

# CASTING THE FIRST STONE

Portraits  
of Women  
and Men  
on  
Both Sides  
of the  
Abortion War

Produced and Directed by:  
**Julie Gustafson**

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**Airs nationally  
on the PBS  
documentary  
series, "P.O.V."**

**Tuesday,  
September 3, 1991  
at 10 PM EST**

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Contact your local PBS  
station for exact time  
and date of broadcast

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Co-Produced by: **John Petito**  
Editing Team: **Rebecca Haggerty,**  
**Jim Klein, David Van Taylor,**  
**Susan Carucio**  
Consulting Editor: **Nancy Baker**  
Cinematography by: **Julie Gustafson**  
Associate Producer: **Esther B. Cassidy**  
Community & Institutional Distribution:  
**Women Make Movies, 225 Lafayette Street,**  
**New York, NY 10012 (212) 925-0606**

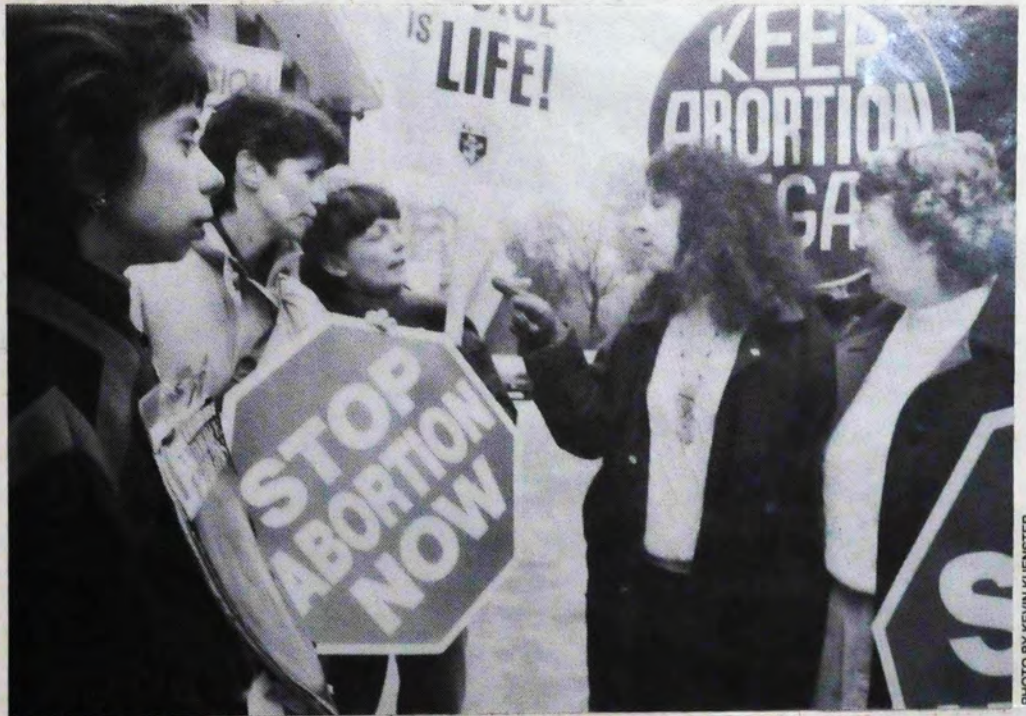


PHOTO BY KEVIN KUENSTER

**C**asting the **First Stone** tells the stories of six passionate women who face each other daily on opposite sides of police barricades at a Pennsylvania abortion clinic. Spanning the last three tumultuous years in abortion history, the characters range from a 67 year-old Italian Catholic grandmother and a fundamentalist Christian who "homeschools" her children, to a progressive Christian abortion counselor and a career-minded feminist. What emerges is a rich and compelling array of opposing beliefs not only about abortion, but about motherhood, family, society and religion.

"Anyone interested in one of the major social issues of our time—the national debate over the right to choose—will find *Casting the First Stone* fascinating and revealing. It sheds light on a complex and important issue which defies simplistic characterizations."

— Kate Michelman

Executive Director, National Abortion Rights Action League

"... Excellent — and recommended — viewing!"

— Judie Brown

President, American Life League

**POV**

TELEVISION WITH  
A POINT OF VIEW

**Funders**

Point of View, The New York State Council on the Arts, The New York Council for the Humanities, The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, The Pennsylvania Humanities Council, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The New York Foundation for the Arts, Funding Exchange/Paul Robeson Fund, SYMEDCO, Funding Exchange/Phoebus Fund, Lucius and Eva Eastman Foundation

# CASTING THE FIRST STONE

## PROJECT FUNDERS

POV The American Documentary  
New York State Council for  
the Arts  
National Endowment for the  
Arts  
Guggenheim Foundation  
New York Council for the Humanities  
Pennsylvania Humanities Council  
The John D. and Catherine T.  
MacArthur Foundation  
The Woman's Fund  
The New York Foundation  
The Paul Robeson Fund  
for Film and Video  
Symedco  
The Phoebus Fund  
The Lucius and Eva Eastman  
Foundation

## PROJECT PERSONNEL

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Editor	Rebecca Haggerty
Consulting Editor	Nancy Baker
Additional Editors	Susan Carucio
	David Van Taylor
Additional Camera	Roy Head
	Jim Ospenson
Consultants	Ruth Smith
	Jonathon Glover
	Faye Ginsburg

# POV

TELEVISION WITH  
A POINT OF VIEW

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ABORTION ADVOCATES AND FOES TAKE A STAND IN **CASTING THE FIRST STONE**  
ON P.O.V. TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3 AT 10 P.M. (ET) ON PBS

"Abortion is such a polarized, volatile issue, we could all keep screaming about it forever. But we have to find a way to have a dialogue, a way to really listen to each other," says videomaker Julie Gustafson. Her new work, **CASTING THE FIRST STONE**, is a thoughtful, provocative look at the circumstances and values of six grassroots activists on both sides of one of the most contentious issues in American society. The film will make its national broadcast premiere on Tuesday, September 3, at 10 p.m. (ET, check local listings) as the final presentation this season on **P.O.V.**, public television's acclaimed independent non-fiction series.

Shot in and around the Women's Suburban Clinic in Paoli, Pennsylvania, **CASTING THE FIRST STONE** is set during two dramatic years in United States abortion politics. Three of the film's subjects believe that women should have the right to choose whether or not they will carry a pregnancy to term, and three believe that abortion is murder. "Abortion is all about what a woman 'should' be," says Gustafson. "Should she take advantage of reproductive and economic advances of the 20th Century, or should she remain 'as God made her -- the center of the home and hearth.' These ideas, and these women, are diametrically opposed." The women are:

(more)

## CASTING 2/

**Joan Scalia**, anti-abortion activist and Italian Catholic grandmother who has been in the traditional role of wife and mother for over 35 years. By risking arrest in Operation Rescue protests, Joan will be forced to choose between standing up for what she believes in or defying her disapproving husband.

**Shelley Miller**, director of the Women's Suburban Clinic. Influenced by social activism in the Sixties, Miller articulates the "pro-choice" position -- the right of a woman to dignity and self determination -- in a dramatic press conference when her clinic is attacked by Operation Rescue.

**Sharon Owen**, staff counselor at the Women's Suburban Clinic, a minister's wife and the adoptive mother of two. Although a staunch advocate for reproductive rights, when Owen counsels a young single mother about her accidental pregnancy, it is apparent she wishes she could offer meaningful alternatives to abortion.

**Alberta Fay Horrocks**, anti-abortion activist. An articulate, divorced single mother and former "pro-choicer," Alberta now moves beyond protest to educate teenagers. Her message: self-control and chastity, not condoms.

**Debby Baker**, anti-abortion activist. A Fundamentalist Protestant who "home-schools" her five children to retain Christian values, Baker believes that public education devalues traditional ideas about the proper role of women and family in society.

**Frances Sheehan**, executive director, National Abortion Rights Action League of Pennsylvania. While strategizing the future of the local pro-choice movement and campaigning for a pro-choice candidate, Sheehan has a baby of her own. She emphasizes that her child is planned and wanted.

### OPERATION RESCUE

Joan Scalia, Alberta Fay Horrocks, and Debby Baker are all supporters of Operation Rescue, a group that in 1987 began staging sit-ins designed to block access to abortion clinics. They also work as "sidewalk counselors," as they use rhetoric and photographs to convince pregnant women not to abort. Izelia Pollard, a young

(more)

### **CASTING 3/**

mother, recalls how she was dissuaded from having an abortion. "I remember when Alberta was telling me that the baby would be shredded apart...I just couldn't do that to no unborn child. The pamphlets --that's what did it."

