



## The Invisible War Discussion Guide

Director: Kirby Dick

Year: 2012

Time: 93 min

### You might know this director from:

Outrage (2009)

This Film Is Not Yet Rated (2006)

Twist of Faith (2004)

Derrida (2002)

Sick: The Life & Death of Bob Flanagan (1997)

Private Practices: The Story of  
a Sex Surrogate (1986)

## FILM SUMMARY

In the West, we live under the pretence that a crime is punishable under the law, and that criminals are brought to justice. Rape, sexual activity carried out forcibly against the will of another, is both unlawful and punishable by law. Yet, **THE INVISIBLE WAR** shows us the flip side of this reality, unveiling a dark world where sexual assault is permitted, thrives, and even at times encouraged within the world of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Through interviews with former military personnel who were assaulted, and additional evidence from lawyers, advocates, and even the military's own rape prevention agency, **THE INVISIBLE WAR** introduces us to a brutal reality. We hear from former Air Force, Army, Navy, Coast Guard, and Marine Corps officials who were subjected to sexual assault while serving.

Those brave enough to report the physical and psychological injuries they suffered at the hands of a fellow soldier were faced with the reality that the military does not manage such accusations fairly. Victims were ignored, chastised, criticized, even dismissed without benefits while they watched their perpetrators rise within the ranks. Female military staff is charged with adultery for having been raped by a married colleague, and more than one victim claimed they saw three options: suicide, AWOL, or dealing with it. When their superiors are often guilty of the same crime that they are reporting, receiving fair and unbiased legal aid was never an option.

**THE INVISIBLE WAR** presents shocking evidence, as we view the outdated and corrupt judicial system of the military, where victims are not brought to justice. Kirby Dick and his team attempt to pry open the steel door of the military's culture of rape and shine a light on this disturbing reality.

## FILM THEMES

By maintaining all legal control and judicial proceedings under its jurisdiction, the military has managed to protect, hide, and even enable sexual assault to thrive within its branches. *THE INVISIBLE WAR* battles to reveal the corruption and mishandling of military rape and sexual assault, delving into the reasons why the armed forces are such a breeding ground of degradation and attack.

### **AN ENVIRONMENT OF BRUTE POWER AND MASCULINITY**

To rise up through the military ranks proves one's strength of body, mind, and character. This is arguably not a career path for the weak-willed, and most people who enlist in the military strive to serve their country with pride, pushing themselves to their personal limits of strength and capacity. Within this traditionally masculine environment of brute power, a victim is weak, the opposite of what the military stands for. Committing an act of sexual assault on a fellow soldier proves one's power to conquer and control. *THE INVISIBLE WAR* provides compelling proof that the world within the military contains an incredibly powerful group mentality. Fight together; stick together. To report that one had been assaulted, or that one had witnessed an assault taking place, would be to break from the group, and is discouraged at all costs.

### **THE IMPACT OF RAPE WITHIN THE MILITARY**

"Rape within the military is akin to incest," stated one military psychologist. The military is one big family, a community of brothers and sisters fighting alongside one another to protect and serve their country. When a woman or man is raped by a brother, what consolation is there that the world is a safe place to exist within? The victims of military sexual assault are impacted deep within their core, making them all that more in need of psychological and medical assistance, not to mention fair legal intervention, once they have gathered the courage to report the wrongdoing. Through interviews with victims, attorneys, psychologists, and loved ones, *THE INVISIBLE WAR* paints a stark picture of the extreme lack of resources available for military rape victims.

### **MILITARY VS. CIVILIAN JUSTICE SYSTEM**

The military's rape prevention program claims that there is always someone to turn to in the case of rape. They recommend reporting your rape to a congressman should your commander not take your claim seriously. Imagine a civilian contacting a congressman with a rape claim. In theory, the police, an extensive system of laws, and public advocates are available to bring perpetrators to justice in the civilian world, making it more difficult for crimes to be repeated. Yet, within the military, the individuals to report such crimes to are often the perpetrators, fiercely loyal to the perpetrators, or guilty of the same crime themselves. Once these perpetrators understand that nothing is in place to hold them accountable, their aggression escalates. *THE INVISIBLE WAR* exposes the imbalance between the civilian and military justice systems, and argues it is time for an overhaul of the military's antiquated ways.

**"This is not an issue of sexual orientation. This is simply an issue of power and violence... whoever is there to prey upon, men or women."**

Captain Anu Bhagwati (retired)

**"There is a right way, a wrong way, and the Army way."**

Army motto



## FILM FACTS:

- Oscar and Emmy-nominated filmmaker Kirby Dick won nine film awards, including the 2012 Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival, for *THE INVISIBLE WAR* and was nominated for an additional four awards.
- *THE INVISIBLE WAR* provides a rare example of how a movie can affect policy. Two days after Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta watched the movie, he announced important policy changes on military rape prosecution procedure, removing the power from unit commanders and placing it higher up the chain of command.
- 25% of female soldiers haven't reported their rape, as the person they would report to was the rapist himself. 62% of victims who did report a sexual assault indicated they met with social, professional, or administrative retaliation.
- Women who have been raped in the military have a higher post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) rate than men in combat, and suicide was stated as a real thought to all victims interviewed in the movie.
- Director Kirby Dick and writer Amy Ziering believed so strongly in making this movie, in part because there was so little media coverage and so few publications relating to the matter, that they chose to begin with or without external funding, embarking with a small grant from the Funding Exchange and a loan from Ziering. The total production budget was \$450,000.
- 15% of incoming recruits to the Navy have attempted or committed rape prior to entering the military, twice the percentage of the equivalent civilian population. Military rapists are not listed on the National Sex Offender Registry, and re-enter society with crimes undetected.
- In the 2011 landmark *Cioca vs. Rumsfeld* legal case, which held former defense secretaries Gates and Rumsfeld accountable for an "epidemic" of rape within the military ranks, rape was ruled an "occupational hazard" of military service. An appeal has been filed.
- Following the release of *THE INVISIBLE WAR*, Kori Cioca, the woman who endured a broken jaw through rape and received an extensive amount of prescription medication but no military medical assistance, was able to receive the surgery she required through the help of civilian donors and supporters.
- The Pentagon estimates that as many as 70 sexual assaults of military personnel by other military personnel occur on a daily basis. Likewise, the number of sexual assault cases being reported is on the rise, with 19,000 cases reported in 2010 and 26,000 in 2012.
- In February 2013 on talk show "Katie," which reaches an average 2.08 million viewers, Katie Couric devoted an entire hour-long program to discussing the movie.

## WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. Visit [Not Invisible](#), which provides many ways to raise awareness on military sexual assaults.
2. Become involved with [Protect Our Defenders](#), a human rights organization that gives voice to men and women who have been raped or sexually assaulted while in uniform.
3. Contact your Congress official, demanding they become involved in the campaign to stop military sexual abuse, calling for an external judicial process in the event of such abuse.
4. Support the [Soldiers Project](#), which offers free confidential therapy for veterans and their loved ones.

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Documentaries provide the perfect topic for meaningful conversations. If you want to talk about the things that matter with people that matter then pick a film, invite your friends, and watch & discuss together. It's as easy as that.

**Influence Film Club – We are the conversation after the film.**