



THE TURN AWAY PLAY

by Lesley Lisa Greene

Inspired by The Turnaway Study: Ten Years,
A Thousand Women, and the Consequences
of Having—or Being Denied—an Abortion

by Diana Greene Foster, PhD

The sisters behind the play!



Photo: Kate Medley

Lesley Lisa Greene (playwright) is a theater artist and event producer based in Ithaca, New York. She worked for over twenty years at the Kitchen Theatre Company, an innovative professional theater company, where she produced, wrote, acted, directed, and worked behind the scenes. She is currently co-director of Story House Ithaca, an organization that brings people together to share, study, create, and enjoy stories in all their forms. She also co-founded and continues to be an organizer of Porchfest, a festival that began in Ithaca in 2007 and now takes place in more than 200 cities across North America.

Diana Greene Foster, PhD (author of *The Turnaway Study*) is a professor at the University of California, San Francisco. She is a demographer who uses quantitative models and analyses to evaluate the effectiveness of family planning policies and the effect of unwanted pregnancy on people's lives. She is the author of over 120 scientific papers as well as the 2020 Scribner book, *The Turnaway Study: Ten Years, a Thousand Women and the Consequences of Having – or Being Denied – an Abortion*. She did a TED talk in October 2023 that has been viewed over 600,000 times since its release in January 2024. She was named a 2023 MacArthur Foundation fellow and one of ten people who shaped science in 2022 by the journal *Nature*. Dr. Foster received her undergraduate degree from UC Berkeley, her MA and PhD in Demography and Public Policy from Princeton University.

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Inspired by

*The Turnaway Study:
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and the Consequences of Having--
or Being Denied--an Abortion*
by Diana Greene Foster, PhD

July 2024

CHARACTERS

THE RESEARCHERS:

DR. FOSTER - Demographer and professor in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology & Reproductive Sciences at UCSF and lead researcher of The Turnaway Study.

LUISA - A Mexican American woman from Texas, 22 years old. The newest member of the Turnaway Study team.

SERENA - A Black woman from North Carolina in her late 20s-early 30s, Serena has worked as an interviewer for the Turnaway study for three years.

RHONDA - A researcher on the Turnaway Study for the past two years. In her mid-20s.

THE WOMEN OF THE STUDY (Real participants in the Turnaway Study. Their words are taken verbatim from study interviews):

AMY - 28 years old and six weeks pregnant when she had an abortion. From Texas.

ANGELA - 17 years old and 24 weeks pregnant when she was denied an abortion. From Illinois.

BRENDA - 24 years old and 24 weeks pregnant when she was denied an abortion. From New York.

KIARA - 26 years old and 13 weeks pregnant when she received an abortion. From Kentucky.

MARTINA - 22 years old and nine weeks pregnant when she had an abortion. From Arizona.

SOFIA - 19 years old and 26 weeks pregnant when she was denied an abortion. From California.

SETTING

The offices of Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health (ANSIRH) in downtown Oakland, California, 2014.

A college lecture hall, 2022

TIME

Dr. Foster's scenes take place on the day the Dobbs decision was released (June 24, 2022).

The office scenes take place in 2014.

NOTES

The actor who plays Dr. Foster speaks directly to the audience. In some cases, Dr. Foster's next line will depend on the audience reaction to a question. The script notation in that case is:

[option 1 / option 2 / option 3]

where the options depend on what the audience has said. Dr. Foster can and should respond to what the audience says and can improvise lines such as "Have you taken this class before?" And "This will be on the final!"

The play can be performed by 4, 7, or 10 actors. If the play is performed by four actors, doubling is easiest as follows:

- One actor plays Rhonda, Amy, Brenda
- One actor plays Serena, Angela, Kiara
- One actor plays Luisa, Sofia, Martina.
- The role of Dr. Foster is not doubled.

SCENE 1

(Lights up on a college lecture hall)

(SLIDE: "Guest lecture today!")

PROFESSOR BIGGS (V.O.)

Okay, class, please welcome my friend and colleague, the demographer Dr. Diana Greene Foster.

DR. FOSTER

(To Prof. Biggs) Thank you, Professor Biggs, for that kind introduction, and thank you for inviting me here to speak to your class.

(To the class) Good morning, class! (Waits for a response. If it doesn't come, she repeats, 'Good morning, class!')

I'm excited to be here. The kind of students who begin their college career by taking a course titled Sex, Science, and Society--you are my people!

And, wow, you are taking this class at an important moment for sex, science and society, with the Supreme Court decision coming any day.

(Holds up her phone) I know you have all turned off your cell phones, but I am keeping mine on in case there's news. When I know something, you'll know something. Okay, here we go.

(SLIDE: Introduction to the Turnaway Study.)

I'll be talking today about my research. I will give you an overview and use statements from people in the study to demonstrate the findings. But I want to start by asking you a question: How many of you know someone who has had an abortion? Raise your hands. (Waits for hands to go up.)

Actually, probably all of you do. Because around one in four American women will have an abortion in their lifetime. One in four. It is likely that all of you know someone who has had an abortion, but they may not have told you about it.

Because there is a stigma around unwanted pregnancy and an even bigger one around abortion.

Just the other day, I was at a small dinner party with a group of women, and after hearing what I study, one woman said, "I don't know how anyone could kill their baby." Everybody heard it and nobody said a word. But after she left, literally everyone there had a story of how they had had an abortion or helped someone who needed one.

Now, some of that stigma has to do with the idea that abortion hurts women, an idea that has been used to justify abortion bans and other anti-abortion laws. A prime example was in 2007, when Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy allowed abortion restrictions to stand, saying, "While we find no reliable data to measure the phenomenon, it seems unexceptionable to conclude some women come to regret their choice to abort the infant life they once created and sustained. Severe depression and loss of esteem can follow."

Let me say some of that again. "While we find *no reliable data* to measure the phenomenon, it seems unexceptionable to conclude some women come to regret their choice."

Once more, for all of us who believe that major policy decisions should be based on evidence, he said, "we find no reliable data to measure this phenomenon."

No reliable data? Those are words that a demographer lives for! We began data collection the next year.

SCENE 2

(Lights up on an office where two researchers are conducting phone interviews.)

(SLIDE: Oakland cityscape)

SERENA

Great. First, I would like to ask you a few questions about yourself: Are you currently employed full time or part time, unemployed, a homemaker, or unable to work?

RHONDA

Who do you currently live with? Alone, Mother, Father, Grandparent, Spouse, Partner/boyfriend, fiancé, children, roommates, or other?

Who is we?

SERENA

Do you live in a house, apartment, condominium, mobile home, another type of home, or are you homeless?

Apartment.

RHONDA

Two children. Are these children your biological children, stepchildren...

Biological.

SERENA

Has a doctor, nurse or other health care professional ever told you that you had any of the following medical conditions?

RHONDA

Do you suffer from any of the following types of chronic pain?

SERENA

Asthma?

RHONDA

Abdominal pain?

SERENA

High cholesterol?

RHONDA

Pelvic pain?

SERENA

Diabetes?

RHONDA

Back pain, osteoarthritis, or migraines?

SERENA

How tall are you without shoes?

RHONDA

How much do you currently weigh?

(Beat)

SERENA AND RHONDA

When did you first consider having an abortion?

(Serena and Rhonda acknowledge that they were both at the same place in their respective interviews--a coincidence.)

