

# PRESS KIT

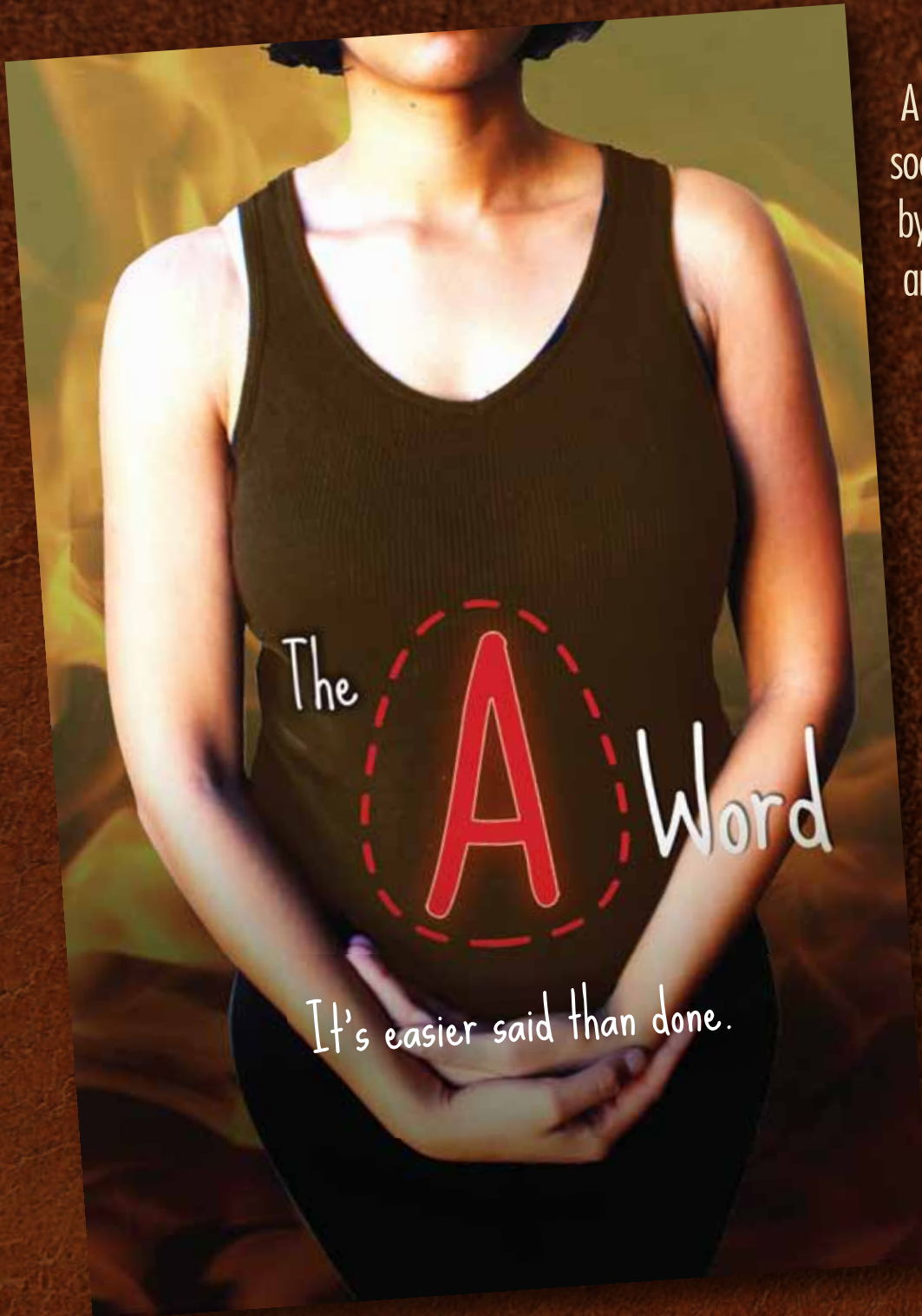
## THE **A** WORD

A young woman rejects the social stigma of her abortion by opening up to her family and people from both sides of the debate.

### PRESS CONTACT

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# One Liner

A young woman rejects the social stigma of her abortion by opening up to her family and people from both sides of the debate.

# Synopsis (86 words)

In the fall of 2009, Lindsay Ellis, a 26-year old graduate student went through the painful process of having an abortion. "The A Word" follows Ellis as she opens up to her family and organizations from both sides of the debate, in search of healing. This is not a film about the protests and debates wrapped up in religious views and political agenda, but rather a personal journey about one woman's struggle to shed the stigma attached to the A-word in hopes of starting a dialogue.

# Synopsis (375 words)

In the fall of 2009, Lindsay Ellis, a 26-year old graduate student went through the painful process of having an abortion. Months later she found herself still struggling to make sense of the experience. In hopes of better understanding it, Ellis began developing "The A Word" by opening up to her family, community and even pro-life organizations.

In 2010, the word "abortion" is still a difficult one to utter. And even though 28% of U.S. women ages 15-64 have had abortions, there is still a tremendous secrecy to the matter.

