

What Were You Wearing?



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ABOUT RISE

Rise is a survivor-led nonprofit based in the United States that empowers everyday people—including survivors—to pass their own rights into law.

In 2016 Rise founder and CEO **Amanda Nguyen** wrote then successfully passed the **Survivor Bill of Rights** through US Congress. Since then, Rise has worked with survivors to pass 60+ laws.

After 6+ years of campaigning, we **successfully petitioned world leaders to recognize sexual violence survivors** outside of war at the United Nations for the first time. Now, 1.3 billion survivors of sexual violence worldwide have access to justice.

September 2nd, 2022 Our Resolution Passes



UNIVERSAL JUSTICE

What's Next?

Following in the footsteps of our successful campaign for a UNGA Resolution for survivors, Rise aims to work with government leaders to establish a **multilateral treaty for universal jurisdiction over sex crimes**.

Our end goal is to create a world where survivors are safe. In order for this to be true, two requirements must be met.



TIME

The Next Step in the Fight
to End Sexual Violence

by Amanda Nguyen

You can read more about the campaign for Universal Justice [here](#).

UNIVERSAL JUSTICE

What does Universal Jurisdiction entail?

Requirement #1

Countries **must** have justice systems in place for survivors.

The UNGA resolution creates the **international standard** for what nations' justice systems should include for survivors.

Requirement #2

Survivors **must be able to** access those justice systems.

Next stage: **universal jurisdiction** - that survivors everywhere will have access to that justice.

You can read more about the campaign for Universal Justice [here](#).

ABOUT THE EXHIBIT

Immersive Art Exhibit

The “what were you wearing?” exhibit features outfits representing survivors of sexual violence. Each outfit was worn by a survivor at the time of their assault. The survivors’ identities are anonymous out of respect and acknowledgment of the stigma associated with rape.

The objective of this project is to acknowledge survivors’ bravery and resilience, as well as the diversity of the survivor experience.

Rise welcomes partnership opportunities to bring the exhibit to more global audiences. The following is a toolkit you can use to create your own exhibit.



ABOUT THE EXHIBIT

Background

Rise first debuted the exhibit at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City in December of 2021, when civil society could not enter the building due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The original exhibit included outfits from the Rise survivor community, each representing a UN regional group.

In March 2022 the exhibit expanded to 103 outfits, representing the 1.3 billion survivors around the world. To collect a high volume of outfits from survivors, in addition to physical outfits Rise accepted descriptions of outfits then recreated based on descriptions.

Rise proudly joins the many other organizations that have hosted a “what were you wearing?” exhibit, including students at the University of Kansas, Amnesty International in Spain, and many others. Additionally, we invite you to further learn about the stigma behind the question “What were you wearing?” by reading Mary Simmerling’s poem that inspired her and Jen Brockman’s work on this issue.



In addition to UNHQ, the exhibit has been on display at MoMA NYC, WEF at Davos, WHO in Geneva, and the Women Deliver Conference in Kigali, Rwanda.

