

UC SANTA BARBARA

# THE *Current*

February 9, 2026

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## **UCSB filmmaker Wendy Eley Jackson's 'The Other Roe' at SBIFF**

In "The Other Roe," filmmaker and UC Santa Barbara lecturer [Wendy Eley Jackson](#) revisits Doe v. Bolton, the Supreme Court case decided alongside Roe v. Wade that quietly shaped access to reproductive healthcare nationwide. Blending cinematic storytelling with documentary form, the short film centers memory, testimony and lived experience to restore a history long absent from public view.

["The Other Roe"](#) will make its world premiere on Feb. 11, at the [Santa Barbara International Film Festival \(SBIFF\)](#), with an encore screening on Feb. 13.

"The subject demanded something more intimate and more cinematic," said Jackson, a lecturer in UCSB's Department of Film and Media Studies and in the College of Creative Studies. "It needed to honor the emotional weight carried by the people most impacted by the law, not just the law itself."

The film examines Doe v. Bolton, the lesser-known ruling that provided the broader legal framework governing abortion access in the United States. While Roe v. Wade became a national symbol, Doe shaped how reproductive healthcare was delivered across the country.

At the center of the film is the legacy of Atlanta attorney Margie Pitts Hames, whose legal work helped establish reproductive healthcare access nationwide. The story is told through the voices of Hames's daughter, Donia Hames Robinson, and her close

friend Ann Rose, who later founded the Jackson Women's Health Organization. The organization would later become the site at the center of the 2022 Dobbs decision that overturned Roe v. Wade, linking the film's historical focus to contemporary legal battles.

Ahead of the film's premiere, Jackson spoke about her creative approach to "The Other Roe," the significance of debuting the film at SBIFF, and what drew her to a case that has been largely erased from public memory.

**"The Other Roe" blends cinematic storytelling with documentary form. How did you approach the tone, structure and visuals of the film, and what were your primary creative priorities?**

**Wendy Eley Jackson:** From the beginning, I knew "The Other Roe" could not feel like a traditional legal documentary. The subject demanded something more intimate and more cinematic. It needed to honor the emotional weight carried by the people most impacted by the law, not just the law itself. Tonally, I aimed for restraint and reverence. This is a film about erasure and consequence, so the tone had to be grounded, reflective and human-centered rather than polemical.

Structurally, the film is built as a reclaiming. Instead of moving chronologically through legal history, we move through memory, testimony and lived experience, allowing the audience to feel the absence of Doe v. Bolton in our collective understanding. Visually, we leaned into cinematic language with deliberate framing, negative space, quiet moments and images that breathe. My primary creative priority was clarity without simplification and emotion without manipulation. I wanted the film to sit with the audience and invite contemplation rather than instruct them on what to think.

**What drew you to the story of Doe v. Bolton, a case that has largely been overlooked in public memory despite its significant role in shaping reproductive healthcare access nationwide?**

What drew me to Doe v. Bolton was its absence. For decades, Roe v. Wade has been treated as the singular pillar of reproductive rights, while Doe was quietly removed from public consciousness. Yet Doe v. Bolton is the case that expanded access, defined health broadly and shaped how care was actually delivered across the country.

As a storyteller, I am drawn to histories that have been buried not accidentally but systemically. *Doe v. Bolton* reveals how narratives are narrowed and simplified in ways that ultimately weaken public understanding of rights and power. This film is my way of restoring a missing chapter and honoring the people, particularly Black women, physicians, and advocates, whose lives and labor were central to that ruling. "The Other Roe" exists because remembering is an act of resistance, and storytelling is how we reclaim what was never meant to be forgotten.

**As the film makes its world premiere at SBIFF, what does it mean to you to share this work with an audience for the first time in that particular setting?**

Premiering "The Other Roe" at SBIFF is deeply meaningful on both a personal and artistic level. Santa Barbara is a place where community, intellect and art intersect, and that mirrors the spirit of this film. This is not simply a premiere. It is an invitation into conversation. Sharing the film for the first time in a setting that values thoughtful engagement and civic dialogue feels exactly right.

There is also something powerful about debuting this story in a communal, in-person space. This film was made to be experienced together, to feel the collective silence, the shared breath and the reckoning. SBIFF offers an audience that is open, curious and willing to sit with complexity, which is all I could ask for as a filmmaker.

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edge of the Pacific Ocean.