When Ellis unexpectedly got pregnant, she reluctantly decided to terminate the pregnancy. From fear of being judged, she initially kept it a private matter hiding it from her classmates, friends and even her own family. But as the days turned into weeks, she began to question why it was socially unacceptable to talk about such a pervasive issue. She decided to use this as starting point to develop "The A Word," only 6 months after her abortion.

The film begins when Ellis heads back to her home state of Tennessee to open up to her parents about her private burden. She finds out that she isn't the only one in her family who kept the truth of their abortion a secret. Sue Ellis, (Lindsay's mother) a high school guidance counselor, shares the experiences of her many students who have dealt with the pain of the post-abortion process. She candidly reveals her own connection to the issue, and opens the door to a memory that was closed many years ago.

Taking these experiences with her back to Los Angeles, Ellis reaches out to organizations from both sides of the debate. She speaks to Aspen Baker, founder of Exhale a secular abortion hotline; and Karen Reynoso, a volunteer for the pro-life organization, 40 Days for Life. Tensions rise when Ellis gives an impromptu speech at a pro-life rally and both sides are faced with the reality of the real victims: the women who go through it.

This is not a film about the protests and debates wrapped up in religious views and political agenda, but rather a personal journey about one woman's struggle to shed the stigma attached to the A-word in hopes of starting a dialogue.

## Subjects:

1. **Lindsay Ellis:** 26-year old graduate film student and main subject.
2. **Ritvik Mayank:** Lindsay's classmate and father of her would be child.
3. **Sue Ellis:** Lindsay's mother and a guidance councilor at the local high school.
4. **Carol Ellis:** Lindsay's father and music teacher.
5. **Aspen Baker:** Founder of Exhale, a secular abortion hotline.
6. **Karen Reynoso:** Pro life advocate and volunteer for "40 Days for Life."

# Director's Statement

This film was made as the result of a discrepancy. The title was the subject of a lengthy debate, and we didn't come to a consensus until very late in the game. We chose "The A Word" because after all of the people we'd talked to and all that we'd been through, there was still a level of discomfort in telling people what the movie was really about. And despite being at the forefront of political debate, people are still wildly uncomfortable uttering this simple 8-letter word. Abortion.

"The A Word" was the result of much talking into, talking out of, and all around convincing. When I was first developing the film, I had many different voices telling me many different things. But perhaps most importantly, I remember those who told me, don't bother if you won't put yourself in it. That is, after all, why you want to make this film in the first place, isn't it? It was with this in mind that I structured the film as you see it; a first hand perspective, bitterly, even offensively so. This film is the result of a discrepancy that I saw. Many, many films were made about abortion, but none by any individual who had actually gone through one, or if they had, made that clear. My goal was to show the audience (from a non-partisan perspective) what it's like to go through an abortion in America, by one of the many who have had to endure it.

When I say that the film is a result of a discrepancy, I mean simply this: there is much debate about what abortion means in this country, but very little of it comes from the millions upon millions of women who have gone through it. This film is not meant to slap a "right" or "wrong" label on the issue, nor is it to raise interest in any prominent political movements, but to show the difficulty in making this choice. Abortion truly is a gray area and ideally audiences will come closer to a point where they can be comfortable with it. It isn't as simple as "right" or "wrong"; it is what the individual makes it, and it can be no more than that.

# Background:

It is a universal yet uncomfortable topic that we hardly talk about: Abortion. It is an omnipresent act that deeply affects millions of women and men, on a daily basis yet is a word we are not allowed to say. While everyone argues about whether it is right or wrong to do, the typical woman, girl, even mother that has had an abortion cannot speak about her own experience. Even today, while a woman has the right to choose, what about the freedom to speak on the matter?

According to The Center for Bio-Ethical Reform, (courtesy of The Alan Guttmacher Institute and Planned Parenthood's Family Planning Perspectives) in the U.S. alone, 1.37 million abortions happen a year, nearly 3700 abortions a day. One out of three women in America will have an abortion. In the case of Roe Vs. Wade, 1973 marked a landmark decision for abortion to be legalized in the U.S. Prior to 1973, abortions have occurred whether it is legal or not.

93% of all abortions occur for social reasons (i.e. the child is unwanted or inconvenient).

Many factors are involved in the decision of an abortion including age, socio-economic status, culture, religious views, and marital status. Still other factors come into play. 1% of all abortions occur because of rape or incest; 6% of abortions occur because of potential health problems regarding either the mother or child. 52% of women obtaining abortions in the U.S. are younger than 25: Women aged 20-24 obtain 32% of all abortions; Teenagers obtain 20% and girls under 15 accounts for 1.2%.

# Resources:

[www.naral.org](http://www.naral.org)

[www.ansirh.org](http://www.ansirh.org)

[www.40daysforlife.com](http://www.40daysforlife.com)

[www.4exhale.org](http://www.4exhale.org)

# Crew Bios



**Lindsay Ellis** began her career as an filmmaker as an adolescent in the pre-digital era, using tools such as two VCRs stacked on top of the other to edit. Before moving to California, she worked in new media as an editor and video producer for various websites. She attended New York University's Tisch School of the Arts before coming to the University of Southern California to study film production as a graduate. She hopes to continue working in both documentary and fiction in different capacities, creating films that tell stories that aren't often heard, and that speak to people.