HOST THE EXHIBIT

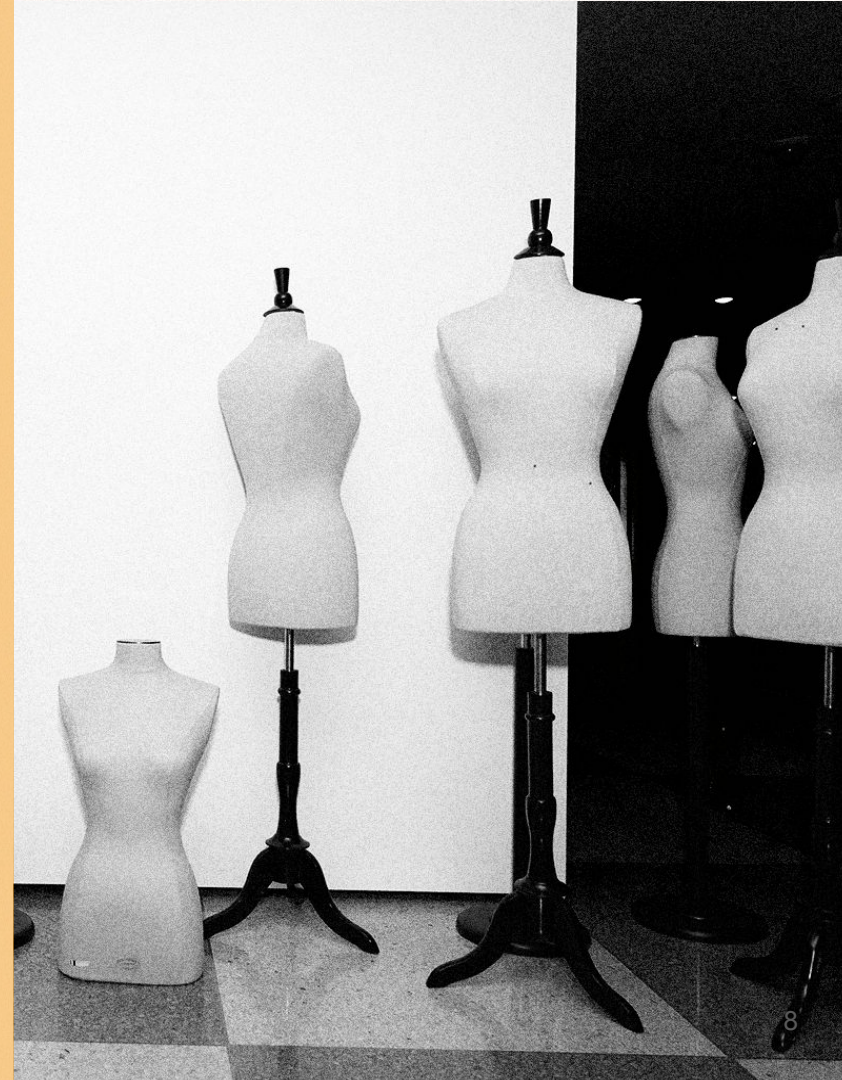
Create your own exhibit

You can create your own exhibit using the tools in this kit. Included in the following slides are real survivor stories and outfits you can replicate. Or, you can choose to collect outfits and stories in your own community.

When collecting outfits for your exhibit, it is important to carefully maintain the conditions and authenticity of each survivor outfit. Store outfits in covered, dry, cool areas and keep them safe. Before obtaining items, ensure the outfit will not be needed for an ongoing investigation by asking the individual who is submitting.

The fundamental materials for each exhibit are:

1. 10-20 Dress Forms
2. 10-20 Survivor Outfits
3. Survivor Stories
4. Signage (Sample Copy Provided on Page 30)



Survivor Outfit Submissions

The following outfits and stories were shared by members of the Rise team and the broader survivor community. We invite you to use these stories and recreate the outfits you see, or to collect your own garments..



“On the day that I was raped, I never could have imagined that a greater injustice awaited me than the one I had already been forced to endure. As a child, I had learned to believe in the well-worn credos of our legal system—that we all had access to justice, that our civil rights were sacrosanct, and that everyone was equal under law. But in the wake of my assault, I came to understand just how hollow those words can feel to a survivor seeking justice and compassion.

In the course of pursuing my own case, I ran into roadblock after roadblock—and discovered that my path was all too familiar to millions of people. I refused to be invisible—so I charted a new path. I rewrote the law, and drafted a Sexual Assault Survivors’ Bill of Rights. It codified a set of basic, comprehensive civil rights for more than 25 million rape survivors across the United States.

Though I never imagined the challenges I would face after my assault, nor did I imagine the power, the progress, and the hope that would arise from my ordeal. I created a non-profit called Rise to teach other survivors how to pen their own rights into existence. To date we’ve passed more than 60 laws in the United States, and recently passed a United Nations General Assembly Resolution.

***No one is powerless when we come together.
No one is invisible when we demand to be seen.”***

Survivor Story



“At the age of 22, I was raped by a childhood acquaintance, a police officer in the town I resided in. I was left with physical injuries, but most devastating was the unimaginable mental anguish. Unfortunately, due to my geographic location, no sexual assault nurse examiner was available at the emergency room. As a result, crucial mistakes in collection of evidence were made. I was further criticized, doubted, and asked questions during police interviews that victims of other crimes are not asked, such as ‘what were you wearing’ and ‘if you were unconscious, then how do you know you didn’t consent?’”

Survivor Story



“A blue dress, black tights, and boots. This is what I was wearing thousands of miles from my home the night I was drugged, raped, and left to die. I experienced the injustices of the very systems that are meant to protect us. I was turned away from a hospital, pressured to not file a complaint by the police, endured unsympathetic examinations, and told that there was no legal recourse. I was handed-off from one agency or official to the next, each one telling me that they were sorry, but there was nothing they could do to help. I was even warned that I could be arrested, as the drugs found in my system were illegal in that country. I couldn’t return to work, I couldn’t sleep, and I became afraid of both strangers and friends.”

