

## THE LINE FAQ

### **Why did you make the documentary film THE LINE and create THE LINE Campaign?**

Because we wanted to start conversation, to bring to light some common rape myths and, most importantly, to get people to examine their own lives and their own behaviors. The film works to create a space where people have an opportunity to speak their minds and explore their beliefs, while not feeling alienated or silenced.

### **Keep in mind, no matter how open or free-form the dialogue is, there are some points that Nancy always addresses:**

- Responsibility always rests on the person initiating sexual conduct, at any stage.
- The conversation is not about women «saying no better, or more loudly»; this is about asking before doing and saying YES, because sex should be an enthusiastic activity that both partners want, a lot!
- We need to collectively shift responsibility onto those that perpetrate violence, use force or coercion. Not on those on the receiving end of violence, violation, force or coercion.
- Legally what happened to Nancy is defined as rape, but explore some reasons why people don't understand that. And what might be some of the reasons that a woman would choose not to report?

### **Here are some questions that may come up, or that you may want to ask your students directly:**

#### **Was Nancy raped?**

Legally and technically, yes.

Although the legal definition of rape varies from state to state, rape is generally defined as forced or nonconsensual sexual contact. Rape and/or sexual assault is forced, manipulated, or coerced sexual contact by a stranger, friend or acquaintance. It is an act of aggression and power combined with some form of sex. A person is forced into sexual contact through verbal coercion, threats, physical restraint and/or physical violence. Consent is not given.

Moreover, forced sodomy, also called anal rape, is forced/coerced anal intercourse, usually male-to-male or male-to-female.

#### **Is Nancy at all responsible for what happened to her?**

Responsibility always rests on the person initiating sexual conduct, at any stage. The conversation is not about women "saying no better, or more loudly"; this is about asking before doing and saying yes, because sex should be an enthusiastic activity that both partners want, a lot! We need to collectively shift responsibility on those that perpetrate violence, use force or coercion, not on those on the receiving end of violence, violation, force or coercion.

#### **Common questions/comments/doubts:**

But alcohol was involved?

But she was in his bed?

Why didn't she fight?

Why didn't she just «get up and leave»?

What if he thought the screams were screams of pleasure?

Again, this is victim-blaming, which is very common in our society.

According to the Rape Crisis Online Encyclopedia: "Victim blaming" is holding the victim of a crime to be in whole or in part responsible for what has happened to them. In the context of rape, this concept refers to popular attitudes that certain victim behaviours (such as flirting or wearing sexually-provocative clothing) may encourage rape. In extreme cases, victims are said to have "asked for it", simply by not behaving demurely. In most Western countries, the defense of provocation is not accepted as a mitigation for rape, although questions about the victim's clothing and behaviour is present in almost all rape trials.

From the NYC Alliance Against Sexual Assault: It is important that the victim of sexual assault understand that no matter where they were, the time of day or night assaulted, what they were wearing, or what they said or did, if they did not want the sexual contact, then the assault was in no way their fault. Persons who commit sexual assault do so out of a need to control, dominate, abuse and humiliate. Sexual assault is the articulation of aggression through sex, and has little to do with passion, lust, desire or sexual arousal.

Thus, whether someone is drunk or sober is irrelevant. While it may make it more difficult to prosecute in a court room, it does not change what actually happened or make it less of a violation. The perpetrator is always the one responsible for the rape, and he/she is the only one who can fully prevent it. It is always their fault. For this reason, it is more appropriate to call Nancy, along with anyone else who has been raped, a survivor.

**But the lawyer, Karen Smolar said that she wouldn't go to the police. And the other lawyer, Brett Sokolow (wearing yellow), said that Nancy is not "a perfect victim".**

Both of those people serve to illustrate how hard it is to prove a case, and just what kind of hurdles we place in front of victims when they come forward.

**Why do you think a woman would choose not to report a rape or sexual assault?**

Fear; embarrassment; wanting to forget it ever happened; it was a friend/family member and afraid to report or worried nobody would believe them; little evidence so afraid nobody would believe them; already suffered enough - afraid of the (lack of) reaction from an «unsympathetic society»

**Can you think of who in our society is deserving of our sympathy, ie. who is the "perfect victim"?**

Generally these women tend to be "good girls", or that stereotype reflected in the media: white women, married women, pretty women, Christian women, etc.

