



# THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR

Sermon Guide

AN AUGUSTA FILMS AND TRANSFORM FILMS PRODUCTION "THE RAPE OF RECY TAYLOR"  
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## **Forward from Rev. Dr. Katie Givens Kime Odyssey Impact**

Dear Friend,

At Odyssey Impact, we believe in the power of personal story to change perspectives, change attitudes and to change the world. Excellent films often evoke deep emotion. They might inspire us—and also trouble us — as we consider a diversity of viewpoints on difficult civic issues.

*The Rape of Recy Taylor* offers particular challenges and opportunities to the preacher who feels moved to share Recy’s story, in some form, within the context of a sermon. Even naming aloud the topic of sexual assault, in the context of preaching, will be a transformative step in many settings. It is in that light that we are so pleased to present the enclosed insights from the Rev. Amy Gopp, a longtime leader in faith-based activism against gender-based violence. We invite you to consider these suggestions for integrating Recy Taylor’s story into your preaching, according to your particular context, and with a pastoral heart.

***Speaking a holy and true word  
is a brave act.***

While we offer this sermon guide as a resource to faith leaders, we also recognize that, across faith traditions, what it means to share a holy word within the context of worship varies quite broadly. “Sermons” and “preaching” usually reference Christian contexts, but doctrines and traditions of preaching vastly differ across various denominations. The pulpit (however defined) is usually a point of power within a worshipping community, with a variety of restrictions around who can speak, and on what topics. In some traditions, a “topical” sermon is acceptable and even usual; in others, preaching is governed by a particular cycle of Scriptural passages. We provide this guide as a model and a starting point, even as we understand the manifold and distinctive needs of every faith community.

And whatever your context, we recognize that speaking a holy and true word is a brave act. May we have the bravery of Recy Taylor as we endeavor to act faithfully, and speak truthfully.

In hope,

Rev. Dr. Katie Givens Kime  
Director of Religion & Civic Engagement

Odyssey Impact



**Introduction**  
***How Do We Draft a Sermon Worthy of Recy Taylor?***

*This bitter earth  
Well, what a fruit it bears  
What good is love  
Mmh, that no one shares?  
And if my life is like the dust  
Ooh, that hides the glow of a rose  
What good am I?  
Heaven only knows...*

~Dinah Washington sings “This Bitter Earth”<sup>1</sup>

Rape.

We don’t speak about it.  
We don’t want to think about it.  
Even the word sends chills down the spine.

Rape.

We certainly don’t want to preach about it.

Is that because we don’t know *if* we should preach about something so horrific and disturbing? Or is it that we don’t know *how* to preach about it?

After all, we are called to preach the Gospel—the *good* news. But rape is anything but good. And while it is news at times, it is not covered nearly as often as it should be because it is not reported as often as it should be. Our society is still mired in secrecy, deceit and shame when it comes to rape, sexual assault or any form of sexual violence. Victim-survivors are often in the shadows suffering in silence and overcome with feelings of guilt and disgrace while perpetrators all too frequently walk away, carry on with their lives, and are seldom held accountable.<sup>2</sup>

Like in Detroit. For an in-depth understanding of the city of Detroit’s and our nation’s backlog of untested rape kits, watch this [TED Talk](#) featuring Wayne County, Michigan Prosecutor Kym Worthy.

It's understandable that rape isn't reported as often as it needs to be—when you dig deeper to find that rape kits aren't even tested, left to collect dust in garbage bags in an old warehouse—what does it matter?

***“And if my life is like the dust  
Ooh, that hides the glow of a rose  
What good am I?”***

Meanwhile, we are bombarded with images of rape and sexual violence on TV, in the movies, and online—as though it were entertainment. What we do not see after the show is over or the movie credits roll are the images of excruciating emotional and physical pain, trauma and the permanent psychological scars that become a part of a rape victim's “new normal.” We don't see how the story ends; how sexual violence changes the course of a person's life and those who love them forevermore. As the author of the seminal work, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape and Resistance—A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power*, which inspired the making of this film, Danielle McGuire states, “Sexual violence terrorizes people—not just the victims.”

