



CALIFORNIA
NEWSREEL

STRANGE FRUIT

STRANGE FRUIT



A devastating yet inspiring reminder of when racial terror raged through this country and when Blacks and whites worked together to stop it. This film can help strengthen this same struggle in our own era."

—Morris Dees, Southern Poverty Law Center

DVD
VIDEO

STRANGE FRUIT



Strange Fruit explores the origins and legacy of Billie Holiday's haunting classic, one of the most influential protest songs ever written. The saga brings viewers face-to-face with the terror of lynching even as it spotlights the courage of those who fought for racial justice. It examines the history of lynching, and the interplay of race, labor and the left, and popular culture that gave rise to the Civil Rights Movement.

While many people assume the song "Strange Fruit" was written by Holiday herself, it was actually conceived as a poem by a Jewish-American schoolteacher from the Bronx. Disturbed by a photograph of a lynching, the teacher wrote the stark verse and brooding melody. It was first put to music at a meeting of his New York teachers union. But it was when Billie Holiday began performing the song at New York's Cafe Society and then later recorded it that "Strange Fruit" began to gain notoriety. The song reached Number 16 on popular music charts just months after being released, despite a ban by radio stations who labeled it subversive. Footage of Lady Day herself performing her bitter and heart wrenching signature song stands at the center of the film.



"This indispensable video fills in the history binding the struggle against lynching and for Black rights with a wealth of common history of African Americans, Jewish Americans, and the American Left. We need to learn this chapter in our past."
—**Nell Irvin Painter, Princeton University**

"I knew Billie Holiday and how deeply Strange Fruit affected her — as this film vividly shows."
—**Nat Hentoff, Village Voice**

Producer/Director: Joel Katz
57 minutes, 2002, Closed Captioned
Produced in Association with the Independent Television Service (ITVS)

SPECIAL DVD FEATURES: Interview with the Director, Extended Clips of Interviews, Additional Scenes, Suggested Weblinks

Discover a rich resource of African American history and culture at www.newsreel.org

STRANGE FRUIT

