



The Turn Out
A film by Pearl Gluck

(USA, 2018)
RT: 90 minutes

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

LOGLINE:

In a small town in Southern Appalachia, a trucker must decide if he will stand up and take action against sex trafficking at his truckstop.

SHORT SYNOPSIS:

The Turn Out is a feature-length film set in Southern Appalachia and at a truck stop in Mineral Wells, West Virginia. The film examines the ever-increasing epidemic of domestic human trafficking and child endangerment, as they relate to the current opioid crisis by telling the story of Crowbar, a long-distance trucker who discovers that a teenager is being trafficked at his local truckstop. The film explores the choices he makes once he is aware of her situation.

The Turn Out melds the testimony and talents of sex trafficking survivors, anti-trafficking activists, and truckers with the work of film professionals to create a tapestry of moral dilemma and personal connection set in the local landscape of Glouster, Ohio, Athens County, and Mineral Wells, West Virginia.

One story shared with us by a survivor:

“My grandmother was sold at a truckstop from the time she was 12 until she turned 18 and became an adult ... your movie hit me hard. It was as if I was watching my grandmother on that screen.”

Jessica Graham
Survivor's Ink



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:

In 2017, 4,687 calls were made to the [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#). According to [Truckers Against Trafficking](#), 1,980 calls were made by truckers. Almost half (48.5%) of the cases reported by truckers involved minors.

While I was teaching at [The Ohio University School of Film](#), in 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. He 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.

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.

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 actually engages 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, Ohio, is the advocate who works with the underage victim. Neveah ("Heaven spelled backwards") is played by a young woman who, herself, was subjected to child endangerment due to struggles with addiction in Chauncey, one of the five poorest counties in Ohio. She shared her own story about how she had 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 dated 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, PRODUCER, WRITER

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Pearl Gluck's work has been developed at the Sundance Lab and played at the Cannes Film Festival, Tribeca Film Festival, and PBS. Her first documentary feature film, *Divan* (2004) was a Sundance Institute project, is distributed by Zeitgeist Films, 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. *The Turn Out* is her first fiction narrative endeavor. Her short film, *Junior*, is in post-production, which deals with a woman struggling with a new normal after her son was shot by an off-duty police officer. 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 based on her research for *The Turn Out* exploring specialty courts that offer an alternative, treatment-oriented approach for victims of sex trafficking. In addition to making films, Pearl teaches Screenwriting and Directing at Penn State University.



Stephen Blahut
CINEMATOGRAPHER/DP

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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.



Kristan Sprague

EDITOR

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Kristan Sprague was nominated for a 2015 Independent Spirit Award for Editing on his second feature film, *Manos Sucias* (2014), directed by Josef Wladyka. The film also won Best New Narrative Director at the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival. Sprague 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.



Tom Hambleton

SOUND EDITOR

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Tom Hambleton of Undertone Music is equal parts composer, sound designer, and re-recording mixer with over 20 years experience with independent film and animation as well as commercial, TV, documentary, and music only-projects. Films that have received his sonic touch feature performances by Tom Hanks (*CAPTAIN PHILLIPS*), Terry Gilliam, Frank Vincent, Katherine Narducci, Laurence Fishburne, Tom Wilkenson, Matthew Modine, and many other great talents. He loves to find organic and surprising metaphoric connections between the visual and auditory worlds. Creating lushly storied soundscapes that integrate and enhance the

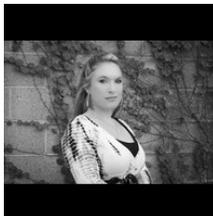
picture is his specialty. His work with artists such as Rosto (SPLINTERTIME, MONSTER OF NIX, and JONA/TOMBERRY), David Russo (I AM NOT VAN GOGH and THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF LITTLE DIZZLE), Beverly Ridge Pictures (CHICAGO OVERCOAT and THE SMALL ASSASSIN), and Andrew Chesworth (MONKEYTOWN and THE BRAVE LOCOMOTIVE) have generated many challenging soundtracks and garnered many top prizes from Cannes to Melbourne to The Hamptons to New Dehli to Black Maria. These and other films have screened at top festivals such as Cannes, Sundance, Tribeca, Claremont- Ferrand, Silver Docs, First Frame, and many others as well as in commercial theatres world wide. In the fall of 2007 he gave master classes and talks in sound and music for film at the Imago Festival in Portugal, and Fantoche, in Switzerland. Tom runs Undertone Music in Minneapolis, MN which features the Midwe... [See more](#)



Barbara Freeman

ADVOCATE AND TRAFFICKING SURVIVOR (SUPPORTING ACTOR)

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. She was honored in 2013 as the Columbus YWCA Woman of Achievement. Her role in The Turn Out is her first "acting" role.



Jennifer Kempton

CONSULTANT SURVIVOR OF TRAFFICKING (SUPPORTING ACTOR)

[IMDb PAGE »](#)

Jennifer Kempton was a survivor of human trafficking who used her experience to promote awareness and advocate for social change. During her horrific time on the streets she was branded and sold by her abusers. After obtaining her freedom, these marks became constant reminders of her abuse until she was given a gift of a tattoo cover-up. The liberation she experienced through covering her brands inspired her to found Survivor's Ink. Survivor's Ink exists to raise awareness and to empower human trafficking victims by breaking the psychological chains of enslavement through beautifying, removing or covering their physical scars, markings and

brandings that are constant reminders of a violent past. Founded by Kempton, Survivor's Ink offers full scholarships to survivors of human trafficking and sexual exploitation to have their branding tattoo's covered or removed. For more information: www.survivorsink.org



Phillis Bibbie

HERSELF AS TRUCKSTOP OWNER (SUPPORTING ACTOR)

Phillis Bibbie was a trucker for 20+ years and now manages a truckstop. She allowed us to set *The Turn Out* at her local Liberty Truck Stop in Mineral Wells, West Virginia. She has been an activist against trafficking and solicitation at her truckstop and prides herself in "cleaning up" Liberty. Phillis plays herself in *The Turn Out* advising the trucker's character, Crowbar.



Rep. Teresa Fedor

LEGISLATIVE CONSULTANT (SUPPORTING ACTOR)

Teresa Fedor (born May 26, 1956) is a Democratic member of the Ohio House of Representatives who has represented the 45th District since 2013. She had previously represented the 47th district from 2011 until redistricting in the 2012 election. [1] She had also represented the 52nd district from 2001 to 2002, and was a member of the Ohio Senate from 2003 to 2010. State Representative Teresa Fedor, a consultant on *The Turn Out*, has made fighting sex trafficking her bipartisan life work and after a long struggle, finally passed the 2014 "End Demand Act" in Ohio.