***If one member suffers,  
all suffer together with it.  
(1 Corinthians 12:26a)***

Clergy are often the first points of contact for victim-survivors of sexual violence. But 74% of faith leaders surveyed grossly underestimate the level of sexual violence their congregants had endured.<sup>3</sup> According to the CDC, one in three women in the US has experienced sexual or gender-based violence in her lifetime; and though male survivors are fewer, men are not immune.<sup>4</sup> Yet rape remains one of the most underreported crimes in our country. If pastors are relatively unaware of the rampancy of sexual violence in our own congregations, how are we expected to preach about it, especially in a culture that does not deem it appropriate or socially acceptable to discuss?

Even the Bible is not silent about rape. Let us name Dinah (Genesis 34), the Unnamed Concubine (Judges 19-21) and Tamar (2 Samuel 13). No, the Bible is not silent about rape. But our lectionary is. The biblical stories of rape were left out of our liturgical calendar and cycles, leaving out all those women (and men) who are a part of our communities of faith desperate to hear a word—any word—acknowledging their experience and breaking the silence and stigma surrounding it. Nonetheless, most of us are still left wondering how in the

world one might preach on a subject so taboo that even the Revised Common Lectionary avoids it?

Moreover, scripture has also been misused. While biblical passages that directly reference rape and sexual violence are frequently ignored, others have been misinterpreted to condone, justify or perpetuate sexual violence. The preacher has the power to reinterpret and reclaim misused verses, raise awareness and challenge their communities to revisit their own assumptions and responsibilities as people of faith who do not condone violence, racism, sexism or any other form of human injustice.

If Recy Taylor were sitting in our pews, dancing in our aisles as she was in the sanctity of her church that night of September 3, 1944, or participating in our Bible study, what would we say to her? How would we preach to a God-fearing, church-going, 24-year old Black girl from Abbeville, Alabama who had just been brutally gang raped? Would we have a word of comfort? Would we have good news to share?

***“What good is love  
that no one shares?”***

How do we begin to craft a sermon worthy of Recy Taylor?

By deciding to do so. By committing to preach about sexual violence—as uncomfortable as it may feel. And by preparing to do so with a hyper-sensitivity to survivors and a firm call to accountability for perpetrators. An all too common and heinous part of the human experience, rape and sexual violence must be named from the pulpit. You as preacher have the power to break the silence. Take it with the utmost seriousness. Practice preaching it. While the old adage “practice makes perfect” may not apply here, practice does make it easier. Consider preaching on sexual violence at *least* annually. The month of April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month and October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month—both appropriate times to speak to our contemporary rape culture, sexual and gender-based violence.

### ***September 3***

Or perhaps you decide to preach about *The Rape of Recy Taylor* on September 3 (or the closest Sunday to that date), the date in 1944 when, on her way home from church, Recy was abducted and gang raped. Or you choose to preach on the film on April 21, the date when, 67 years later, the Alabama State Legislature issued Recy Taylor an official apology in 2011.

## ***April 21 ~ Recy Taylor Day***

As you begin your sermon, consider dedicating it to “the countless women whose voices have not been heard,” as the film does. Preach on one of the little known “texts of terror” as biblical scholar Phyllis Trible named her seminal work by the same name.<sup>5</sup> “In theological/ethical gender studies, such texts are used to break the conspiracy or chain of silence that often exists around issues of sexual violence in a community,” Fulata Mbanjo-Moyo of the World Council of Churches explains. “Study of [a] seldom-used text is employed as a means of raising awareness for transformation. It is a tool that helps open up the process to discuss issues which are important in church and society.”<sup>6</sup>

The more you preach about an otherwise stigmatized subject, the more normalized it becomes. Sharon Ellis Davis is an African-American pastor, former police officer and a survivor who “feels that the lack of consciousness [of the church] grew from the problematic messages about women coming from the pulpit. For example, she points out the Biblical stories that are emphasized, such as the false rape accusation of Joseph, and the ones that are largely ignored, such as the actual rapes of Dinah and Tamar as well as David’s coercion of Bathsheba.”<sup>7</sup>

Faith leaders have an ethical, moral and spiritual obligation to confront sexual and gender-based violence in all its forms, and by reinterpreting, reframing and reclaiming scripture related to the subject. This may be a sermon guide, but the preacher’s commitment to preaching the oft-considered unpreachable must reach far beyond the pulpit. Tradition, sacred texts, doctrines, teachings and cultural values are either a roadblock or a resource to ending sexual violence. The role of the preacher, thus, cannot be underestimated. This role includes naming the unmentionable sins, offering spiritual and pastoral care, making the appropriate professional referrals, and promoting healing and justice—including an expectation of accountability for the perpetrator instead of the “cheap grace” usually offered them. Offering a pastoral word and care, resist the temptation to jump too quickly to concepts of grace and forgiveness for perpetrators.

