaukee Film Festival and the Zürich Film Festival among many other festivals and exhibitions. ‘Netizens’ is currently part of the prestigious U.S. State Department ‘s Film Diplomacy Program, where it has screened at U.S. Embassies in Albania, Lebanon, Moscow and Turkey with associated cultural programming and lectures.

Cynthia is also the producer and writer of the acclaimed documentary ‘Bully’ (The Weinstein Company) following five kids and families through a year in the life of America’s bullying crisis. The film premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival and also appeared on Independent Lens, Netflix and numerous other television and video-on-demand outlets. Lauded by critics, ‘Bully’ was nominated for two Emmys for Best Documentary Film and Outstanding Information Programming. The film was also shortlisted for the Oscars and received an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia Award for Excellence in Journalism, as well as the Stanley Kramer Award from the Producers Guild of America, the True Life Fund Award, the Cinema Eye Audience Choice Award, the Emery Award, the Bergen Film Festival Audience Award and more.

Drawing on the powerful responses to the film, Cynthia co-created The Bully Project Social Action Campaign, a collaborative effort in partnership with organizations, foundations, brands and corporate sponsors, sharing a commitment to ending bullying and transforming society. Partners included Adobe, the American Federation of Teachers, Autism Speaks, BBYO, the Cartoon Network, DoSomething.org, Facing History and Ourselves, GLSEN, JPMorgan Chase, Human Rights Campaign, the National Center for Learning Disabilities, Sears, the United Federation of Teachers and many more. The campaign engaged over five million students in a free community screening program and was screened at The White House where President Obama announced his support for the Safe Schools Improvement Act. The immense cultural influence of 'Bully' and the associated impact campaign was featured in a 1-hour CNN special hosted by Anderson Cooper called 'The Bully Effect.'

Cynthia is also an award-winning poet and winner of the National Poetry Series for her collection 'The Cloud That Contained the Lightning,' selected by Nikky Finney and published by University of Georgia Press (2013). Using the character of J. Robert Oppenheimer, known as the "father of the atomic bomb," as a jumping-off point, the collection explores the enduring legacy of nuclear weapons. Of these poems, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Richard Rhodes writes, "No biographer in 600 pages has come closer to understanding him [Oppenheimer]—and the bomb—than does Cynthia Lowen in these subtle, resonant poems." On behalf of her poetry, Cynthia was awarded the distinguished Discovery Prize accompanied by a reading at New York's 92nd Street Y.

Cynthia has also held residencies at MacDowell, the Banff Center, Yaddo, Hedgebrook, the Berlinale Talent Campus, the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown among others, and she received the Hedgebrook Women Authoring Change Fellowship from William Morris Entertainment. She received her MFA from Sarah Lawrence College and her BA from Colorado College and has been a member of the Producers Guild of America since 2014.

Anti-Abortion Voices

KRISTAN HAWKINS | Founder, Students for Life of America



Kristan is the founder and president of Students for Life of America, the largest pro-life youth organization in the U.S. with over 1200 chapters in middle schools, high schools, colleges and medical schools in all 50 states. Valedictorian of her high school and the daughter of blue dog Democrats, she wanted to become an aeronautical engineer.

Battleground delves into Kristan's personal evolution and witnesses as she sets out to build the "pro-life generation" who will lead a post-Roe America.

MARJORIE DANNENFELSER | President, Susan B. Anthony List



Marjorie Dannenfelser is the president of the Susan B. Anthony List, a powerful anti-choice lobbying organization with a mission to get pro-life leaders elected to office. Surprisingly, Marjorie was leader of the pro-choice Republicans at Duke and, as a freshman, decided to seek an abortion when she thought she was pregnant.

Dubbed “Trump’s abortion-whisperer,” ‘Battleground’ seeks to understand how Marjorie's stance changed, and follows as she becomes a key player in advancing Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court.

TERRISA BUKOVINAC | Founder, Pro-Life San Francisco



Terrisa Bukovinac represents a very different facet of the pro-life movement: a Democrat, atheist, vegan and self-proclaimed feminist, she's the founder of Pro-Life San Francisco. Wearing her outsider status as a badge, she wants to reframe anti-abortion as consistent with non-religious, progressive values.

'Battleground' follows as Terrisa becomes increasingly bold in her anti-abortion actions and determination to overturn Roe, and finds herself to be odd political bed-fellows with her Republican counterparts, who see her as a bridge to typically pro-choice communities.

Pro Choice Voices

ALEXIS MCGILL JOHNSON | President and CEO of Planned Parenthood



Alexis McGill Johnson is the president and CEO of Planned Parenthood Federation of America and the Planned Parenthood Action Fund. Alexis is a champion for social and racial justice, a respected political and cultural organizer, and a tireless advocate for reproductive freedom.