**Clarinda Morales** has produced a number of documentaries for the past several years. After her undergraduate Theater and Film work at UCLA. One of her most notable documentaries was on Showtime entitled Reversal of Fortune about a homeless man who was given \$100,000. She has also produced in LA and NY and the UK for MTV, VH1 and other networks. Besides documentaries, she is worked as an indie features such as Down For Life. She continues filmmaking within USC's School of Cinematic Arts as well a outside and hopes to continue making films that matter.



**Kaveh Taherian** is a jack of all trades who has worked jobs across the board of the creative arts, including film director, illustrator and graphic artist. Some notable credits include working on HBO's Entourage and The Simpsons. He received his B.A. in illustration/design which gave him the skills to found his own creative services business, Digi Socks Design. Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, Kaveh was born to Iranian immigrants who encouraged him to pursue a career in the visual arts. This brought him to Los Angeles in 2008.

# Crew Bios



**Hongsik Park** studied architecture at Kookmin Univ (South Korea) and won several awards in TV commercial contest including MTV, Sony and Samsung. He wandered around edge of filmmaking several years working as a journalist for Film 2.0 and Movist magazine, a game architect and a motion graphic designer. When there's no shooting with his USC friends, he usually spends all day writing and daydreaming.



**Claudia Castello** was born in Rio de Janeiro and has been living in Southern California for the last 9 years. Claudia discovered her passion for film making through editing, and working on the documentary 'The A Word' has been a great experience. Now, going into her third year of an MFA in Film Production at USC, she is looking forward to the next step in her career.



**Ritvik Mayank** worked as a software engineer for nearly five years after receiving his bachelor's degree in computer science from the Indian Institute of Information Technology, . His desire to collaborate with creative individuals and positively influence the society was his primary motivation to leave his successful career and home country and join the School of Cinematic Arts at USC. Ritvik is a recipient of the James Bridges Scholarship for excellence in directing, honored by the USC School of Cinematic Arts, and he strives to continue making thought-provoking films that address social and emotional issues.

# Crew Bios



**Jesse Keller** is an MFA candidate in Film Production at the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts. As an undergraduate at UCLA, he directed the short documentary, "Monk Chat," about Buddhist monks and foreign travelers in Thailand. "The A-Word" marks his first serious work as a sound designer.



**Josh Mendoza** was born and raised in Phoenix, AZ. He attended Stanford University and received a BA in English with an emphasis in Creative Writing. After college, he returned home to pursue a successful career in real estate sales and continued writing. His true dream was to work in the film industry and an opportunity to produce a one-hour television pilot while in Arizona renewed that passion and inspired Josh to apply to USC. Josh is currently matriculating at USC in the MFA program in Production.

# Credits

**Director:** Lindsay Ellis  
**Producers:** Clarinda Morales, Kaveh Taherian  
**Cinematographer:** Hongsik Park  
**Editors:** Claudia Castello, Ritvik Mayank  
**Sound:** Jesse Keller, Josh Mendoza  
**Original Music By:** Samuel Jones, Alexis Marsh

**Set Photographer:** Lauren Anderson, Josh Weiss  
**SCA Business Affairs:** Reba Molock  
**Colorist:** Vince Gonzales  
**Graphic Design:** Erin Siegel, Kaveh Taherian

**Documentary Faculty:**

Kate Amend, A.C.E.	Editing
Mark Jonathan Harris	Directing
Tomlinson Holman	Sound
Lisa Leeman	Producing
Josh Morton, S.O.C.	Cinematography
Reine-Claire	Avid Editing Instruction

**Graduate Assistants:**

- Sean Blanche
- Bret Cornish
- Jean Tsai
- Jonathan Zimmerman

**Thank You To:** Aspen Baker, Ted Braun, Mark and Robin Capalbo, Miriam Cutler, Alicia Dwyer, James Egan, Sue and James Carol Ellis, Annie Gulley, Sherry Karuda, Thomas G. Miller, Fred Nobari, Amanda Pope, Kai Ratliff, Karen Reynoso, Brenda Smith, Melissa Tremaine, Tracy Weitz

**Special Thanks To:** Lori Berg, Channel Awesome, The Ellis Family, Glenn Ellis, Kenneth Hall, William King, Thomas Johnson, Doe Mayer, Christopher McKay, Mario Morales, Monica Price, 40 Days for Life, NARAL, Exhale, ANSIRH ,Thanks to the generosity of all of our donors, And especially to our 547 classmates for all their support

**Music Clearance Information:**

“America The Beautiful”

Traditional

Performed by Lindsay Ellis,  
Alexis Marsh and Samuel Jones

“Let your Babies Live”

Words and music by: Matthew S. Smith

Performed by Matthew S. Smith

Used with permission,  
courtesy of Matthew S. Smith

“Where No One Stands Alone”

Words and Music by: Mosie Lister

Performed by Carroll and Lindsay Ellis

Used with permission,  
courtesy of Mosie Lister

Student Produced at the School of Cinematic Arts, University of  
Southern California.

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# Production Stills