***“They played in her body.”***  
***~ Alma Daniels***

Your primary focus and audience is the survivor—Recy Taylor and all Recy Taylors—as the victim, the survivor, the one wronged, violated and brutalized, the one whose body was deemed nothing more than a playground, the ones whose Black, female body was objectified, dehumanized, ravaged, mutilated and traumatized. It is because of her and for her that you preach—first and foremost—doing so with thoughtfulness, compassion, and extraordinary sensitivity, mindful that any survivors in your midst will most likely be triggered. Keep in mind that *if you speak about sexual violence, you will hear about it.*

***If you speak about it, you will hear about it.***

To that end, as you prepare a sermon on this highly sensitive subject, invite staff from your local domestic or sexual violence services agency to be present should survivors in the congregation need professional care after hearing the sermon. Research who your local service provider and advocates are. While faith leaders can provide essential pastoral, spiritual and emotional support, crisis counselors and advocates are specially trained to walk a victim through the process of accessing important services, as necessary. This may include medical care, contacting law enforcement, creating a safety or escape plan or seeking professional counseling.

Joining forces with professionals ensures that a victim’s spiritual, physical and emotional needs are being met in a coordinated way. You may also want to have brochures or cards ready to refer survivors to appropriate services and hotline numbers. Place posters on the back of your congregation’s bathroom stalls with this information. (Refer to the list of resources at the end of this guide).

We preach for the survivors.

We preach for Recy Taylor.

For all the Recy Taylors of this world.

Mindful that our sermon, as Danielle McGuire so pointedly states, is in support of “Black women fighting for the right to move through the world unmolested.”

And so we begin... by naming the unnameable, by mentioning the unmentionable, and by speaking out to break the deafening silence surrounding rape and sexual violence. We begin by reminding the victim-survivor that the Spirit of God that dwells within her; and we proclaim that she is holy, for God’s temple is holy, and she *is* that very temple.

To be reminded of her sacredness—the holiness of her body, her spirit, and her life—that is where the preacher begins *and* ends.



***Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.  
(1 Corinthians 3:16-17)***

To preach about *The Rape of Recy Taylor* means we not only lift up a life-giving word to victims and survivors of sexual assault—most often girls and women—but we also preach about racism and white supremacy. We must.

How are we to preach about the rape of a young Black woman in the racially segregated South when the seven young men who did it may not have seen anything wrong in doing so? Dr. Crystal Feimster asserts that, “It is the sort of rite of passage where young southern White boys hunted for a young Black girl. Their behavior was that Black women would be happy to sleep with a White man. Under slavery there was no way that a Black woman could not consent. These young men believed that Recy Taylor would be a consenting partner, and if she wasn't, that they would force that consent with a gun to her head.”

***“They did not see her.”  
~ Crystal Feimster***

One of the most critical preaching tasks, thus, is to see her. To unblindfold her. To see Recy. To hear her. To believe her. To protect her. To fight for her. To free her. To honor her.

***“And if my life is like the dust  
Ooh, that hides the glow of a rose  
What good am I?”***

And then to name, confront and denounce misogyny and male dominance and whiteness and white supremacy. As Recy Taylor's brother, Robert Corbitt, said, “the Black woman's body did not belong to her.” The Black woman's body still does not belong to her.

Recy's story has never been more relevant; it is about what happened in the deep south in the 1940s and it is about the sexual violence that happens to 60% of African-American females before the age of 18 in our day.<sup>8</sup> “African-American women are raped at a higher rate than White women, and are less likely to report it. We have suffered in silence far too long,” writes Lori Robinson her important book, *I Will Survive*.<sup>9</sup>

Which is why Recy Taylor was such a remarkable woman and her story so worthy of telling. The Civil Rights Movement can be traced back to Recy's story. Before the film even begins, we are confronted by a quote that frames the issue: "The numbers of Black women raped by White men in our country's past is staggering. Afraid for their lives, just a courageous few spoke up." At the tender age of 24, Recy spoke truth to power. She told the truth—the truth of what happened on her way home from church the evening of September 3, 1944.

***"I couldn't help but tell the truth about what they done to me."  
~ Recy Taylor***

In the Jim Crow era of the South, a young Black woman finds it within herself to speak out and tell her truth and to fight the unfathomable injustice done to her.

