



RAOUL WALLENBERG
Children's Foundation
International

Documentary Film: “Rescuing Raoul Wallenberg”

Many people know about Raoul Wallenberg and his selfless humanitarian mission. Fewer people realize that he was taken from Budapest by the Russians and disappeared into the Soviet gulags, languishing for the rest of his life as an invisible victim of the Cold War. Only one person has known the full story of the organized attempts to uncover the truth about what became of Wallenberg and the dramatic but ultimately unsuccessful efforts to rescue this remarkable hero. Sonja Sonnenfeld joined Wallenberg's sister and brother at the Official Raoul Wallenberg Committee in the 1970's -at the age most people retire- and for over thirty years made it her mission to exhaust every potential source of new information, pursue every opportunity to engage world leaders in the quest, and orchestrate all promising secret operations to save him. Several books and films have chronicled Wallenberg's important legacy, but none has ever recounted the untold story of the desperate struggle to bring him home, or why these efforts proved to be impossible. Sonja Sonnenfeld, who served as the leader of the Official Wallenberg Committee during its most active period, is a captivatingly candid storyteller on film. Born into a Jewish family in Berlin, she witnessed firsthand the horrors of Hitler's rise to power, experiences which she recounts for schoolchildren across Germany. Along with her enthralling personal account, Mrs. Sonnenfeld -in over one hundred hours of footage- chose to finally divulge the full story of her mission to rescue Raoul Wallenberg, waiting until she was in her late nineties due to her sensitivity concerning the painful ordeal the Wallenberg family has endured for so long.

This story is especially timely now due to the national conversation focused on Russia and international tensions between democracy and autocracy. Currently, Wallenberg's niece has filed a lawsuit in a Moscow court to compel the FSB (formerly the KGB) to release documents that could provide new information about Raoul Wallenberg's fate. It is looking more promising than ever that we might finally learn the truth about this unsolved mystery.

This film will tell both Wallenberg's and Sonja's epic stories and continue Sonja's important work: to keep the memory of Wallenberg's extraordinary and inspirational sacrifice alive, to pursue the ultimate truth about Wallenberg's fate with a relentless investigation that must persist until it is resolved, and -as she has implored of students across Germany- to convey through this story Sonja's rallying call, “You must think for yourself and never be indifferent”!



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Current Status 2017: The RWCFI documentary film is nearing completion of the Pre-production stage and is seeking partners for the Production stage.

- Presentation materials and online videos complete
- Preliminary historical and archival research underway
- Cross-platform advanced web site built for RWCFI and film promotion
- More than 100 hours of filmed interviews and related footage with Sonja Sonnenfeld, Frank Vajda (rescued by Raoul Wallenberg), and Vladimir Bukovsky (Soviet dissident).

Film Plan:

This documentary explores the many intriguing accounts of attempts at prisoner exchanges and rescue missions to free Raoul Wallenberg which Sonja Sonnenfeld organized with the Wallenberg Committee, prominent world leaders, and other key contacts. It offers thoughts about what happened to Wallenberg in Russia, where it is believed he was alive for many decades after the official Russian report of his death in 1947. The film highlights information from Russian officials about his whereabouts, accounts of meetings with famous spies, as well as the fascinating story about the family's trip to Moscow. The film asks the ultimate question: why did the Swedish government and indeed, the world, not come to his rescue?

The documentary film "Rescuing Raoul Wallenberg" will be feature length (between 90-120 minutes) and begins when both Raoul Wallenberg and Sonja Sonnenfeld were born just six weeks apart in 1912. The film chronicles their youths in parallel, following their development until the onset of World War II.

- The film next delves into the darkness of the Holocaust; Sonja's (as a Jewish woman and Swedish Citizen) subsequent departure from Berlin, and Wallenberg's journey to Budapest.
- The film then explores how and why Wallenberg was taken by the Russians and what his life might have been like in captivity. This section includes the struggle of Raoul Wallenberg's parents -and later his sister and brother- to save Wallenberg, with the help of Per Anger—who worked with Wallenberg in Budapest.