SERENA

What was your relationship to the man you became pregnant with at the time you became pregnant? Was he your Friend, Boyfriend, Ex-boyfriend, Husband, Acquaintance, or something else at that time?

Okay.

RHONDA

Did any of the following slow you down or prevent you from coming to the clinic earlier in your pregnancy?

SERENA

Not knowing you were pregnant?

RHONDA

Not knowing where to go to get the abortion?

SERENA

Figuring out how to get to the clinic?

RHONDA

Travel costs? Cost of the procedure? Insurance coverage?

SERENA

Trouble deciding whether or not you wanted an abortion?

RHONDA

Did you experience any side effects or health problems from your abortion?

SERENA

Do you have an idea of what you will do when the baby is born?

SCENE 3

(SLIDE: How do you study abortion?)

DR. FOSTER

Why were there no reliable data? Well, Justice Kennedy, it was because existing studies only looked at people who had had abortions. They didn't use comparison groups.

So, how do you study abortion? Take a moment and consider this question: if you wanted to know if abortion hurts women, what are the comparison groups? (Waits for audience responses)

Thank you for your answers. To really know the effect of abortion on people's lives, you need to compare people who get abortions with people who want abortions but aren't able to get one--people the clinics turn away.

So let's talk about why someone who wants an abortion would be turned away. What do you think? Call it out. (Takes responses)

Great. There are many possible reasons why a clinic might turn someone away, but in our study, we looked at people who were turned away because they arrived after the clinic's *gestational limit*. That's the point in a pregnancy beyond which a clinic will no longer perform an abortion.

However, there is no single law or scientific finding that determines that point, so two clinics in the same state may have very different gestational limits.

If a clinic performs abortions up to 12 weeks, say, and you show up at 12 weeks and a day, you are out of luck. You are turned away.

I put together a study at the University of California, San Francisco--the leading university dedicated exclusively to the health sciences, as we like to point out. It ran through 2017.

We recruited people who sought abortions at 30 facilities across the country.

(SLIDE: Turnaway Study recruitment sites)

Some arrived just under the clinic's gestational limit and received one. Some arrived just over the limit and were turned away. Then their lives diverged. Or did their lives diverge? And if so, how? That's what we wanted to find out.

I led a kickass team of women researchers.

(SLIDE: researchers at computers)

We followed 1,000 people for up to five years each, calling every six months for interviews in English or Spanish. And we got the data.

SCENE 4

(SLIDE: Oakland skyline)

RHONDA

Thanks. Now I am going to ask you about your relationships with family and friends. For each statement, I want you to tell me whether you Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Disagree nor Agree, Agree, or Strongly Agree.

SERENA

The next few questions have to do with sexual relationships and family planning. Have you had sex in the last month?

RHONDA

My family is willing to help me make decisions.

SERENA

The last time you had sex did you or your partner use a method of contraception?

What method?

(There's a tentative knock, and Luisa opens the office door. She stands in the doorway. Rhonda and Serena both wave her in and continue with their calls.)

RHONDA

I can talk about my problems with my friends.

SERENA

Have you had a miscarriage in the six months since we last spoke?

RHONDA

There is a special person with whom I can share joys and sorrows.

(Luisa is still standing awkwardly at the door. Rhonda notices and gestures for her to come in.)

Sorry, was that Agree? Oh, okay, Disagree.

SERENA

Have you had another abortion in the six months since we last spoke?

RHONDA

Okay, these last questions are open-ended, so you can answer in your own words. How do you think your life will be different a year from now?

(Luisa is still standing by the door. Serena lifts her headset mouthpiece to talk to her.)

SERENA

Luisa? Come on in. That's your desk.

(Luisa suddenly exits the office. A moment later she reappears with a lot of stuff: a box of books; a box of desk organizers, plants, and decorations. Getting it all across the small office is a struggle.)

To your knowledge, are you now pregnant?

(Maybe Luisa has a moment - is she talking to me?)

RHONDA

How do you think your life will be different five years from now?

SERENA

Are you currently trying to become pregnant?

RHONDA

Great. Thank you for your time. We will be contacting you for another interview in six months. Right, that will be in February 2015. Bye.

(Rhonda hangs up the phone, writes a few final notes.)

SERENA

Oh, okay, sure. We can pick this up again tomorrow. Same time? Great. (Serena hangs up the phone.)

Damn.

LUISA

Sorry!

SERENA

Not your fault. She had to go. It's Luisa, right? I'm Serena. That's Rhonda.

RHONDA

Welcome! We've been anticipating your arrival.

SERENA

If you need more space...?

LUISA

I guess I did bring a lot of stuff!

RHONDA

Leave some room for the big stack of files that are coming your way!

(Luisa does some frantic rearranging.)

LUISA

Oh, okay, I'll make room. Here!

SERENA

Did you get a tour?

LUISA

Yes! Dr. Foster took me around yesterday after the training.

SERENA

How was the training?

RHONDA

(As if this was a Turnaway Study interview) Was it very interesting, somewhat interesting, a little interesting, or not at all interesting?

SERENA

She can't stop.

RHONDA

(Still in interview mode) It's okay if you need to take more time.

SERENA

Rhonda is an interview machine.

RHONDA

Occupational hazard.

LUISA

I see. The training was very interesting! I think the study is amazing. But they asked tough questions.

SERENA

Oh?

LUISA

Like should people be allowed to have an abortion in their third trimester? Or what if someone has an abortion for sex selection? Or for fetal anomalies? And what if they're not life threatening? If someone's life is in danger, sure, but what if it's not and they have 5 abortions? Or 50? That seems wrong. Is that wrong? Is it even possible to have that many?

SERENA

That exercise is supposed to make you aware of your own beliefs so you can avoid seeming judgmental when you're making calls for the study.

RHONDA

"Seeming" is the key. I make judgments right and left all day long. "You named your twins Hester and Lester? Wonderful!"

SERENA

"You can't talk right now because you're about to shoot a bear? Of course, no problem." I actually got that one last week.

RHONDA

What?!

SERENA

I kind of want to go hunting with her.

(Luisa's phone rings.)

Oh jeez! Sorry.

(She picks up, flustered) I'm at work.

RHONDA

(Under her breath, to Serena) She won't last a week here.

SERENA

She's just nervous. You weren't so comfortable on your first day, as I recall.

RHONDA

I was born comfortable.

LUISA

(On the phone) I just needed your friends to leave so I could get enough sleep.

Your bandmates, whatever.

Yeah, at 2am! I had to get up at 6.

I have to go. Bye. (She hangs up)

Sorry!

SERENA

No problem.

LUIA

That was just my boyfriend. His band was practicing in our apartment until two in the morning.

RHONDA

Live-in boyfriend?

LUIA

He moved here with me from Texas. Maybe I should have left him there!

RHONDA

That's what I would have done, no question.

SERENA

It would cramp Rhonda's style to have a live-in boyfriend.

RHONDA

Right. Like you would?

SERENA

I like it calm at home.

LUIA

Me too. I am supposed to be studying for the MCAT, but there's always a band playing.

SERENA

Oh, the MCAT. That's what all those books are for?

LUISA

Yeah. I was hoping I could study here after work sometimes.

SERENA

That shouldn't be a problem. There's nobody here in the evenings.

LUISA

(Luisa takes a cracker out of a box and puts it in her mouth)

Great, that's great.

(Realizing she is eating). Want one?

RHONDA

Nah, I'm good.

LUISA

I have a nervous stomach, especially since the move.

