

# THE JANES

## Impact Campaign Overview

THE JANES premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2022 and debuted on HBO Max on June 8, 16 days before the U.S. Supreme Court ended — after nearly 50 years — the constitutional right to abortion with its ruling in *Dobbs v Jackson Women’s Health Organization*.

The documentary tells the story of a group of young women in Chicago who, in the years immediately prior to the *Roe v Wade* decision — when abortion was a crime — had built an underground system to provide access to safe abortion care.

Reaching audiences when it did, THE JANES echoed and amplified the sentiment around the country: we are not going back.

## What Was Our Impact Goal?

Our impact goal for this first phase of THE JANES impact campaign was to use the film to contribute to state-level efforts to mobilize abortion rights voters for the 2022 midterms. We would position the film as a tool — an additional piece of ammunition — for the fight underway.

Despite the *Dobbs* decision, it was clear that the opinion of the U.S. Supreme Court did not reflect public opinion on access to abortion care. In early August, when voters in Kansas — from both political parties and unaffiliated — rejected a proposed state constitutional amendment banning abortion in the state, it became abundantly clear that voters could be mobilized to turn out in support of access, even in “red” states.

We foresaw opportunities both to gather and energize voters as well as to provide motivation to the countless volunteers across the country working with national and local organizations to make calls, knock on doors, and send texts to get out the vote.

Following the election and due to ongoing demand, we continued to coordinate screenings with organizations that were interested in educating and inspiring others to stay engaged in ensuring abortion access in a post-*Dobbs* world.

## How Did We Intend to Achieve Our Goal?

With limited resources and capacity, we identified 14 target states (8 “tier one” + 6 “tier two”) to focus on, using multiple criteria to select these states where election outcomes could have a significant impact on abortion access, both at the state and federal level. This included using data from Emily’s List to identify important U.S. Senate and House races, as well as data from

Sister District about the potential to impact state legislative control. We also looked at gubernatorial races, attorneys general races, and the election of judges to state supreme courts.

Our target states were as follows:

#### *Tier One*

- Arizona
- Georgia
- Michigan
- North Carolina
- Nevada
- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
- Wisconsin

#### *Tier Two*

- Colorado
- Florida
- New Hampshire
- Texas
- Virginia
- Washington

To support those who wanted to host screenings, our intention was to cover the cost of the screening fee, ensure delivery of the film, provide additional financial support (e.g., venue fees, honoraria, refreshments) in response to requests, supply graphics and other imagery to use to develop promotional materials, provide technical assistance, brainstorm ideas, amplify their event promotion through the film's social media channels, coordinate the participation of the Janes and/or the filmmakers, and connect event organizers with other institutions and individuals in their communities with whom they could partner to host the event or invite to participate.

## What Did We Do?

Between late September 2022 and the end of March 2023, we coordinated 43 screenings in nineteen states (with two virtual events that reached audiences in all of our target states).

We were repeatedly impressed by the ambition and organizing skills of those with whom we worked, often putting together significant events in short periods of time. They clearly saw the film as fitting within their existing strategies to motivate and mobilize voters and volunteers.

Here are some of our favorites among the events that we coordinated:

**October 4/Charlotte NC** – The Reproductive Rights Coalition in Charlotte NC worked with a local movie theater to host a free screening to educate voters about the importance of voting for state assembly members to secure the governor’s veto power over legislation to impose a ban or further limitations on abortion in the state. Diane Stevens, a “Jane” who is a resident of Charlotte, participated in the event. While ticket sales could not be used for fundraising, audience members raised money for the Carolina Abortion Fund, which supports those seeking abortion care in North and South Carolina.

**October 25/ Denver CO** - A local member of the documentary community took the reins and ran with hosting a screening in partnership with the local Planned Parenthood and the Colorado Trial Lawyers Association, whose members were able to educate audience members regarding the current state of abortion access in the state. Members of the Association were able to earn continuing education credits for participating in the event.

**October 25/Phoenix AZ** – Desert Star Family Planning, a Black-women-owned abortion clinic in the city, hosted a virtual screening of the film as well as a conversation between Dr. DeShawn Taylor (Desert Star owner), Willbliss Kim (a local abortion doula and queer educator), and Judith Arcana, a Jane. The discussion covered the topics of gender, white feminism, and the potential impact of the midterm elections on access to abortion in Arizona.

**October 26/Raleigh NC** – A group of angry suburban moms started an organization — Never and Now — to elect “pro-choice” state assembly members and hosted a screening of THE JANES at a local wine bar for volunteers. Diane Stevens, a Jane, called in to the event via Zoom to cheer on the volunteers in the final weeks before the election. “Thanks for giving us this opportunity!” shared the organizers after the event. “We were enthralled by the film, writing postcards, and talking! One of my favorite parts were talking to people who were at the restaurant and ended up watching the film- they had no idea the situation in NC.”

**October 26 and November 5 and 6/National** – On October 26, the Progressive Turnout Project hosted a virtual screening of THE JANES for their postcard-writing volunteers across the country to encourage them to incorporate pro-abortion access messages into their messages to voters in our target states. Janes, Martha Scott, and Patricia Novick, called in via Zoom following the screening to motivate the volunteers to keep going. We coordinated similar events with Swing Left on November 5 and 6 with Jane Sheila Avruch’s participation. “It was a fantastic event! Martha and Patricia stole the show, shared the organizers.”

**October 27/Houston TX** – Sisters United Alliance partnered with the Harris County Democratic Lawyers, and the Black Women’s PAC to host a screening at the Match Theater, where voters gathered to get fired up about the election.

