



## THE LINE

Sex. Consent. Power. Pleasure.

a documentary film by Nancy Schwartzman

[www.wheriseyourline.org](http://www.wheriseyourline.org)

## PRESS MENTIONS (continued)



**This Week In Tabloids: Brad Wanders L.A. Looking For Jen; Mariah Buys Cinderella Crib**



**The Line: When Rape Victims Aren't "Perfect"**  
#filmforthought  
#rape



**Elle: Rihanna's Waist Gets Whittled Via Photoshop**  
#photoshopofhorrors  
#maghag



**Meet "Souleye," The Guy Alanis Morissette Married** #soulmates  
#alanismorissettesh



**Gaga's New Video Makes Riot Gear And Latex Boring**  
#justdance  
#ladygagaalejandrov



**"Teenom" Girls Convince Us That The Kids Are All Right** #kidstoday  
#teenphenoms



FAQ. Include # before tag:  
#tips, #snapjudgment, #gr

## The Line: When Rape Victims Aren't "Perfect"

Published by Anna North

A new documentary and the alleged rape of a homeless woman in New York both illustrate what happens when rape victims aren't "perfect".

In the New York case, the Post reports that 18-year-old Robert Gonzales is pleading not guilty to the attempted rape of a 23-year-old homeless woman in Central Park, on the grounds that she consented – and that she was drunk. His lawyer James Layton Koenig says, *"The victim was intoxicated. Once the facts are laid out, nothing forcible will be proven."* The consent argument seems pretty specious given that Gonzales is accused of robbing the victim after he sodomized and attempted to rape her, but what's really bizarre is the fact that Gonzales's legal team is using drunkenness as an excuse. New York sex crime law turns out to be a little complicated on the issue of intoxication and consent – according to the New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault, having sex with an intoxicated person is only classified as rape if that person is actually unconscious, or mentally incapacitated by alcohol or drugs "given to them without their consent." So having sex with a drunk person isn't always a crime in New York, but raping one still is, and there's really no reason Gonzales's alleged victim's intoxication should work in his favor. Except that defense lawyers are always trying to discredit rape victims – and Koenig may be gambling that a jury will care less about a woman who was homeless and drunk than about someone who behaved the «right» way.

This constant judgment of rape victims' behavior is front-and-center in *The Line*, a 24-minute documentary directed by Nancy Schwartzman. The film chronicles Schwartzman's quest to make sense of her rape: she went home with a man she knew from work, and consented to vaginal intercourse with him, but then he forcibly anally penetrated her and didn't stop when she screamed. Her friends questioned whether she'd really been raped (one said, *"just because it hurts doesn't mean it was forced"*), and when she confronted

her rapist, he said, *"we did everything from our free will, our free love, our passion."* Perhaps the most telling part of the film, though, is her conversation with attorney Brett Sokolow, who specializes in sexual assault cases. Sokolow says, *"the jury system actually permits a rape-prone society,"* and explains, *"if you have done anything that places you in a position of vulnerability, that makes you something less than the 'perfect victim,' [...] you're doomed."*

Several others in the documentary – including another attorney – express distrust of the criminal justice system's handling of rape cases, but no one really has an alternative. Perhaps significantly, though, both rape victims depicted (Schwartzman's friend Netanya was also raped, by a stranger) eventually contact their attackers to explain what the men did wrong. Victims shouldn't have to do this, but their words make a powerful point – rapists themselves, not alcohol, revealing clothing, homelessness, or "bad choices" are responsible for victims' pain. As activist Don McPherson explains, *"we do nothing to talk to men about not raping, but we do talk to men about how to protect themselves, which is [...] why we place the blame on women when something happens."* The attitude that sex is something men are supposed to want and women are supposed to evade doesn't just result in victim-blaming – it also creates a monolithic view of sex that denies the experiences of people like Schwartzman (as Sokolow points out, *"consent to one form of sexual activity isn't consent to every other form"*). Part of teaching men (and women) not to rape is the lesson that sex should be cooperative and communicative, not something, as McPherson says, that *"we do to the Other."* The Line also has a Tumblr where volunteers respond to the question, *"where is your line?"* The most recent entry:

*Thanks for asking! I will do what WE decide (and it will be hotter because we agree)*