

**NORMA RAE (1979) 09.26.09**  
**beated by Erik LeDrew**

1. CREDITS: Montage of cotton mill workers operating machinery, intercut with photographs of NORMA RAE from baby to mature adult.
2. Norma works her machine in the mill. Her's is one of dozens of others.
3. TEXT: "Summer, 1979" over a sign that reads the "O.P. Henley Textile Mill".
4. Norma Rae at lunch with a co-worker and her MOTHER. Small talk reveals Norma is having an affair with a man who has a "mighty big car". Norma realizes her mother can't hear her and runs her across the noisy mill floor to:
  5. The doctor's office. The doctor can't do anything about Norma's mother's hearing loss -- hearing loss is common for this job -- but it doesn't stop Norma from chewing out the doctor. We learn there "ain't no other job in this town" and that Norma doesn't think the mill management cares about her mother at all.
  6. Norma washes dishes with her father, VERNON. She has two children who aren't cooperative when it comes to their homework. She gets ready to go into town and her father interrogates her as to why -- he comes across as loving albeit very controlling.
  7. REUBEN WARCHOWSKY shows up at Norma's family's house, asking for a "room with a mill family". He is a labor organizer from New York, "come to put a union in the mill". Vernon -- and the town by extension -- is very antagonistic toward the idea of unions, and Reuben, a "Jew", in particular. Vernon threatens Reuben and Norma tries to come to Reuben's defense, but Reuben leaves.
  8. Reuben runs into Norma at a motel lobby. Reuben hasn't had any luck anywhere else in town. Norma tells the motel manager to give Reuben a good room. A well-dressed man enters, gets a key, and glances briefly at Norma as he walks past her. She watches him walk away.
  9. Norma dresses herself in one of the motel rooms. The well-dressed man from the lobby and her have just slept together. Norma is finished having a tryst with this married douche bag. He gets pissed that a small-town girl like her is dumping him: "...what the hell are you good for...?" and smacks her.

10. Norma runs out of the motel room with a bloody nose and Reuben stops her, offering ice and aspirin. Norma laments her terrible luck with men. Norma notices that Reuben has a lot of books -- his response implies he travels a lot -- and that he has a girlfriend of some kind, but Reuben doesn't seem terribly passionate about the woman. They formally introduce themselves. Reuben turns out to be a Jew, Norma's never met one before: "thought Jews had horns." But she observes that he's not much different than the rest of them.
11. Reuben hands out "Textile Workers Union of America" flyers in front of the mill while the town streams in to work. Most people ignore him, but Norma smiles at him, looks over the flyer, and tells him "there are too many big words". A BOSSMAN hassles Norma for talking to Reuben. The bossman then hassles Reuben, Reuben threatens him with a civil contempt suit.
12. Norma works her machine when one of the bossmen summons her. The head bossman promotes Norma to keep her mouth shut and stop her from complaining. They give her a job that won't make her any friends but that doubles her hourly wage.
13. Norma "spot checks" various other mill workers who all look very uncomfortable due to her presence. She times her father who, because of his age, isn't going very fast. She tells him to speed it up some and he doesn't look happy.
14. Norma and her father argue back at home. "I don't think you should push your own daddy." She needs the money, but that doesn't matter to Vernon. She pulls her kids out of the garden
15. Norma is at a local ball game with one of her friends from the mill. Norma offers to get her friend a hot dog.
16. Norma runs into Reuben at the hotdog stand. Reuben is horrified by how awful the hotdog tastes. The deadbeat father of one of Norma's children approaches her. Reuben watches Norma brush the guy off.
17. Norma and Reuben walk the ball field. They bond over affairs they've both had -- they get along well.
18. Norma times SONNY at the mill, who gives her a really difficult time for timing him. He goes a little crazy, running and jumping around all over the place. Norma tells him he could lose them both their jobs.
19. Sonny shows up at Norma's to apologize: he had been handed divorce papers earlier and couldn't handle it. Norma shows sympathy, Sonny asks her to a drink. Sonny tells her they knew each other as children and

