



THE RAPE OF REGY TAYLOR

A FILM BY NANCY BUIRSKI



COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY
FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

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A NOTE FROM ODYSSEY IMPACT

Thank you for your interest in bringing **THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR** and expanding its dialogue within your campus community. Please let this booklet serve as a resource for you to structure your film screening. Here you will find preparation tips, “Community Agreements,” suggested film excerpts, facilitator questions, and scripts to consider while framing the event to an audience. While we do not expect you to present this information verbatim, you are more than welcome to use this guide that will also be closely followed by hundreds of other universities that have chosen to share this nuanced and timely narrative.

This guide is designed to support your engagement with a varied panel and/or audience. We are aware that this story may attract people from varied walks of life and belief systems, and have attempted to create a resource that allows you to be a flexible facilitator to a wide range of participants.

The included sample questions are presented as options that we have tiered and scaled to engage participants whose expertise on this topic may range from beginner to novice to expert. As such, we have coded introductory or beginner questions with a number one (1); advanced questions—those requiring the participants to scratch a bit more beneath the surface—are labeled as number two (2); and, questions designed for more intangible and abstract thought are labeled as number three (3). In some cases, we have added additional bonus questions as well.

FORMATTING OPTIONS

While you have the freedom to structure your event in a way that best reflects the community’s openness to interactive learning, there are two programming formats we have found to prove popular and engaging—panel discussions for a larger audience, and small-group discussions for more intimate gatherings—and have provided examples of programming logistics for each below.

PANEL DISCUSSION WITH A LARGER AUDIENCE

Section	Time Allotted
Introduction	5 Minutes
Film Screening	91 Minutes
Post-Film Intermission	10 Minutes
Panel Discussion	20 Minutes
Audience Engagement	15 Minutes
Wrap Up	5 Minutes
Total Event Runtime	146 Minutes or nearly 2.5 Hours

This format is ideal for a large-audience event open to the public. We recommend partnering with collaborators or co-sponsors from campus groups (such as women’s and/or multicultural centers, religious life departments, etc.) to bring some of their members on as panel guests. This option encourages cross-promotion between various communities and may draw a well-rounded audience to your event.

FORMATTING OPTIONS

INTIMATE GROUP DISCUSSION

Section	Time Allotted
Introduction	5 Minutes
Film Screening	91 Minutes
Post-Film Intermission	10 Minutes
Facilitated Small Group Discussion	15 Minutes
Wrap Up	5 Minutes
Total Event Runtime	126 Minutes or just over 2 Hours

This format is ideal for groups who wish to discuss this topic in a smaller, more intimate setting such as student-led, peer-to-peer discussions with a facilitator asking the audience directly for feedback to the questions made available in this guide.

PRE-SCREENING PREPARATION TIPS

- Review documentary (DVD or web link) before the event to ensure it works properly.
- Invite the services of counseling center staff, peer advocates, or community organizations equipped to support survivors or that specialize in de-escalating intense dialogues or situations. They can help maintain a safe space for all participants.
- Confirm participation of a varied panel that represents the intersectional lens of this film. (Be sure to provide adequate seating for all panel members.)
- Provide sample questions to panel at least one week in advance.
- Ensure you have brief biographies of all panel members.
- Remind your panel that they are expected to answer every question.
- Mark the time stamps of all video clips you wish to show.
- Develop a set of Community Agreements to be recited in the space to set the tone for audience and panel expectations, participation and care. We have included some samples in the script below.

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.

Our post-screening discussion will explore themes of race, place, and religion as they relate to a segregated South, sex, and the sacred ownership of Black femininity. We will also examine rape culture, respectability politics, and resistance through an anti-oppression framework.

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.)
- Please respect the person who holds the mic and the space.
- If you feel yourself taking up too much space, pass the microphone! Likewise, if you find yourself not as present, encourage yourself to be.
- Treat one another with respect at all times.
- If you have other guidelines to add to the list, please feel free to suggest them at any time throughout our time tonight.

POST-FILM DISCUSSION

If time permits, allow for a brief intermission for the audience to stretch and regroup. However, it may be necessary to flow directly into the second half of the event in order to sustain the audience's presence.

As you transition to the discussion portion of the event, consider using the following script as an introduction:

Large Panel Format

"I will now introduce our panel members and ask that they come take a seat as I call their names. Once we begin, we have allotted up to 20 minutes for prepared questions and an additional 15 minutes for questions from the audience. Please give our panelists a hand."

Small Group Discussion Format

"We will now transition into the discussion portion of the program. As facilitator, I will ask a series of questions for us to explore as a group. This is designed to be an interactive dialogue powered by our collective ability of engagement. I will briefly restate our community agreements and then we will dive right in."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Here is a list of sample questions you may consider incorporating into your discussions. We would recommend choosing a few from each section. You will also find time-stamped excerpts from the film that align with each section's theme. This should give you some flexibility in your presentation style. For instance, if you choose to forgo a panel, you may have additional time to replay select clips from the film.