Survivor Story



“I was wearing a uniform that for a fire science program I was in while attending high school. The uniform consisted of this button-up shirt, an undershirt, and tactical duty pants. I had to put on this uniform every day and be reminded of the pain I went through while wearing it.”

Survivor Story

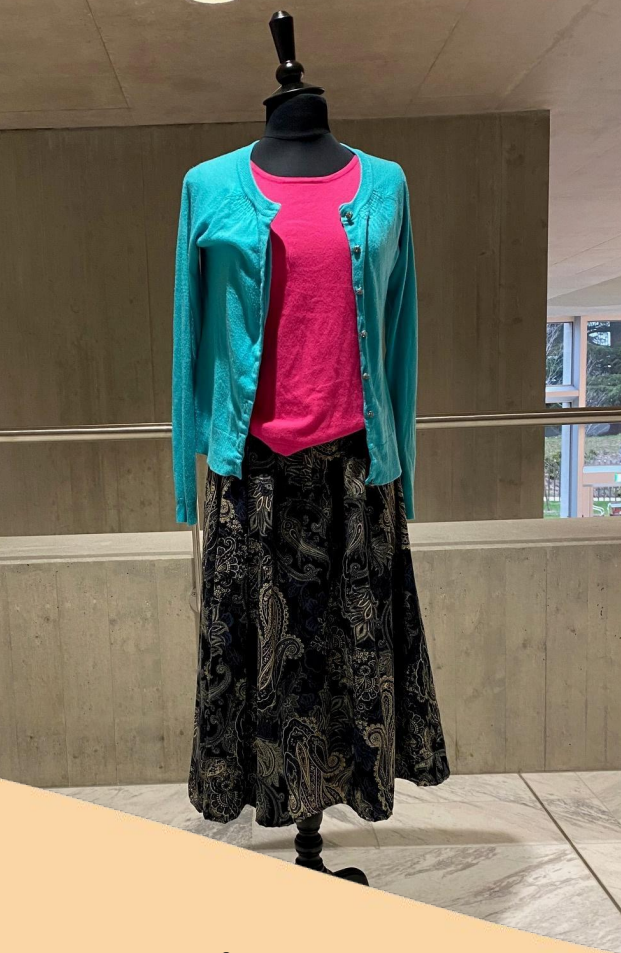


“I was at work. He was my supervisor. I was testing out something for a new hire and while the new hire was distracted, he grabbed me by the neck as he made sexual comments about me. It took me until recently to realize the severity of what had happened.”

Survivor Story



“I was wearing a t-shirt and shorts. My abuser took me to his mother's house alone, where he mowed the yard and I waited in the house. He took a shower after mowing, called me back to a back bedroom, and assaulted me. I was wearing an outfit like this one, he was wearing nothing. I was six years old.”



“I was assaulted by the father of my child when I was 6 months pregnant. I said I didn't want to have intercourse and cried silently during. He left the room to play video games when it was over.”

Survivor Story

“I had just gotten off work and went to go hang out with someone who I thought was a friend. I was still wearing my work clothes when they assaulted me.”

Survivor Story



“I was still in baby diapers when I was raped by a 24 year old. I was raped several times between the ages of 2 and 5.”

Survivor Story

“At 22, when my ex beat, raped and locked me in his house for 3 months the first time I tried to leave him--I was brought back to the first time, when I was 3 years old.

I remember the sudden terror and pain I felt. I tried to scream but he held my mouth down with his right hand, then he threatened me to not tell anyone or else I will be kicked outside of the house. The house was owned by his parents, who were my aunt and uncle.

During the genocide of my people, we fled to Columbo from Jaffna, hoping it would be safer than the warzone. A college student who rented a room next to ours started to molest me. They told me it was normal and "part of being a female". When you're a toddler, you're innocent beyond any words that can describe it. You believe what adults tell you. They use familiar words like "aunt", "uncles", "cousins", "big brothers", etc. and make you feel you are safe with them.”



“I left a bar with a man who I trusted and believed to be my friend. I was in a relationship at the time and this was well known by the perpetrator. I came to find out later he would befriend women, gain their trust, then assault them when they were vulnerable.”



“I was 7 years old when I was sexually assaulted and molested by my older brother. This happened a handful of times during the night time. I was also sexually assaulted by a couple of boys who were friends of my older brother. These boys and my brother would assault me and then threaten me if I told anyone. They made me feel like it was my fault and that I would also be in trouble. I was so paralyzed with fear that I pretended to be asleep while I waited and prayed for it to be over. I never told anyone for fear that I would be in trouble or no one would believe me.”

