



THE RAPE OF REGY TAYLOR

A FILM BY NANCY BUIRSKI



FACILITATOR'S
GUIDE

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A NOTE FROM ODYSSEY IMPACT

By choosing to screen **THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR**, you are now part of a nationwide Social Impact Campaign. We have started #ForRecy, a grassroots movement that utilizes the stories within the film to educate and activate audiences on the issue of sexual violence against women and the historical trauma faced by Black women both during the era of the Jim Crow South and today.

As part of this campaign, we encourage you to use **THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR** as a tool for training, lobbying and/or teaching, keeping in mind the following campaign goals:

1. To elevate the voices of Black women and empower all survivors to share their stories.
2. To enable conversation about sexual violence against women and the disproportionate discrimination experienced by Black women.
3. To engage the Church as a leader on this issue.
4. To educate audiences and allies, empowering them to become vocal about the structural racism that affects survivors of color.

This document is simply meant to be a guideline that offers ideas and questions you might consider as you prepare for your screening. We invite you to make it your own by tailoring it to the specific needs of your community. Our only request is that you uplift the campaign goals listed above.

Screening **THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR** is only the first step in making this change. The stories in this film are springboards to larger discussions you can have about sexual violence against women and structural racism with your community. Use Recy Taylor's story to inspire and mobilize your audience. In doing so, your community will lend its voice to the national conversation on these issues.

Thank you for bringing **THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR** to your community. Now let's get to work!

Sincerely,

The Odyssey Impact Team

ABOUT THE FILM

Recy Taylor, a 24-year-old Black mother and sharecropper, was gang raped by six white boys in 1944 Alabama. Sexual violence like this happened commonly in the Jim Crow South and few women spoke up in fear for their lives. Not Recy Taylor: She bravely identified her rapists. The NAACP sent its rape investigator Rosa Parks to Alabama, who rallied support and triggered an unprecedented outcry for justice.

THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR also exposes the legacy of physical abuse inflicted upon Black women and reveals Rosa Parks' intimate role in Recy Taylor's story. An attempted rape against Parks was but one inspiration for her own ongoing fight for justice for countless women like Taylor, and Parks' well-known 1955 bus boycott was the result of decades of activism, not the beginning.

More and more women are now speaking up after being assaulted. **THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR** shines a light on the Black women who spoke up when danger to do so was as its greatest; it was their noble efforts to reclaim control of their bodies that paved the way for today's generation of activists. The 2017 Women's March and the ongoing Black Lives Matter movement are directly linked to their courage.

THE FILMMAKERS

NANCY BUIRSKI is the Director/Producer/Writer of **THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR**, winner of the prestigious Human Rights Nights Special Prize for Human Rights this year at the 74th Venice Biennale. Buirski is the Director/Producer/Writer of *BY SIDNEY LUMET* (2015), *AFTERNOON OF A FAUN* (2013), and the Oscar-short listed, Peabody and Emmy Award-winning *THE LOVING STORY* (2012) and served as a Producer of *LOVING* by Jeff Nichols. She is directing *ENDANGERED*, an animated feature based on Eliot Schrefer’s YA novel, and will direct a narrative version of *AFTERNOON OF A FAUN*. A member of the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the Television Academy of Arts and Sciences, Buirski founded and ran the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival. She is the photographer and author of *EARTH ANGELS: MIGRANT CHILDREN IN AMERICA*.

TRANSFORM FILMS INC., a documentary production company that tells stories of hope, compassion, and the quest for a more just world, presents **THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR**.

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I’m often asked why, as a white filmmaker, I choose subjects dealing with race. A Black female director will have a very special take on the story of a Black woman raped in 1944. That story will be told differently than the way I tell it; I don’t live in a Black woman’s skin. But I believe these stories should be told again and again, and that there may be value in my difference. Race is “The American Story”; as a white person I inherit complicity in what happened to African-Americans in our country. Recent events in Charlottesville and elsewhere are tragic outgrowths of white supremacy palpable in both our film and my earlier film *THE LOVING STORY*; it powers the oppression and hatred in both. Those boys who raped Recy Taylor inherited it, and the unequal justice system that twice allowed the rapists to go free is its legacy. If there were ever a responsibility for one to tell these stories—white and Black filmmakers—it is now. I am passionate about conveying them, compelled by empathy and responsibility, and a need to expose a shameful history.

We were very fortunate to have the extraordinary testimonies of Recy Taylor’s brother and sister. Their lucid account of their sister’s rape—as well as of life in Alabama in the 40s and 50s—through their measured but emotional retelling adds immediacy; their slow but firm cadences inform the film’s rhythm and serve as the film’s backbone. Without them, I could not have made this film.

