

# NANA

A Film by Serena Dykman

100 minutes, color, 2017, Documentary



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## **Synopsis:**

Directed by 25 year-old Serena Dykman, NANA documents her journey with her mother Alice as they retrace her grandmother's Auschwitz survival story. Born in Poland, Maryla Michalowski-Dyamant survived Ravensbruck, Malchow and Auschwitz - where she was the forced translator for the "Angel of Death," Josef Mengele. Maryla dedicated her life after the war to publicly speaking about her survival to younger generations.

Alice and Serena, daughter and granddaughter, explore how Maryla's outspoken activism continues today, in a world where survivors are disappearing, and intolerance, racism and anti-Semitism are on the rise.

## **Director's Statement:**

Different from other Holocaust-related films, NANA is made from the third generation's point-of-view, and investigates how survivor testimonies and messages against intolerance can continue today in a world where survivors are disappearing and intolerance, prejudice, anti-Semitism, and racism are on the rise.

NANA is an intensely personal film, exploring the relationships between grandmother, mother, and daughter under the weight of heritage, but also a film with a universal message. It recounts and teaches what can happen in a world without tolerance against the backdrop of the recent events in Paris and Brussels.

My personal goal with NANA is to continue to do my grandmother's work teaching tolerance. She passed away when I was little, and after meeting countless people that had heard her story, it became clear how effective her work was. Unfortunately, she is not here to speak in schools and give conferences anymore. By putting together a documentary that follows my grandmother's life and work with my mother, my goal was to make this film relevant for all generations, as well as for people of all backgrounds and religion. It is not a historical documentary about what happened to the Jewish people during WWII, but rather the story of a blonde girl with a normal life who lost everything, and how her descendants live with the trauma of heritage. It also shows a strong woman who managed to survive and keep her hands clean.

## **Awards**

WINNER Leon Award for Best Documentary Film at the St. Louis International Film Festival (out of 73 films)

WINNER Best Documentary Film at the Fargo Film Festival

WINNER Mira Nair Award for Rising Female Filmmaker at the Harlem International Film Festival

WINNER Silver Palm Award for Best Documentary at the Mexico International Film Festival

WINNER Madelyn's Choice Award at the Rocky Mountain Women's Film Festival

WINNER Audience Award for Favorite Documentary at the East Lansing Film Festival

SPECIAL MENTION Audience Feature Film at Amnesty International Au Cinéma pour les Droits Humains

WINNER Best Biography at the Palm Beach International Film Festival

WINNER Best Documentary Pitch at the Fusion Film Festival (judges from HBO, VICE, PBS)

WINNER Mary Lerner Human Spirit Award at the Chagrin Documentary Film Festival

WINNER Best of Show at the Docs Without Borders Film Festival

WINNER Matanel Foundation grant

WINNER Fondation pour le Judaïsme Belgium grant

WINNER Alan Lansburg Post-Production award

WINNER Best Teaser Take Two Film Festival

## Press Links

### Steven Spielberg's USC Shoah Foundation

"After Maryla described her experiences – she was deported from Bedzin, Poland, to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where she was forced to work as Dr. Josef Mengele's translator, and survived a death march to Ravensbruck and Malchow concentration camps – the interviewer asked if there was anything she wanted to say to her granddaughter, Serena. Maryla said she hoped Serena "does everything so it doesn't happen again." As a young filmmaker, Serena is now fulfilling her grandmother's wish"

<https://sfi.usc.edu/profiles/serena-dykman>

### European Jewish Congress

"Among other things, the panel discussed the common responsibility of Europeans to never forget the lessons of the Shoah: "The European Union was born in Buchenwald. Hatred of Jews is today exploited for political gain. If we stay silent on that, the European project will fail." said First Vice-President Timmermans. "We need to teach people at a young age. This is not only the story of the Jews, it belongs to humanity as a whole", added Serena Dykman."

<https://eurojewcong.org/ejc-in-action/events-meetings/ejc-european-commission-host-screening-film-nana/>

### BUST Magazine 8 Up-And-Coming Women Directors To Watch

"Dykman and her mother retrace the steps of Dykman's late grandmother Maryla Michalowski-Dyamant, a Holocaust survivor and activist, in this documentary. Dykman also speaks with other Holocaust survivors, friends of her grandmother's, and activists as she grapples with questions of what it means to inherit trauma."

<https://bust.com/movies/193673-bushwick-film-fest-women-directors.html>

Manhattan Neighborhood Network - ImaginingNANA (interview with James Vrettos)  
(Television)

<http://www.mnn.org/video/radical-imagination-imagining-nana>

### KIDS FIRST ! NANA

"This inspirational film is a must see. A story within a story, there are so many authentic personal stories including her memoir writer collaborator, recorder of survivor testimonies, Jewish history teacher and educational project designer among those who knew her well. Ms. Dykman's footage is complemented by the archival footage that turned up unexpectedly.

<http://www.kidsfirst.org/juror/blog/2017/11/04/nana-deeply-touching-documentary-about-a-nana-who-survived-the-holocaust/>

## Screening the Holocaust film series returns for a second year

"Miriam Klein Kassenoff, director of the Holocaust Teacher Institute, said, "Not only is 'Nana' a gem of a film because of its intergenerational commentary on how the Holocaust impacted a daughter and granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor, but also for its historical information narrated by granddaughter Serena. This film without any images of terror manages still to tell the history with a heartfelt gentleness."

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/florida-jewish-journal/news/miami-dade/fl-jjdc-filmseries-0927-20170920-story.html>

## A Women's Thing

Meet the 24-Year-Old Filmmaker Behind the Holocaust Documentary NANA

<https://awomensthing.org/blog/serena-dykman-filmmaker-documentary-holocaust-survivor-grandmother-nana/>

## **Production Credits:**

**Director:** Serena Dykman

**Screenwriters:** Serena Dykman, David Breger, Corentin Soibinet

**Producers:** Serena Dykman, Alice Michalowski, Stephane Dykman

**Directors of Photography:** Nick Walker & Julia Elaine Mills

**Editor:** Corentin Soibinet

**Music:** Carine Gutlerner

**Sound Design:** Charles de Montebello

**Motion Graphic Design:** Alex Noble