After leading a YWCA Teen Chastity discussion group Alberta explains, "I do believe that women, because of the capability of bearing children, have to make different decisions from men. Women are the first nurturers of the human race -- that's an important element to bring into the world, not to strip it away in order to compete [with men]."

After an emotional clinic staff meeting, abortion counselor Sharon Owen voices her frustration: "The protesters often get me and say 'How can you be a Christian and how could you be married to a minister and still work in an abortion clinic?' And you know, it behooves a Christian to be in the places where the hard decisions are being made. When they stand there and grab the clients and pretend that they know what's good for them, I think Jesus would probably, were he there, say 'Any of those of you who are without sin, cast the first stone.'"

### **WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ROE VS. WADE?**

In 1973, the landmark Roe vs. Wade decision guaranteed American women the right to a safe, legal abortion. But one of the most

(more)

## **CASTING 4/**

fervent debates in U.S. history was far from over. "Most people don't realize that Roe was really hobbled by the Webster vs. Missouri decision in 1989, which said that each state will determine its own policy. The recent Rust vs. Sullivan Supreme Court decision [which denied federal funds to clinics that perform or even discuss abortion] is a further blow. Roe has been, without our realizing it, overturned," says videomaker Gustafson. "This has been a tremendously momentous two years in the history of abortion law."

The film captures the pro-choicers' response to the Webster decision as Frances and other shocked abortion providers meet to discuss the implications. If Pennsylvania chooses to make abortion illegal, will they continue to perform them "underground?"

### **GETTING BOTH SIDES OF THE STORY**

Among documentary filmmakers, Gustafson is a rarity. She chooses to involve her subjects in all stages of the film, including the editing. "It's a way of building trust and generating even more commitment to the process," she explains. "They saw this film as an opportunity to share their lives and presumably, to get their message on television."

In a situation as volatile as this, obtaining the consent of all involved proved particularly daunting. Gustafson recalls, "It

**(more)**

## **CASTING 5/**

was startling and difficult for both sides to see the other side portrayed in such a positive light." The anti-abortion activists, for example, were horrified to find themselves appearing in the same film with Women's Suburban Clinic co-founder Dr. Stephen Ellen, who performs abortions. The pro-abortion group, on the other hand, were equally dismayed to learn that the film would include footage of "Baby Choice," an aborted fetus in a tiny casket used as an Operation Rescue prop. After much discussion, Gustafson was able to convince everyone that **CASTING THE FIRST STONE** would be a fair, dialogue-provoking film. "If the film can't be perfectly balanced, which would be impossible, at least I can try to show the strengths and weaknesses of both arguments."

Where does the abortion war go from here? "I don't think it's going to get better," Gustafson says. "The battle will go on. There's going to be a lot of chaos."

Contact: Ellen Schneider  
212/397-6736

### **About the Filmmaker**

**Julie M. Gustafson** is a prominent video maker, curator and educator who has pioneered a style of feature-length and narrative techniques. Credits include **THE TRIAL OF AVCO PLOUGHSHARES** (1986, with John Reilly), **THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS** (1983, with John Reilly), and **JOE ALBERT'S FOX HUNT** (1980, with John Reilly and Karen Mooney).

A recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, Gustafson curated numerous screening series. This includes 16 years at an annual documentary festival held at Joseph Papp's Public Theatre. Gustafson has taught at the Annenberg School of Communications, The New School for Social Research and New York University.

**CASTING THE FIRST STONE**

Credits

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Marc N. Weiss is executive producer of **P.O.V.**; David M. Davis is executive director. Major funding is provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Arts, and public television stations.

**P.O.V.** is presented by a consortium of public television stations: KCET/Los Angeles, South Carolina ETV, WGBH/Boston, and WNET/New York.





1993  
Thirteenth Annual  
Film and Video Festival

**Communicating and  
Community**



**COUNCIL ON  
FOUNDATIONS**

Nothing since the Vietnam War has polarized the American public like the issue of abortion. It cuts across ethnic, religious and socio-economic lines. Pro-life activists and pro-choice activists see each other as implacable enemies. Ironically, while making *Casting the First Stone*, director Julie Gustafson was surprised to learn how much these women had in common. "The reason they scream and yell at each other is not just about abortion. It's about their very way of life, what it means to be a woman and a mother," says Gustafson.

*Casting the First Stone* is a complex portrait of both sides of the abortion controversy as debated in a small Pennsylvania town. Gustafson has managed to get behind the threatening voices and numbing rhetoric to the more personal beliefs and feelings of a few advocates on each side. There were concerns of class, income and religion which required extensive attention.

Ultimately, *Casting the First Stone* is not about whether abortion is right or wrong, but why people hold the values they do. From the beginning of the film, it becomes obvious many of these activists are taking principled stands based on their fundamental personal values. They are committed people doing their best to solve real problems.

"On the surface they would seem to have a lot in common, particularly the women. Many of them are mothers, many of them are people who are religious—on both sides—and they also are people who are oriented toward serving," says Gustafson. However, different life experiences have shaped conflicting beliefs and values.

It is in the interviews at home, away from the clinics and protests, that Gustafson's sympathetic approach is illuminating. In the process, she shatters stereotypes. Joan Scalia, a grandmother, explains as she prepares pasta that she joined Operation Rescue because she could not bear the thought of babies being killed. She says she thinks of herself as being part of the civil rights movement, but that she is old-fashioned enough to avoid being arrested at protests because it would annoy her husband.

By contrast, Frances Sheehan, the executive director of the National Abortion Rights Action League of Pennsylvania, is filmed in her upscale home with her 3-month-old baby. She must soon return to work to meet her professional responsibilities as well as for the income.

As the *New York Times* notes, "No viewer's opinion about abortion is likely to be changed by the hour, but you may come away with a better

understanding and perhaps a higher regard for those on the other side."

The Paul Robeson Fund for Independent Media assisted with production funding because it explored both sides of a controversial issue in a balanced fashion.

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation provided finishing funds for *Casting the First Stone*. Woodward Wickham, the foundation's Vice President for Public Affairs and Director of the General Program, explained that the foundation believes that democracy is best served by a diverse media environment, in which a range of viewpoints are available on any important social issue. "We funded *Casting the First Stone* because it provides a respectful hearing for strong, personal voices on all sides of the abortion question," says Wickham. "Aired on public television, the film rounded out a picture that the foundation felt had previously been painted simplistically."

# CASTING THE FIRST STONE

## Views from Both Sides of the Abortion War

A Video by Julie Gustafson

Shot in and around the Women's Suburban Clinic in Paoli, Pennsylvania, **CASTING THE FIRST STONE** focuses on six women who regularly confront each other from opposite sides of a police barricade.

Set against the backdrop of the U.S. Supreme Court's recent historic abortion decisions, the video portrays three activists who believe that women should have the right to choose whether or not to carry a pregnancy to term, and three who believe that abortion is murder.

Shelley Miller, director of the Women's Suburban Clinic, endures constant harassment from anti-abortion groups camped outside her doors. She is committed to making choice every woman's right. Joan Scalia, a Catholic mother of six, defies her husband to join Operation Rescue as they work to save more babies from being murdered. Closer to the middle is Sharon Owens, a counselor at the clinic and an adoptive mother of three, who cannot comfortably decide when human life begins, but feels that her Christian commitment requires her to serve others who must make this difficult decision for themselves.

In chronicling the daily lives of these and three other women, the camera records anti-abortion blockades, counseling sessions, a visit with a young woman who was convinced by protestors outside the clinic to have her baby, and Planned Parenthood's emergency board meetings after the Supreme Court handed down its decision in Webster v. Missouri.

Rare in giving equal voice to proponents of both sides, **CASTING THE FIRST STONE** is among the most insightful documents of the abortion struggle ever made.

54 minutes                      color                      1991  
Sale/16mm: n/a                      Sale/video: \$390  
Rental/video: \$75

### SUBJECT AREAS

Abortion/Reproductive Rights, Education, Ethics, Guidance & Counseling, Student Life, Resident Life, Human Sexuality, Legal Studies, Psychology, Religion, Sociology, 20th Century American History, Urban Studies, Women's Studies.

### ORDERING INFORMATION

Order on institutional letterhead, by purchase order, or pay in advance. Rental price listed is for classroom screening. Previews for purchase consideration by established film libraries only.