Survivor Story



“I wore this outfit when I was first raped by my ex husband. He came home while I was sleeping in our bed and began undressing me. When I awoke I told him to stop because I didn't want to have sex, but he continued and grew angrier the more I tried to push him away. Once he overpowered me, I cried and continued to plead until he finished. When I eventually came forward to report him for that and the domestic violence he committed, I was told they weren't going to report the alleged rape incidents because, as my husband, it was impossible to prove it wasn't consensual.”



“I was at a school rock performance playing basketball with my so-called friend before the concert started. We took a walk around the school. I got an awful feeling in my gut on our way back to the gym. We were right outside the gym doors near the bushes. I remember looking around and noticing that there were no cameras on that side of the building. Out of nowhere, he said to me “what if I pushed you into that bush and raped you?” I was speechless. All I could do was laugh it off and go inside. I assumed it was a stupid joke that stupid high school boys make. I brushed it off... The rest is a blur to me, I remember the heavy sound of my breathing, his cold fingertips digging into my skin, the sound of the band started to play, and the light dimming as he left me in that closet. Alone.”

Survivor Story



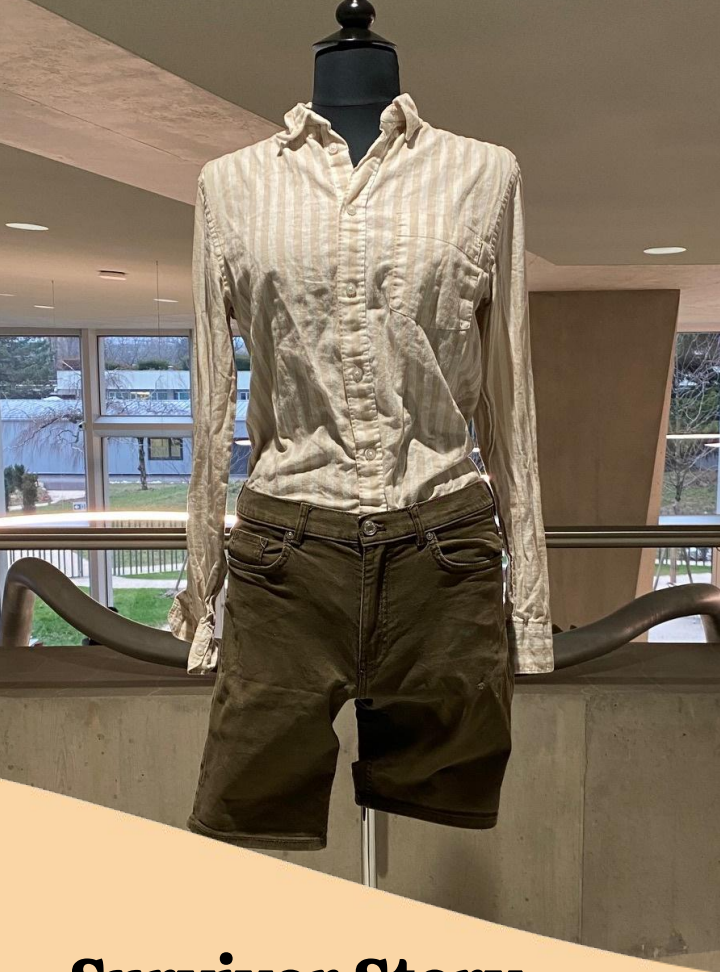
“A college reunion... My friend I’d brought along hopped in a car alone going to a party cabin 30 minutes away with some guys I barely knew (but knew better than she did). I told her to get out, I pleaded with her to come out. They started to drive away and I said okay wait — I’m coming too. I was afraid for her, but it would be me who ended up needing the protection. I was raped, I knew my attackers, everyone in the cabin knew what happened because they pulled them off of me. That was 5 years ago, and I just tossed out the brown bag evidence the prosecutor told me to 'hold onto' in case anything ever came of the case. Even with 10+ witnesses, nothing will.”

Survivor Story



“I hosted a house party in my apartment two days before my 23rd birthday. I was assaulted by the brother-in-law of my coworker. A complete stranger that I meet for the first time that night and didn’t interact with at all. Once he started making attempts at me, I kicked him out and informed the coworker via cell phone to remove him from my front door. Moments later, I received a call back from the coworker asking if they could stay due to them being intoxicated. I still had family members as well as my best friend in the apartment with me, so I felt “safe”. However, hours later, my cousins left and I felt tired. My best friend came to my bedroom door to sleep but was met with a locked door. Both of us, unaware of the unthinkable.”

