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The Turn Out

A FILM BY PEARL GLUCK



"The Turn Out" begins regional production this summer

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By Andrea Gibson

Using locations in Athens County and West Virginia, filmmaker Pearl Gluck will begin shooting a drama about sex trafficking in early July.

"The Turn Out," directed and co-written by Gluck, an Ohio University visiting assistant professor of film, is a fictional story based on her extensive research on the problem of children and teens being used in the sex trade.

Gluck has spent two years interviewing government officials, police officers, judges, social workers, truckers and victims about the issue in Ohio. Her sources include state Rep. Teresa Fedor, who sponsored the anti-trafficking "End Demand Act" passed by the Ohio Senate on June 4.

The filmmaker became interested in the issue after learning about the organization Truckers Against Trafficking, which seeks to combat the problem of teen prostitution at truck stops. Although some mainstream films have depicted women who have become prostitutes by choice or after being kidnapped, "The Turn Out" spotlights an issue that hasn't received as much publicity: adults who sell their own children or young relatives for sex.

Gluck has worked primarily in the documentary film genre, but chose to write a dramatic narrative to explore various angles of the sex-trafficking issue.

"What is compelling to me about fiction is that it allows me to create a situation that I may just not catch as a documentarian, no matter how patient I am behind the camera," she said. "It allows me to ask, 'What if?'"

The feature film follows the story of Crowbar, a truck driver who takes a stand against sex trafficking after meeting a 16-year-old girl, Neveah, who has been forced into prostitution by her own family. Gluck hopes that the film raises awareness of how poverty, abuse and addiction are factors in the problem.

The cast draws on Ohio University theater students and local thespians, but also includes members new to acting. Crowbar is played by real-life truck driver James Gagne, Jr., and Barbara Freeman, who survived 23 years of sex trafficking, will star as an advocate who encourages Neveah to contact the authorities.

Gluck's research on sex trafficking opened Gagne's eyes to the problem, he said.

"I'm in the middle of the trucking industry, and I don't like to see people abused or misused—especially children. I have kids myself, so it hits close to home," he said. "I'm hoping that the film brings awareness to people about what's going on around them in their communities."

The production crew of "The Turn Out" includes current students and recent graduates of [Ohio University's School of Film](#), where Gluck has taught for the last two years.

"I love teaching and making films, and this is a marriage of both—it's been fantastic," she said.

"The Turn Out" is a departure in subject matter from several of Gluck's previous films, which explored stories from the community of Hasidic Jews where she was raised in New York City. But the new work shares a common theme of interest to her, which is how people move from becoming bystanders to horror and crime to what she describes as "upstanders," or those who act to protect or save others from harm.

Gluck's films have been shown at festivals such as Cannes and the Tribeca Film Festival, and have aired on PBS and the Sundance Channel.

The film is supported in part by a grant from the Ohio University Research Committee and funding from the College of Health Sciences and Professions. Gluck is raising additional funds through a Kickstarter campaign.

The filmmaker plans to screen the film at Ohio University later this year.

Film poster image courtesy of Pearl Gluck.



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