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*"A riveting, unblinking look at the realities of the abortion debate, giving us enormous insight into why American women are so deeply divided. Gustafson's extraordinary rapport with her subjects and brilliant editing make this a first class documentary."*

— **Faye Ginsberg, Professor of Anthropology, New York University, and author of *Contested Lives: The Abortion Debate in an American Community***

*"Excellent—and recommended viewing."*

— **Judie Brown, President, American Life League**

*"Fascinating and revealing... Sheds light on a complex and important issue which defies simplistic characterizations."*

— **Kate Michelman, Executive Director, National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL)**

*"A good starting point for any discussion about the role of women in society. Neither side is condemned, neither side is praised. Instead, we are asked to understand one of the most controversial issues of our time."*

— **Virginia Yans McGlaughlin, Professor of History and Women's Studies, Rutgers University**

*"Helps viewers move beyond the angry stereotypes seen on the evening news to a place where dialogue might begin."*

— **Margaret Caffery, Professor of History, Memphis State University**

*"The women engage us so powerfully with their different perspectives that we have to listen to what they are saying, even if we don't agree with them... An extremely useful tool for exploring the assumptions underlying both sides of the debate as well as for opening up the possibility of finding common ground."*

— **Helen Strickler, Department of Communications, Adelphi University**

*"Anyone with a stake in how the abortion-rights question will ultimately be resolved, regardless of point of view, should take a look at Gustafson's remarkably evenhanded and intelligent film."*

— **Robin Dougherty, *The Boston Phoenix***

*"Julie Gustafson's probing documentary manages to get past the twisted faces, threatening voices and numbing slogans to the more personal beliefs and feelings of a few advocates on each side."*

— **Walter Goodman, *The New York Times***

*"CASTING THE FIRST STONE reveals that the controversy over reproductive rights may be as much about ways of life as it is about abortion itself."*

— **Tim McCarthy, National Catholic Reporter**

*"Of all the documentaries that have been made about abortion, Julie Gustafson's **CASTING THE FIRST STONE** is by far the most illuminating because it gets to the core of the honest beliefs on both sides."*

— **Nat Hentoff, *The Village Voice***



NATIONAL CATHOLIC  
REPORTER

KANSAS CITY, MO  
WEEKLY 50,000

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# POV program on abortion as evenhanded as you can get

By TIM MCCARTHY 4760

Never afraid to tackle the tough ones, POV ("television with a point of view") ends its summer series taking on the abortion issue. "Casting the First Stone" documents two years in the lives of six women activists, three of them pro-life and the others pro-choice. It is scheduled to air on public television Sept. 3 (check local listings), and all those on both sides of the issue would do well to watch it.

Producer/director Julie Gustafson points out that our society has always made difficult choices in weighing the value of human life, choices that involve class, social values and race, and there are many inconsistencies. That is the far from simple scenario she explores in her documentary.

The women range from a fundamentalist Protestant pro-lifer who has five children and is pregnant with another to the feminist director of an abortion clinic. In between are an Italian grandmother, traditional in her Catholicism and in her view of marriage and motherhood; a divorced single mother who used to be pro-choice; a minister's wife, committed Christian and adoptive mother of two, who is a staff counselor at an abortion clinic; and the executive director of the Pennsylvania Abortion Rights Action League, who has a baby while she is campaigning for a pro-choice candidate.

*Tim McCarthy is a member of the NCR staff.*

No simple scenario, indeed. But Gustafson's treatment of it is about as evenhanded as you can get with such a volatile issue and the result is some compelling television.

There are articulate advocates on both sides here, but in a way the debate pivots upon a placid-looking matronly woman named Sharon Owens, the minister's wife who counsels in the Paoli, Pa., clinic that feminist Shelly Miller directs. How, cry the pro-life protesters, can she be a Christian and a minister's wife and still work in an abortion clinic?

Owens has no easy answer. But she defends herself in Christian terms: "Jesus always was there where the hardest decisions were being made, in a nonjudgmental kind of way," she says. "And you know, it behooves a Christian to be in the places where the hard decisions are being made. When they (the pro-life protesters) stand there and grab the clients and pretend they know what's good for them, I think Jesus would probably, were he there, say, 'Any of those of you who are without sin, cast the first stone.'"

Miller's clinic does abortions up to 13 weeks. Her staff does not advise any woman to have an abortion, but they do let women know they have choices in their life. That Miller describes as a feminist approach, shaped, she says, by the social activism of the 1960s and early '70s when she was in college.

Miller declares that, rather than screaming at one another across protest lines, we should put the energy into cur-

ing the social ills that force a lot of people into having abortions. That, however commonplace it may have become, is really the only compromise "answer" the film suggests. But it probably will not happen, because one thing "Casting the First Stone" reveals is that the controversy may be as much about ways of life as it is about abortion.

On the pro-life side, this becomes especially clear with some of those involved with Operation Rescue, as are all three pro-lifers in the film. Joan Scalia, for example, is the Catholic activist who has been a housewife and mother for 35 years. She has a shrine in her house, complete with devotional candles, plaster saints and the Sacred Heart.

Scalia speaks of the "evil of contraception" but admits that her own large family is evidence that the rhythm method is unreliable. At an OR action in Philadelphia, where priests are singing hymns in Latin, she yearns to be arrested but does not want to hurt her husband, Ben: "I must consider his feelings first. I can't get arrested until he is comfortable with that decision."

Debby Baker, the Protestant fundamentalist, sacrifices the benefits of a two-paycheck family so she can teach her children at home rather than expose them to the public-school system, which she believes devalues the influence of God on history and the nation and the traditional role of women and the family.

Frances Sheehan, state National Abortion Rights League director, finds power-

ful joy in her new baby but emphasizes that having a child is not the only way women can have an impact in the world.

With equal intensity, Alberta Fay Horrocks, the former pro-choicer, educates teenagers on the horrors of tearing fetuses limb from limb and tries to convince them of the wisdom of sexual abstinence.

Given those conflicting life-styles, Operation Rescue may be seen, in part, as a political rebellion against the looser, more pluralistic (some would say hedonistic) way of life that has emerged in the last generation, an uprising that justifies itself as inherently patriotic, sometimes illegal in a temporal sense, perhaps, but always divinely sanctioned.

As OR founder Randall Terry puts it in the film, the movement is designed to stimulate a peaceful, righteous upheaval to create the tension necessary for political change.

At the end of the film, Owens is telling a client that "abortion's a loss, no matter how you look at it." She is right, of course. But she also knows, from the depths of her Christian anguish, that there are many ways to lose a life and that sometimes, God help us, we have to make choices.

If we all could agree on only those two elements, the loss and the anguished choices, then maybe people on both sides of the protest lines would begin to make sense to one another. At last. ■

OAKLAND PRESS

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# Videomaker discovers the complexity of abortion

Julie Gustafson made "P.O.V.: Casting the First Stone," which deals with both sides of the abortion issue. The documentary can be seen at 10 tonight on Channels 28 and 56.

**Q: Tell me about your background.**

A: I'm from Massachusetts, from a small town on the south shore of Boston. I'm 42, divorced, with two children, a girl and a boy.

**Q: Tell me about the style of your filmmaking.**

A: Actually I work in video, which is kind of interesting. It definitely affects the style of my work. I've done a whole range of documentaries, including ones on the politics of intimacy, young women and sexuality, birth and death.

**Q: Why did you get into this field?**

A: I started out in theater and dance and I thought there wasn't enough material about women and social issues. I thought the documentary medium would be a way to write or interact in creating material about those issues. I never saw myself as a writer. I'm more performance-oriented.

My style is to be very collaborative. I view my subjects as part of the work; they're very interactive in the way I work.

**Q: How did that go into making "Casting the First Stone"?**

A: It caused me a lot of trouble in this documentary, to tell you the truth! It's such a controver-

## TAKE 10

sial subject and these people felt so intensely involved in what they were doing.

The trust that allowed them to be candid with me was built through the fact that I said they could see the material and see the edit, and have a reasonable amount of input if they wanted. They felt they were part of writing the work.

I knew those rules also meant if someone became too interfering, I would have to drop them as subjects.

In the past, I've never had any problems with that. In this case, there was almost-immediate horror on both sides during the early cuts. The horror was that the other side was presented so strongly, that they were so likable: There were interesting points made on both sides, though they knew I intended this to be a balanced work. I made a decision that I didn't want either side to tell me what to do with the other side.

**Q: Which side had the most to say about your work?**

A: The pro-life side had more concerns. They feel they haven't been well-represented. They thought I presented too much about their personalities and not enough about the issue, which they feel is the civil rights of the unborn child. They were very helpful.

