



Written by [Annalisa Pesek](#) on March 22, 2021

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The Untold Story of Roe v. Wade

Forty-eight years after the U.S. Supreme Court voted 7-2 in favor of legalizing abortion “on demand” in America comes the new movie *Roe v. Wade*. A first of its kind, the film uncovers the untold story of the infamous decision, as conceived by filmmakers Cathy Allyn (*The Experiment*) and Nicholas Loeb (*Primary Colors*).

This powerful chronicle of the Supreme Court decision tackles themes of redemption, as well as greed, manipulation, and corruption, in a thought-provoking, carefully paced work that weaves the history of the unprecedented ruling with the complex portrait of a man swept up in the zeitgeist of 1960s and 1970s America.



Roe v Wade RVW media kit

As a whole, the movie accomplishes what it sets out to do — to present all the facts, allowing viewers to decide on which side of the abortion issue they fall.

The film’s co-writer, co-director, and co-producer, Nick Loeb, who also stars as the movie’s main character, Dr. Bernard Nathanson, spoke to *The New American* in a recent video interview to discuss some of the more intriguing details of the film.

One haunting question that opens and closes the film is whether an aborted fetus is really a human being. For Nathanson, who in real life presided over more than 60,000 abortions throughout his career, the certainty that there is life in the womb was always there. So why, years later and after tens of thousands of deaths, did he experience a change of heart and advocate for the unborn?

Loeb suggested, “If Nathanson always knew the aborted fetus was a life, was there really a conversion?” Though it’s difficult to say for sure, the emotional scene in which Nathanson breaks down weeping upon viewing an ultrasound capturing a baby’s heartbeat is the moment of his epiphany that society’s normalization of murder, something he helped create, was not acceptable.

Yet, reportedly, after denouncing abortion as wrong, Nathanson still (for a time) performed abortions in cases of medical emergencies. To *New York Magazine*, in the late 1980s, he acknowledged, “On a gut, emotional level, I still favored abortion. It represented all the things we had fought for and won. It seemed eminently more civilized than the carnage that had gone on before.”

“No matter what people decide about having an abortion or not, there’s a baby there, and there’s a life, and life begins at conception,” said Loeb. And that’s the message with which viewers will contend. In the opening scene, set in March 1985, Nathanson is giving an interview to an obviously bewildered *Washington Post* reporter, who questions what seem to be contradictory statements from the doctor:

Reporter: [Referring to the aborted children] “When you take them out, you don’t see anything?”



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Nathanson: “No, you don’t see anything. Well, I mean, of all the thousands of second trimester abortions I’ve done, maybe I’ve seen half a dozen.”

Reporter: “But didn’t it bother you when you did?”

Nathanson: “No, not particularly, it was the end product, a lifeless limp thing lying there.”

Reporter: “They have a human form.”

Nathanson: “Oh absolutely.”

Reporter: “I’m a little confused. First you said, all you see is ‘bloody meat,’ but now you say you always thought it was a person. So, which one is it?”

Abortion Was Never About Women

In this scene Nathanson is conveyed as calm and cool, and his statements are verbatim real-life documented conversations. This is the man whose journey to committing his life to “saving women” began after he paid for a back-alley abortion for a girlfriend he’d hoped to marry, a decision that destroyed their relationship but led to what he describes in the film as “the start of a revolution. Women are dying.... I’m saving lives!”

We quickly learn that abortion’s real mastermind, however, was a man named Lawrence Lader (Jamie Kennedy). Dubbed “the father of the abortion movement,” Lader was mentored by Planned Parenthood founder and eugenicist Margaret Sanger in the 1920s. Aspiring to continue her work, Lader recruited Nathanson and the leader of the women’s movement, feminist Betty Friedan (Lucy Davenport), to launch the National Association to Repeal Abortion Laws (NARAL), the nation’s first organization committed to legalizing abortion.

As Loeb pointed out, “There is a lot of money in abortion.” And greed and power clearly drive the ambitious Lader, who is visibly thrilled at the fervent enthusiasm of the women in the burgeoning “pro-choice” movement.



Not listening to both sides: Though U.S. Supreme Court justices presided over the pro-life and pro-abortion arguments in *Roe v. Wade*, ultimately ruling 7-2 in favor of Roe, it is clear that they cast their votes based on personal preferences, not the law. (*Photo credit: Roe v Wade RVW media kit*)



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In one scene, a spooky jingle known as the “Abortion Song,” first introduced in Nathanson’s 1979 book *Aborting America*, is sung gleefully by Lader’s and Nathanson’s wives and children. Its lyrics, composed by Nathanson, relay the grim truth about abortion: “There’s a fortune in abortion — just a twist of the wrist and you’re through....”

