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## Judge lets talk host know who runs show

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Making her courtroom debut in Ann Arbor, Sally Jessy Raphael hosted the morning round of testimony Thursday, defending herself in a lawsuit over an edition of her talk show about the Church of Scientology.

Raphael, in a taupe suit and her trademark red eyeglasses, nodded deferentially to the jury, as if it were an audience, and interrogated lawyers.

Finally, Washtenaw County Circuit Judge Melinda Morris told her to knock it off.

"Put yourself in the position of people you ask questions of on a show," Morris told Raphael pointedly. "Wait until you are asked. Otherwise we'll be here tomorrow and the next day. The next time I will take action."

Playing to cameras in a packed courtroom, Raphael said she had a 220 IQ and has been a journalist for 37 years. Until now, her nationally syndicated program — seen at 3 p.m. weekdays on WDIV-TV (Channel 4 in Detroit) — never has been sued.

Raphael is among several defendants named in a \$72-million lawsuit involving the Church of Scientology. She said she volunteered to testify and even canceled a show taping to come.

"This is an important case you're sitting on," she told the jury.

Church staff member Dorothy Dickerson, 61, of Albion says Raphael invaded her privacy and caused her emotional distress in 1991. A conversation between Dickerson and her children had been secretly recorded by Dickerson's daughter and a camera crew in an Ann Arbor park and was broadcast on Raphael's show.

Two of Dickerson's daughters, Valda Gratias and Emma Urban, appeared on the July 1991 show, saying their mother had been brainwashed by Scientologists.

Dickerson's attorney, Robert Logeman, hammered away at Raphael about her role in obtaining the tape. Logeman argued that the 90-minute tape was edited to a 40-second segment that made Dickerson appear foolish.

In the tape, Dickerson confides to her daughter that she makes only \$5,000 a year and loves washing dishes for the church.

Raphael's attorney, Greg Curtner, argued that Gratias had a First Amendment right, as a participant in a conversation, to record it. And he noted that Michigan's eavesdropping statute permits recording as long as one of the parties is aware of it.

Raphael said repeatedly that her producers handled the tape and she had nothing to do with its production. The producers invited both Dickerson and other Scientologists to be on the show, but they declined, she said.

But after nearly two hours, her television persona began to crack and she admitted to being nervous. She asked Morris for a glass of water and a rest room break. On the way back from the rest room she explained her willingness to testify.

"You must defend the public's right to know," she said in a courtroom hallway. "You fight a lot of little battles one at a time."

Raphael added that the lawsuit was an attempt by the Church of Scientology to silence media critics.

"If they cause enough discomfort, people will not do shows on Scientology," she said.

Back on the stand, Raphael seemed near tears as Logeman hammered away again about her alleged role in obtaining the tape.

"I had nothing to do with it," Raphael declared. "You've asked me over and over to the point of intimidation. ... You know how to intimidate a woman. You want me to say I put the tape on the air. I did not do it."

After that, the Sally Jessy Raphael show in Ann Arbor was over. Surrounded by assistants and photographers, Raphael was whisked away to a black Cadillac limousine, waiting, ironically across from the park where the tape was made.

The limousine, honking its horn in farewell, whisked her away to a waiting plane.

Testimony in the case continues Monday.

### LOCAL NEWS



LARRY E. WRIGHT/Associated Press

Sally Jessy Raphael defends herself Thursday in Ann Arbor against a Church of Scientology member's suit, stemming from a 1991 episode