



## THE LINE

Sex. Consent. Power. Pleasure.

a documentary film by Nancy Schwartzman

[whereisyourline.org](http://whereisyourline.org)

### PRESS MENTIONS (continued)

**SEXGENDERBODY.COM** April 8 2010



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### Interview: Nancy Schwartzman, Director of "The Line"

**Have you ever been coerced into sex with someone? Have you ever coerced someone for sex?**

**If so, you may have had your line crossed or crossed someone else's.**

For those unaware of the film, "The Line" is about a woman (in this case, the filmmaker herself) who is raped and her efforts to confront her attacker. The film also examines our cultural prejudices against rapists and those who are raped.

The expectations and judgments we place on others and ultimately ourselves are examined and questioned as Nancy views the impact of cultural projections arising from gender, power, language and identity.

Running through all this is the ideas of consent and communication. Where, when, what & how a person speaks to indicate their line of consent/no consent and this place is "The Line" that the film addresses.

We all know what we are comfortable with and have some idea of what we'll experiment with and we probably know the things we're not comfortable with. These things can alter over time, but the issue in this film is when a person feels like saying "No", do they have the language and the ability to say so?

Social stereotypes may inform a person that they don't have the right to say no. Or, they may feel that they "owe" compliance to someone because they said "yes" before or some other reason. Many of us will have different answers to the same situation at different points in our lives. But, for many people their line gets crossed and they are left with no idea of what happened or how to deal with it.

This film is a great tool for individuals of any sex, gender, age or class to view as a means to understanding their participation in the rape elements of our shared cultures. I recommend it highly.

The target audience is people wishing to understand boundaries and consent. It is also being applied as a tool for educators, sex educators, activists and organizations or people working with gender based violence.

Presentations of the film can be made to any particular group or groups in accordance with their particular wants or usage for this film. Email questions to [thelinemove@gmail.com](mailto:thelinemove@gmail.com) if you would like to arrange a showing. The Line is on facebook and twitter. If you would simply like to know where it is already scheduled for public viewing, you can find screenings listed here.

Recently, I interviewed Nancy Schwartzman, who directed the film. They are halfway through the first year of this project. They have launched a website, [whereisyourline.org](http://whereisyourline.org) which holds information about the film plus a blog for users/readers to share their own images and stories about their lines in their lives.

People have submitted some astonishing, personal and touching statements from their own lives, so I do recommend reading that section of the website.

Next year, The Line Campaign will focus on bringing this conversation to specific groups including, college students –especially orientation programs, Jewish & queer communities and finding applications that work for putting conversations of consent in terms to empower children.

Beyond The Line, Nancy is thinking to make another film. Though no specific project exists, she stated that she's looking into the question of what we can be and create in the conversations of intimacy, relatedness and where we can go as a society. She is curious about what kind of sexuality we can create. Nancy also talked about her passion for amplifying the voices of young people.

I asked Nancy a few questions about herself, the film and life within the existence of The Line Campaign.

**SexGenderBody: How do you define yourself, in terms of sex, gender & body?**

**NancySchwartzman:** I am a female, mostly hetero femme-y kind of gal.

**Who are you now, that you were not before your line was crossed? Who were you then, that you are no longer?**

**NS:** The question of before was huge for me when I first set out to make a film about what happened. It ate me up, what did I lose? What part of me was no longer there? I knew for sure that I didn't lose my "innocence", he was not my first time, nor was he my last. But in some ways a sense of what is right or how things should be was completely shattered. Before, how things "should be" are that when you're fooling around, in bed with someone, giving and receiving pleasure, you don't take more than is given, take more without asking, take and violate because you can. I was so unsuspecting, I wasn't resisting sex, we were both into it, so for almost all of the night, I was consenting. Until he flipped the script and shattered my notion of a sexual contract.

**So...what is "the line"?**

**NS:** The line is what you want, it is your limit, it is your boundary. The line is something you navigate as you change your mind, get more turned on. I love showing the film and then asking people "where is your line"? and hearing the amazing responses, like: "It changes. Please ask. Please listen", or "Undefined, but not unclear"

**You could have made a film about "the line" without including your own life. What did you see as possible in choosing to make the film with your own experience as part of the story that was not available otherwise?**

**NS:** Working with yourself as a subject, I had access to the innerworld of my



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THERE IS NO "SHOULD"

character – without having to film all the time or put my character under surveillance! That's kind of a technical response – I felt most comfortable taking risks with my own story, less guilt or fear about asking someone to reveal “too much”. I was happy to push myself, to out myself and to be as honest with the audience as needed, and in the process, come to terms with my own guilt, limits, shame and vulnerability as it relates to this part of my life.