The population of the nation won’t grow if it’s left up to you.”

Lader’s mission is simple: Find a pregnant girl to challenge the abortion laws, and “When New York falls, the country falls.”

Enter Dr. Mildred Jefferson (Stacey Dash), Nathanson’s compelling if underdeveloped foil (perhaps this was deliberate?), who is briefly introduced but then noticeably absent for the next 40-plus minutes of the film. Jefferson was the first black woman to graduate from Harvard Medical School. She would go on to become one of the founders of the National Right to Life Foundation and influence President Ronald Reagan’s pro-life views.

Yet, as Loeb noted, “Mildred Jefferson has been completely left out of history. No one talks about her.... If Mildred had been pro-choice, everyone would have heard her name.” Dash, who plays the young doctor, has been utterly disparaged by the film’s critics and is one of the latest victims of cancel culture.

In the film, Dr. Jefferson is approached by Catholic priest James McHugh (Tom Guiry) to head the National Right to Life Committee. She initially declines but is pressed further by McHugh, who says, “[Abortion] is akin to slavery, and you know the topic.” To which Jefferson retorts, “Because I’m black?” “Yes,” he replies. Eventually signing on with the group, she befriends law professor Robert Byrn (Joey Lawrence), whose charismatic, convincing personality and sharp legal mind create an endearing character with a penchant for quoting luminaries such as Ben Franklin, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and John Marshall.

McHugh’s comment to Jefferson equating slavery to abortion should be alarming for every American. It’s true: Abortion has been a holocaust on the black community, with 40 percent of all abortions in the country happening in poor black and Hispanic neighborhoods.

Given Sanger’s views, as proposed in “The Negro Project,” to reduce the black population and literally stop black people from having children altogether, such a result could have been expected. But in film scenes of busy abortion clinics, women enthusiastically await their opportunity to receive “reproductive health care” services; notably, none of the women are black.

Throughout, the pro-life movement is depicted as sincere but lacking in funds, support, and the well-engineered enthusiasm of the pro-abortion side. Archival footage of massive protests demonstrates a fervent women’s liberation movement embracing Lader’s ingenious invention of the slogan “pro-choice,” a message few were willing to oppose. Loeb expressed his belief that “today the majority of pro-choicers believe they are helping women and they just don’t understand the facts. I think the movement was co-opted by a few corrupt people who knew what they were doing, and greed set in.” To viewers, it appears that at the height of the sexual revolution, women were so caught up in the idea of their right to control their own bodies that they seemed to show no concern for the fact that they are killing their own children.

As with Nathanson’s confession that he lied about knowing the aborted fetus was a human being, the movie makes clear that lies are what advance the entire pro-abortion movement. Lader proves



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especially adept at conjuring incredible falsehoods, which even *Time* magazine willingly prints, such as that “every year, a million back-alley abortions claim thousands of women’s lives.”

In one revealing scene, while vacationing in St. Lucia, Nathanson and Lader are boasting to a beautiful bikini-clad woman about what they’ve done. She asks why they would lie about such things. Nathanson, who at this point is raking in \$50,000 a day, tells her, “If you keep repeating the big lie, people don’t question it.”

Buying the lie, Texas lawyers Linda Coffee and Sarah Weddington (played by Justine Wachsberger and Greer Grammer, who deserve plaudits for their outstanding performances) are the willing pawns of the “pro-choice” cause. Unemployed and having never tried a case before *Roe*, they bask in their rise from rags to riches.

Corruption in the High Court

Among the film’s greatest strengths is its intimate portrayal of the political and personal influences impacting the decisions of the Supreme Court justices, a group commonly revered as impeccable men without flaws. “I want the general public to take away from [the film] how Supreme Court cases are decided today, very similar to the way they were decided back then,” said Loeb. “It’s very political, as the whole process has been in the past decade for the Supreme Court, and maybe it’s not all about the Constitution or legal fact.”

In the film, Justices Potter Stewart (William Forsythe) and Harry Blackmun (Corbin Bernsen) unashamedly have family members who work at Planned Parenthood, creating a clear conflict of interest. When Stewart is confronted by Justice William Brennan (Robert Davi), who demands Stewart recuse himself, Stewart refuses. To spite Chief Justice Warren Burger (Jon Voight) for demanding *Roe* be reargued after an initial internal vote of 4-3 in favor of *Roe*, Justice William Douglas (Richard Portnow) admits to Brennan that he’s going to leak the vote to the press.

As each judge wrestles with his decision, the film emphasizes the pressures they face from outside forces, including fears of damaging established political alliances or losing the favor of family members. Blackmun’s own daughter tells him, “Stand with us, Daddy, stand up for women.”