***"She told everything she could tell - everything."  
~Robert Corbitt***

It's extremely important to understand that rape is not about sex. It's about violence, power and control. The definition from Faith Trust Institute: "Sexual violence is not about sex—it is about violence that misuses sex and sexuality to exert power over others. The injuries may be psychological or physical, usually both."<sup>10</sup>

When the filmmaker, Nancy Buirski, was interviewed about her work, she clearly understood this. "The power dynamic in rape when we're talking about Black women and White men, it is as much against the Black men as it is against the women. It's a method of putting Black men in their place because there was nothing Black men could do about this. They couldn't protect their women or they would probably be as much at risk as the women who dared to speak up, which is why so many didn't. They were at genuine risk of being assaulted again or losing their lives."<sup>11</sup>

[\*The Rape of Recy Taylor\*](#) highlights the complex power dynamics at the intersection of race, white supremacy, and gender. "Planting a flag firmly at the intersection of patriarchy, sexism and white supremacy, *The Rape of Recy Taylor* is a documentary of multiple layers and marvelous gumption," writes Jeannette Catsoulis in her film review.<sup>12</sup> We can't talk about race without talking about gender. We certainly can't talk about power without talking about whiteness and white supremacy. We can't talk about power without talking about sexism and gender equality. Oppressive structures and systems simply cannot be examined separately—they must be understood as the interconnected realities they are. Preaching on this film opens up a myriad of nities to highlight

opportunities to highlight the intersectional nature of human behavior and inequality as well as systemic injustice and oppression.

Recy's nephew, James Johnson II, puts it this way: "By having the power to have sex with Black women when they wanted to, they were in control." He goes on to explain, "Intimidation was one thing that was used to keep Black men under control and then have access to Black women. If a Black man even dreamed about a White woman he better not even tell it—but here it is the White males could go, and come into your house, or come by and blow the horn, and your woman go out to the car and get in and leave with him and come back an hour or two later and you knew the Black men knew what was happening but for survival purposes [silence] was the attitude that was prevalent throughout the South."

With an impish grin on his face, local Alabama historian Larry Smith divulged this about the power dynamic between White men and Black women: "Some slave owners felt they could have their will with a female slave since they owned the slave, and I'm sure in some instances it was a consensual type of affair. But in those days, an old saying used to be in these parts 'that every White man had another woman at every crossroads—White and Black.' "

Consider incorporating both statements into your sermon or showing those clips from the film.

***For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.  
(Galatians 3:26-29)***

Because what this film demands of us all is honesty. Pure honesty and truth-telling—whether in the form of the telling of your own story or courageously speaking out not only about sexual assault and misogyny and the war on women's bodies but also against white supremacy and the sins of whiteness.

As the preacher, be clear about your own racial, social and economic location as you prepare this sermon. Be acutely aware of the perspective from which you are preaching, and to whom you are preaching. Speak truth to power, as Recy did, and be ready to give up what womanist theologian Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas calls “any entitlement to privilege”—and state that from the pulpit. And then do it. Live it. Because what this film demands of us all is honesty. Pure honesty and truth-telling—whether in the form of the telling of your own story or courageously speaking out not only about sexual assault and misogyny and the war on women’s bodies but also against white supremacy and the sins of whiteness.

The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don’t, the parts we see and the parts we don’t. If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance. (1 Corinthians 12:26, from *The Message*)

When one part flourishes, we all flourish. There is good news here.

We can overcome. Jesus understands our pain; He is a co-sufferer. But He is also a healer. And most importantly, Jesus Christ is a liberator. His Resurrection means that we, too, no matter what we have endured, can rise again.

Rise, Recy, RISE.

Rise, Recy, RISE.

## Sermon Starter

### ***Recy Taylor: The Persistent Woman and Many Unjust Judges***

Luke 18:1-8, NRSV

*Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'" And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"*

We have here a parable about the power of persistence and the tenaciousness of one seeking justice. The story is so clear, in fact, that we would simply be misreading it if we were not impressed by the persistence of the widow in literally wearing out the unjust judge. Her resolve is remarkable. Just like Recy Taylor's.

The woman in this parable didn't give the unjust judge a break, wearing him down and demanding she be heard. A widow on the farthest margins of her culture, she knew that if she didn't speak up for herself, no one else would.

Just like Recy Taylor.

