



The Turn Out
A film by Pearl Gluck

(USA, 2016 – in post-production)
RT: 77 minutes

Pearl Gluck
646-247-7329
pearl@palinkapictures.com
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The Turn Out

LOGLINE:

At his local truckstop in Mineral Wells, West Virginia, a trucker is drawn into a sex trafficking ring at his local truck stop and discovers a troubling connection between an underage prostitute and his fifteen-year old daughter.

SHORT SYNOPSIS:

The Turn Out is a feature-length film set in Southern Appalachia. The film examines domestic trafficking at truckstops in rural America through the story of a trucker named Crowbar who comes to the excruciating realization that he has become an active part of a sex trafficking ring when he engages with an underage victim. The film explores the choices he makes once he is aware of her situation.

STORY SYNOPSIS:

Crowbar is a trucker who has driven more than 3 million miles throughout the United States over the last twenty-five years. What keeps him on the road is his desire to give his daughter the opportunities he did not have. What keeps him awake on the road is his methamphetamine. He is trying to shelter his 15-year-old daughter, Amanda, from the world of addiction and desperation he faces every day. On his way home from work one day, he is met by his wife who tells him that Amanda got into his stash when no one was home, that she overdosed and almost died. His wife hands him a restraining order to prevent him from seeing his daughter until he gets clean. Crowbar is forced to move into the local dilapidated truckstop where he is propositioned by Neveah, a truckstop prostitute. He succumbs to her offer of "company," but pays her for "partying" with him instead of sex. The next day, Crowbar violates the restraining order to attend his daughter's high school music rehearsal, he sees Neveah standing beside Amanda singing and realizes he has hired an under-aged girl. Instead of being concerned for Neveah's welfare, Crowbar confronts Neveah at the truckstop and tells her to stay away from his kid. What he doesn't realize but soon comes to learn is that Neveah is being trafficked by her own mother's boyfriend. Under the threat that they will pimp her little sister if she doesn't comply, she is forced to work the trucks every night. The film explores what Crowbar does once he discovers that he is part of a sex trafficking ring.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:

In 2014, the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline received reports of 3,598 sex trafficking cases in the United States alone. The year before that, on September 2013, two arrests were made in Athens, Ohio in a domestic sex trafficking case: a young girl was being trafficked by her father's girlfriend in exchange for drugs and money. Eleven years prior, in 2002, a trucker parked at a travel center in Detroit made a phone call to report his suspicions of two girls being trafficked at his truckstop, and saved the lives of a young girl and her cousin who were kidnapped from Toledo, Ohio and trafficked across state lines.

Based initially on these two stories and the research I conducted in Ohio when I was teaching at Ohio University's School of Film, I wrote *The Turn Out* in 2014.

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While *The Turn Out* is inspired by the story of a trucker who did not purchase sex but made a phone call at a truckstop that saved the lives of two victims, the fictionalized version the trucker is a less-than-heroic everyman who does actually engage in the sex trade. To him, a quick inexpensive rendezvous with a prostitute is an innocuous respite. *The Turn Out* challenges simplistic understandings of bystander, perpetrator, and victim. By the end of the film, Crowbar comes to realize that he is, in fact, culpable and could play an essential role in prevention.

To inform the narrative, I interviewed survivors of trafficking, truckers, and legislators and incorporated their voices into the narrative. The documentary elements of the film also informed the casting. For example, a trucker for the United States Post Office, plays Crowbar, a survivor of 25 years of being trafficked on the streets of Columbus, OH, is the advocate who works with the underage victim, Neveah ("Heaven spelled backwards") is played by a young woman who, herself, was subjected to inner-family trafficking because of drug addiction in Chauncey, one of the five poorest counties in Ohio. Jack Wright, co-founder of Appalshop (Appalachia's multimedia arts center), tells the story of the Wipple Company Store in Fayette county on early signs of trafficking in the region, and the woman who is cast as Neveah shared her own story with me about how she had once managed to escape her heroine-addicted mother when she was traded for drugs to a dealer.

Staying true to the regionality of the issue, the film is set at the aging Liberty Truck Stop in West Virginia, and Glouster, also one of the poorest counties in Southern Ohio.

As an additional note on the storytelling, my grandmother, a survivor of Auschwitz, often said to me: "I don't know why they keep making those films on the Holocaust, killing us over and over on screen." I took her sentiments to heart and for this reason, I decided not to show the actual sexual abuse in *The Turn Out* on screen. The film focuses on a bystander who can challenge our proverbial blindness and encourage the viewers to see what is otherwise hidden but directly on our doorsteps.

This film raises questions of women's agency and victimization and counters the misconception that trafficking predominantly involves girls and women who come from outside the United States. This film highlights that a majority of the women committing a "crime" of solicitation are actually forced into it. For example, State Representative Teresa Fedor, a consultant on the film, has made this her bipartisan life work and after a long struggle, finally passed the "End Demand Act" in Ohio in June 2014.

From my research, it is clear that addiction, poverty, and lack of opportunities are some of the leading causes of domestic inner-family sex trafficking.