POST-FILM DISCUSSION

Initial Thoughts

1. I think we can all agree that this film unravels various narratives and intersections worthy of a closer look. Let's start by sharing your initial thoughts on the tone and themes present in the documentary.
2. Are there narratives or stereotypes that have survived past the era of the film and are important to note here?
3. Although Recy Taylor's specific story may be new to some, the topic of sexual violence has sparked outrage and encouraged national dialogue for decades. What makes Recy Taylor's story so compelling?

Recy Taylor and the Ownership of Black Femininity

1. When exploring Recy Taylor, we heard some interesting dialogue around church women versus those who were perceived to be "rough womens." What are your thoughts on the role of faith, or Recy Taylor being a "Woman of Faith," and how that intersects with the narrative about sex and/or sexual violence?
2. How does the comment from Recy Taylor's sister that she was "more Christian than we were" play into a larger narrative that upholds a dichotomy of "good girls vs. bad girls" or, in other words, this idea of who does and doesn't deserve to be raped?
3. Recy Taylor was a 24-year old married mother on the night she was raped in Abbeville, Alabama. Her youngest attacker was no older than 15. Can you talk a little about the ownership of black bodies (with an emphasis on the forced sexual conquest of black women) as a white supremacist rite of passage into manhood?
4. Bonus question: We are introduced to a young Rosa Parks in this film in a role that may seem unfamiliar. How does her confrontation with the white man who attempted to assault her conflict with the meek, whitewashed version of Rosa we were taught about in school?

Resistance: Past and Present

Recy Taylor was recently referred to as the "Mother of the #MeToo" movement for her bravery in speaking out against her rapists during the height of our country's tumultuous civil rights history. This film—through direct accounts or the expert lenses of the scholars featured—also speaks to the larger historical arc of Black women's collective resistance to violence and how that translates to transformational and equitable benefits to our larger society. ("When Black women set out to save themselves they end up saving the world.") In the film, we see both formal and informal acts of resistance aimed at destabilizing the overall oppressive infrastructure as well as individual instances of violence.

1. Give some examples of how Recy Taylor and her family exemplified political resistance to white supremacy while living in Abbeville, Alabama.

POST-FILM DISCUSSION

2. In contrast, how does the introduction of a young Rosa Parks being backed by the NAACP signify a more formal example of political resistance to white supremacy?
3. Can you name some examples of how the very system that assisted Recy Taylor to seek justice also disappointed her?
4. Bonus question: How do the historical patterns of oppression present in this film reverberate today? What are some present-day issues?
5. Bonus question: In a time where intergenerational activism (within and across communities) is pertinent, what are some limitations and gaps to progression toward a unified anti-oppressive strategy to ending violence?
6. Bonus question: With an overall goal of “liberation for all,” how can those of us here tonight utilize the local campus and larger community to engage in this work?

WRAP-UP POINTS

- Thank everyone who participated in the event.
- Remind people about the counseling and support resources present in the community.
- Connect students to other engagement opportunities on this or similar topics.
- Invite your audience to complete an evaluative assessment on learning outcomes of the event.

HIGHLIGHTED EXCERPTS FROM THE FILM

Recy Taylor's Assault

- 05:08-11:21 (Retelling from Recy Taylor and her family)
- 34:44-35:19 (Why Recy Taylor is a hero)

Family's Reactions/Violence

- 13:02-17:13 (Recy Taylor's father walks the town)
- 26:20-27:14 (Firebombing and father's reaction)
- 1:07:55-1:10:32 (Secondary trauma)

Intersections of Religion, Sex & White Supremacy

- 27:16-27:50 (Sheriff Corbitt silences the family)
- 05:43-7:30 ("Rough Womens")
- 04:20-4:50 (Recy Taylor is called a prostitute)
- 02:28-4:07 (Recy Taylor loved church)

White Supremacy and the history of Access to Black Women

- 17:29-20:24 (They knew they could get away with it)
- 20:50-21:48 (Black women's bodies as rites of passage)
- 21:51-22:34 ("Historian" and "consensual relationships")
- 40:33-41:14 (Dangers Black women face)

Rosa Parks and Resistance

- 27:52-29:53 (Interaction with Sherriff Corbitt)
- 31:41-34:42 (Rosa nearly assaulted)
- 37:01-38:34 (Recy Taylor's sister is slapped by a police officer)
- 39:03-39:33 (Archie Theatre)

Racism, Rape Culture & Respectability

- 35:23-37:00 (Courthouse Hearing)
- 54:54-1:03:05 (Investigation ordered by Governor)
- 1:03:10-1:04:13 (2nd Hearing)
- 1:08:43-1:12:51 (The perpetrators move on)

NAACP and Black Media

- 39:43-40:31 (Esther Cooper Jackson of Southern Negro Youth Congress)
- 41:15-41:32 (Esther talks about Black media)
- 48:03-50:55 (Black press is the life of the movement)
- 45:19-47:20 (Committee for Equal Justice for Recy Taylor)

Who saves Recy Taylor?

- 1:12:52-1:14:41 (Recy Taylor's life after the second hearing)

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