- Norma has a moment of realization, agrees to go out with him. Her Dad tries to stop her but she tells him he's loving her to death and leaves.
20. Norma and Sonny drink beers, are quite drunk. They talk music, happiness. We learn Sonny thought about killing his ex-wife and her boyfriend, but couldn't bring himself to do it. He reminisces about how happy he and his ex- used to be. Norma spots Reuben and invites him to join them. Sonny isn't too happy about it, but recovers. Reuben doesn't drink, but joins them anyways. Sonny and Reuben talk about the oppression of the little man at the hands of "the rich man". A song plays that reminds Norma of her dead husband.
  21. Norma and Sonny argue over who's going to drive. Reuben tells them he'll drive them both.
  22. Norma sits between Reuben and Sonny. "I went out with one man, and I'm going home with two." She remembers how her dad used to dote on her as a kid. Norma asks Reuben to pull over so she can throw up. Sonny says he can't help her or he'll get sick too.
  23. Reuben watches over Norma as she gets sick. She says, "One of these days, I'm gonna get myself all together." Reuben warns her that he's going to "start in on her." Does he mean romantically or unionizing?
  24. Reuben hands out flyers at the mill again, tells Norma he got it down to two syllables. She says "One'll be better." A bossman bids Norma good morning in a threatening tone.
  25. LUCIUS a co-worker of Norma's, ignores her when she says hi on the mill floor. Another friend, LYNETTE, also ignores her. BILLY JOE ignores her too. She finally asks him what the deal is, and he calls her "Fink." She storms off, understanding what that means.
  26. She goes into the bossman's office, threatens to quit. She tells him he's speeding them up to weed out slow workers. She says she won't rat on her friends anymore. He says they won't fire her, but demote her instead. "Your family's been with this mill a long time."
  27. Back on the floor, Norma returns to her machine and a friend welcomes her back by putting an apron on her.
  28. Sonny arrives at Norma's to take her out. Norma comes out with her two kids. Sonny is surprised but excited.
  29. Norma, Sonny, and her kids ride in his truck to the lake, but he's "gotta make a stop first".

30. Sonny picks up his daughter, ALICE, to bring with. Norma: "Well like I always say, the more the merrier."
31. Norma's kids play at the lake. Norma and Sonny talk. Sonny compliments her, she's been around plenty and isn't impressed by words. Sonny proposes to her. Norma: "It's been a long time between offers." Theirs will be a marriage of pragmatism, not love. They kiss.
32. Norma and Sonny marry in a small ceremony. Nobody is terribly thrilled, Norma looks a little uncertain even. Sonny: "To my wife Norma Rae and, uh, I just hope I can keep up with her."
33. Norma's friend shows her a flyer for a union meeting, says the bossman told her not to go. Norma tells her friend she's not asking the bossman's permission.
34. Reuben recounts the story of his unionized father's funeral to a small crowd at a church. Reuben talks about the concept of the union as a family, "when they spoke, they spoke in one voice, and they were heard." Reuben tells everyone that their industry is the only non-unionized industry in the country. He urges them to take action. Norma isn't quite sure what to think. Reuben tells Norma to make the time to help him because if he doesn't get help soon, he's going to leave.
35. Reuben shows up at the mill to inspect the plant. The bossmen are all gathered and not budging. Reuben threatens them with legal precedent. They go in.
36. Reuben tosses some trash away. They enter the mill floor. The head bossman comes out, gives Reuben a pair of earplugs. The bossman walks too fast, Reuben asks him to slow down. Reuben tries to greet the various mill workers, who aren't eager to speak with him. One of the bossmen calls Reuben a "kike", they almost fight but another bossman pulls Reuben over to the bulletin board. Reuben's notice is placed so high on the board, "only Wilt Chamberlain on stilts could read it." He asks them why they pull this kind of shit, and they eventually give in to his request to lower it. We learn no union organizer or representative has been within the mill in a decade. They go to the other bulletin board. Reuben greets more workers along the way and they all look at him wide-eyed. He gives a special greeting to Norma. She watches him walk through the plant, unsure what he's doing there. The second bulletin board is hidden behind stacks of boxes. They play hardball, but again eventually give. Norma watches the bossmen give into Reuben.
37. Norma walks up to Reuben's motel room. He's "busy" with laundry. She asks him if she'll lose her job if she joins up with him. He tells her "No