Change of heart: In the movie depiction, as well as real life, Dr. Bernard Nathanson (Nick Loeb), a notorious abortionist-turned-pro-life advocate, is baptized into the Catholic Church. (*Photo credit: Roe v*



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Wade RVW media kit)

As depicted, all of the judges had strong feelings about the way the vote should go. Burger uses his position as chief justice to demand *Roe* be reargued, a move several of the other justices resent. To attack Burger publicly, Douglas and Stewart coordinate an organized effort to leak information about the court's internal vote to a *Washington Post* reporter played by the inimitable Roger Stone. Stone is shocked at the leak, but Stewart remains defiant, stating, "He [Burger] deserves it."

In December 1971, when *Roe* was first heard by the high court, only seven justices sat on the bench, as President Richard Nixon struggled to get his two picks confirmed in the Senate to fill vacant seats. Burger is the most tragic figure. Knowing abortion is legally and morally wrong, he ultimately falls prey to perceived public opinion and flips his vote from no to yes for *Roe*. Byron White (John Schneider) is the only justice unwavering in his commitment to life, and, with Justice William Rehnquist, dissents in the final 7-2 decision.

Now, viewers will be wondering where and who is Jane Roe. As a character, the 20-something Norma McCorvey, the real-life *Roe*, is given less than 10 minutes of screen time. In fact, viewers learn very little about her or the actual case. Yet, according to Loeb, "What is relevant about Norma is not that she was pro-life or pro-choice but that she was lied to and manipulated. They signed her up and never spoke to her again.... What happened? She had no idea." In the film, Professor Byrn raises some obvious questions during a college lecture: "Why was *Roe* in the Supreme Court? There's no factual record in this case, no trial, no expert witnesses, no description of evidence, no expert witness testimony.... This is a conspiracy."

One could argue the conspiracy of which Byrn speaks is that the case has nothing to do with women's healthcare or well-being, but instead money and power for Planned Parenthood and abortionists.

In the movie, as well as real life, Norma's case is initially filed in Houston, even though she lives in Dallas. Lawyer Coffee arranges this so that Dallas Judge Sarah Hughes, who favors the position of *Roe*, will oversee the hearing. McCorvey never appears in court; she never even has an abortion. Meanwhile, Judge Hughes' enemy No. 1, Texas District Attorney General Henry Wade, takes one look at the case and states emphatically, "No judge or jury in their right mind would ever let abortion happen in Texas."

In court, Assistant District Attorney Jay Floyd argues that the child's right to life is superior to the woman's right to privacy. Conversely, Weddington asserts it's impossible to determine "when life begins or even ends," garnering a standing ovation after an impassioned closing argument: "These young girls, who cannot possibly shoulder the responsibility of a child, should be entitled to an abortion!" Though Texas loses the case, Wade promises to "appeal all the way to the Supreme Court so help me God!"

Life Is the Way Forward

Well illustrated throughout are the parallels of the cultural issues dividing America both then and now, as well as the manipulation of the media and the proliferation of the Lawrence Laders of the world among today's progressive Left. American society today and during the *Roe* controversy are deeply similar, and this fact will not be lost on conservative or leftist viewers.

Aside from a 1989 TV movie starring Holly Hunter, Allyn and Loeb's film may be the seminal account (so far) on the landmark ruling. In a recent phone interview with *The New American*, Allyn stressed that



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the film received zero Hollywood backing. “We reached out to everyone we could think of from pro-life and religious groups.” Moreover, members of the cast included “an equal breakdown of actors from the pro-life and pro-choice movements, brought together to document the history of the ruling,” said Allyn. Yet, according to Loeb, over the course of filming, one cast member changed from the pro-abortion to the pro-life side.

At the end of the film, Nathanson, a pro-life champion, is baptized into the Catholic Church (in 1996). That someone who could kill so many babies could have a change of heart and work so diligently for the pro-life cause is nothing short of miraculous. In 1984, before his religious conversion, he created the antiabortion film *The Silent Scream*, depicting an abortion-in-progress via ultrasound imaging. Perhaps it’s time to resurrect this film.

Still, the question remains, will *Roe v. Wade* the movie convince viewers of the abomination of abortion? For decades, Americans have been deceived, thinking abortion is about caring for women. But abortion in no way advances women; instead, it normalizes murder by dehumanizing the preborn child. Since 1973, more than 60 million babies have been aborted, and 40 percent of those deaths are in the black community. In 2020, the profits of Planned Parenthood exceeded more than \$1.6 billion, according to the film.

Undoubtedly, the story of *Roe v. Wade* is long overdue. Yet it is here now, and in the words of the film’s executive producer, Dr. Alveda King, it “proves that Hollywood does not have the final word about the sanctity of life.”



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