RHONDA

Oakland doesn't agree with you?

LUISA

I love it, but my stomach doesn't. You sure you don't want one?

SERENA

No, thanks.

RHONDA

(Mouthing, to Serena) One week!

SCENE 5

(SLIDE: Why do people decide to have abortions?)

DR. FOSTER

Okay, important question here: why do people decide to have an abortion? Take a moment and make a list in your head of some of the reasons.

(She waits for several seconds) Okay, stop.

Congratulations! You have given this more thought than many policy makers deciding on abortion restrictions.

We wanted to know--not guess--why the people in the Turnaway Study were seeking an abortion. Note that we excluded people who were getting medically necessary abortions, because people who are facing an immediate threat to their life are rarely turned away. Let's hope it stays that way.

Our researchers asked each participant the same open-ended question: What are the reasons you decided to have an abortion?

Most people gave more than one. Can anyone guess the top reason? (Takes guesses from the audience)

[Actually / Yes!] Money. Nearly half of the people in our study said they wanted an abortion because they didn't think they had enough money to raise a child--or another child. As college students, you should have a pretty good idea of how expensive children can be.

We took the guesswork out of it. We collected data and impact statements from our study participants.

(Dr. Foster presses a clicker. Lights rise on Brenda.)

(SLIDE: Brenda)

BRENDA

I was in no position at all to even think about raising a kid. I could not afford diaper number one.

(SLIDE: Brenda + turned away)

(Dr. Foster clicks. Lights up on Sofia)

(SLIDE: Sofia)

SOFIA

When I called my boyfriend and I told him I was pregnant, he hung up the phone. And I didn't get a call back until the next day. He told me, "Well, I don't think it's the right moment."

My mother was already raising four kids, and she would struggle at times to put food on the table. Things got really rocky, and we actually got evicted. So that was another thing that was going on. So many questions popped into my head. Do I really want to go through this? Is this the right moment? My two minutes of happiness that I first felt drifted away when I started realizing that bringing a kid into this world would be a lot harder than I thought.

(SLIDE: Sofia + turned away)

(Dr. Foster clicks. Lights up on Angela.)

(SLIDE: Angela)

ANGELA

When I found out I was pregnant, I was 17, and although I was living by myself, I was still scared to tell my mom what was going on. It was almost like me being a kid, trying to hide it, and feeling like, let's just take care of this as soon as we can so we never have to tell anyone.

(SLIDE: Angela + turned away)

(Click. Lights up on Martina) (SLIDE: Martina)

MARTINA

I had met this guy on the Internet. He didn't live in the same town as me, but he traveled for work and would come on his way to his job to see me. We hung out a couple times, and then, you know, decided to try having a relationship. We were both young, and in hindsight it was not the right choice. He already had a kid with another woman, which probably should have been a red flag.

When I found out I was pregnant, it was one of those shifts. Like, I'm so screwed right now. It was, I - it was not we, we as a couple, are so screwed right now. It was me, I am screwed.

(SLIDE: Martina + received an abortion)

(Click. Lights up on KIARA) (SLIDE: Kiara)

KIARA

I was dating this guy who was a horrible guy in every sense of the word. The relationship was physically abusive, mentally abusive. He stalked me. I was already in the process of breaking up with this boyfriend, and then I found out that I was pregnant. I was absolutely devastated. I remember sitting on my couch with my roommate and just crying and sobbing. My first instinct was to terminate the pregnancy, and I just kept going. I knew that making the decision would be my way out of this relationship and I could close that chapter and go forward and not have to look back or have any strings holding me back.

(SLIDE: Kiara + received an abortion)

(Click. Lights up on Amy) (SLIDE: Amy)

AMY

Our daughter is growing up. She's a pretty big highlight of my life. I basically think that everything that I've ever done, ever worked for has been for her. I think I would be depriving her by having to support a second one. And I guess being

an only child myself I was really selfish, and I'm still selfish. I just want to give one person everything that I can.

(SLIDE: Amy + received an abortion)

DR. FOSTER

"I just want to give one person everything that I can." More than half of the people in our study were already parents.

So, what were the reasons the study participants gave for why they were seeking an abortion?

(SLIDE: Reasons for seeking an abortion.)

Money, time, partners, kids, aspirations, preparations, and health. Usually a combination. Is that what you thought?

SCENE 6

(In the office, two days later)

(SLIDE: Oakland cityscape)

SERENA

Ready for a practice call?

LUISA

I think so.

SERENA

(Serena hands Luisa a folder and pen.) Great! Here are the questions and the response form. You know the tone you're going for?

LUISA

"Balanced rapport."

RHONDA

Yep! Casual and friendly and impersonal!

SERENA

You aren't here to give advice or opinions.

RHONDA

But try not to sound like a telemarketer or a machine.

(In a robot voice) Thank you for telling me about your difficult pregnancy, your abusive partner and your starving children.

LUISA

Okay. I won't do that.

SERENA

Good! Call Rhonda.

(Rhonda and Luisa put on headsets)

LUISA

Hi, my name is Luisa from the Health Study. Is Rhonda there?

RHONDA

This is Rhonda.

LUISA

Hi Rhonda. Is this a good time for your interview?

RHONDA

You know it is!

LUISA

Great! Thank you for taking time to participate in this study. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering, but your answers are very important to us and help us understand how women's lives... women's lives.. women's lives?! How women's lives are affected by pregnancy.

I'm nervous!

SERENA

You're doing fine. Keep going.

LUISA

Okay. First, I would like to ask you a few questions about yourself:

What is your highest grade, I mean, *the* highest grade or year of school you have completed?

RHONDA

I got my master's, baby!

LUISA

Okay, post-graduate degree. Are you currently in school, either full-time or part-time?

RHONDA

Who has time for that?

LUISA

Okay, Not at all. So I go to question five?

SERENA

Right.

LUISA

How would you describe your work status right now?
Are you currently employed / full-time

RHONDA

I'm employed alright. I got this nice office, great coworkers...

LUISA

Thanks! But are you currently employed full time or part time, unemployed, a homemaker, or unable to work?

RHONDA

Full time.

LUISA

And what kind of work do you do?

RHONDA

I make pretend phone calls.

LUISA

That sounds like fun!

SERENA

Actually, you can't say that. No opinions.

LUISA

Oh, sorry. "Pretend phone call maker," got it. Who do you currently live with?

RHONDA

How do you count that exactly? Like can I count the guy who was in my apartment this morning? Adorable, but clueless about some important things. Like he couldn't operate the coffeemaker.

LUISA

Ummm, does he live with you?

RHONDA

No way. No coffee, no stay.

SERENA

Rhonda.

RHONDA

I live alone.

LUISA

So the total number of people living in your home is one. Is that right?

RHONDA

And I like it that way.

SERENA

Okay, good. Let's skip ahead to / question

RHONDA

How about you, Luisa? What about this guy you live with?

LUISA

I am here today to listen to your experiences.

SERENA

Good!

RHONDA

You're going to med school?

LUISA

If I get in! I was an early education major. I have so much catching up to do.

SERENA

Let's get back to the practice interview. We can interview Luisa later.

(Luisa's phone rings.)

LUISA

Oh no! He's calling again.

SERENA

Do you need to take it?

LUISA

He's got a job interview today. I hope he's not lost. (She picks up the call) Hey, what's up? Everything okay?

Your pants?

Did you look on the bathroom floor?