We also hear anew Jesus' instructions to "pray always and not lose heart" in this text. So, too, is this story about prayer. The kind of fervent praying that takes courage. But, if your experience reflects most, prayer can feel slow at times, ineffective, even. How many times must we pray for certain things in our lives that we desperately yearn for? How many times have we prayed for the hungry to be fed? Our children to be safe in their own schools? Women to no longer be treated as objects but rather as the human beings God created them to be? How often must Recy and her family prayed for the right to her bodily space, for safety, for resolution and for justice to be done? How many times? Prayer is not an easy fix; it's not magic. Prayer is persistence. Persistence is power.

Recy Taylor's persistence was indeed her power. She told the truth about what happened to her that night walking home from church. "She told everything," her brother said.

She identified her seven attackers—young White men—and then took them to court. But the case was dismissed. Enter Rosa Parks—yes, *that* Rosa Parks—sent from the NAACP to investigate the case. Long before she refused to give up her seat on that bus in Montgomery, Rosa Parks worked as an activist for Black women who had been sexually assaulted. She tirelessly fought for Recy Taylor. She pushed and pushed to get equal access to the court.

“Grant me justice,” she pleaded. And pleaded. And pleaded.

When she showed up in Abbeville, everyone knew who she was. She came to the Taylor home and in no less than fifteen minutes the sheriff, Lewey Corbitt, came by. He busted into the house and told Rosa to get out.

She left.

Two weeks later, Rosa came back.

“Grant me justice,” she pleaded. And pleaded. And pleaded.

This time, the sheriff came again, took Rosa by the arm and pulled her out of the house and onto the porch.

Rosa left but she was not intimidated. It would not have been unusual to be physically thrown out of someone’s house. Rosa would expect a White sheriff to manhandle her. But for Lewey Corbitt to come in and throw her out of the house and onto the steps implies that Rosa wasn’t giving in easily; she resisted the sheriff’s abuse. Rosa demonstrates the persistence of resistance.

As Danielle McGuire, author of the book that inspired the film stated, “We can link this up to her refusal to give up her seat on the bus. That there is a claim she is making and it’s a bodily claim. To be able to own a space, whether that’s Recy’s kitchen table or the seat on the bus. That she wants and believes that she has right to be in that space.”

“Grant me justice,” she pleaded. And pleaded. And pleaded.

Danielle McGuire goes onto say, “Rosa Parks is operating from a place where rape is a crime. The rape of a Black woman is legally a crime. [Recy] gets a hearing but not a fair hearing. It’s going through the motions. When that hearing is over, we don’t get justice for Recy.”

Like the widow in Luke’s parable, once again we hear the resounding chorus, “Grant me justice,” she pleaded.

Rosa Parks was willing to risk her life to gain justice for Recy Taylor. She was willing to risk arrest and imprisonment. And Black women knew that when they’re arrested and thrown in jail, anything could happen. Black women still know this.



Remember Sandra Bland, a 28-year-old African-American woman from Texas. For failure to signal that she was changing lanes, she was pulled over by a police officer and harrassed. Over and over. Until eventually she was put in jail. [\[You may want to show this video.\]](#)

Three days later, she was found dead in her jail cell. It was declared a suicide. [\[You may want to show this video.\]](#)

“Grant me justice,” she pleaded. And pleaded. And pleaded.

But no one heard Sandra Bland. No one heard her.

As in Recy Taylor’s case, “This is about us being able to hear. And the stories that people are willing to hear, and they have the courage to tell. Recy is part of a longer tradition of Black women saying “this is not right!”—not only do we deserve protection, but we deserve justice,” adds Dr. Crystal Feimster.

Sandra Bland needed a Rosa Parks. Someone who would be in it for the long haul, an advocate, an activist, an ally. A persistent woman fiercely committed to the protection of Black womanhood. A persistent, praying woman dedicated to fighting for the right of Black women to move through the world unabused.

The invitation of Jesus in this story of the persistent widow and the unjust judge is to “pray always and not lose heart.” It’s the constancy of prayer, the persistence over the long haul, and it’s the waiting, not getting disheartened, that Jesus invites us to. Tired of being persecuted by the Roman Empire, people were starting to lose hope that Jesus would ever come again. Written a generation or so after Jesus’ death and resurrection, his followers were holding out for his return. So they were getting a bit antsy. Luke reminded them to not get discouraged, to keep the faith—to not lose heart.