BRIEF PERSONAL STATEMENT:

In some ways, it should come as no surprise that I took up film to tell stories, the camera always a presence in my family history, my Hasidic father behind the super-8. But, where I'm from, it's not the norm to watch movies, let alone create them, because it is diversion from a life of piety, devotion, and modesty. Hence, the paradox of my cinematic project: on the one hand, film has informed my early life, on the other hand, it was entirely forbidden.

The silent witness of the camera and the inherent challenge of its documentary voice continue to inspire how I engage with stories that move me to action. In 2010, I started dating a trucker which led to trips over-the-road in his rig. At the same time, I learned about Truckers Against Trafficking which galvanizes truckers to notice and report signs of human trafficking. Because they are on the road, and because of the demand for sex workers on "Peterbilt Alley" (the lines of parked trucks at truckstops), truckers are deemed the "eyes and ears of America," the potential witnesses to the crime. This awareness inspired me to write *The Turn Out*. My goal was to blend my documentary research with the dramatic possibilities of a fictional script.

My first documentary project, *Divan* (2004), informs this process since the film is an autobiographical archeology of my own Hasidic narrative. Working with documentaries inspired me to incorporate real life experiences into fiction. This proved to be true in my first narrative project, *Where Is Joel Baum* (2012), where my actors' life experiences were integrated into the story. Our work together earned one of the actors a Best Actor award at the Starz Denver Film Festival and a leading role in *Felix and Meira* (2015), Canada's 2015 submission for the Academy Awards.

CREW BIOS:

Pearl Gluck – Director, Writer and Producer

Pearl Gluck's work has been part of the Sundance Lab, and played at the Cannes Film Festival, Tribeca Film Festival, and PBS. Her first documentary feature film, *Divan* (2004) opened theatrically at Film Forum in NYC, was broadcast on the Sundance Channel, and played across the country and internationally at festivals. Pearl's first narrative short, *Where Is Joel Baum* (2012), won prizes such as Best Actor at the Starz Denver Film Festival and Best Film at the Toronto Female Eye Film Festival. She continues to make both documentary and narrative films that explore themes of class, gender, and faith. Pearl teaches Screenwriting and Directing at Penn State University and is currently developing a documentary project exploring specialty courts that offer an alternative, treatment-oriented approach for victims of sex trafficking.

Kristan Sprague – Editor

Kristan Sprague's second feature film, *Manos Sucias* (2014), is nominated for a 2015 Independent Spirit Award for Editing. The film also won Best New Narrative Director at the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival. He edited the short film, *Mulignans* (2015), directed by Shaka King, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. His first feature film as lead editor, entitled *Newlyweeds* (2013), also premiered at Sundance, and won the Someone to Watch Award at the 2014 Independent Spirit Awards. Kristan learned how to edit by hand splicing 16mm film while an undergrad at Vassar College, where he edited a short documentary called *Stolen Moments* that went on to win 2nd Place for Documentary in both the Los Angeles Black Film Festival and the Cine Noir Film Fest in North Carolina.

Ildiko Szollosi - Co-producer

Ildiko Szollosi is a New York based lawyer and activist committed to economic and social justice. Her work and activism focuses on empowering women and the underprivileged whether by representing small businesses against large corporations, or socially engaged art endeavors. Ildiko was an attorney in international law firms, and was also the founding in-house lawyer of Gawker Media. Ildiko joined the team of *The Turn Out* after she learned about domestic inner-family human trafficking. That was her call to action to get involved in producing social action films. Her next collaboration with Pearl is a feature documentary exploring specialty courts that offer comprehensive treatment-oriented approach to victims of sex trafficking instead of traditional punitive sentencing.

Stephen Blahut – Cinematographer

Stephen Blahut is a narrative and documentary cinematographer currently living in New York City. He has served as director of photography on over twenty film projects since 2010 ranging from feature, documentary, music video, and commercial work. Some of his work as DP includes: *Mother* (2015 by Iryna

Zhygaliuk) which played at many festivals including the Female Eye Film Festival, the Short Film Corner at Cannes, the Wexner Arts Center, the Munich Underground Film Festival. His other films include *Good Bad, Not Evil* (2014 by Sarah Leibman) which played at festivals such as the New Orleans International Film Festival and L.A. Student International Film Festival, *Birds of Paradise* (2013 by Mladan Jurkovic) which played at festivals such as the Cannes Short Film Corner and Valencia Film Festival in Spain, and *Beautiful Eyes* (2012 by Rani Deighe Crowe) which played at festivals such as SWAN Festival and Ohio Shorts at the Wexner Arts Center. Prior to filmmaking Stephen participated in theatre where he received an American College Theatre Festival National Title in Dramaturgy and a Playwright Center Fellowship in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Additional Writing:

Barbara Freeman

Barbara Freeman survived 25 years of being trafficked on the streets of Columbus, OH. In 2003 through Catch Court she was saved from her traffickers. Since then, she has started a program called The Freeman Project that helps prostitutes in Columbus Ohio become aware of their options and decipher whether they are being trafficked. Her role in *The Turn Out* is her first acting role.

James Gagne, Jr.

James Gagne is a trucker who hauls United States Postal Service priority mail. He was a producer on *Where Is Joel Baum* (2012) which won Best Film at the Female Eye Film Festival in Toronto. His role in *The Turn Out* is his first feature acting role.