Then get up and look. Geez! (She hangs up)
I think he thinks I'm his mother!

RHONDA

How old is he?

LUISA

We're both 22.

RHONDA

A 22-year-old man is a lot younger than a 22-year-old woman.

LUISA

If he's old enough to move to California and start a band, he should be old enough to dress himself.

RHONDA

That depends. Is it a rock band?

SERENA

Rhonda.

RHONDA

Nothing against rock musicians, I've had some of my best times with a very sexy bass player. And that drummer last summer. Oh, that should be a song.

(Riffing) The drummer last summer. So glad I got his number. Cuz what a cummer. My summer cummer drummer!

SERENA

Oof, don't quit your day job.

RHONDA

I would never. Where else could I sing that song?

SERENA

Hopefully nowhere. Let's -

LUISA

He couldn't find his pants! It *is* a rock band.

SERENA

Let's get back to the interview. We can skip to the end. Pick it up with question 173. You're doing great.

LUISA

Okay. We've asked you a lot of questions. The last one is: Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your experience?

RHONDA

(As an imaginary study participant. She's making it up as she goes.) Hoo boy. I've got a lot to tell you. Not about me, but about my husband...Theobald. Theobald somehow thinks that I got pregnant all by

myself without any help from him. I shouldn't be surprised, since this is the guy who asked me the night before his birthday last year if I could refrain from having my period that day.

(Aside) That is a real story I heard!

Like too many men, Theobald doesn't know one single thing about female anatomy.

LUISA

...one single thing about female anatomy. Got it. Anything else?

RHONDA

That's about it. It feels good to get that off my chest!

LUISA

Thank you very much for your time. We will be contacting you by phone for another interview in 6 months.

RHONDA

Can't wait!

SERENA

Now you would confirm her contact information and availability for future interviews. We'll go over that later. Any questions?

SCENE 7

(SLIDE: Reasons for showing up late)

DR. FOSTER

What are the reasons why study participants showed up late at the clinic?

(Click. Lights up on Brenda.) (SLIDE: Brenda)

BRENDA

I didn't find out I was pregnant until, I would say, four months. Some of the people at the abortion clinic were just, like, how could you not know you were pregnant when you're this far along? You're such a fucking idiot; you missed four periods? And I was, like, well, you know, I haven't been having periods for a while. I just thought it was nothing new because really I hadn't had a period for, like, eight or nine months at that point just because I was kind of underweight - like, almost all of my calories came from booze. I just wasn't having them. I thought it was nothing new until I felt something kick.

I felt like I was being considered the dumbest person in the room who doesn't know she's pregnant for four months.

(Click. Lights up on Sofia) (SLIDE: Sofia)

SOFIA

I actually found out I was pregnant when I was about five to six months along. I didn't know I was pregnant porque I was still getting my periods. I didn't get nauseous. I wasn't vomiting - all the things that I knew were symptoms of a pregnancy. And I just felt like, OK, it's just my menstrual cycle. I didn't think anything of it.

(SLIDE: blank purple slide)

DR. FOSTER

Both were denied abortions. They were too late in discovering they were pregnant.

Others were late because it's hard to get to a clinic. You will only find abortion providers in 10% of counties in this country.

Why? There are more than a thousand restrictions and stipulations on when, where, how and who can get an abortion? Restrictions on everything from whether private insurance companies can cover abortion procedures to the width of the halls of abortion clinics. The effect--the desired effect--has been to dramatically reduce the number of providers.

"Why is fifteen weeks not enough time," asks Supreme Court Justice John G. Roberts, Jr. I hope he hears the answer before he makes a decision. Fifteen weeks may simply not be long enough for someone to know that they are pregnant, much less make it to a clinic in time.

SCENE 8

(SLIDE: Oakland cityscape)
(Luisa is finishing a phone interview. Serena has been listening in as part of the training.)

LUISA

Thank you very much for your time. We will be contacting you by phone for another interview in six months. (She hangs up.)

SERENA

That seemed very smooth.

LUISA

I guess so. But the situation was kind of disturbing.

SERENA

What was the situation?

LUISA

She's a graduate student!

SERENA

Oh. And that was disturbing?

LUISA

Maybe just surprising. She didn't know she was pregnant until she was four months along.

SERENA

Maybe she was on birth control.

LUISA

Not very good birth control!

SERENA

No method is 100% good. A lot of the people we talk to were on birth control when they got pregnant.

LUISA

I'm on the pill.

SERENA

You know it's not 100% effective, right?

LUISA

Yes, but it practically is.

SERENA

Practically for the 93 out of 100 people who don't get pregnant in a year of use. Not so much for the seven who do.

LUISA

Oh god. I've been feeling weird lately, but I've always had a sensitive stomach. Like, last night my boyfriend was sick, and today I feel nauseous.

SERENA

Are you sick?

LUISA

No, that's what I'm saying. Just seeing someone sick makes me feel sick.

SERENA

And you want to be a doctor?

LUISA

Yes.

SERENA

What's wrong with your boyfriend?

LUISA

Too much partying! It's gross. I need him to grow up. I really need him to grow up.

SCENE 9

(SLIDE: Why do people get pregnant when they don't want a baby)

DR. FOSTER

Have you ever had the kind of sex that could lead to pregnancy but you weren't actively trying to make a baby? You don't have to tell me, but have you?

Maybe you used a method of contraception and maybe you didn't. Either way, there is a chance you could have become pregnant or caused a pregnancy.

Okay, shout out to my daughter and her 9th grade science project for these next slides.

Meet Mary.

(SLIDE: Mary)

Mary is a hypothetical heterosexual cisgender woman who began having sex at 18,

(SLIDE: Mary at 18)

will start menopause around age 45,

(SLIDE: Mary at 45)

and wants to have two kids--when she's ready.

(SLIDE: Mary with kids)

How will she accomplish this plan?

Mary will have to take 6,844 contraceptive pills.

(SLIDE: Mary with 6,844 pills)

Or use condoms every time, for something like 2000 acts of intercourse.

(SLIDE: Mary with 2000 condoms)

Or replace her patches 975 times

(SLIDE: Mary with 975 patches)

or her vaginal rings 325 times

(SLIDE: Mary with 325 vaginal rings)

Or have four to six intrauterine devices inserted and removed.

(SLIDE: Mary with 6 IUDs)

And even if she's very responsible and careful, Mary might still become pregnant by accident as many as two times on the pill,

(SLIDE: Pregnant Mary x 2)

four times with condoms,

(SLIDE: Pregnant Mary x 4)

and seven using withdrawal. Which is still better than the ten to twenty pregnancies she would have if she used nothing at all.

(SLIDE: Pregnant Mary x 7)

Poor Mary!

(SLIDE: Poor Mary)

Now factor in the money and time and medical appointments and pharmacy visits required. Many unintended pregnancies in the United States are caused by gaps in contraceptive use--sometimes

because people ran out of condoms or pills or patches or rings, and sometimes because they just got tired of putting up with the side effects of using the method every day, every act, for years on end.

(Click. Lights up on Kiara) (SLIDE: Kiara)

KIARA

I had lapsed in my birth control by, like, two days. My refill was late, and so I had to go back and get it. It was just a lapse in judgment. I was like oh, it will be okay. And then it wasn't.

(SLIDE: blank purple slide)

DR. FOSTER

Two thirds of the participants in our study were using a contraceptive method in the month they conceived.

