

A Reproductive Rights “Back-To-School”
Campaign To Mobilize Student Advocates

2024

The Turnaway Play



DIY Guide

**Everything you need to know to
host a reading of the Turnaway Play
in your community.**

This guide is designed to be flexible and adaptable to your level of experience with readings, theater, and knowledge of abortion. Please feel free to use some or all of it. If you need support, don't hesitate to reach out to us at theturnawayplay.com/contact-us

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OVERVIEW

Our Hopes and Goals



Our team is passionate in the belief that performing readings and having candid discussions of the play can help in reframing the national conversation, increase storytelling, and reduce stigma associated with the topic of abortion. Hosting a reading of The Turnaway Play can engage local communities to:

- 1 ORGANIZE - people for change
- 2 EDUCATE - about the science
- 3 CREATE CONVERSATION - across groups; and
- 4 TAKE ACTION - invite audiences to get involved and take action

Abortion will be on the ballot in several states in 2024. From attempts to criminalize and deny women the right to body autonomy, we aim to activate communities to vote to expand and protect reproductive rights through the play and the study.

OVERVIEW

About the Turnaway Study



Dr. Diana Greene-Foster and her research team of 11 conducted the Turnaway Study from 2008 to 2018. In the study, they tracked 1,000 women who wanted to get an abortion. Of the 1,000 women in the study, three quarters were able to have abortions and **one quarter were “turned away”**.

The study compared patients who received abortions with those who were turned away at similar points in their pregnancy. Study participants were interviewed every six months about their mental and physical health, education attainment, employment, economic situation, social support, and relationships.

The main finding of The Turnaway Study is that **women who are turned away** from getting their abortions **endure far more negative and damaging life consequences** than those who are able to exercise bodily autonomy.

You can learn more about Dr. Foster and her role at Advancing New Standards for Reproductive Health (ANSIRH), watch her popular 2024 TED Talk, or read her book *The Turnaway Study: Ten Years a Thousand Women and the Consequences of Having of Being Denied an Abortion*.

OVERVIEW

Why Abortion Stories Matter

As of May, 2024, **14 states have restrictive bans on abortion** despite knowing that when abortion is made accessible, it is a safe and common medical procedure.



Since the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, our country's abortion access crisis has worsened. Limiting or criminalizing access to abortion impacts one in four women in the U.S., yet due to stigma, people who have abortions don't share their experiences, even with those closest to them. By not having real discussions about abortion, it leaves many to get their information from biased media sources and political talking heads, further adding to an already dangerous national abortion access crisis.

When we share our lived experiences, we gain a deeper understanding into one another and in turn, we expand our community and empower future generations.

THE PLAY

About the Turnaway Play

The Turnaway Play is the theatrical manifestation of the Turnaway Study and is a **70-minute performance piece** that embodies humor, drama, audience participation, and testimonials from real study participants.



The Turnaway Play gives voice to an incredibly important group of women, especially in today's post-Roe world; those who were turned away and unable to have wanted abortions.

We are grateful to the study participants for their willingness to share their stories with us. Their courage to share those stories empowers both existing and future generations to come. Hosting a reading of The Turnaway Play brings the science and the stories to a broader audience; reduces abortion stigma; and sparks essential conversation.

THE PLAY

The Basics

- 1 The play can be performed with four, seven or ten actors. A character breakdown and casting notes will be included.
- 2 You will need someone to run the slides during the performance.
- 3 You may want someone to read stage directions, though it's not necessary.
- 4 The space requirements of the play are minimal, so anything from a theater to your living room can work. It doesn't have to be fancy, though fancy can be fun too!
- 5 Consider a community center or an empty storefront. Does it have free parking? Is it near public transportation? Is the venue accessible for people who need a ramp?
- 6 The runtime of the play is 70 minutes, so you don't even need the space for very long. Factor in time for set up and a post-show discussion, and two hours might do the trick.



Note: If you are looking to stage a full theatrical production of *The Turnaway Play* please contact the playwright directly at www.lesleylisagreen.com/contact

THE PLAY

Optional Additions

Post-Play discussion:

A post-play discussion is a great way to **allow the audience to reflect** and possibly commit to action. You can choose moderators and/or panelists who will elevate the voices of those most impacted by abortion bans: people who are LGBTQ+ or BIPOC. A member of *The Turnaway Play* team may also be able to join your post-play discussion. You will be able to indicate your interest after submitting the form www.theturnawayplay.com/host-a-reading.

See *The Turnaway Play* discussion guide for more ideas and audience questions.



Partnerships:

Partnerships can be great for increasing the impact of your play reading. Here are some ideas:



HIGHLIGHT THE WORK

Highlight the work of a local abortion fund, abortion care provider or reproductive justice organization. This could take the form of a resource table, an ask for funding, or a printed program with information about the organization.

INVITE AN ORG

Invite an organization to help with the reading and/or the post-play discussion. This could be an abortion access coalition, a women's fund, or a voting rights organization. Or it could be a student theater club or a professor on your campus who is willing to work with you to make the reading happen.

BALLOT INITIATIVE

Does your state have a ballot initiative or other important work happening? Invite campaign leaders to participate in the post-show discussion or resource table

CONNECT

Connect with a civic organization like **When We All Vote**, a local **League of Women Voters**, or another local group to encourage voter registration and increase attendance

THINK LOCAL

Ask a local politician, campus leader or influencer to perform one of the parts in the play.