**Looking now at the completed film and the process that it took to get here; can you think of something you expected to happen but which did not? Conversely, can you think of something that did happen which was unexpected?**

**NS:** I expected to get hated on much more than what has happened. I thought I would be blamed for my own rape, or slut-shamed for my sexual behavior, the way it happened when I first developed this story as a film. This is probably a result of two things: not having a super-huge mainstream broadcast (on MTV, for instance) or a testament to how the film is crafted.

I never expected to fall in love and find the man of my dreams while shooting this film! In a brothel no less! My mother was harboring the fear that by being so vocal with my rape that I'd be “tainted”, in other words, no one would want me... so I never expected to fall in love with my cameraman while telling this story. I revealed myself to him through this experience and we consummated our attraction at the Bunny Ranch while shooting.

**Your film deals with the point where an individual's sovereignty or agency is taken away, in the form of rape. The line is between two people: the one saying 'no' and the other one raping. But the framework for what is acceptable is dictated by agreement in society / culture where the two people exist. For example, some cultures think men raping women is acceptable or justifiable. How is society to be held to account for creating and sustaining a rape culture?**

**NS:** Great question, and one I'd like to pose loudly to the US Government who refuses to sign CEDAW the UN treaty advocating for women's rights as fundamental human rights – so we join the ranks of Sudan, Somalia and Iran in not signing this. The American Right Wing balks at the notion of giving women reproductive justice/choice/freedom for reasons I will never understand. Let alone allowing women sexual pleasure, agency, power and true equality.

**Who Benefits from Rape Culture?**

**NS:** Those who do not want to disrupt the status quo and want to hold onto their power – whether that be economic, sexual, religious, racial, or military power are those who benefit from a rape culture. These are men in blue suits in Congress, these are drug lords in the Congo, these are Executives at Fox News, Viacom and Hollywood, plastic surgeons on Park Avenue, men in white robes in the Vatican

**Where else does 'rape culture' exist and play out on people's lives besides physical rape?**

**NS:** In media – where women are told to be sexual, and sexy and then punished for having sex. Where Kim Pierce's “Boys Don't Cry” was threatened with an NC17 rating for showing Chloe Sevigny having an extended orgasm, but women are murdered, raped and dismembered on television.

**How does 'rape culture' negatively impact men?**

**NS:** Oh man – it tells us that men are pigs, and we should expect them to behave like animals, it robs them of their right to be sensitive, or real or confused or human. It tells us to “fear them”, instead of enjoying them, loving them, trusting them or fucking them.

**Many men have never raped anyone. For them, this film, these conversations – all of it, can be used as 'prevention' and 'awareness' in order to teach them how to stay out of rape. What do you see as the path forward for men who have crossed 'the line', who have raped? And, does your film have anything to address that?**

**NS:** I hope that my film gives men a chance to examine their behavior and evaluate their past and future experiences. Have you ever crossed the line? Why? How? How can you take steps to make sure that never happens again? Emphasizing communication – dialogue, checking in with a partner, being true to yourself, are some good ways to make sure that the line doesn't get crossed again. Are you vulnerable? Express it. Are you curious and want to try something new? Express it, instead of letting your anger/shame/judgment burn. I've had men stand up and admit that they've crossed a line – that is so powerful! Be honest with yourself. Examine your motivations and your behavior. What kind of person to you want to be? What kind of sex do you want to have?

**What core statement, question or belief about 'the line', do you think is important for women and girls?**

**NS:** I'm always wary of saying “make sure you communicate what you want” because that sounds again like telling the victim how not to be victimized. First and foremost – know yourself. Know and explore your wants and desires sexually. Know that you can ask for what you want. Expect that your partner will experiment with you – and not punish or shame you for asking. If he does – move on, you'll find someone who won't. You have the right to your own pleasure, your own desire, and your own fulfillment. Go and seek it. You will grow from that exploration. Keep asking questions. Keep exploring. Raise the bar, expect a lot from your partners. You deserve it.

**How can healthy couples address, identify and embrace 'the line' in their lives?**

**NS:** Talk! Ask! Explore! Be real. Voice your desires, your fears, your vulnerability, and your secrets. Be flexible, expect change and keep checking in. It is powerful and deep.

Read more: <http://sexgenderbody.com/content/interview-nancy-schwartzman-director-line#ixzzOzjOWcLzf>