



# CHEWED GUM

- ❖ Utah has had rates of sexual assault higher than the rest of the country for the past 30 years.
- ❖ According to the Utah Department of Health, 88.2% of rapes in Utah go unreported, which means the actual rates of sexual violence are higher than we even know.
- ❖ Utah is ranked 50<sup>th</sup> of the United States for women's equality.

**LOGLINE:** *15 years after her rape drove her to seek solace in the Mormon Church, filmmaker Alana Maiello returns to Utah to confront her unresolved trauma and to connect with other LDS sexual violence survivors. Discovering a buried epidemic of sexual violence in Utah, she experiences the power of religion to suppress personal truth, and faces her own history in the community she left behind.*

**SYNOPSIS:** *Chewed Gum* is a personal journey exploring silencing patterns toward survivors of sexual and domestic violence in the Mormon community in Utah, framed by director Alana's direct experience as an LDS survivor. The narrative arc follows Alana's active investigation and internal reckoning, but the film is grounded in a multiplying chorus of voices sharing and processing together in rising solidarity – survivors, journalists, activists, lawyers and lawmakers – all engaged in the emotional work of making change in a community they love that is also the source of their trauma.

A sense of cognitive dissonance has built within Alana since she left the Church, but her attempt to run from her past implodes when she reads an exposé about rape victims at Brigham Young University punished by the Mormon school's antiquated Honor Code Office, which strictly forbids pre-marital sex. Impelled to talk to the students speaking out, she goes back to Utah and uncovers serious institutional gaps – no counseling, no sex education, uninvestigated cases, untested rape kits, and even police misconduct – that perpetuated the punishment and silencing of rape victims at BYU.

Meeting with journalists and attorneys who have tried to bring this issue to light, Alana learns the staggering statistics about the occurrence of violence against women in Utah and the systematic silencing tactics employed by the Church to maintain its image. Many of those she meets were exiled from the Church for speaking out. One journalist discovers all her coverage of sexual assault in Utah has been wiped from her news station's website. But as Alana meets women whose personal truths were so harshly denied by the very religious leaders and community they had turned to in their trauma – and yet who persevere – she finds the freedom to reconnect with herself and begin her own healing.

**Director:** Alana Maiello – [alana.maiello@gmail.com](mailto:alana.maiello@gmail.com) **Producer:** Liz Yale Marsh – [elizabethyalemarsh@gmail.com](mailto:elizabethyalemarsh@gmail.com)