**Why would somebody with Nancy's kind of story (the most typical, 80% acquaintance rape, most common on college campuses) seek criminal justice?**

To prevent it from happening to somebody else; may feel a sense of empowerment; may help in the healing process; may help regain a feeling of control

From Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN): While there's no way to change what happened to you, you can seek justice while helping to stop it from happening to someone else. Reporting to the police is the key to preventing sexual assault: Every time we lock up a rapist, we're preventing him or her from committing another attack. It's the most effective tool that exists to prevent future rapes. In the end, though, whether or not to report is your decision to make.

Also, contact Students Active for Ending Rape (SAFER) to discuss ways to bring about creating change on your campus: [safercampus.org](http://safercampus.org).

**Filming/technical questions taken from an interview with Nancy:**

**How long did the film take?**

The film took 5 years. I really count the beginning of my commitment to make a film about my experience, when I confronted my perpetrator, which was January 2004.

**How did you get access to the Bunny Ranch? I imagine that's a really difficult place to bring a camera...**

It took a lot of planning and letter writing, only HBO really has official access to the Bunny Ranch. Through a series of lucky connections, I met the state archivist of Nevada, who had done a lot of work advocating for women working in the brothels. Through his good work, and history with the state, I was able to get a foot in

the door. I convinced them that I really wanted to show how the women working at the brothel were agents of their own lives and destinies, and they are not victims. I wanted to give them a chance to speak their minds on camera.

**Have they seen the film?**

Yes, Madame Suzette and Alexis Fire were both very moved.

**How'd you get the Spring Break footage?**

I first went to Daytona Beach (probably inspired by Byron Hurt's *Beyond Beats & Rhymes*), but it was not happening at all, just a bunch of trucks on the beach. Also, as a woman, I was having a hard time disarming young men. Incidentally, my friend a soundman, Roy Marasigen, happened to be in Panama City with a camera. He is a party animal and travels the world looking for parties. He was the perfect shooter because he manages to inhabit both worlds, that of a frat boy drinking beers and the other as anthropologist recording. He was the one who got them to talk.

**Tell us about the Hidden Camera/private detective segment...**

I spent six months researching the best way to approach the man I called "the perpetrator." I researched restorative justice principles and tactics, one of which is a victim and offender having a mediated conversation. Once I realized I had to meet with him, nothing could stop me.

I went to the Lexington Avenue Spy Shop in NYC and bought equipment – a tiny button-size camera, a microphone the size of a matchstick and a huge battery pack. I didn't really think through how I was going to wire the mic, the purse and all that stuff; and I was nervous that the Israeli airport security would think it's some sort of bomb. I got to Israel and realized that I didn't have the capacity to pull it off by myself, and a friend connected me to a private detective who formerly worked for the Secret Service. He sewed a camera replacing a button on my vest, wired and tucked the receiver in the base of my pants and also had a wireless receiver with him where he was recording.

Restorative Justice would recommend having a third party there to witness and mediate, but I was concerned that he wouldn't agree to meet with the two of us. I went alone and brought the camera as my witness. Knowing it was there made me feel safer.

At first I was really upset because the image was crackly and breaking up, but it actually added to the atmosphere and the material.

**Personal questions taken from an interview with Nancy:**

**Did you have any qualms about making such a personal piece as you were filming?**

I did. I found it really challenging but also ultimately very productive to have my experience of a sexual assault, as someone who is not a "perfect victim", questioned over and over again. It underscored the need for the film on a societal level. On a personal level, I was fearful of sharing it with my family, and embarrassed to lay bare the details of my sex life, my rape, my past. What continued to inspire me was the flood of personal stories that audience members share with me and online, and how I can see that speaking out encourages others to share, and lose their shame and inhibitions and actively want to make change. The stories and thank-yous make the less pleasant experiences completely worth it.

**How do you feel about making a film about consent but filming your perpetrator without consent?**

I thought about if that was a fair thing to do, and I even brought it up with a rabbi. Basically, I made pains to disguise his identity because I'm not trying to demonize him or ruin his life, so I do feel like I covered my bases.

**Has the perpetrator seen the film, or do you have plans to send it to him?**

Not to my knowledge. If it were broadcast in Israel, I would probably let him know. I have no intention of sending it to him.

**Further questions to explore:**

- Why do you think Nancy chose not to use the word rape right away in the film? (Creates a polarizing dialogue, but she does use it.)
- Why do we in society blame the victim?
- Dissect this comment: *"75% of the bitches out here are using alcohol as an excuse to fuck, 25% are just whores"* – how do young people hide behind alcohol to justify their behavior, or shame young women for engaging in sex?
- What might be some of the factors that make us feel shame about sex and our bodies?