THE FILMMAKERS

But as I did my research, I came upon a wealth of other sources that helped shaped my narrative and animate Recy Taylor’s personal story. The scenes from so-called “race films,” that in their day provided an African-American perspective on life in the U.S. completely absent from white mainstream movies, were particularly enlightening to me. In some cases they depict the sexual predation of white men on Black women with surprising frankness. They might be new to many viewers and are fascinating documents in themselves. We have rare footage of Rosa Parks who supported Recy Taylor’s uphill battle for justice in a skewed and bigoted legal system. There are newspaper articles in the Black press that drove her story up to New York, and interviews with activists and experts whose insights were invaluable.

Music also became very important while I worked on the film. The extraordinary songs of African-American popular tradition, some sang by the activist Fannie Lou Hamer, serve as a thread that ties the material together.

The relationship between Rosa Parks and Recy Taylor is the heartbeat of our film. Mrs. Parks’ intimate role in Recy Taylor’s story reveals a life different from what we’ve been told about Parks, a mythology that belies her true nature as determined activist. Rosa Parks was not just a tired seamstress when she refused to change her seat on the bus, but a committed activist and secretary for the Montgomery NAACP while also sewing clothes for whites. We recently discovered a letter from Parks describing an attempted rape she fought off, using the power of persuasion. It’s likely one inspiration for her ongoing work to restore black women’s bodily integrity, work that consumed her for years. The bus boycott was the end result, not the beginning.

Increasingly, people are willing to confront our past in order to understand our present. We’re moving faster in the slow process of tearing down historical commemorations of oppressors; our film is a part of the replacement, the more honorable and appropriate re-telling of the truth of our past. **THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR** invites others to join the retelling of our history with greater affinity and truthfulness. While our film is about a specific historical episode, clearly this episode is still terribly relevant today.

It took 70 years, but Recy Taylor received an official apology about the inadequacy of the response to the crimes against her. But this film is a reminder that much remains to be done, and much remains unresolved. Our hope is that **THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR** is a bullhorn—that it ignites others to tell this story, too, some who may be closer to the experience. Their stories will be deeper, resonate in new, revealing ways, and attract more unconverted by their immediacy and authenticity. Those new to it will feel its utter commonality because of its human, truthful detail. We will have been honored to set the stage for the ongoing discussion and exposé of a story of rape in the Deep South.

Nancy Buirski

BEFORE YOUR SCREENING

Using the Film as a Catalyst for Change

- What type of support does your community need to address sexual violence against women and structural racism?
- Are there other organizations, congregations, and/or community leaders that would benefit from attending this screening and who could collaborate on a nationwide call to action?
- Are there models of action other communities have used that you could adopt in your own community?
- What goals do you have for the outcome of your screening event?

What You'll Need

Screening Materials and Equipment

MATERIALS

- THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR Poster & Flyers
- THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR DVD
- THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR Discussion Guide
- Display Survey Instructions
- Sign-in Sheet & Pens
- Any Other Organizational Material You Wish to Distribute

EQUIPMENT (you provide these)

- Speakers and Sound Systems
- Wi-Fi Access Preferred (in order to access Post Screening Survey)
- Microphone(s) for Panel Discussion/Audience Q&A
- Necessary Cables and Extension Cords
- AV Equipment for DVD Playback (one or more of the following):
 - Projector and Screen
 - Monitor or TV
 - Computer or DVD player

BEFORE YOUR SCREENING

Event Introduction

When introducing the film, consider using excerpts from the following sample script:

“Thank you all for coming out to share this experience with our community. The documentary you are about to watch depicts the brutal assault of Recy Taylor in Abbeville, Alabama, in 1944. The film explores the intersection of sexual violence, sexism, and racism while also bringing to light an added layer of trauma from the civil rights movement: The prevalent rape of Black women.

The film also highlights Rosa Parks’ roots as a non-profit advocate for victims of sexual violence, as well as her involvement leading a national campaign for Recy’s right to a fair trial.

Because these are such complex and sensitive topics, I would like to begin by presenting a few Community Agreements that will guide how we take up space and contribute to tonight’s dialogue in a thoughtful manner. They are as follows:

- *What is said here stays here, but what is learned here leaves here.*
- *Take care of yourself. (If, at any time, you need to step out of the space and speak to a support person, please do so.)*
- *Treat one another with respect at all times.*

PROMOTION AND OUTREACH IDEAS

Publicize Your Event

Use our **THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR** toolkit to promote your event. Here are some specific materials you might find useful:

- Press Release Template
- Email Template
- Screening Flyer Template
- Social Media Photos & Language

YOUR POST SCREENING DISCUSSION

Determining the Best Format for Your Post Screening Discussion

- Are you leading an intimate discussion or a panel discussion with experts in the field?
- Will you allot time for an audience Q & A?

