

# Civia Tamarkin's Director's Statement

June, 2019

Rarely is a film so perfectly timed or so exactly focused on the nation's psyche as *Birthright: A War Story*. With the appointment of two anti-abortion Supreme Court justices, the recent rapid-fire spate of extreme anti-abortion laws in eight states and Alabama's outright ban, including in cases of rape and incest, the survival of *Roe v Wade* is on everyone's mind. Suddenly the news is consumed with it, women are protesting and people are wondering how the hell did we get to this crisis point in a country where the majority of Americans support a woman's legal right to an abortion.

*Birthright: A War Story* shows how it happened. With an inside look into the anti-abortionists' 40-year war game, the film illustrates how they indoctrinated a youth army of ground troops, groomed candidates for political office and infiltrated every level of government, from local school boards up to Congress, the White House and the Supreme Court. As the head of the National Right to Life says in the film, "I know we are going to win because we are winning the hearts and minds of the young people." Meanwhile, the prochoice side, complacent and seeming secured by their 1973 *Roe* victory, was asleep at the switch. "We didn't see the onslaught that was coming," says one abortion rights activist.

As journalists, the filmmakers of *Birthright: A War Story* began to connect seeming isolated incidents around the country where pregnant women were being jailed, forced to undergo cesarean sections and locked away in hospitals to guard their fetuses. They began to document a pattern of American women under siege as the Christian Right, with its fetus-centric policies, tightened its grip across America. Presciently, the documentary foreshadowed Alabama as ground zero for laws that favor the unborn over their mothers.

*Birthright: A War Story* is the film of the hour—a film that captures the dangerous and deadly consequences of eroding a woman's reproductive rights. It is the real-life "Handmaid's Tale", a chilling account of how states, courts and religious doctrine determine whether, when and how women will bear children. And in today's political climate, it should be mandatory viewing. The film is "not just instructive but essential," said the Los Angeles Times. "'Birthright' shows Big Brother in action, and at his most misogynistic.