If you have ever had the kind of sex that can lead to pregnancy when you didn't want a baby and a pregnancy didn't occur, then you are one of the lucky ones; the unlucky ones show up at the abortion clinic. If there is an abortion clinic.

SCENE 10

(SLIDE: Oakland cityscape)

LUISA

I really need him to grow up.

(Rhonda enters the office.)

RHONDA

What was that? Who needs to grow up? You better not be talking about me!

LUISA

I'm not talking about you! I was talking about my boyfriend.

SERENA

Definitely not you. You'll never grow up, and we wouldn't want you to.

RHONDA

That's a relief. Though maybe I have grown up. I'm starting a clothing line.

SERENA

Really? Side hustle?

RHONDA

For now. I think it's going to be big. Contraceptive-themed headwear!

SERENA

No!

RHONDA

Yes! This one is for you. (Gives Serena a hat)

SERENA

You think I'm going to walk around with a condom on my head?

RHONDA

I thought you cared about safe sex.

SERENA

I'll be getting no sex if I walk around looking like this.

RHONDA

Well that's the safest kind, though not as much fun.

Luisa, this one is for you. (Hands Luisa a hat.)

LUISA

How did you know I was on the pill?

RHONDA

You have that look. Just kidding! I thought it would suit you. Put it on. (Luisa does) I was so right!

SERENA

Where's yours?

RHONDA

I haven't made it yet. I just have these two designs so far.

LUISA

You could make one with calendar pages and thermometers on it.

RHONDA

The rhythm method! You're funny!

SERENA

Yours should have every kind of contraception on it. It could look really festive, like the party you are.

RHONDA

Ooh yes! and I can wear it with IUD earrings for special occasions!

SERENA

You have IUD earrings?

RHONDA

No, next project.

(The office phone rings. Serena picks up)

SERENA

Hello this is the health study, how can I help you?

Yes, this is a great time. Give me just a sec.

(Serena finds the file for the study participant then listens to the person on the other end, who has a lot to say.)

LUISA

Rhonda, have you used the pill?

RHONDA

I've used everything.

LUISA

And it's really effective, right?

RHONDA

If you use it carefully. If you're not good at remembering to do things regularly, it may not be the best method for you. But if you never miss a day, I think the chance of getting pregnant is, like, less than 1%. Of course nothing's 100% effective.

SERENA

Okay, great, I've got you scheduled for next Friday at 11am eastern time. Talk to you then! (Hangs up)

RHONDA

Anything else you want to know?

LUISA

Yes. Is it okay if I leave a little early today?

SERENA

Sure, if you have to. Do you know about the film screening?

LUISA

I don't think so.

RHONDA

They're showing my favorite movie and paying us to watch it!

SERENA

There's a research group here that's studying media representations of abortion. Sometimes they screen a film and ask us questions afterwards.

LUISA

I don't think I can tonight.

SERENA

That's okay, it's not required, and there will be other chances.

LUISA

Okay, I've got to go. See you tomorrow! (She leaves, in a hurry)

RHONDA

I'm not saying I told you so.

SERENA

You can't yet. We have to give her some more time.

RHONDA

One week!

SCENE 11

(SLIDE: Does abortion cause psychological or emotional harm?)

DR. FOSTER

Does abortion cause psychological or emotional harm? This is the question that launched our study. The Justice Kennedy challenge. "It seems unexceptionable to conclude some women come to regret their choice."

Here's what the trend in depressive symptoms actually looks like. Here are the people who received an abortion.

(SLIDE: Depressive symptoms)

And here are the people who were turned away - no abortion.

(SLIDE: Depressive symptoms + added curve)

Notice anything? (Wait for a response)

The two curves are pretty darn similar. The people in the study tended to be a little depressed at the start--they had an unwanted pregnancy, so maybe not a surprise--but they are doing better by the end of the study.

That goes for other measures of mental health as well. People who receive abortions and people who are turned away experience steady improvement over time. By the end of five years, the mental health of the two groups was the same.

This graph is one of my favorite results of the study because it is a really simple representation of resilience. Five years after an unwanted pregnancy, whether it ended in an abortion or a

birth, the one thousand participants of our study were on average doing a lot better in terms of their mental health than when they were recruited.

How about their emotions? Do people who have abortions come to regret their choice, as Justice Kennedy presumed? No! At the end of five years, over 95% say that they don't regret their choice.

(SLIDE: 95% don't regret their choice)

So, no, Justice Kennedy, your guesses were wrong.

(Click. Lights up on Martina) (SLIDE: Martina)

MARTINA

It was definitely probably the hardest decision I ever had to make in my entire life. The first couple years I did not accept it. Now as I get older I don't regret the abortion at all. I'm where I am supposed to be in my life. So I know that I made the right decision for myself. When I think about it now, I don't look down into that deep, dark spiral of, oh my God, I can't believe that that happened.

(Click. Lights up on Amy) (SLIDE: Amy)

AMY

I don't think that the abortion has affected anything since then negatively. And honestly I'm not even sure if it's been positive either. I think it was just something that I knew that had to be done, and we went about our lives.

(SLIDE: blank purple slide)

DR. FOSTER

If the mental health of people who get abortions and people who are turned away is the same, does that mean that there's no difference between those who received and those who were denied abortions?

It does not. For every other measure of wellbeing, the two groups diverge.

For instance, the ability to pay for basic needs.

(SLIDE: Ability to pay for basic needs)

People who are turned away are much less likely to be able to afford food, housing, or transportation than those who received a wanted abortion.

If there are children in the household, those children are more likely to be living in poverty and less likely to achieve developmental milestones if their mother was turned away than if she received the abortion.

(SLIDE: Children living in poverty)

And there are serious health effects as well.

(SLIDE: Life-threatening consequences)

Women who were turned away were much more likely to have life-threatening consequences from their pregnancies and report worse health for years after.

(Dr. Foster's phone goes nuts-lots of text messages and alerts are coming in.)

Sorry, I -- (reaching for the phone)

Oh my god, it's happened. The Supreme Court has just overturned Roe v. Wade.

I'm so sorry. This is going to affect your lives. This is going to affect your whole generation.

SCENE 12

(SLIDE: Oakland cityscape at night)

(After hours at the office. Luisa enters with a pregnancy test and her cell phone in hand. After a little while, the timer on her phone goes off and she looks at the result.)

LUIZA

Shit.

(Luisa's cell phone rings. She picks up.) I'm still at work.

No, I'm studying.

Actually, no, I can't. There's too much noise, too much mess, and too many people.

Well, good to know. Good to know that there was one single day where my new apartment wasn't filled with noisy, messy people who don't pay the rent.

Right, you're job hunting. How's that going?

Nothing's wrong!

I've gotta go. (She hangs up.)

Padre nuestro,
que estás en el cielo.

Santificado sea tu nombre.

Venga tu reino.

Hágase tu voluntad en la tierra como en el cielo.

Danos hoy nuestro pan de cada día.

Perdona nuestras ofensas,

como también nosotros perdonamos a los que nos ofenden.

No nos dejes caer en tentación y líbranos del mal.
Amén.

SCENE 13

(SLIDE: blank purple slide)

DR. FOSTER

They did it. We thought they might, and they did.

I will get back to the Turnaway Study, but there's something I feel I need to address first: why did the Supreme Court make the decision to overturn Roe v. Wade? Let's see if I can tackle it calmly.