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- These events lead us to 1979 when Sonja Sonnenfeld joined the Raoul Wallenberg Committee in Stockholm just one day after “retiring” and undertook her own passionate rescue mission with Wallenberg’s sister and brother, Nina Lagergren and Guy von Dardel.
- We explore how Sonja worked with world leaders and other persons in her quest. Told through her own voice, we will learn about the support she received from Simon Wiesenthal, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Henry Kissinger, Helmut Kohl, President George H.W. Bush and many others towards finding and freeing Wallenberg.
- There are many intriguing stories from this point in time as well, including her meetings with spies and several rescue missions she helped to organize. The film delves into the evidence suggesting that Wallenberg was still alive even as late as the 1980s or 90s.
- Dramatic reenactments help to illustrate what life might have been like in one of these Russian “camps of silence” where Wallenberg was held. We will also depict the visit of the Raoul Wallenberg Committee to Moscow where some of Raoul Wallenberg’s personal articles were returned and the family was asked to sign the death certificate dating his death to 1947; this was refused because it was well known that he lived well beyond this time period.
- Only three months before Sonja passed away, on July 22nd, 2010, she had made her last visit to Berlin and Bremen, Germany to again lecture at German schools. Even more inspiring is that Sonja had still another trip planned for September 2010, just weeks before what would have been her 98th birthday. These lectures will also be highlighted in the film.
- The film will follow and supplement the recently reopened investigation initiated by Marie Dupuy, Wallenberg’s niece. It will conclude with the inspiration that both Wallenberg and Sonja Sonnenfeld offer to the world and will pay tribute to both of them and their impassioned and selfless struggles to make the world a better place.



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Next Steps:

Filming of additional interviews with those associated with the many Wallenberg sightings and rescue attempts as recounted by the Wallenberg family and Mrs. Sonnenfeld. *Among those to be interviewed:*

- Nina Lagergren (sister of Raoul Wallenberg, now age 96)
- Charles Levy-Attorney (supported Wallenberg rescue attempts)
- Annette Lantos-widow of Congressman Tom Lantos (both rescued by Wallenberg)
- Mark Brzezinski-son of Zbigniew Brzezinski (Ambassador to Sweden, 2011-2015)
- Marvin Makinen (obtained information about Wallenberg while imprisoned in Russia)
- Imma Svingel (widow of Karl Gustav Svingel, leader of a prisoner exchange attempt)
- Henry Kissinger, George H.W. Bush, and others with firsthand experience or knowledge related to this story.

To complete the documentary, additional filming is needed for dramatic reenactments at locations associated with the story, collection of archival materials, continued investigative research, translation and/or transcription of all current and future footage, graphics work, musical score, and a distribution plan.



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About the RWCFI:

The Raoul Wallenberg Children's Foundation International (RWCFI) is based in Hartford Connecticut with offices in Stockholm Sweden, and Saint Petersburg Russia. The Foundation was initiated with the official backing of the Raoul Wallenberg Committee (RWC) in Stockholm whose founders were Raoul Wallenberg's siblings, Nina Lagergren and Guy von Dardel, along with Swedish Diplomat Per Anger and Sonja Sonnenfeld. The Foundation is a 501©3 non-profit charitable organization with primary focus on raising and donating funds to promising Evidence-based programs dedicated to improving the lives of children and their families.

Our mission, in the spirit of Wallenberg's work, is to ensure that families and children, particularly those who are disadvantaged, have the resources needed for achieving optimal family and child outcomes.

Profits from the film sale and distribution will be donated to the Raoul Wallenberg Children's Foundation for our charitable donations.

Highlights of the RWCFI Foundation Work:

- Establishment, with the Raoul Wallenberg Committee, of the Raoul Wallenberg Medical Center in Moscow, for the purpose of research and follow up care of children from Chernobyl.
- Distribution of approximately \$3,000,000.00 of Humanitarian aid to children's hospitals and orphanages in St. Petersburg.
- Founded with Russian Partners the Raoul Wallenberg International University for Family and Child in Saint Petersburg, recently awarded recognition as one of the three best private educational institutions for child and family study in Russia. [Learn more.](#)
- RWCFI is currently raising funds in the US to support programs that promote healthy child development and innovative models for at-risk youth.



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