**November 3/Milwaukee WI** – The National Council of Jewish Women partnered with Planned Parenthood Wisconsin to host a screening at a local synagogue, where the audience participated in a discussion about women’s rights and the law in anticipation of the upcoming election. The

organizer shared after the event, "I've been getting continuing thanks for sharing 'The Janes' with our NCJW group on Thursday night! We had 60+ men and women attend the program. Our local Planned Parenthood Legal Counsel, Michelle Velasquez, and their Outreach Professional, Alyson Chavez, opened the evening with updates on our Wisconsin abortion situation and the importance of electing candidates who support our right to choose at Tuesday's elections. The movie was so impressive, and it was great meeting many of the women who were the heroes of this group's efforts. After time for questions, the attendees wrote out postcards to Milwaukee voters reminding them to get to the polls—we mailed those first thing Friday. The guests Thursday included a good number of people we hadn't been in touch with, and they'll be included in our future program mailings for advocacy efforts here in Milwaukee and in Wisconsin. Showing 'The Janes' enabled us to culminate our fall voter advocacy projects successfully."

**November 3/Fort Collins CO** – A local volunteer wrangled the League of Women Voters to host a screening of THE JANES at The Lyric theater, raising money (by passing the hat — not ticket sales) for the Cobalt Abortion Fund, which provides financial assistance to those seeking abortion care. Diane Stevens called in to join in on the conversation.

**November 4/Detroit MI** – Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan, the ACLU Michigan, and Michigan Voices — three of the groups behind the Yes on 3 campaign in the state — hosted a virtual screening for campaign volunteers in the waning days before Michigan voters would vote on a state constitutional amendment that would assure access to abortion and contraception. Sheila Avruch, a Jane, joined the conversation. Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan are now partnering with Wayne State University to host an in-person screening to debrief the Yes on 3 campaign and talk about the future of abortion access in the state, with an emphasis on BIPOC and trans people.

**November 6/Tucson AZ** – The Democratic Socialists of Tucson organized a screening in partnership with the Tucson Abortion Support Collective, Indigenous Women Rising, and the Abortion Fund of Arizona. As with the other events, the screening was free, but donations were accepted to support the three participating abortion funds.

**November 7/Tampa FL** – The University of Southern Florida Medical Students for Choice organized a screening in partnership with the South Florida Democratic Moms and which included Dr. Ron Hammerle, who is featured in THE JANES, due to his pre-Roe work to ensure access to abortion care through the Chicago Clergy Consultation Service on Abortion. "We had a great showing and wonderful discussion afterwards," shared the organizer. "Sadly, it did not impact our terrible election results here in Florida, but we did have our US House Representative, Kathy Castor, join us, which was wonderful."

**November 30/Atlanta GA** – Nurses for Sexual and Reproductive Health at Emory University worked within and beyond the university community to host a discussion on the post-Dobbs status of abortion access in Georgia that included a provider (Feminist Health Center) and

abortion fund (ARC Southeast), building new relationships and generating support for these organizations in need.

**January 12/Richmond VA** – Planned Parenthood Virginia and the Virginia Reproductive Equity Alliance hosted a screening at the Byrd Theater in Richmond. The Alliance, a coalition of reproductive rights and justice organizations, used the screening as an opportunity to call on allies to join them later that month for a day of advocacy, action, and learning at the state Capitol. The organizer enthusiastically shared, "It was a great success and got people thinking. Someone told me a week later, 'I can't stop thinking about the film...'—that was my goal! Getting Virginia voters motivated and thinking. The theater just emailed me that someone from the Richmond League of Women Voters wants to have a screening."

**January 18 and 22/Bozeman and Missoula MT** – The Montana Racial Equity Project hosted two screenings in two cities in Montana — with one coinciding with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Roe v Wade* decision — to connect state residents with local abortion service providers and reproductive justice activists to allow them to contribute to the fight for abortion access.

**January 22/Massachusetts** – An Indivisible group in Massachusetts partnered with ACLU Massachusetts to host a virtual screening that engaged members and other participants across the state. "We hoped to inspire participants to find their 'inner Jane' and provided some options to do so safely in the modern world," explained the organizer. "This allowed us to strengthen our relationship with the ACLU Mass as we included someone from the group to speak about cyber security and how it affects those seeking abortion. We also put together a Life in a Post-Roe America Toolkit that has been shared with participants and our membership and which we will update regularly."

## Did We Have an Impact?

While it is difficult to isolate the impact of a single film, we believe that THE JANES has contributed to the national conversation about abortion access, the seizure of long-standing rights from pregnant people, and the capacity to organize in the face of injustice.

The individual events that we coordinated contributed to efforts to educate and mobilize voters and to energize volunteers who were communicating with their neighbors about the importance of pregnant people being allowed to control their bodies and their futures — and to reflect that importance in their votes on Election Day.

We connected individuals and organizations who, despite living in the same city and sharing common concerns, had not come together previously, but who will work together moving forward.

We inspired intergenerational dialogues that increased young people's awareness of history and encouraged older people to consider new ways of thinking about gender and race and access to abortion care.

## What's Next?

The better-than-expected outcomes of the 2022 midterm elections has energized abortion rights activists across the country to consider bringing the issue directly to voters in 2023 and 2024 and to fight back against gerrymandered state legislatures and governors who intend to assert their ideologies over the will of the people.

In a country that is politically divided, access to abortion care is an issue that can bridge that chasm and feels dire enough to get those who may normally sit on the sidelines in non-Presidential election years to cast their ballot. While we should never underestimate the violence of the opposition, it is possible that some elected leaders may be less inclined to take action that could penalize their power.

## By the Numbers

**Number of Screenings = 43**

**Number of States = 19 states**

**Number of Multi-State Virtual Screenings = 2**

**Number of Participating Organizations = 82**

**Average Number of Audience Members = 75**