**Q: What was your goal?**

A: I really wanted to under-

stand why the conflict over abortion is so heated. I had a feeling that on the surface, if you know both sides, they would appear to have so much in common. They care about women and children. Many are mothers and family people. Yet there is this intractable difference. I was curious as to why.

I'm a liberal feminist, but I have this nagging ambivalence about abortion and I wanted to explore more.

**Q: So what did you find?**

A: What I found was that the abortion issue is about a great deal more than when life begins and who decides. The issue is what woman is and how to live one's life. There are labor issues related to women and religious issues.

**Q: Did making this documentary change your mind?**

A: It made me more grief-stricken about the issue. I personally am a pacifist. I've been around peace activists, and they've sung the same hymns and they talk about the sanctity of life. Their arguments and methods resemble those of Operation Rescue (the abortion protesters).

So, I'm torn. I don't want to see the women and children who are here take the fall for huge societal problems. Abortion is not a very compelling solution. I felt that all the more as I did the work.

These are very good people taking very principled stands. It's

heartbreaking to have this rend in society. That's what I mean about grief.

As far as the laws, this didn't change my opinion on that.

**Q: Were you hoping to change some minds among your viewers?**

**A:** I was trying to chink open some openings in these hard-set beliefs. I really think if there is to be a solution, it won't be immediate. We'll struggle for decades, unless there is some amazing technological solution. I wanted people on the choice side and on the other side to be more open-minded.

**Q: Was making this a big challenge for you?**

**A:** It was enormously difficult. I feel 20 years older than when I started it. It's interesting — the people I work with are largely pro-choice, in the film community, the documentary community. I had to immerse myself and assume someone else's identity to represent that other side.

For me, all these activists were women and mothers, and several are quite religious. I have a lot of sympathy and interest in people with that commitment. So I ingrained that point of view and came back to New York and spent time with the people I work with, and I felt in conflict.

(Deb Anderson interviews a media personality every other week in Take 10.)



Women debate reproductive rights in 'Casting the First Stone'

FROM KING FEATURES SYNDICATE, 235 E. 45TH ST., NEW YORK  
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FOR RELEASE TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1991

SCHEUER-PREVIEW NETWORK

STEVEN H. SCHEUER

Today's best television shows as previewed and selected by Steven H. Scheuer and TV KEY's staff in New York and Hollywood.

9:00 PM CBS

"The Operation." (Made-for-TV 1990) 3 Stars. What starts off as a familiar malpractice suit story suddenly changes plot direction and keeps you guessing up to the very end. Lisa Hartman is very good as the woman who brings the charge against a trouble doctor (Joe Penney). Without giving the rest of the plot away, let's just say the TV movie becomes a series of cover-ups and alibis. The driving motives of these dangerous characters are passion and greed.

9:00 PM ABC

Roseanne. "Her Boyfriend's Back." (Repeat). Teenagers will be teenagers and that's what has Roseanne and her husband Dan worried. Their eldest, Becky, is beginning to show more and more resentment for rules as she and her boyfriend Mark take her dad's motorcycle for a spin without his permission. Tune in to find out how Roseanne and Dan deal with this violation of the Connor household rules.

9:00 PM PBS

Who Will Teach for America? An illuminating and often rather ennobling documentary about Teach for America, the inspired idea of a young woman and a recent graduate of Princeton University. You'll learn how, against very long odds, Wendy Kopp may well be on the way to establishing a domestic Peace Corps. The new program permits hundreds, and hopefully thousands, of young and talented new college graduates who are willing and anxious to teach in our most troubled and impoverished public schools. You'll feel good about some of our youth after watching this program.

10:00 PM NBC

Law & Order. "Mushrooms." (Repeat). This series manages to stay as current as yesterday's headlines and tonight's hour is a perfect example. Two children are shot right in their own

homes by a teenaged hitman. Further investigation links the incident to a drug operation and a shady real estate agent. Young shooting victims have become a tragic footnote to today's urban violence.

10:00 PM ABC

thirtysomething. "California." (Repeat). A real dramatic cliff-hanger as Michael's and Hope's marriage hangs in the balance. This was the last episode for the season but as it turned out, it is also the last show of the series. Michael seems to feel their marriage could stand a whole new environment and heads for California for an interview after quitting his job at the agency. Hope, on the other hand, is even more at odds with everything. This series has taken a mostly intelligent look at society from the viewpoint of a group of people in their 30s coming to grips with the small and larger problems in life.

10:00 PM PBS

P.O.V. "Casting the First Stone." Abortion remains the single most divisive issue in American politics, and that is surely not likely to change in the foreseeable future as a new and much more conservative Supreme Court reconsiders the existing law permitting abortions, known as Roe vs. Wade. Director Julie Gustavson gives almost equal time to those supporting and opposing abortion. Based on this set of interviews, it does seem that many of the anti-abortionists know little of the history of civil liberties in America, and are woefully ignorant about our past history and the pivotal separation of church and state. This valuable essay may not change any minds among viewers, but it will certainly help you grasp the agonizing complexities, and why the right to continue pro-choice legislation is such an urgent matter for not only many millions of women, but millions of concerned men as well.

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(Note to Editors: Eastern Standard Time and networks listed above. Adjust for local time and station.)

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# NEW DIRECTIONS FOR WOMEN

Volume 21, Number 1

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*CASTING THE FIRST STONE. Produced and directed by Julie Gustafson for POV. The American Documentary, Inc., 330 West 58th Street, Suite 3A, New York, NY 10019, 212-397-0970.*

After an emotional clinic staff meeting at the Women's Suburban Clinic in Paoli, Pennsylvania, abortion counselor Sharon Owen, on the verge of tears, says, "The protesters often get me and say, 'How can you be a Christian and how could you be married to a minister and still work in an abortion clinic?' And you know, it behooves a Christian to be in the places where the hard decisions are being made. When they stand there and grab the clients and pretend that they know what's good for them, I think Jesus would probably, were he there, say, 'Any of those of you who are without sin, cast the first stone.'"

Filmmaker Gustafson follows Owen and five other activists as they oppose each other every day at the clinic. And no one, no matter what side of the debate she is on, can fail to be moved by the passion and heartbreak that motivate them. Three of the women support Operation Rescue, and while their position on the issue of abortion may not be sympathetic, their torment over the issue evokes empathy in the viewer. Most of this is due to the skill of filmmaker Gustafson, whose purpose was to produce a fair, dialogue-provoking film. This she has certainly done.

One feels for Joan Scalia, a devout Italian Catholic grandmother who, by risking arrest during Operation Rescue Protests, is forced to stand up to her patri-

archal, disapproving husband. Ironically, some of the most feminist-inspired, self-realizing dialogue occurs as Scalia and her husband face off on the issue. Indeed, feminism has touched everywoman.

But one also feels for Mona, agonizing over her decision to abort an early term fetus, weeping over what might have been, pitifully asking counselor Sharon Owen if it "will hurt."

What Gustafson has done is portray both sides in a positive light, if such a thing is possible. And while some may hope this will encourage a meeting of the minds on the subject of abortion, even Gustafson does not think this is possible. "The battle will go on," she says. "There's going to be a lot of chaos." ▲ L.W.

# The New York Times

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1991

## Review/Television

### An Abortion Program for People on Both Sides

By WALTER GOODMAN

Scenes from the battleground over abortion, not rare these days, are on screen again in "Casting the First Stone," at 10 tonight on Channel 13. But Julie Gustafson's probing documentary manages to get past the twisted faces, threatening voices and numbing slogans to the more personal beliefs and feelings of a few advocates on each side. No viewer's opinion about abortion is likely to be changed by the hour, but you may come away with a better understanding and perhaps a higher regard for those on the other side, particularly for antiabortion activists, not television's favorite people.

Ms. Gustafson, who keeps her opinions to herself, takes her camera into the Women's Suburban Clinic in Pao-li, Pa., where Sharon Owens, a counselor, tries quietly and without pressure to reassure an unmarried pregnant woman who says, "It's like killing my child." Mrs. Owens replies that most doctors believe the fetus feels no pain. But on the other side of the deep division, Alberta Fay Horrocks, holding her new baby, speaks

Minds are unlikely to be changed, but understanding may benefit.

of abortion as "a very violent act" and tells of the help she received from members of Operation Rescue, known for its sometimes illegal efforts to shut down abortion clinics: "I wasn't alone." She has become a "sidewalk counselor" for the anti-abortion group.