First of all, it didn't come out of the blue. There have been fifty years of concerted effort to overturn Roe v. Wade. States made law after law that they knew would be contested, hoping they could fight it all the way up to the Supreme Court and get the decision reversed. Which is what just happened.

But what was the reasoning? Well, the majority opinion in the case says that there is no right to abortion because abortion isn't mentioned in the Constitution, there's no precedent for it. But do you know what else isn't mentioned in the Constitution? Women! There is literally no mention of women in the Constitution.

One would hope that the Supreme Court will interpret the Constitution in a way that accounts for all the progress we've made. Not usually. What the Supreme Court has done for much of its history, and now in all of its decisions, is protect the interests of white, property-owning men.

If you're like me, you may want to blame it all on Justice Alito. Alito is a smug, racist, classist, patriarchal misogynist, but he didn't do this alone.

Why did the Supreme Court make the decision to overturn Roe v. Wade? Because people's lives and bodies still aren't their own. Because nobody cares about poor people. Because the government in this country keeps prioritizing politics over people. Because no matter how hard we try, they don't fucking listen.

That wasn't nearly as calm as I hoped.

SCENE 14

(SLIDE: Oakland cityscape at night)

(Luisa at her desk. Rhonda and Serena enter.)

SERENA

Oh, hey, you're still here! You missed the movie.

LUISA

I came back to do some studying. I've already seen Dirty Dancing.

RHONDA

So have I, but I can't get enough.

SERENA

I love a good abortion movie. Especially one where the woman who has the abortion doesn't die.

RHONDA

Well you know, one in six women dies after having an abortion...

LUISA

What?!

RHONDA

... in the movies. In real life it's safer than having a baby.

SERENA

A lot safer! Women in the U.S. are 14 times more likely to die carrying a pregnancy to term than from having an abortion. And for Black women, it's higher than that.

RHONDA

Yeah, they are three times more likely to die during pregnancy or delivery than white women. And on that fun note, do you two want to go out for a drink? You can wear your new hats.

SERENA

I could do that. Minus the hat.

LUISA

I can't, but thanks.

RHONDA

(Singing) NOW I'VE HAD THE TIME OF MY LIFE

(Rhonda tries to get Serena and Luisa to dance with her. She has some of the dance moves from the movie down.)

RHONDA

NO, I NEVER FELT LIKE
THIS BEFORE. YES I
SWEAR, IT'S THE TRUTH
AND I OWE IT ALL TO YOU

SERENA

Oh, we're dancing now?
Not the lift!
AND I OWE IT ALL TO YOU

RHONDA

(To Luisa, who is sitting in her cubicle) Come dance with us. Nobody puts Baby in the corner!

LUISA

If you only knew.

SERENA

You don't dance?

RHONDA

Your life is a 1960s coming of age story?

LUISA

No, there's a baby in the corner.

SERENA

No there isn't. You're just new to this. I think you're going to be great.

LUISA

I mean I'm pregnant.

SERENA

Oh!

RHONDA

When did you find out? (LUISA holds up the test.)
Oh wow. How far along are you?

LUISA

I don't know! My stomach's been off lately, but that's normal for me. I've been on the pill for a couple of months, but for all I know I was already pregnant when I started.

RHONDA

When was your last period?

LUISA

I don't know that either, but irregular periods are a side effect of the pill!

SERENA

That's true.

RHONDA

Most likely you're well within the time frame for getting an abortion, don't worry. The clinic in San Francisco is great, and we can help you get an appointment.

SERENA

You can't decide that for her, Rhonda. Maybe she wants to keep the baby.

RHONDA

(Incredulous) Keep it? Is that what you want? What does your boyfriend think about it?

He doesn't know.

LUISA

How can I tell him? I don't think he's ever even held a baby.

SERENA

Well that's easy enough to learn.

RHONDA

Yeah, most dads are so good at it.

SERENA

Most dads are good at it.

RHONDA

A whole lot of dads hand the baby to mom as soon as the baby starts to cry.

SERENA

She can hand it right back. There's no reason for that.

RHONDA

The reason is that men are big babies.

SERENA

Rhonda! All men?

RHONDA

Maybe there are a few grownup men. Maybe you can meet one--come out for a drink with us. Or a soda, whatever.

LUISA

I think I'll just stay here for a little while.

SERENA

Do you want us to stay with you?

LUISA

No, thanks. I just need to do some thinking.

SERENA

Okay. Call us if you need us.

(Serena and Rhonda exit. Luisa stays at her desk)

SCENE 15

(SLIDE: blank purple slide)

DR. FOSTER

Why am I taking this so personally? Because I know the consequences of unwanted pregnancies from careful scientific study, and I *feel* them because of my own family story.

My father's mother, Sally, had an abortion during the Great Depression. At the time, abortion was illegal in New York, so she traveled to Puerto Rico, where it was legal. Later she went on to have three children: my uncle, my aunt, and my dad. I learned about her abortion when I was in high school, and it made a big impression. My grandmother had an abortion?! My tiny old grandmother with the big wet grandmother kisses? Grandma had an abortion?

Meanwhile, on my mom's side, her biological mother, Dorothy, became pregnant when she was 19. Years later, Dorothy told me that her 30-year-old golf instructor "taught me more than I needed to know." And when she told him she was pregnant, he said that if she ever told anyone that the baby was his, he would get all his friends to say it could be theirs. That's my charming biological grandfather!

Dorothy's parents were furious about her out-of-wedlock pregnancy, so they sent her away to the Salvation Army Home for Unwed Mothers in San Diego. Her baby, my mom, was placed for adoption.

Dorothy experienced severe complications from delivery - both physical and emotional. After placing my mother for adoption, she struggled to find strong romantic relationships, and she never did get to have more children, though she desperately wanted them. Her life trajectory took a

detour when she became pregnant, and she never found a way to get back on track.

My mom found her when I was twelve, and my grandma Dorothy and I became super close. I was the one at her bedside when she died.

My mom's mom was forced to give her child up for adoption. If she'd had an abortion, I wouldn't exist. My dad's mom had an abortion in the 1930s and later gave birth to my dad. If she hadn't had an abortion, I might not exist.

Many of us are alive and well today because our mothers and grandmothers were able to avoid carrying an unwanted pregnancy to term. It allowed them to take care of the children they already had or have a baby under better circumstances later.

Now that abortion may become illegal in half of the country, the question is whether we get to live the lives we want to lead. And will we get to have-and raise-children on our own terms?

And one more lesson from my family story. Anyone who suggests that adoption is a substitute for abortion -- Amy Coney Barrett -- is being callous about the physical health risks, the social stigma, and the emotional toll. Relinquishing a child is extremely difficult. I see that in Dorothy's experience and we see that in the study data.

(SLIDE: Angela)

ANGELA

The day after my son was born was extremely hard. It was just extremely hard to see them drive away and not have the satisfaction of going home with my baby.

I had to have a social worker come to my house so I could sign over my rights. She was saying, once you

do this, you have no legal rights for the rest of his life. At any time, they can decide that they don't want you to see him any more. They can do that.

I was thinking, what if this is the wrong decision for him. I just don't want him to ever wonder why this decision was made, or feel unloved.

SCENE 16

(Luisa, Serena, and Rhonda are making calls.)
(SLIDE: Oakland cityscape)

RHONDA

In the past month, how often did you see the man
you became pregnant with?

