

# "Sentencing the Victim"



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

SENTENCING THE VICTIM is a documentary film which portrays a deeply moving account of a young woman's struggle to take charge of her life after a brutal attack — and her journey to seek justice from the courts and the parole system to hold the offenders accountable.

In 1988, 19-year-old Joanna Katz and a female friend were abducted in Charleston, South Carolina. They were taken to an abandoned project house where they were beaten, raped and tortured at gunpoint throughout the night. Despite her serious head injuries, Joanna managed to escape, contacted the police and accompanied them to rescue her friend.

Through SENTENCING THE VICTIM we get to know Joanna and her support team. Her parents describe the challenges they faced seeking to support their daughter without prior knowledge of what was needed--without the road map that would help them do and say the right things during this painful period of Joanna's life. We meet the prosecuting attorney who has been at Joanna's side on most of the 110-mile trips she makes to the parole board two to three times a year when one of the five attackers comes up for review. We meet the detective of the case who educates us about the law enforcement perspective on sexual assault and the rape crisis counselor who met Joanna at the hospital emergency room after the attack and continues to be her advocate and friend today.

While deeply disturbing, Joanna's account of the victimization opens our eyes to the bleak reality of sexual violence with insightfulness and discretion. She shares the complex feelings of self-blame, overwhelming fear and loss of will to live that she felt during the attack, and the experience of profound peace that appeared and gave her the courage to escape certain death. Her story also reveals the inconsistencies of criminal justice that unravel the process of ensuring offender accountability and leave the victim in a state of limbo.

More importantly, SENTENCING THE VICTIM is a success story. We see how Joanna's participation in the criminal justice process has been beneficial to her recovery. We hear the words of respect that her support team expresses on her behalf and realize that her self-advocacy has benefited the system by clearly communicating the needs and concerns of victims.

Using the film as a centerpiece, ITVS's Community Connections Project (CCP) and Joanna Katz have collaborated to develop the SENTENCING THE VICTIM Community Engagement and Educational Outreach Campaign, which reaches out to:

- Crime victims and survivors
- Criminal justice professionals
- Interfaith communities
- Parent/teacher associations
- Families, friends and colleagues of victims
- Hospital and mental health professionals
- Public policymakers
- College and university students and administrators

The **goals** of the outreach and education campaign are to educate participants about:

- The short and long term impact of violent crime on victims and their families.
- The ways in which participation in the criminal justice process can further traumatize victims and their families and also the benefits of their participation to their healing process.
- The sensitive treatment of victims and their families by criminal justice and allied professionals, colleagues and friends and how it can affect a victim's ability and capacity to heal in the aftermath of a violent crime.
- Recommendations to improve treatment of victims and their families by criminal justice and allied professionals, colleagues and friends.

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The SENTENCING THE VICTIM Community Engagement Campaign invites **national organizations** to participate as partners in this multi-focused effort:

**Focus 1: Public Awareness through PBS Broadcast**

Targeted community discussions and screenings, press and promotions, public television stations, complimentary community and educational resource development (discussion guide, fact sheets) and the ITVS Community Engagement Website.

**Focus 2: Public Education and Policy Development**

Conference presentations, focused briefings and forums with leaders and targeted groups.

**Focus 3: Sustainability and Long-Term Impact**

Ongoing use of video, discussion guide, facts sheets and training available by contacting <http://www.sentencingthevictim.com>

**National partner benefits:**

- Listing and web link in web and print material.
- Opportunity to inform campaign strategy and objectives.
- Access to film and accompanying materials.
- Opportunity for training and support in using resources.
- Evaluation and reporting on outcome measurements.

For more information about ITVS's Community Connections Project, go to [www.itvs.org/outreach](http://www.itvs.org/outreach) or contact [outreach@itvs.org](mailto:outreach@itvs.org).

The Independent Television Service (ITVS) brings to local, national and international audiences high-quality, content-rich programs created by a diverse body of independent producers. ITVS programs take creative risks, explore complex issues, and express points of view seldom seen on commercial or public television. ITVS programming reflects voices and visions of underrepresented communities and addresses the needs of underserved audiences, particularly minorities and children. The ITVS Community Connections Project (CCP) is a public education and outreach project that transforms timely social issue independent film and public television broadcasts into tools that educate, engage and encourage positive action.

SENTENCING THE VICTIM was produced by Liz Oakley and Joanna Katz, in association with the Independent Television Service (ITVS), with funds provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

SENTENCING THE VICTIM will be broadcast on the acclaimed PBS series *Independent Lens* March 2, 2004 (check local listings).