'Battleground' features Johnson's response to the unprecedented attack on reproductive rights and the tactics of the anti-abortion movement.

JENNA KING | Former Planned Parenthood Alabama State Director



Jenna King was the Alabama State Director for Planned Parenthood Southeast, and she is currently attending law school. The daughter of a Southern Baptist pastor, and a two-time runner-up for Miss Alabama, Jenna came out publicly about having an abortion at 17.

With deep ties to the Alabama political establishment, Jenna uses her background to shatter the stigma around abortion in the South, and lobby for pro-choice policies in Alabama.

SAMANTHA BLAKELY | Planned Parenthood Services Coordinator



Samantha Blakely was brought up in the conservative Church of Christ and was one of the only women to speak on the floor of the Alabama senate to oppose the state’s total abortion ban, telling her own story of becoming pregnant after a rape.

‘Battleground’ follows as Samantha becomes a client services coordinator for Planned Parenthood in Mobile and a PP Storyteller, sharing her experiences with groups in the South, where stigma remains extremely high.

NANCY NORTHUP | President of the Center for Reproductive Rights



Nancy Northup is President and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights, a global human rights organization whose litigation and advocacy work have transformed how reproductive rights are understood by courts, governments, and human rights bodies.

'Battleground' witnesses the Center for Reproductive Rights fight a major Supreme Court case that attempts to overturn Roe v. Wade.

FULL CREDITS

Opening Credits

Train of Thought Productions presents

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Safe Space Pictures Fifth Man Productions The Harnisch Foundation

Executive Produced by Jeff Sobrato
Dexter Braff
Nicole Shipley
Ryan Harrington
Ruth Ann Harnisch

Original Music by Gil Talmi

Cinematography by Gabriella Garcia-Pardo
Barbie Leung

Edited by Nancy Novack, ACE

Additional Editing By Katharina Stroh

Co-produced by Steffie van Rhee

Produced by Rebecca Stern, p.g.a
Cynthia Lowen, p.g.a

Directed by Cynthia Lowen

BATTLEGROUND

End Credits

Written by Cynthia Lowen
Nancy Novack

Additional Cinematographers Sara Kinney
Lauretta Prevost
Hannah Varnell
Tijana Petrovic
Don Gregory
Jia Li
Vatsala Goel
Cailin Yatsko
Riley Engemoen
Chris Hilleke

Field Producers Kim Daniels
Pita Juarez
Melanie Sisk

Associate Producer Chrisi Hornback

Consulting Producer Eliza Licht

Sound Recordists Gabby Sturgeon
Sebastian Levy Polat
Travis Groves
Cynthia Lowen
Monica Rodriguez
Paige Goedkoop
Carver Audain
Lisa Gage
Colleen Zickler
Don Gregory
Jeremy Burns
Tom Craca

Austin, TX Pandemic Story Unit

Producers Ivy Chiu and Hannah Varnell
Director Hannah Varnell
Cinematography Ivy Chiu
Kyle Moser
Casting Andrew Escher

Production Assistants Mackenna Crosby

Tish Lara
Matthew Maffei
Orlando Torres

Assistant Editors Pedro Vital
Sera Gillow

Archival Producer Jillian Bergman
Archival Coordinator Lauren Bell

Design and Animation Jason Conratt

Supervising sound editor Coll Anderson M.P.S.E.
Re-recording mixer Coll Anderson M.P.S.E.
Dialogue Editor Duncan Clark
Sound Effects Editors Matt Snedecor
Katrina Henson

DI Colorist Keith Jenson
DI Producer Meghan Griesbeck
DI Account Executive Ryan Duffy

Score Producer Gil Talmi
Additional Music Andrew Gross
Music Supervision Andrew Gross
Music Editor Maddy Rose Weisman
Assistant to Composer Simón Wilson
Score Orchestrator Gil Talmi
Music Preparation Margy Hayes

Vocals Petra Haden
Gisela Fullà-Silvestre
Strings Cercles Gris Ensemble
Piano Gil Talmi

“Tell Me No Lies” Performed by
Maddy Rose Weisman
Written by
Maddy Rose Weisman, Gil Talmi and Andrew Gross
Courtesy of
Konsonant Music

Additional Music Courtesy of Konsonant Music

Archival Footage & Photos Courtesy of Students for Life of America

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- CBS News
- The Daily - NYT
- The Office of Donald J. Trump
- CNN
- NowThis
- NPR - Morning Edition
- NewsChannel5
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- The Sun
- MSNBC
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- ITV News
- Veritone
- WAMU - 1A
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