Survivor Story



“I was hanging out with my boyfriend after school, and I was going through a depressive episode and I just wanted to talk about it. He kept trying to finger me, and I kept telling him “no” in different ways. eventually I just gave up and let it happen even though I didn’t want to.”

Survivor Story



“I was talking to this one guy, and two of the times we hung out, I specifically said I didn’t want to have sex. I made that very clear, and I stated my reasons. He agreed, but it still happened despite me telling him no.”

Survivor Story

Additional Outfits

The below descriptions were anonymously submitted by survivors. We welcome you to recreate these outfits with permission from the survivor community.

- Blue nightgown
- Work polo and long skirt
- Black jean shorts, crop top
- Military uniform
- Easter Sunday dress
- School uniform
- Full niqāb
- Child's swimsuit
- Disney nightgown
- Sweatpants and hoodie
- White shirt and jeans
- Leotard and gym shorts
- Black lace short dress
- Basketball shorts, t-shirt
- Engineer work uniform
- Pink floral dress
- Construction work clothes
- Flannel pajamas

Sample Signage

We encourage you to display a poster with a description of the exhibit and a **call to action to support the global survivors' rights movement**. Page 30 includes a sample sign you are welcome to print out and use.

Page 31 includes an example content warning, with information about resources available.

what were you wearing?

In fashion, this question celebrates identity, creativity, and influence. But for survivors of sexual violence, it's used to blame them for the violence that happened to them.

There are more than 1.3 billion survivors of sexual violence globally. The outfits you see here represent survivors around the world. Some outfits were worn by a survivor at the time of their assault, while others are a recreation of the outfits worn that day.

Prior to 2022, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) had never passed a resolution focused solely on sexual violence survivors' rights. In September 2022, survivor-led NGO Rise engineered the successful adoption of a UNGA resolution securing access to justice for survivors worldwide. Now, national governments around the world must pass legislation upholding survivors' access to justice.

Survivors need your help. Justice should not depend on geography. Peace is not the absence of visible conflict. In order for there to be true peace, survivors need access to justice.

Go to [HERE](#) to sign in support of the global campaign for survivors' rights.

<https://bit.ly/universaljustice>



CONTENT WARNING

This exhibition includes themes of sexual violence and may be upsetting to some viewers.

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual violence and need support, go here for resources:

<https://nomore.org/need-immediate-help-2/>

PROMOTING THE EXHIBIT

Opening Event

For many of the exhibits hosted by Rise, we created a launch event to unveil the exhibit and invite guests to visit.

We recommend creating a launch event that brings together the community members you would like to see and honor through this exhibit.

Some programming recommendations include:

- Guest Speakers - ***Prioritize Survivor Voices***
- Musical Performances
- Dance Performances
- Reception



PROMOTING THE EXHIBIT

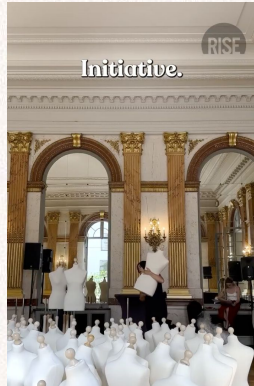
Tag Rise so we can amplify your exhibit!
@risenow.us on IG, @RiseNowUs on X

Social Media

We encourage you to announce your exhibit across all your social media platforms at least two weeks in advance. Make sure to post again the week before, the day before, and the day of. We have found that consistent storytelling around the event ensures the most success.

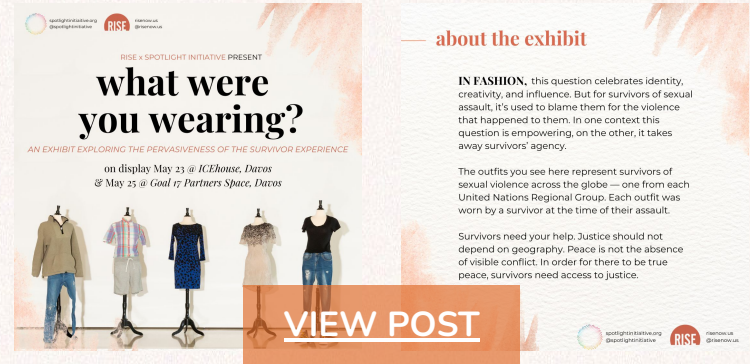


[VIEW POST](#)



[VIEW POST](#)

You can do a simple overview of the event by putting together b-roll of the exhibit and explaining the content and purpose of the exhibit via voice over.



You can also make a simple graphic with event details and a slide dedicated to providing context.

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