It is in the interviews at home, away from the clinics and protests, that Ms. Gustafson's sympathetic approach really pays off. Joan Scalia, a grandmother, explains as she prepares pasta that she joined Operation Rescue because she could not bear the thought of babies being killed. She says she thinks of herself as being part of the civil rights movement. The camera glides over the religious pictures and statues in her home.

Religion is a powerful theme here.

Mrs. Owens, whose husband is a minister, tells of her concern for the suffering of poor unmarried teenagers burdened with babies. "They can't take that kind of Christianity away from me," she says of the anti-abortion forces. But Debbie Baker's fundamentalist Christian faith has no place in it for abortion. Seen teaching her children about God, she says she is offended by feminists who purport to speak for all women and defends her decision to devote herself to her family rather than take a job.

Although Ms. Gustafson avoids generalizations, hints of economic and class differences keep coming through. Ms. Horrocks lives in a housing project; Mrs. Baker notes that her family is far from well off, and Mrs. Scalia says she is old fashioned enough to avoid being arrested at protests because it would annoy her husband. (He says, "A man should be a man and a woman should be a woman.")

By contrast Frances Sheehan, the executive director of the National Abortion Rights Action League of Pennsylvania, is filmed in her upscale home. She can afford day care for her 3-month-old baby, and much

as she would like to stay home with him, she says she is likely to go back to work soon because of her professional responsibilities as well as for the income. Motherhood, she says, is not the only way to have an impact on society, and her husband agrees.

There are no editorials here. My hunch is that Ms. Gustafson is firmly on the abortion-rights side of the debate, but in a professional decision that some other documentary makers might emulate to the benefit of their work, she lets her subjects have their say without intruding or loading the argument.

"Casting the First Stone" is the final offering of the season for "P.O.V.," public television's series of independently made documentaries. In June, in a review of the first program, "Absolutely Positive," about several people with the AIDS virus, I wrote that the subjects of future programs indicated the series had not changed in response to criticisms from the right that "P.O.V." is skewed to the left. I concluded, not very hopefully, "Well, maybe one of them will take a surprising point of view." If the absence of a point of view can be a point of view, "Casting the First Stone" is the one.

# DAILY MAGAZINE

PEOPLE • HOME • MOVIES • THE ARTS • TV • STYLE

## Review: TV

TUESDAY

September 3, 1991

# Show gives each side its say on abortion

By Jonathan Storm  
*Inquirer Television Critic*

Many people see the abortion issue as black and white. Some say abortion-rights activists are selfish feminists who prize temporal success more than human lives. Others portray anti-abortion activists as fuzzy hysterics who would deprive women of an active role in the modern world.

"Cast the First Stone," tonight's P.O.V. episode (Channel 12, 10 p.m.), probably won't change any minds in the opposing camps, but it provides a look into the soul of America's struggle over abortion law.

Filmed almost entirely in the Philadelphia area, "Cast the First Stone" uses colorful portraits of people involved in the abortion wars to paint the issue not as black and white, but as gray — a complex dilemma of ethics and morality that has no easy answer.

The camera gives people on both sides a chance to tell their stories, and filmmaker Julie M. Gustafson even gave her subjects a chance to help in editing. When it was done, some of the activists complained that their opponents had been taken so seriously, yet each side was pleased at the way it was depicted.

And that makes "Cast the First Stone" wildly different from other P.O.V. documentaries, most of which contain heavy doses of their creators' point of view — the phrase from which the show's title is derived.

Some critics have torpedoed "Cast the First Stone" for not being one-sided. No opinions are expressed, they say. In fact, it has twice as many opinions as most documentaries, since it gives free rein to both sides.

The film is less than successful in other respects, especially pacing. Sometimes it's confusingly jumpy, hopping from time period to time period and from protest to protest. Other times it bogs down in mumbles, especially when Frances Sheehan, then-executive director of the National Abortion Rights Action League of Pennsylvania, discusses motherhood and family matters with her husband.

On the abortion-rights side, the film profiles Sheehan, Sharon Owen, then-staff counselor at the Women's Suburban Clinic, and Shelley Miller, the clinic's director. The opposition is represented by Joan Scalia, Alberta Fay Horrocks and Debby Baker, who support Operation Rescue, the confrontational anti-abortion group that's making headlines in Wichita, Kan., this summer but that started out in the Philadelphia area in 1987.

All have interesting stories, but Owen's and Scalia's may be most moving to those who oppose their views.

Scalia, a grandmother and a deeply religious Roman Catholic, is torn between obedience to her husband, who is strongly opposed to her violating the law to make her point, and what she sees as the urgent need to

(See P.O.V. on 7-C)

# Evenhanded show on abortion

P.O.V., from 1-C  
end the murder of unborn babies.

A scene with her and her disabled adult daughter, Patty, is especially poignant. As Joan Scalia argues against abortion in the case of potential birth defects, Patty says, "I feel that God places special people with the right people; he knows what families can take the hardship."

Owen, a deeply religious Protestant and adoptive mother of three, seems at first glance to be a bundle of contradictions. "I want to know when a fetus gets a soul," she says.

But she doesn't know, and she does perceive a need for women to have control of their lives. She is not an abortion advocate, but she thinks it is the best alternative for some women.

Scenes in which she counsels a distraught pregnant woman who is considering an abortion are among the film's most moving. "I will work in an abortion clinic," she says, "because I think it behooves a Christian to be in a place where the hard decisions of life are being made."

With people like these as subjects, what documentarian needs to insert her views into the mix?

All of the main characters here are women and mothers. For her next effort, perhaps producer/director Gustafson could look more closely at the motives of the men who get so fervently involved in this battle, especially against abortion.

There is certainly time, with an issue that may never be resolved.

Pro-choice and anti-abortion have almost no common ground, but they do agree on one thing, so eloquently and simply stated by Joan Scalia:

"I think that we're coming from such different directions that we're really not even communicating with one another."

and Anne Lewis Johnson's timely, probing film.

### TURN HERE SWEET CORN

The camera moves through a Minnesota cornfield and finds a photograph of a suburban tract clothes-pinned to a cornstalk. Layered with visual and emotional paradoxes, *Turn Here Sweet Corn* searches for meaning beyond clichés and nostalgia, as a family farm is lost to speculative suburban real estate developers. **Helen De Michiel** juxtaposes innovative video techniques with slices of a simpler, threatened life, in an emotional and personal reflection on the colonization of cornfields by shopping malls.



## POINT OF VIEW 1991

ing, **Mark Kitchell's** extraordinary chronicle of those years was named Best Documentary of 1990 by the National Society of Film Critics and was nominated for an Oscar in 1991.



"As vivid and astonishing as any fiction to arrive on the screen in quite a while... deserves its success." David Sterritt, *Christian Science Monitor*

provocative short films. Titles to be announced.

Where the Heart Roams

### Week of July 30 (90') A LITTLE VICIOUS

In *A Little Vicious*, a pit bull, his elderly master and a dog trainer/philosopher form a curious love triangle. Elegantly crafted, wryly narrated by **Kevin Bacon**, and infused with a blend of humor and bathos, **Immy Humes's** "dog-umentary" is a quirky, off-beat gem of a film.

### WHERE THE HEART ROAMS

Romance novels comprise nearly half the paperback books sold in America. Chiffon-shrouded, jewel-laden, flower-bedecked Barbara Cartland has written hundreds of them. And filmmaker **George Sicsery** has given his heart to this fascinating subculture where all the women are beautiful, all the men are mysterious and all the endings are happy.

"A delectable overview of the purveyors of palpitating pulp fiction and their breathless fans...scintillating...a considerable achievement, a sparkling and adroit slice of American life that defies easy classification."—Judy Stone, *San Francisco Chronicle*

### Week of August 6 (90') THE BIG BANG

Whether the subject is sex, death, madness or God, *The Big Bang* never lets up in its weird and wonderful search for the meaning of it all.

"The startling thing... is how much fun it is... [James Toback] has shaped the responses into the best of all possible bull sessions, one that's funny and moving and never bogs down...It deserves to be seen and savored."—*Entertainment Weekly*

"The wildest party—conversationwise—you've ever been to. Definitely one of a kind."—David Sterritt, *Christian Science Monitor*

### Week of September 3 (TBD) CASTING THE FIRST STONE

Abortion has been at the center of one of the most dramatic and wrenching debates of our times. But the social forces and the changing lives behind the rhetoric are rarely explored. **Julie Gustafson's** groundbreaking film draws complex portraits of individuals on both sides of the controversy in a small town in Pennsylvania, where very different life experiences have shaped conflicting values and beliefs.