LUISA

¿Qué relación tenía con el hombre de quien quedó
usted embarazada? ¿En el momento de su embarazo...
!Son las preguntas! ..era su amigo, novio, ex-
novio, esposo, conocido, o tenía alguna otra
relación?

RHONDA

Does he know about this pregnancy?

SERENA

Were you given an ultrasound at any point before
your abortion appointment?

LUISA

Mi familia está dispuesta a ayudarme a tomar
decisiones. ¡Yo no hago eso!

SERENA

Were you offered a view of the ultrasound?

RHONDA

Did he know about the pregnancy when you were
deciding about having an abortion?

LUISA

Hay una persona especial con quien puedo compartir
mis felicidades y tristezas.

SERENA

How did you feel about the ultrasound, either
during the ultrasound or afterwards?

LUISA

¿Cómo crees que...cómo cree que su vida será distinta de aquí a cinco años?

RHONDA

How did he feel about this pregnancy? Would you say he: 1. Wanted you to have the baby and keep it, 2. Wanted you to have the baby and let someone else raise it, 3. Was not sure about whether he wanted you to have the baby, or 4. Did not want you to have the baby?

SERENA

Great. Thank you very much for your time. We will be contacting you by phone for another interview in six months. (She hangs up)

LUISA

Muchas gracias por su tiempo. Dentro de seis meses, nos pondremos en contacto con usted para hacer otra entrevista. Sí, sí, eso es todo. Muchas gracias por tu ayuda. OK. Tengo que colgar. ¡Gracias, pero tengo que colgar! Bye, bye. (She hangs up)

SERENA

I was going to have you do a practice call in Spanish, but I guess you just went for it!

LUISA

No I didn't. That was my mom.

SERENA

Your mom?

LUISA

I thought she'd make a good practice subject.

RHONDA

That sounds fine. I'll call you then! (Hangs up)

SERENA

How'd it go?

LUISA

Terrible! I can't ask her those questions. I've never talked to my mother about sex, ever. And I can't ask her half of the other questions either, like about her mental health or how much she weighs. And then, when I asked how she sees her life in five years, she said she sees herself playing with a grandbaby.

SERENA

Aww. ¡Quiere ser abuela!

LUISA

Si.

SERENA

You told her you're pregnant?

LUISA

No! I can't.

RHONDA

In five years, you'll still be in med school. I think you should ask your mom to put off that particular dream.

SERENA

That's not for you say, Rhonda. Luisa may want to have a baby sooner than that. Maybe a lot sooner.

RHONDA

With her pants-less boyfriend? No offense, Luisa, but he is not at your level.

SERENA

He might rise to the challenge.

LUISA

He has a good heart.

SERENA

And anyway, she doesn't need him to raise a baby. Don't tell my mother that a single mom can't do a great job of raising a kid.

LUISA

I don't want to lose this job.

RHONDA

You've made it eight days, Luisa, we don't want to lose you now.

LUISA

Eight days?

RHONDA

Yep, that's the magic number.

SERENA

Rhonda!

LUISA

My five-year plan was med school. I want to help people when they really need it and be the person who speaks their language to find out what's wrong.

RHONDA

Wow.

SERENA

You can do that now or you can do it later.

LUISA

What's your five-year plan, Serena?

SERENA

I want to go back home and open an abortion clinic where the needs of the whole person are met--not just physical, but emotional, spiritual, and social. I'm tired of Black women being mistreated and unheard.

RHONDA

You two! So ambitious and good.

SERENA

Yeah, well. It would take a lot.

RHONDA

You can do anything, Serena.

LUISA

You're so strong.

RHONDA

Careful with that word.

LUISA

Strong? Isn't that a good thing?

RHONDA

Women are always expected to be strong.

SERENA

Especially Black women.

RHONDA

And they're expected to put up with anything that happens or doesn't happen to them. Men, on the other hand... You know why there aren't male birth control pills? They stopped clinical trials-- because the participants experienced side effects.

SERENA

Acne and mood changes! The same exact side effects of nearly every birth control method available to women.

LUISA

I wish I was stronger.

SERENA

Are you kidding? Moving here from Texas, aiming for med school, working so hard, all at 22 years old?

You are strong. Just don't let it be the excuse for people to push you harder than you want to be pushed.

SCENE 17

(SLIDE: Who steps in to help?)

DR. FOSTER

Who steps in to help someone who is denied an abortion? What we found is - nobody.

(SLIDE: Nobody)

People who are denied an abortion are more likely to be raising children alone, without a partner and without adult family members.

One in twenty participants in our study experienced violence from the partner involved in the pregnancy. People who received an abortion experienced a sharp decline in violence. There was no decline for those who were denied.

Put those things together with the fact that they are more likely to live in poverty, experience worse physical health, and struggle to take care of their existing children, and we are talking about lives of real hardship and strain.

(Click. Lights up on BRENDA.) (SLIDE: Brenda)

BRENDA

Pregnancy definitely has a negative impact on people's financial well-being. Because it is very, very difficult to find a job when you're pregnant, to keep a job when you're pregnant, and to find or maintain a job with a baby, especially if your partner is a douchebag and doesn't want to help. The incidence of domestic violence skyrockets because you're financially dependent on your partner because you have to be home with the kid. Pregnancy is an incredibly scary thing, especially if you cannot trust the person you're with.

(SLIDE: blank purple slide)

DR. FOSTER

There is almost nothing more telling than the answers to the questions we asked at the very end of each interview.

We asked "what are your plans for the coming year?" Then we asked them to look further out and tell us what they hoped to be doing in five years.

(Click. Lights up on SOFIA.) (SLIDE: SOFIA)

SOFIA

I'm an overnight manager. I work the graveyard shift, which is pretty tough because I come home early. So when I come home, my daughter is already awake. And she's up and running. I'm just so drained out from work that sometimes I can't spend as much time as I would like to with her. Her father is not really around. I guess he hasn't reached the point of maturity that he should be at. He's just not ready for commitment. And I just want mi hija to have a stable relationship, a stable family, a stable house.

(Click. Lights up on Kiara) (SLIDE: Kiara)

KIARA

If I hadn't had the abortion, the calmness and the strength and everything that I feel now, I don't think that any of that would have been here. I feel like my life would still be as chaotic and kind of crazy. Even, I think, meeting and marrying my husband I don't think would have been possible had I had that child.

(Click. Lights up on MARTINA) (SLIDE: Martina)

MARTINA

If I had had the baby, I definitely wouldn't be in the relationship that I'm in. I probably wouldn't have left my hometown, just because of the financial cost of raising a child. And now, I don't want children. For so long our society has said, you graduate high school, you get a job - or you go to college, you get a job, you have kids, dog, picket fence, blah, blah, blah. I'm realizing that that model is not going to work for me. I want to use all of my time and resources to explore versus finding that nuclear family. We want to take another month-long trip this year. And maybe even

do a couple extreme sports events because, as a woman in the mountain-biking world, I am definitely in the minority. This year the chance of being at the top of an event is very high, and it definitely on my list of goals.

I don't think that abortion needs to spell the end of a woman's life. I feel like right now maybe our society puts it that way, like if you have an abortion, you're damaged goods. I don't think that's true at all. I'm proof of it. I'm proof that having that abortion did not end my quest to take over the world.

(Click. Lights up on Angela) (SLIDE: Angela)

ANGELA

I've learned a very important lesson that I can make plans and try to figure it out, but in the end I never am going to know what's going to happen next. But I do have plans for myself to just really make my life worth it - considering that I've given up a life in a way, when I gave my son up for adoption.