Which leads us to this wonder woman of a widow who never lost heart. Who was she? Why was she willing to lift her voice so tirelessly, even to a judge who clearly did not have any concern for her?

“Grant me justice,” she pleaded. And pleaded. And pleaded.

How might we cultivate such persistence?

The cries of the widow and the way she demanded the unjust judge hear her teaches us much about our own ability to commit to the lifelong work of pursuing the good news of justice and reconciliation that is at the heart of Jesus’ gospel. And yet this story is not about the unjust judge repenting or coming to his senses.

It's about *God's ability* to work in the midst of such unresponsiveness and irresponsibility; it's about the widow's faith and the capacity of God to hear her and overturn the unjust system she was trapped inside. Above all, this story lifts up the partnership of the faithful with God. It's about waiting not for God to hear your prayer, but knowing that God is already there, waiting with you. Just like God waited with Recy Taylor. She was never alone. God heard her.

"I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming," said the judge. "And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night?'"

The character of the widow is the faithful one who may not have any social, economic or political power but who has the courage to empower herself to demand justice. The Hebrew word for widow is "one unable to speak" or "silent one" and in Greek it means "forsaken" or "left alone." Once again Jesus uses a figure from the margins of his culture to teach us, his followers, a lesson. Luke's parable is clear about where Jesus stands—always on the side of the silent, the silenced or the forsaken and left alone. Always and without exception Jesus stands with the marginalized and the abused.

And this is exactly why we stand with women on the margins, with Black and Brown women, with all girls and women—with the sexual assault victim, the rape survivor, the one whose body was mutilated, brutalized and traumatized—never to be the same again. They are the "widows" of our time. So let us stand with all those who have been silenced in our society and yet somehow find the strength to truth-tell, to admit #MeToo, and who speak up in persistent protest of injustice. Let us stand with the abused—the Recy Taylors of this world. Just as Jesus would. Our mission is to paralyze resistance with persistence. Our standing with the marginalized is our constant call and response, "Grant me justice," she pleaded, and pleaded—until we achieve justice.

Our unwillingness to remain silent in the face of injustice is our ethic of persistence. And we can count on this good news, Church: God's piercing persistent power, through the movement of the mighty Holy Spirit, moves even those unjust judges who do not fear God nor respect people. It may have taken 67 years, but on April 21, 2011, the Alabama State Legislature issued an official apology to Recy Taylor. Continually dismissed, she continued to tell her story. That persistence, along with the persistence of the NAACP, Rosa Parks, and the Black press, is what makes Recy's story so significant. She is the mother of a long history of Black women speaking out against sexual violence and the right to bodily space.

It was this sacred and sustaining power that transformed an unprotected, unprivileged, dispossessed woman into a person of purpose, perseverance and power. Some might even say she is a foremother of the #MeToo movement and a catalyst for the entire Civil Rights Movement. That's the power of telling our story.

And that power is available to all of us.

Will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night?

***“Oh, this bitter earth  
Yes, can it be so cold?  
Today you're young  
Too soon you're old  
But while a voice  
Within me cries  
I'm sure someone  
May answer my call  
And this bitter earth, ooh  
May not, oh be so bitter after all.”***

## Resources and Hotlines

National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-4673

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233

[Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network](#)

[National Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#)

[National Sexual Violence Resource Center](#)

[National Resource Center on Domestic Violence](#)

[Male Survivor: Overcoming Sexual Victimization of Boys and Men](#)

[FaithTrust Institute](#) for clergy and lay leader training on specific issues of abuse, domestic and sexual violence, healthy boundaries and responding to misconduct.

## Endnotes

1. [Dinah Washington, "This Bitter Earth," YouTube](#)
2. ["Untested Rape Kits Hid 817 Serial Predators in Detroit", Newsweek, December 19, 2017.](#)
3. "Broken Silence: A Call for Churches to Speak Out" was commissioned by IMA World Health and Sojourners on behalf of the We Will Speak Out U.S. coalition in 2014. The report was based on a LifeWay Research survey conducted among 1,000 Protestant pastors.
4. ["Preventing Sexual Violence", US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, March 12, 2019.](#)
5. Tribble, Phyllis, *Texts of Terror*. Fortress Press, 1984.
6. ["The Rape of Tamar: Peace in the Community, A Bible Study on 2 Samuel 13:1-22," Overcoming Violence](#)
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