



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on July 17, 2014

Abortion-Themed “Romantic Comedy” Fails for Good Reason

In Hollywood just about anything violent, vulgar, offensive, and otherwise in poor taste is fodder for a hit film. That’s why director and screenwriter Gillian Robespierre was so hopeful about *Obvious Child*, touted as a romantic comedy with a twist: the heroine of the story gets pregnant and, instead of keeping the baby, decides to get an abortion. How she tells the baby’s father about her “choice” and comes to believe that the killing is “what’s best for her,” as the [Los Angeles Times](#) review puts it, is what is supposed to give the film its unique “rom-com” appeal.



Explaining her motivation for writing and producing the movie, Robespierre said that “we don’t feel like women should feel judgment for making this choice. It’s private and complex, but it doesn’t need to be riddled with guilt.”

The movie, which premiered at Sundance and opened in theaters earlier this summer, was praised by all the predictable media. “Finally, a romantic comedy about abortion,” praised *Los Angeles Times* guest reviewer Susan Rohwer, writing that the film “subverts the trope that the procedure is tragic, something to be ashamed of or painful, and does something we rarely see on screen: makes it OK.”

Though the movie’s heroine Donna, played by one-time *Saturday Night Live* actress Jenny Slate, “isn’t thrilled at the prospect of getting [an abortion], it doesn’t ruin her life,” says Rohwer, adding that the film re-enforces the tragic fiction that Donna “is able, like many women who have an abortion, to walk away unscarred.”

Vanity Fair called *Obvious Child* “wildly funny and exceptionally raw and honest.” Likewise, [Variety](#) called it “refreshingly honest,” while [Salon](#) gave it thumbs up for not depicting abortion as a “major moral dilemma or a particularly painful decision or a trauma that’s likely to change Donna’s life.”

One pro-abortion reviewer praised the film for debunking the “[8 biggest lies about abortion](#).” Wrote blogger Elizabeth Plank: “With humor and wit, *Obvious Child* dispels pretty much every single myth that mainstream television and film have perpetuated about abortion over the past few decades.”

But despite the efforts of pro-abortion columnists and bloggers in the major media to hype the movie as a fresh, hip, and totally hilarious spin on the “choice” women have (most liberal-leaning reviewers could hardly bring themselves to voice the word “abortion”), *Obvious Child* turned out to be a box office bomb, barely grossing \$2 million in its two-week run in selected theaters across the nation. “Compare that to 2007’s *Juno*, a brilliant film widely seen as pro-life (at least among pro-lifers),” wrote Jonah Goldberg in [National Review](#), “or *Knocked Up*, a raunchier romantic comedy also hailed by abortion foes, both of which grossed more than \$140 million domestically.”



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Even given the fact that as an independent film it wasn't supposed to set attendance records, *Obvious Child* performed poorly compared to two pro-life indie films, *Bella* and *October Baby*, which grossed \$8 million and \$5.3 million respectively.

Pro-life columnist Cassy Fiano, writing for [Live Action News](#), argued that *Obvious Child's* poor numbers make for a telling observation: Women "are not rushing to theaters to see a movie that revolves around abortion. Crazy enough, it seems that people don't find abortion all that romantic or funny. Like *After Tiller*, also the darling of the pro-abortion crowd, most of America is ignoring this movie, because most normal people don't feel the need to romanticize abortion. Only pro-abortion extremists feel the need for abortion to not only be legal, but celebrated and glorified."

Most likely the majority of movie-going Americans passed on *Obvious Child* because, like Jillian Kay Melchior writing in [National Review](#), they understand that the whole foundation of the movie "is reprehensible because, through tasteless and unsubtle humor, it trivializes something that's of grave importance for pro-choice and pro-life women alike."

Or like Arina Grossu, director of the Center for Human Dignity at the [Family Research Council](#), they are troubled at how the movie "attempts to gloss over the gravity of abortion." In an interview with the [Daily Signal](#), Grossu observed that "no amount of acting or short-lived laughs can take away the reality that abortion is a grave moral evil that kills one person and wounds the other."

Perhaps, ultimately, rank-and-file Americans did not join with pro-abortion crusaders in applauding and celebrating *Obvious Child* because, like conservative columnist [Brent Bozell](#), they feared it was possible that "if America laughs at this, America is beyond redemption."



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