Tongues Untied

**For additional copies of this poster or to share your reaction to a program:**

**Please call our 24-hour Response Line at (212) 757-6104**

or write us at: P.O.V. Viewer Services, 330 West 58th Street, Suite 3A, New York, NY 10019.

**Many of these films are available for public screenings or on home video. See distributor listing on reverse side.**

# Datebook

SEPTEMBER 1, 1991

## Abortion Documentary Looks at Both Sides

BY SUE ADOLPHSON  
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

**A**N ANTI-ABORTIONIST holds up a shriveled, scarred aborted fetus, enraging reporters at a news conference. A young woman softly sobs as she struggles with the decision over whether or not to have an abortion. A "sidewalk counselor" describes to a woman entering an abortion clinic how her unborn child will be shredded to death and feel great pain. A group of somber pro-life activists quietly

"Casting the First Stone" airs at 11 p.m. Friday on Channel 9.

sing "Holy, Holy, Holy" outside an abortion center.

One can't help but be affected, sometimes emotionally torn, by the striking scenes in "Casting the First Stone," airing Friday as part of the "P.O.V." series on KQED, Channel 9.

The one-hour documentary by New York film maker Julie Gustafson attempts to "probe the personal issues that fuel the public debate over abortion rights" by focusing on six individuals, three on each side of the increasingly heated topic.

There is Joan Scalla, an anti-abortion activist and Italian Catholic mother of six, who says, "I think we're coming from such different directions we're not communicating." A participant in Operation Rescue, she compares the group that organizes sit-ins and protests at abortion clinics across the country to being "just like the civil rights movement."

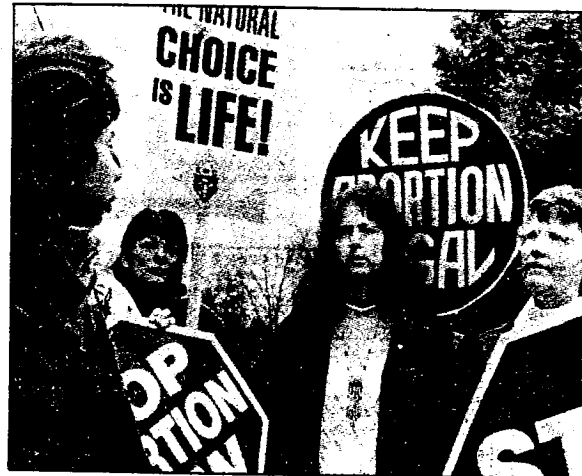
She actively participates, but avoids being arrested in adherence to her husband's wishes. She believes birth control "destroys the unity between man and wife. It makes the wife only a sex object. God did not want you to use [sex] for pleasure."

Shelly Miller, director of the Women's Suburban Clinic in Paoli, Pa., is shown arguing with protesters and says, "I don't believe blocking people from medical care is peaceful demonstration," and points out that freedom of speech does not include the right to "harass and torment" women entering the clinic.

Alberta Fay Harrocks, a divorced single mother and former pro-choice person who now is pro-life, in her Teen Chastity Program tells her young audience, "I advocate abstinence for teens. I'm against abortion. It's breaking the baby up."

At one point she convinces one poor young black woman not to go through with an abortion. (Two years later, the single woman will have yet another child, be unemployed and find it impossible to finish high school.)

Debbie Baker is an anti-abortion activist who tutors her five



Abortion clinic director Shelly Miller, above center, in video by Julie Gustafson, left



children at home rather than sending them to school. "I want to teach them Christian values so when they are challenged they will be able to resist. God is ignored in textbooks," she says, adding, "You know what offends me about feminists? They say they are speaking for me."

Frances Sheehan is executive director of the National Abortion Rights Action League of Pennsylvania, who is pregnant with her first child in the early part of the video. She gets teary-eyed when saying, "The only real difference women make is the ability to have a child, but it's not the only way women can make an impact. I'm

Gustafson initially faced opposition to her project. "The concept of being in a video with opponents they faced every day was not compelling to either side. They really didn't see eye to eye. It wasn't pleasant," the video maker recalls. But she eventually won them over.

Asked about her own views about abortion, Gustafson says "I feel most comfortable saying I'm ambivalent," and points out that her work is meant to show that there are "very compelling arguments on both sides, and some very disturbing elements on both sides. I wouldn't be able to make the [film] if I didn't respond to what both sides were saying.

"I come from a liberal feminist background where the belief in choice is a given, but when I met these women... like Sharon in the film, it is a question for me when a life begins. That is a disturbing question in every woman's life. In society's life.

"I would never want to see women punished and set back by severely restrictive laws, but I do believe as an individual and as a society it's to our benefit to search for alternatives to abortion. I don't think we've been strong enough in arguing that. I think we focus too much on abortion and not on what other potential solutions are."

While she found complete objectivity impossible, and believes viewers will respond to the video like a Rorschach test ("whatever their own feelings are, they'll read it that way"), Gustafson says she tried to make each of the six women she studied likable.

**"T**HERE'S A PIECE of each of them that really touches me. One reason I did the piece is that I find it really painful that there are women who, under other circumstance, I could like, but there's this unmitigated hatred and anger over this issue. I wanted to get beneath it all.

"I wanted to humanize the people a little bit, to see what potential common ground there is so maybe there can be some dialogue that's a little more productive.

"Without dialogue that recognizes the passion that the other side feels, we're really going to have an outright war."

not sure that's valued in this society."

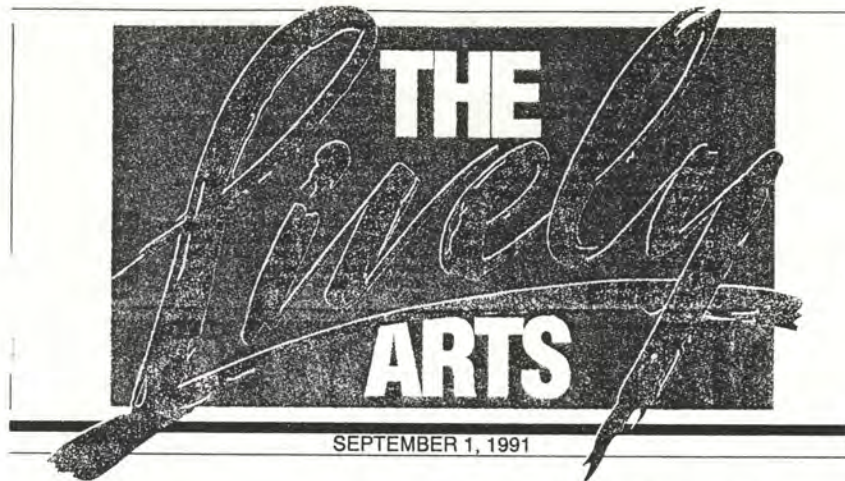
Sharon Owen, a counselor at the clinic, a minister's wife and the adoptive mother of two, explains the difficulty she faces in being an infertile woman working at the clinic.

"I wrestle with the issues between adoption and abortion, but no one owes it to me [as an infertile person] to provide me with a child."

And on being a Christian involved with abortion, she adds, "it behooves a Christian to be in the places where hard decisions are made, where suffering is," she says. "Jesus would say, 'Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.'"

Getting all these women in the same documentary was a difficult challenge for video maker Gustafson, 42, who has been producing work on controversial social subjects for almost 20 years. A mother of two, she originally started a piece called "The Value of Life," financed by a Guggenheim fellowship received in 1987, comparing how life is valued in such circumstances as abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia and war. But "I got so interested, I decided to just stay with the abortion issue," she says.

# The Sunday Record



SEPTEMBER 1, 1991

THE SUNDAY RECORD



As tension on both sides of the abortion issue mounts, a PBS documentary aims to show the more personal story.

## Beyond abortion picket lines

REVIEW

By Bill Ervolino  
Record Television Editor

**E**arly on in the documentary "Casting the First Stone," Operation Rescue leader Randall Terry explains the goals of his organization: "... To have an act of repentance before God because we've let this [legalized abortions] go on for so long, and to help stimulate a peaceful, righteous upheaval that ultimately brings enough tension to produce political change."

Clearly, the tension is on. During the past week, at a well-attended Operation Rescue rally in Wichita, Kan., members of that organization once again brought national attention to their cause. For years, the group has stationed its members outside clinics where abortions are performed, intending to counsel — or harass, it's a matter of perspective — women attempting to enter those centers.