I'm just trying to make something for myself rather than nothing. If I make nothing, then it wasn't all worth it.

(Click. Lights up on AMY) (SLIDE: Amy)

AMY

Our daughter has grown up with everything that I could've, would've, should've given her. It's a good life. It's an ordinary life, but it's an extravagant, wonderful ordinary life.

(SLIDE: blank purple)

DR. FOSTER

Am I saying that every person in the study who received a wanted abortion had it easier and better than every person who didn't? No. There were 1000 participants in the study, with 1000 different stories. Real people with real hopes and dreams and real challenges.

SCENE 18

(Serena and Luisa are in the office. Serena is getting ready to make a call.) (SLIDE: Oakland cityscape)

SERENA

(Reading aloud from a file) Shaniqua Turner. I know that name. I think it's a woman who sought an abortion from the clinic where I used to work.

(On the phone) Hello, may I speak with Shaniqua please? Hi Shaniqua, this is Serena from the study. (To Luisa) It's her. (To Shaniqua) Great! I know you've heard this before, but - Thank you for taking time to participate in this study. I want to tell you that the information you provide will be kept confidential. If you tell me that you are having thoughts about suicide, I will provide a referral to support services and may be required to involve appropriate authorities.

Suicide by cigarettes? Ha. No, I guess that doesn't count.

So--how would you describe your work status right now? Are you currently employed full time or part time, unemployed...

Sorry, I can't hear you very well. You were laid off? Hello?

(Shaniqua has put her child on the phone) Oh, hi! Who is this? That's not a very nice thing to say. Okay! Can you put your mommy back on?

(Shaniqua is back on the phone) Shaniqua? I see. Oh. Wow. Well, maybe this isn't the best time to talk. We can continue the interview tomorrow. Same time? Okay, talk to you then. (She hangs up.)

That was something. I remember her really struggling back then, but it's... Her mother had just died, and she couldn't imagine giving birth without her mom there with her. But we had to turn her away, and now I just talked to her child.

LUISA

The one she was pregnant with when you turned her away?

SERENA

Most likely, the timing works out.

LUISA

She had the baby!

SERENA

Well that was a given. There was nowhere else for her to go at the point when I turned her away.

LUISA

But she's okay now?

SERENA

Depends what you mean by okay. Some of these stories we hear do not come out alright. Time will pass, and yes, she's resilient. But that doesn't take away the three or four years that maybe she lived in 10 different places. It doesn't take away the fact that she didn't know who was eating today. It doesn't take away the fact she wore the same clothes for four years straight, you see what I'm saying?

LUISA

I think so.

SERENA

And also, what is she left with? There's no guarantee she's going to get along with the child. She's going to think about the abortion she didn't

get, she's going to think about everything she went through to raise that child.

LUISA

Women are strong, but they shouldn't always have to be.

SERENA

Exactly. And for women of color it's even more true. Which is some bullshit. It's not fair to say that women can endure a little bit more trauma than usual and say that we're going to be alright at the end of the day, because you didn't hear that we're not alright. Because we've been silenced by that trauma. So yeah, alright is not alright.

LUISA

Alright is not alright.

SERENA

Right.

LUISA

I want a baby.

SERENA

You do?

LUISA

I do, I want a baby. But do I want one right now? I don't know.

SCENE 19

(SLIDE: Conclusions)

DR. FOSTER

Time for the big wrap-up. Let's review what the data tells us.

We found no evidence that abortion hurts women.

(SLIDE: No evidence that abortion hurts women)

In fact, we found the opposite: Abortion is associated with better outcomes for women and children compared to carrying an unwanted pregnancy to term: happier romantic relationships; less poverty; greater ability to take care of existing kids; and a greater likelihood of setting and achieving aspirational life goals in the coming year, including having wanted pregnancies later.

Did you get all that? Good, because it's pop quiz time!

(SLIDE: Pop Quiz!)

I'm going to describe a scenario to you, and you are going to decide what should happen next. Ready? Imagine a young woman who has just discovered a career she loves.

(Lights come up slowly on Luisa at her desk. During this next section, Luisa is considering whether to have an abortion or give birth. She makes a personal phone call, does some journaling, etc.)

She'll need an advanced degree to get where she aspires to be in this career. For now, she is working hard and saving money. She doesn't have a very steady relationship, though she does have supportive friends and family.

Now suppose this young woman gets pregnant without intending to. What does our research say about whether she should have a baby or an abortion? Let's imagine that she lives someplace where it's still legal.

What do you think she should she do? Have the child? Have an abortion?

That was a trick question. The answer is -- not your decision!

The people in the study made the decision to seek an abortion based on how they thought a baby would change their life. And they were right. Nobody else can make that decision for them. Nobody else *should* make that decision for them. Not the Supreme Court. Not their state legislators, and not even a class of very smart college kids can know what is right for someone else. When people are not able to make this decision for themselves, their lives and the lives of their children will be worse off.

George Tiller was a physician who provided abortions in Kansas and was assassinated by an anti-abortion extremist in 2009. He used to say: Trust women.

(SLIDE: Trust women)

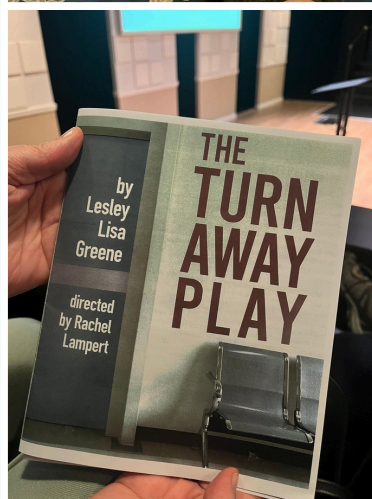
That's the big takeaway of the study--you can trust people who are pregnant to make decisions for themselves.

(SLIDE: blank purple)

That's usually the end of my talk, but I want to add this-- I went into abortion research because I was interested in motherhood and family planning and science. Not because I wanted to be an activist. But I think that we all have to become activists now.

So keep learning, stay informed, and exercise your vote. Speak up for the rights of people in your community and your country. You have the data.

(Lights down on Dr. Foster. Luisa looks up from her work; she has come to some decision. She sits with it for a moment. Lights down. End of play.)



“The Turnaway Play has the potential to do for abortion what The Vagina Monologues did for vaginas.” – Vienna Farlow

“This play both made me think and made me feel, like so much of the best theater does. I left feeling like I was better able to have conversations with friends and family who might disagree with me about certain things.” – Juliana Friend

“It’s very rare that you sit in a room and talk about abortion and cry and laugh and think deeply about what it means for many, many people—what’s behind the statistics.” – Anna Noonan

“As an abortion researcher, I really love how The Turnaway Play brings the findings of the Turnaway Study to a broader audience.” – Payal Chakraborty

The Turnaway Play looks at what really happens when people are denied access to abortion. It is inspired and informed by the groundbreaking Turnaway Study, which followed 1,000 women over five years and reached the first definitive scientific conclusions about the consequences for women’s lives of either having or being denied abortions. The study was headed by the playwright’s real-life sister, Diana Greene Foster, and the characters are based on study subjects and members of the research team.

We are making the play and lots of helpful supplemental material available for free to theaters, students and advocates across the country who would like to host a reading and discussion. Join us and make a difference in your community.

Find out more at theturnawayplay.org.