- way...there's not a goddamn thing they can do to touch you." She says she'll go along with it. He tells her she's the fish he wanted to hook, that he's gonna make a "mensch" outta her -- she doesn't know what that is. She signs the union form, he sees her name "Norma Rae Webster", asks why everyone down there has three names.
38. Norma tries to convince a co-worker to put on a union button during break. She convinces him to put it on and a bossman hounds her as she walks out of the break room. She blows him off.
  39. Norma approaches the reverend of her church. It's the church she's been going to since she was a child. He calls her a "good Christian", she asks for permission to use the church as a union meeting hall. Norma makes unionizing a moral issue, threatens to leave the church if he doesn't support the union. The reverend tells her they'll miss her voice in the choir. N: "You'll just hear it raised up someplace else."
  40. Norma pulls up to her house with a group of black men in the back of her truck. She walks up to her neighbor, one of the bossmen, tells him he shouldn't have any trouble seeing through her window to spy on the union meeting she's hosting. Sonny tells Norma she's gone too far, having black men in their living room. Norma tells him white men are the only ones who've caused her trouble.
  41. Reuben encourages the group of people to speak. People share their stories of hardship reluctantly.
  42. Reuben and Norma discuss the meeting afterward. Reuben doesn't feel he's getting through to people, Norma tells him he's an outsider, that it's not New York. One of Norma's kids tells her the other is wetting the bed. Reuben asks if Norma has any ideas, Norma tells him she does: hit the backroads on Saturday.
  43. MONTAGE: Norma and Reuben approach various people with flyers. The first, they offer to change his tire in exchange for reading the flyer -- but neither has any idea how to change the tire on a tractor. They approach a group of old men whittling. Norma introduces Reuben. None of the men are interested in the union; they believe management gives them a better shake than a union would. Reuben tries to whittle a stick to fit in, cuts himself. At the final place, Reuben slips and falls into a cowpie. N: "It's only grass and water, Reuben."
  44. Norma washes Reuben's shirt in a pond, while he swims naked. She strips matter-of-factly and joins him. They swim naked together. Norma tells him he's a fish out of water. She asks about New York, he tells her what a day at home would be like. Norma's only ever been to two other places in her

- life, two nearby towns. Reuben tells her she'd love New York. Norma tells him he's homesick. Norma tells him he's got a skinny build, compares him to Sonny. Norma tells him not to worry about being skinny, tells him he's got a head on him and that he uses it.
45. Norma works the phones in her kitchen, thinks her conversation is being tapped. Sonny enters, they argue about how much time she spends with Reuben. Nothing gets done around the house and she and Sonny are "going without, altogether". Norma explodes and races around the kitchen, throwing stuff at the stove, laundry in the sink, spits on the iron, tells him to lift up her nightgown and they'll make love while she irons. Sonny is defeated, goes to calm her down, kisses her. She gives in.
46. Norma passes flyers out during break at the mill. People greet her decidedly differently than they did Reuben. Norma runs into her dad, who she hasn't seen in a while. She says he doesn't look good. He admits to drinking, wonders if when he lies down, he'll get back up again. Norma doesn't like him "talking old". Vernon offers to take her out to "a grand supper" soon. She hugs him, he kisses her on the forehead, gets back to work.
47. Norma works late with Reuben. They're the only two working, everyone else's gone home. Norma asks about Reuben's girlfriend, Reuben says she and her mother get along well. Norma asks why his girlfriend is so smart, Reuben tells her "books." He offers her a beer and a banana for dinner, she takes it, picks up a Dylan Thomas book. Reuben quotes: "Rage, rage against the dying of the light..." Norma is intrigued: "There ain't nothing on TV anyways." She uses a Yiddish word in conversation.
48. Reuben goes to a church where they're to have a meeting, but nobody is there.
49. Reuben goes to someone's house to ask why no one showed. The man tells him management's got them on a "stretch-out": twice the work, for half the pay. The man's got no food to feed his family, closes the door on Reuben.
50. Vernon works hard, his arm cramps up and he falls to the floor. He asks one of the bossmen if he can take his break now, the bossman tells him no. He tries to get back to work and falls face-forward into a box.
51. Norma and her family at her father's funeral.
52. Reuben's room is now packed with people helping him organize. Norma chews out someone for arriving late, Reuben tells her to shut up and get

out of the office. Norma doesn't understand why, Reuben simply says "out", welcomes the late man to work.

53. Norma at a diner, plays with her coffee, doesn't eat her pie. Reuben arrives, tells her she's got a big mouth, that she comes down too hard on people. R: "If you were at the State Department, we'd be at war." Norma understands, tells him she pushes people because cotton workers are known as trash and she wants to change that. Reuben eats her pie and leaves without paying.
54. Two higher-up union types arrive at Reuben's room late at night, waking up Norma. Reuben isn't there. They question her, she's hesitant. Reuben comes back from the printer's. They tell him they're worried about his lack of progress. They caution him against working with Norma: rumors are going around about her having been in a porno, and she's damaging their chances for success. Reuben asks them if they're in the union business or the character assassination business. He tells them to get lost. Norma offers to quit, Reuben ignores her offer.
55. A bossman puts up a flyer on the bulletin board.
56. Norma is at the mill, on the phone with Reuben. A bossman enters, asks who she's talking to. She lies, he calls her on it.
57. White union workers beat up a black union worker. Other black union workers come to his help. Reuben asks Norma what started it, Norma tells him management put up a notice saying blacks run the unions. Reuben wants it copied down verbatim. Norma is reluctant, doesn't have a good memory, but will try.
58. On her coffee break, Norma nonchalantly strolls past the bulletin board.
59. Norma writes from memory on a roll of toilet paper in the bathroom. She can't remember.
60. Reuben reads what she's written so far in his motel room. He asks her where the rest of it is, she says she couldn't remember the rest. He tells her to get back in there and copy it down word-for-word because it's their best chance. They fight, she tells him he's crabby and needs himself a woman. R: "Funny you should mention it..." and he storms out.
61. Norma walks up to the board with a notepad, starts to copy the letter down. More and more bossmen gather around her, trying to stop her. They threaten to call the police. They bring her to their office.