Call to Action:



Consider creating calls to action that are accessible to your audience. You are the expert in your community, but here are some ideas to get you started:

- 1 Give the audience a chance to **share stories** about abortion care and reproductive health

- 2 **Collect donations** for a local or national abortion fund

- 3 Ask audience members to **talk to five people** in their lives about abortion and the findings from the Turnaway Study

- 4 **Share information** about how to take action for abortion access on social media

- 5 Set up a **resource table** with opportunities for audience members to get involved

THE PLAY

Staging and Design

A play reading can be as simple as people sitting around a table reading the play out loud.



But, if you plan to have an audience, some simple staging can be very helpful for getting the story across in an engaging way. Some examples:

EXAMPLE #1

The actors each have a music stand to hold their script. When they are in a scene, they stand at the music stand. When they are not in a scene, they sit. If an actor arrives or leaves a scene, they stand or sit at that point. With this staging, you may want an additional person to read the stage directions to give the audience more context for who the characters are and where the scene takes place.

EXAMPLE #2

Dr. Foster stands at a podium in one part of the stage. The researchers in Oakland are seated at a table or desks in another area of the stage. The women of the study have a third place on the stage. If you also add two or three different lighting looks, the scene transitions become very clear, and you won't need someone to read stage directions.

EXAMPLE #3

The actors can sit for some characters and stand for others.

THE PLAY

Casting

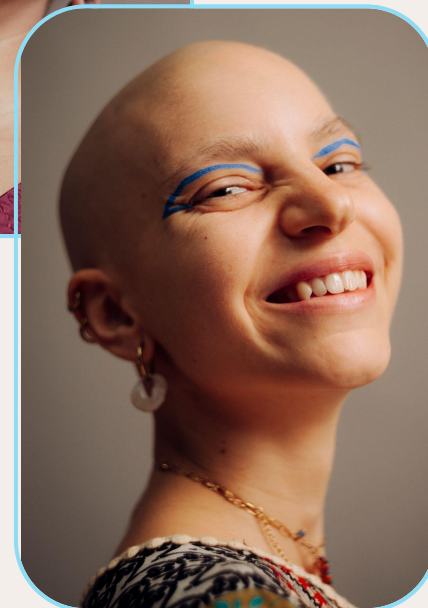
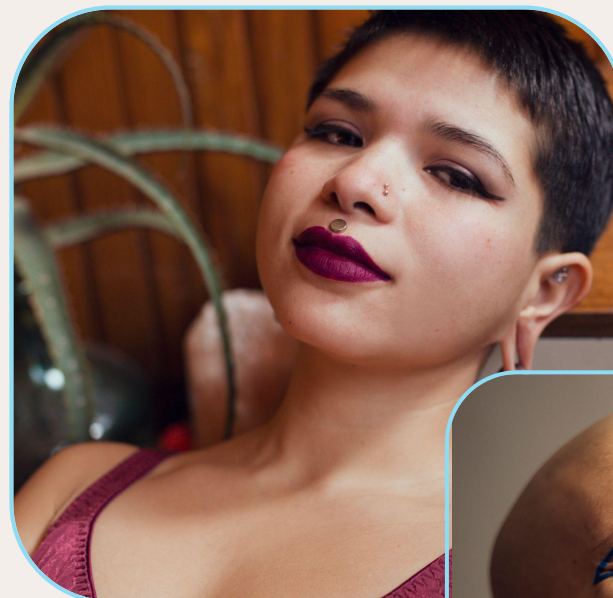
The play can be performed by 4, 7, or 10 actors. If the play is performed by four actors, doubling is easiest as follows:

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



It is important that the actor who plays Serena identifies as Black and the actor who plays Luisa is Latinx and speaks Spanish. The other characters can be of any race or ethnicity, but the more diversity in your cast, the better the play will represent the full range of experiences with abortion in America.

The Turnaway Play

Characters: Researchers

Dr. Diana Greene Foster:

Demographer and professor in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology & Reproductive Sciences at the University of California, San Francisco and lead researcher of The Turnaway Study, 50 years old. A great communicator and mentor, Dr. Foster is heartfelt in her convictions but can see all sides of an argument. She has a wonderful sense of humor.

Luisa:

A Mexican American woman from Texas, Luisa is 22 years old. The newest member of the Turnaway Study team, she is young but ambitious and actively figuring out her life plan. She is caught between her family's expectations and finding her own path.

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. Prior to that she worked as a counselor at an abortion clinic. Serena is mission-driven and has a good sense of humor. She is kind and empathetic but takes charge when needed.

Rhonda:

A researcher on the Turnaway Study for the past two years in her mid-20s, Rhonda is outspoken and has a great sense of humor. She loves to tease.

The Turnaway Play

Characters: Real women who participated in the Turnaway Study

Amy:

Amy was 28 years old and six weeks pregnant when she had an abortion. A middle class Texan, she is family centered and religious.

Angela:

Angela was 17 years old and 24 weeks pregnant when she was denied an abortion. From Illinois, she is desperate for independence and able to make tough decisions.

Brenda:

Brenda was 24 years old and 24 weeks pregnant when she was denied an abortion. A low income New York City native, she struggles with substance abuse and violent relationships. She is smart and angry.

Kiara:

Kiara was 26 years old and 13 weeks pregnant when she received an abortion. From Kentucky, she escaped an abusive relationship and is now happily married. She has inner strength and conviction; decisive.

Martina:

Martina was 22 years old and nine weeks pregnant when she had an abortion. An Arizona native, she is independent, athletic, and self-aware.

Sofia:

Sofia was 19 years old and 26 weeks pregnant when she was denied an abortion. She grew up poor in California. She has a great reserve of inner strength and perseverance, but her dreams have been deferred.

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For more information please go to
turnawayproject.com