To members of the organization, these demonstrations are "rescue" missions, their way of fighting for the rights of the unborn. To those in the pro-choice camp, Operation Rescue, through its sheer aggressiveness, is a thorny concern at a time when the Supreme Court's landmark 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision, which legalized abortions in the United States, is threat-

Television coverage of events in Wichita was all but buried in local newscasts because of the continuing story in the Soviet Union and ongoing unrest in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn. Still, TV reports on such abortion-related demonstrations, usually peppered with short interviews and shots of marchers and their placards, rarely provide any real insights into activists on either side. Nor do they capture the real-life stories behind what is perhaps the most emotionally charged political issue of this era.

For that reason alone, "Casting the First Stone," which airs Tuesday night as part of the PBS series "P. O. V." (Channel 13, 10 p.m.), is significant, gently humanizing both sides of the controversy, and presenting individual views on abortion along with clues as to how those views were formed. Filmmaker Julie Gustafson wisely keeps the yelling and screaming to a minimum. Instead, she brings us into the day-to-day lives of women and men on both sides of the fence and, if nothing else, allows us to experience their passion, sincerity, and concern over the future of abortion rights in this country.

It's important to note that Gustafson, who began working on the film in 1987, didn't plan to make a film strictly about abortion. Rather, using funds she received as part of a Guggenheim Fellowship, she set out to make a film about the values placed on human life in contemporary society.

"I wanted to compare abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia, and war," Gustafson explains, "and why people decide in one situation that a life is sacred, and in another that it can be weighed differently. I was curious about why some people who believe that abortion is murder seem to have much less difficulty with capital punishment. And I've met people who are pacifists as far as war [is concerned], but are for abortion."

When Gustafson began filming in early 1988, Operation Rescue had just begun to make its presence known, and was targeting certain cities for marches, demonstrations of civil disobedience, and intense, ongoing "rescue" activities. As the filmmaker began to interview both those who

See **ABORTION** Page E-4

# ABORTION

From Page E-1

are pro-choice and Operation Rescue members, she realized that the timing was right for a film that dealt exclusively with the abortion issue. Indeed, though its scheduling occurred in March, the film's airing on Tuesday is quite timely, considering that it coincides with events in Wichita.

Gustafson says she approached the making of her film "sort of as an anthropologist," trying "very hard" to accept the terms on which her subjects live and act. Those subjects include Operation Rescue members; employees at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Philadelphia; a woman who at the time of the film was contemplating an abortion; and another young woman who was talked out of terminating her pregnancy after being handed leaflets outside a clinic. The family members of some of these subjects are included as well.

The film by Gustafson, who describes herself as "politically committed, a liberal, and a feminist," is nicely balanced. (Films picked up by "P. O. V." don't necessarily have to present two or more sides to an issue; the producers, in keeping with the series' title, are looking for works with a point of view.)

Gustafson admits that this is not, and perhaps never will be, a black-and-white issue for her. "I want women to have control of their lives," she says, "but I am ambivalent because I have a hard time drawing the line and the boundary. Anyone who comes down very heavy on one side or the other is leaving out a lot of infor-

mation."

She further admits that in the course of making the film, her own thoughts on abortion were somewhat rattled. "I taped a tissue examination of a 13-week-old fetus, about the average date for a first trimester abortion ... and it's a very hard thing to watch. It made me aware in a very graphic way that it [the fetus] is indeed a scale of life and it is very hard to decide whether it's a human being or not." (The footage is not included in the film.)

As Frances Sheehan, one of the women interviewed in "Casting the First Stone" observes, "It was very clear to me that Julie wasn't setting out to make a political statement. A couple of people have said to me, 'Is this a pro-choice film or not a pro-choice film?' And I've told them, 'I don't think that's important. I think she's done a good job of just exploring who the people are who get involved.'"

As the film was being made — Gustafson worked on it over a four-year period — Sheehan became pregnant. She is shown in the film at various stages of that pregnancy, and at one particularly compelling point in the film, she tearfully notes that, while having a child is one of the greatest things a woman can do, "it is not the only way we can make an impact on the world." It's a poignant, complex moment.

Joan Scalia, an Operation Rescue member who appears to be in her late 50s or early 60s, is seen at home with her husband who describes himself as "... from the

Filmmaker Julie Gustafson wisely keeps the yelling and screaming to a minimum. Instead, she brings us into the day-to-day lives of women and men on both sides of the fence.

old school. I believe men should be men, and women should be women." He expresses his concern over his wife's arrest at a protest in Cherry Hill, and instructs her, "Picket, sing, pray, but don't get arrested."

At a subsequent demonstration, his wife walks away before police can take her into custody. "I must consider his feelings first," she says. "I won't get arrested until he's comfortable with that."

We later learn that the Scalias have a mentally retarded daughter — one of six children Scalia says she conceived while using the rhythm method. (She considers contraception "evil.") In a particularly heart-tugging scene, Scalia and her daughter respond to a question about women terminating fetuses their doctors have told them will produce a handicapped child. The answers, by mother and daughter, are unforgettable.

Equally unforgettable is a tasteless scene in which Operation Rescue's Terry addresses a press conference holding a doll in a white coffin. The doll is made to look like a 5-month-old fetus, its body blackened to represent the effects of saline. Terry insistently pushes the open coffin into the faces of reporters so it can be photographed and he can be filmed, as

he turns his head and groans, "God help us, God forgive us." It's a clownish, self-serving gesture.

A far more sympathetic figure from the antiabortion camp is Alberta Horrocks, another Pennsylvania native whose activism has led her to do "sidewalk counseling" at clinics where abortions are performed on a regular basis and, more creatively, to hold "Teen Chastity" meetings at her local YWCA. (She has since continued those meetings at a local Catholic elementary school.)

Horrocks, who considers herself a feminist, is committed to the antiabortion movement on religious grounds, but also sees it as a civil rights issue, "fighting for a person who can not fight for his or her rights."

Horrocks says the biggest misconception about the members of her movement is "that we're busy-bodies. [People say,] 'Mind your own business! We can't.'"

In a short clip of film that introduces "Casting the First Stone," Gustafson says one of her goals with this work was "to see if there's any common ground and any possibility for a dialogue on this issue." If nothing else, the film personalizes a fiery, sometimes violent confrontation between two passionate groups.



# TELEVISION

## Without sin

### *Casting the First Stone* takes an objective look at abortion

by Robin Dougherty

CASTING THE FIRST STONE, directed by Julie Gustafson. Presented by P.O.V. Airing September 3 at 10 p.m. on WGBH (Channel 2).

Given that it will air in the aftermath of the Wichita demonstrations, the most volatile and visible anti-abortion demonstrations in recent years, Julie Gustafson's *Casting the First Stone* could hardly have asked for better timing. (It wasn't scheduled that way; it's actually the final installment on P.O.V., PBS's excellent summer series of independent documentaries.) But there's really never a bad time to examine the ways abortion has cut through America more deeply than any issue since slavery, embracing not only politics but, for the women involved, dire matters of health, morality, religion, financial independence, and self-termination. Anyone with a stake in how the abortion-rights question is ultimately resolved, regardless of point of view, ought to take a look at Gustafson's remarkably even-handed and intelligent film.

It's not Gustafson's intention to steer you to a particular point of view (though it

seems to be pro-choice politics that prompted the making of the film), or even to put her finger on just why abortion rights has become the arena in which debates on morality and sexuality are taking place. The film takes its title from the Biblical chestnut that one subject quotes in response to queries about how a minister's wife can support abortion. (She adds that "it behooves a Christian to be in the place where hard decisions are made.") And it wants to introduce some of the people involved. Thus, Gustafson follows six women — three pro-choice activists and three who oppose abortion — through 1988 and 1989, two years that saw not only the formation of the anti-abortion guerrillas Operation Rescue but the Supreme Court's decision in *Weber v. Reproductive Health Services*, the first of several significant threats to *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark 1973 decision that provides legal access to abortions.

Gustafson's virtue is that she gives equal voice to both sides of the debate, presenting none of her subjects as fanatics or placard-waving mouthpieces, or even as representatives of other women or groups of women. Her six primary subjects are Joan Scalia, an Italian-American grandmother who seeks her husband's permission before risking arrest during Operation Rescue demonstrations; Sharon



**COMMUNICATION:** Alberta Horrocks (left) debates with Shelly Miller (center) and Sharon Owens (right) in this P.O.V. presentation.

Owens, an abortion counselor who happens to be a minister's wife; Shelly Miller, director of a woman's clinic that's attacked by Operation Rescue; Alberta Horrocks, a former pro-choicer who leads a "Teen Chastity Program"; Debby Baker, a fundamentalist anti-abortion activist who teaches her five children at home; and Frances Sheehan, executive director of the National Abortion Rights Action League of Pennsylvania and a new mother.