Locate Experts and Key Changemakers in Your Community to Participate

Identify local experts on topics related to sexual violence against women and structural racism and consider asking them to participate in your screening as a moderator or panelist. Some individuals to consider might include:

- Sexual Assault Organization Leaders
- Faith-Based Activists
- Leaders of Women’s Ministries, Churches, Synagogues, Mosques or other houses of worship
- Community Leaders
- Impacted Community Members
- Elected Officials
- Educators
- Policy Makers & Experts
- Law Enforcement
- Women & Family Experts

DURING THE SCREENING

Screening Timeline Breakdown 3 to 4 Hours

EVENT SET UP: 30-60 MINUTES

CONDUCT TECH CHECK: 15 MINUTES

Test DVD playback & make sure there are no audio or visual problems. (This step is crucial to ensuring the success of your screening.)

WELCOME GUESTS TO YOUR SCREENING: 15-20 MINUTES

- Sign-in all guests.
- Give people time to mingle and find their seats.
- Have a PowerPoint slide (or physical sign) up with your venue's Wi-Fi name & password and the URL link to the screening surveys.
- Pre-Screening Survey
- Introduce the film (see sample script) & discuss how it connects to your organization's mission.

SCREEN THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR: 91 MINUTES

ISSUE POST-SCREENING SURVEY: 5-10 MINUTES

Direct attendees to complete post screening surveys on their smartphones.

BEGIN POST-SCREENING DISCUSSION: 20-30 MINUTES

LEAD AUDIENCE Q&A: 15 MINUTES

ANNOUNCE A CALL TO ACTION: 10 MINUTES

Discuss ways your guests can take action after they leave. What is your organization doing as a next step?

WRAP UP YOUR SCREENING: 5 MINUTES

Thank your audience for attending. Remind participants who missed the initial sign-in period to please sign in at this point. Encourage attendees to network with one another and continue the discussion amongst themselves.

FACILITATING A CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSION

Be Prepared

- View the film once or twice before your screening to familiarize yourself with the subjects' names and to discuss key themes and important scenes from the film.
- Determine what themes and/or scenes from the film might resonate with your audience. These can be used as springboards for discussion (for topic ideas, please reference the Discussion Guide).
- Identify specific actions to mobilize your community.
- Research incarceration statistics and local legislation that may directly affect your audience.

Know Your Audience

- Get a sense of who will be attending your screening. Will members of a particular organization attend? If so, what is that organization's mission/perspective? Will any experts or community influencers attend?
- Realize that not all attendees will come into this screening with the same points of view, life experiences, or prior knowledge.

The Role of the Moderator

- Create a safe space so that attendees feel respected and willing to engage in conversation.
- Feel comfortable to gently correct any misinformation.
- Supplement the discussion with background information and facts when necessary, but make sure not to dominate the conversation.
- Be conscious of time and kindly remind attendees to keep their comments brief so that everyone has the chance to speak.
- If you have an audience Q & A, gauge how many audience members would like to speak by asking them to raise their hands and ensure that the pacing of the conversation allows time to field as many questions as possible.
- Listen carefully to find the right moments for follow up questions.

ANNOUNCE A CALL TO ACTION

Are there specific local programs and policies that you would like your community to back following your screening? Here are some research questions that can help you devise a community-specific Call to Action:

- Do you have resources to support those affected by sexual assault or violence against women in your community?
- Are there volunteer opportunities through your local organizations that community members can partake?
- What are some local and national organizations dealing with sexual assault and violence against women?
- Are there ways for you to partner with these organizations?
- Is there local legislation around sexual assault and violence against women that you can ask your community members to support?
- What are examples of local or national support services that have worked in other communities and would these programs work in your community? (For some examples of support services, please head to www.therapeofrecytaylor.com.)

For more ideas on action you can take with your community head to
www.therapeofrecytaylor.com

AFTER YOUR SCREENING

Report Your Impact

To maximize our efforts for change, it's crucial that you report the outcome of your screening within the context of the nationwide **THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR** social impact campaign. We need your help to evaluate the impact of each grassroots screening across the country!

Please be sure to complete the Post-Screening Host Survey that will be sent to you following your event and send any photos and/or press covering your event to screenings@therapeofrecytaylor.com

Continue the Discussion

Encourage your viewers to send feedback and additional comments on the film to screenings@therapeofrecytaylor.com

Keep the conversation going on social media using the hashtags:

#ForRecy

#TheRapeofRecyTaylor

#SheSpokeUp

#RecyTaylorFilm

THANK YOU for bringing **THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR** to your community. In doing so, you've joined a nationwide movement that is changing the way we think about our sexual violence against women and all of those it affects.

THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR

A FILM BY NANCY BUIRSKI



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