

# Choice: Texas

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**Short Game Description:** *Choice: Texas* is an educational interactive fiction game addressing reproductive healthcare access in the state of Texas. Play as one of five Texas women attempting to navigate the state's reproductive healthcare system. Latrice is an attorney in her 30s trying to negotiate her professional ambitions while supporting her mother and siblings; Leah is a small-town bartender unsure about her next steps as she considers moving on from high school; Alex is a promising high school student who struggles to live up to her parents' expectations; Jess is looking forward to motherhood as she builds a life with her husband; and Maria is an LVN and mother trying to balance her family's needs and her own desires. Although billed as interactive fiction, *Choice: Texas* is based on extensive research into healthcare access, legal restrictions, geography, and demographics, and is reflective of the real circumstances facing women in the state.

## More About *Choice: Texas*

*Choice: Texas* is an independently produced interactive fiction game developed by Carly A. Kocurek and Allyson Whipple. Production was funded by a successful IndieGoGo campaign in September 2013 (Kocurek and Whipple), and the game was released as a free-to-play browser game in 2014.

The game was developed using Twine and relies on real demographic and legal information specific to the state of Texas. Players enter the game as one of five characters (see Figure 1), including ambitious attorney Latrice, small-town bartender Leah, high-school student Alex, expectant first-time mother Jess, and working mother Maria. The game home page also includes links to other information about the game, including a content note; the content note provides information on the types of content covered in each character's storyline for players who may wish to avoid some topics. For example, Leah's storyline begins with discussion of a sexual assault.

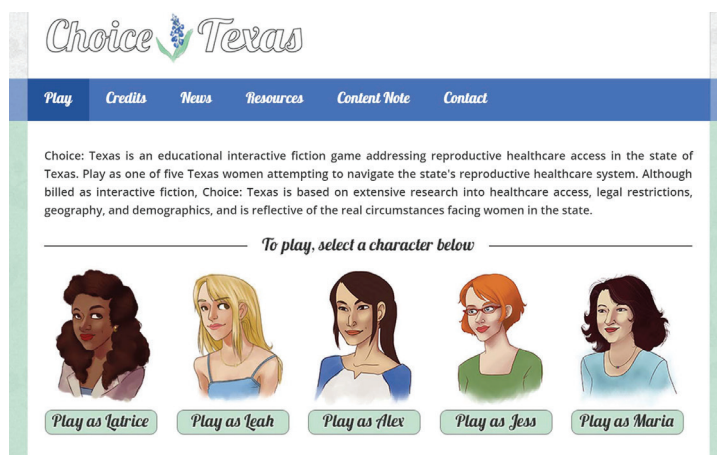
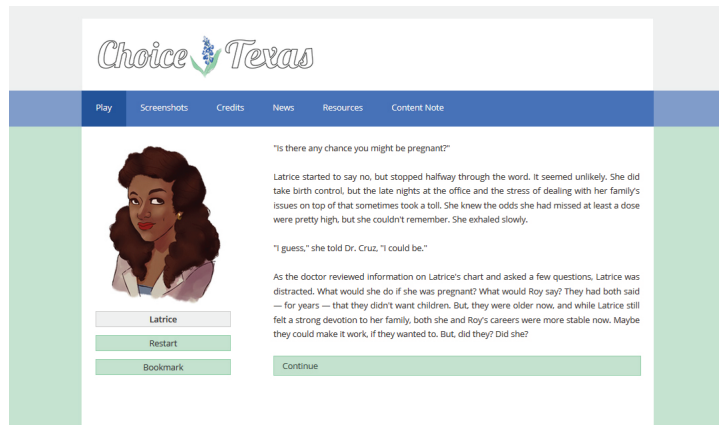


Figure 1: The *Choice: Texas* shows all five characters.

After selecting a character, players are taken to the first screen of that character's story (see Figure 2). Players navigate the story by reading text passages and then making choices regarding the character's response to particular situations. Player choice impacts both the information that is available to the player and the situations she will encounter. Throughout, the player has the option to restart the character's storyline or bookmark progress so that she can return to complete the game at a later time.



**Figure 2: The first page of Latrice's story in *Choice: Texas*.**

*Choice: Texas* applies two distinct approaches to education. First, the game relays factual information about reproductive healthcare regulation and access in the state of Texas throughout the narrative. In playing the game, players are exposed to information about state laws, clinic availability, adoption systems, and other information. Second, the game relies on narrative as a means of encouraging empathy. In this, the game draws inspiration from recent empathy games like *Depression Quest* (2013) and from research that suggests that games can be effective at encouraging empathy and understanding (Flanagan, Howe, and Nissenbaum, 2008; Belman and Flanagan, 2010; Greitemeyer, Osswald, Brauer, 2010).

Upon its release, *Choice: Texas* received positive coverage from *Paste Magazine*. Reviewer Jed Pressgrove awarded the game 9 out of 10 stars, and said in part:

*Choice: Texas* seems unlikely to revolutionize videogames even though it has more to say than most of them. ... Perhaps the game's lack of self-important and divisive politics has turned some people off — it's nowhere near as controversial as predicted. In a gaming world where the shock tactics of *Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes* and *The Walking Dead* translate to phony relevance, *Choice: Texas* is respectfully profound. (2014)

To date, *Choice: Texas* has been exhibited at the 2013 F.R.O.G. Vienna Conference, the 2014 SWPACA Conference, and Different Games 2014.

## Access *Choice: Texas*

*Choice: Texas* is available as a free-to-play browser game at <http://playchoicetexas.com/>.

## References

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## **Acknowledgments**

Full credits for all members of the *Choice: Texas* development team are available at <http://playchoicetexas.com/credits.php>