During the film's prologue, Gustafson explains that she made the film to discover whether the two sides shared any common ground. What did she find? One pregnant teenager, dissuaded by pamphlets describing how abortions "shred apart" the fetus, goes on to have two children before she's out of high school but still thinks abortion is an individual choice. A pro-choice woman feels compelled to tell a pregnant woman considering abortion that Opera-

tion Rescue does provide short-term answers like pre-natal care or help putting a child up for adoption. A woman whose children are adopted nevertheless asserts that "no woman in this country owes it to me to provide me with a child."

Still, it's worth noting that in the film, as in real life, the two sides rarely talk to each other except by yelling or ugly confrontation. Gustafson suggests that the greatest irony of the abortion debate is this very lack of communication. A doctor who speaks on film about his emergency-room experiences treating women who've profoundly injured themselves trying to end their own pregnancies remarks that "all the rhetoric about killing babies hasn't stopped women from having abortions." What *Casting the First Stone* says is that after nearly 20 years of abortion debate, the real tragedy is that there's no resolution in sight.

By DAN COHEN

The right-wing firestorm that engulfed "P.O.V.," the public TV documentary series, over the showing of "Tongues Untied," Marlon Riggs' brilliant evocation of the experience of Black gay men, did not keep the film off the air. But the lingering embers have flared up to kill another gay-related film. Robert Hilferty's "Stop the Church," which had been scheduled to be shown in an anthology of short films, "Short Notice," Aug. 27.

On Sept. 3 the focus shifts to reproductive rights with Julie Gustafson's "Casting the First Stone." Although at first one might be put off by the amount of screen time given to anti-choice activists, Gustafson has made exactly the right choice. One of the things her video shows is that this is not simply a struggle to preserve abortion rights but that women's liberation itself is dependent on winning this battle.

The confrontation at the grass roots

between pro- and anti-choice activists is a struggle between two worldviews: one that imprisons women within the home and another that frees them to share the stage equally with men.

Gustafson's camera follows the activities of the clinic defenders and the anti-choice zealots of Operation Rescue over a two-year period as they confront each other in and around the Paoli, Pa., Women's Suburban Clinic.

#### AS GOD MADE HER?

What makes Gustafson's work so effective is that she allows the protagonists to speak for themselves. The only nationally recognizable figures are OR's Randall Terry and Planned Parenthood's Fay Wattleton. All the others are grass-roots activists, and the anti-choicers are given enough rope to hang themselves.

The husband of one anti-choice activist expounds on how important it is for her to be there to greet him with dinner when he comes home from work; another is able to control whether his wife will get arrested for acting on her beliefs.

Though the struggle over abortion is often portrayed as a fight between women, Gustafson shows that in addition to OR's Terry there are priests and other men in the

# PBS' 'P.O.V.' pull prompts protests



PBS elected to stop the film rather than "Stop the Church." A scene from Robert Hilferty's film about the December 1989 action at New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral

forefront of the "pro-life" forces. The beleaguered pro-choice troops are clearly led by women.

"Casting the First Stone" portrays the integral link between religion and the anti-choice position. Abortion counselor Sharon Owen sums up the dilemma she regularly faces: "The protesters often get me and say, 'How can you be a Christian and how could you be married to a minister and still work in an abortion clinic?' And you know, it behooves a Christian to be in the place where the hard decisions are being made. When they stand there and grab the clients and pretend that they know what's good for them, I think Jesus would probably, were he there, say 'Any of those of you who are without sin, cast the first stone.'"

"Abortion is all about what a woman 'should' be," says Gustafson. "Should she take advantage of reproductive and economic advances of the 20th century, or should she remain 'as God made her—the center of the home and hearth.' These ideas, and these women, are diametrically opposed."

"Casting the First Stone" will, in turn, anger you and make you cheer for the real trench heroes of the reproductive freedom wars. Don't miss it.

Casting the First Stone

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BURRELLE'S

## 'P.O.V.' looks at activists on both sides of abortion issue

By WALTER H. COMBS 4760

Tribune Media Services

Nothing since the Vietnam War has polarized the American public like the issue of abortion. Not only does the issue transcend rational debate at times, it cuts across ethnic, religious and socio-economic lines. Pro-life activists and pro-choice activists see each other as implacable enemies.

Filmmaker Julie Gustafson, armed with a philosophical mind and curiosity, set out to discover, as she put it, "how and why we make decisions about what life is valuable when in abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia and war."

Acknowledging eventually that the project was just too nebulous after trying to raise money for it, she said she "got a little bit of encouragement and decided to do just abortion and capital punishment. So I set off to go on location, and went to the northeast part of Philadelphia and started taping at a clinic called the Northeast Women's Center, which was a for-profit clinic. I wasn't there about five minutes and I realized I was never going to be able to do a half hour about abortion."

The resulting film, "Casting the First Stone" (10 p.m. Tuesday, KOPB 10) profiles activists on both sides of the abortion debate and finds not only their humanity, but a common ground that unifies them.

Gustafson said that what interested her as she made the film was not "really about whether abortion is right or wrong, or who's going to win and who's going to lose, but why people hold the values that they do. Because it's quite obvious from the beginning, when you get to know these people, that many of these activists are taking very principled stands. They're very committed. They're good people."

"Sometimes they are a little out of control to tell you the truth, but on the surface they would seem to have a lot in common, particularly the women. Many of them are mothers, many of them are people who are religious — on both sides — and they also are people who are oriented toward serving. The people on the pro-choice side, for example, are social workers and therapists and nurses and people who are really caring. People who are trying to solve real problems in a real society."



Abortion clinic director Shelley Miller (center) and counselor Sharon Owen (right) debate rights with anti-abortion activist Alberta Horrocks (far left) on "P.O.V."

the clinic, shares a deep religious commitment with Debby Baker, a fundamentalist Christian anti-abortion activist and Joan Scalia, a Roman Catholic Italian-American grandmother. Their commitment, their love for their children and their faith are the common ground they share.

Despite this shared sensibility, and perhaps because of it, these women are at odds. Things separate them — income, career, lifestyle — but at their core, they are representative examples of some of the best things in human nature.

Gustafson said, "One of the things that drew me to this topic was 'Why do we believe what we believe?' And I don't really think it's just an intellectual game we are playing in our heads. It really comes down to a whole constellation of issues that tend to shape us, and shape the flow of the way we make decisions and the way we decide on what's important in a certain direction.

"I think that this is why the issue is so intractable. People are protecting things that are of immense importance to them, including their way of life and their right, for example, if you are pro-life, to say that motherhood is an important way of life, centering your life around it, having many children, which is much more likely to happen in a pro-life constellation and putting a value on that.

"Debby is saying outright, 'We're not valuing children in our society the way we used to.' Other people are saying there are greater values, like being able to have a career and having achievements. I think we all are torn, and I think that's what's so compelling to me about meeting them, although I had more difficulty with the shorthand form of what they were trying to say. I have a great deal of difficulty with the yelling and screaming at women who are going in to have abortions, no matter how committed they are to what they are saying. I don't think it's effective.

"When you start to listen to what's underpinning it, yeah, sure, I'm very drawn to what she's trying to say. I came from a religious background myself, a large, immigrant family. A lot of what these people are saying has a great appeal to me. There's part of what they're saying inside me myself, even though I would appear from the outside to be a woman from the other tradition."

"I like to do documentaries which have a narrative bent. I think people are not really interested in messages or information. I think people like stories. I like to try to deal with ideas — complicated, abstract questions — but in the lives of real people, and I like to find a unified location." These three factors led her to the place and the people who are at the heart of the film.

"I ended up going one day, not long after I'd started, to the Womens' Suburban Clinic in Paoli, Pa., by following Operation Rescue. It was there that I met Shelley Miller and Frances Sheehan (who work in the clinic) and through Shelley, met those three women who

are the three pro-life characters, as it were. I just started taping around them and their lives."

Gustafson took her camera into the clinic, filmed staff meetings and counseling sessions. Outside, Operation Rescue held anti-abortion demonstrations that challenged the integrity and values of the clinic staff. Shelley confronts the demonstrators with reasoned arguments. They reply with rhetoric and arguments about the value of life. Both groups are sincere.

The women demonstrating and the women staffing the clinic are mothers, doing on their children. All are committed to doing what they feel is right. Sharon Owen, a counselor at