62. The head bossman asks her why she made personal phone calls on company time. Norma asks everyone to spell their names out for her. The bossman tells her to get off the premises now. Norma gets up to leave.
63. Norma walks through the mill, PINKERTON MAN in tow. She walks back to her machine. The pinkerton puts his hands on her, she throws his hands off, tells him she's staying put, going to wait for the sheriff to take her home. She stands up on a table, writes "UNION" in lipstick on a piece of cardboard, holds it up for the whole floor to see. Her friends watch in stunned silence. Norma pleads with her eyes. Then her mother shuts her machine down. Then someone else shuts theirs down. Then another co-worker does, and so on. This continues for a few more people, until someone shuts down the whole floor. The SHERIFF enters the now-quiet floor. He asks her to get down, she cooperates, but slowly. She tells him she wants his promise that he'll take her straight home in writing. The sheriff refuses. The bossman tells the sheriff he wants Norma off the premises, she finally agrees to go with.
64. Norma exits the building, realizes they're going to throw her in the back of a police car and take her to jail. She struggles, puts up a fight, but they eventually get her in the back.
65. Norma gets booked into the police station, charged with "disorderly conduct". A female officer escorts Norma to a cell, slams the door behind her. Norma sits down. She's given her one phone call, told to call Sonny. N: "I'll be calling my union organizer."
66. Reuben drives Norma home, telling her he knows jail is bad, but that it comes with the job. Norma breaks down for the first time. Reuben recounts much worse things that have happened to unionizers: "You just got your feet wet on this one." She stops crying immediately.
67. Sonny welcomes Norma home. Norma wakes up the kids, brings them out to the living room. She sits her kids down on the couch for a talk. She tells them she loves them, that she's "a jailbird", that they'll be hearing "a load of other things" too, but that they'll hear it from her first. She tells them why she joined up with the union, that she wants the mill to be a better place for them if they decide to work there. N: "I believe in standing up for what I think is right." She sends them back to bed. Norma leaves to take a bath. Sonny is left with Reuben. Sonny points out to Reuben that Norma called him instead of her husband. R: "She knew I could make bail." Sonny doesn't know what to do with Norma now, Reuben tells him to deal with it, leaves.

68. Sonny sits on the bed next to Norma. He asks her if she's ever slept with Reuben. N: "No. But he's in my head." Sonny reaffirms his commitment to Norma. Norma is touched, spoons him.
69. Pro- and anti-union personnel count ballots. The bossmen and the entire mill's employees gather around the table, waiting anxiously for the outcome of the vote. People hold signs and it is hot. A woman faints. The final tallies are handed to an announcer. Votes against the union: "373". Some of the crowd cheers, some boo, some are silent.
70. Norma and Reuben listen outside the mill, trying to make out the reason for the cheering.
71. The announcer: "For the union, 425." More cheering than before. The crowd starts chanting "Union, union, union..." Two of Norma's friend's break down with tears of happiness. The boss men quickly leave.
72. Norma and Reuben hear the chants outside, smile to each other. Reuben is leaving immediately. They walk to his car, not knowing what to say to each other. Reuben offers to send her a copy of Dylan Thomas, but Norma's already bought one for herself. R: "Nobody can do anything for you, huh?" Norma tells him he's done a lot for her. He says she's done something for the unions. They arrive at his car, he refuses to say goodbye because he doesn't want to cry. R: "Best wishes don't hardly seem like enough..." Reuben admits to thinking she's pretty, that he likes her. Norma blushes. He finally just offers his hand. They grasp for a long time. Then without saying anything he gets in his car and drives away, leaving Norma standing alone in front of the mill.
73. END CREDITS: over Norma, as she watches Reuben drive away into the distance.