

LIFE AFTER MANSON

The untold story of Patricia Krenwinkel



EDUCATIONAL DISCUSSION GUIDE

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ABOUT THE FILM

Life After Manson is an intimate portrait of one of the world's most infamous crimes and notorious killers. At 21, Patricia Krenwinkel callously murdered three people at the command of Charles Manson. Now 66-years-old, she continues to be demonized by the public and haunted by the suffering she caused over four decades ago.

Through an exclusive interview with and never-before-seen footage of Patricia Krenwinkel, *Life After Manson* frames a historically irreconcilable story through a complex emotional lens, offering insight into what led a suburban girl to commit crimes the world will never forget. For the first time, the public will learn what caused a young girl to recklessly run away from home and toward destruction. Her unlikely relationship with the charismatic Charles Manson led her to cross every line of moral consciousness, resulting in the brutal murders she committed to win the approval of the man she loved.

Life After Manson offers a provocative character study that reveals a broken woman struggling with her past, her arduous effort to evaluate the cost of her choices, and the possibility of self-forgiveness. Can society offer her the same? Is it possible to identify with a woman who took life only to lose her own in a desperate effort to find love?



PATRICIA KRENWINKEL - QUICK FACTS

EARLY YEARS

Born on December 3, 1947 in Los Angeles, California, Patricia Krenwinkel's parents divorced when she was fourteen.

She dropped out of her first semester of college to go live with her step sister in Manhattan Beach, CA where she was introduced to the late 1960's drug scene.

Patricia met Charles Manson at a party in 1967, and became one of his most devoted followers.

She was the third person that Manson recruited into "The Family."

As part of The Manson Family, she was known as "Katie."

THE CRIMES

The Manson Family murders resulted in the deaths of seven people in two, separate Los Angeles homes on the nights of August 8 and August 9, 1969.

- The first night occurred at the home of Roman Polanski and actress Sharon Tate, who was eight and a half months pregnant. By the end of the night, Tate and four others in the house were murdered. Patricia was responsible for stabbing Abigail Folger (of the coffee empire).
- The second night occurred at the home of local business owners, Leo and Rosemary LaBianca. Patricia was responsible for stabbing Mrs. LaBianca.

On March 29, 1971, Patricia was found guilty and sentenced to death, along with three other Manson Family defendants.

- Charles Manson was also convicted for the murders and conspiracy charges even though he was never found to have committed a homicide himself but commanded the members of his Family.

LIFE IN PRISON

California overturned the death penalty in 1972 which changed Patricia's sentence to life in prison.

Patricia has maintained a perfect prison record with no disciplinary write-ups.

She received a Bachelor's degree in Human Services from the University of La Verne and is active in prison programs such as the Canine Support Team, which trains dogs for the disabled. She is also a reading tutor and a mentor in several inmate support group programs.

She currently works in the Forestry Department at the prison, which trains inmates to become firefighters.

The last media interview Patricia participated in was with Diane Sawyer in 1994.

Patricia is the longest-incarcerated female inmate in the California prison system.

Patricia has been denied parole thirteen times. Her last hearing was in January 2011, and her next one is scheduled for 2018.

2014 is the 45th Anniversary of the Manson Family murders.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



I remember the first time I walked into prison. I was nervous that night as I began my volunteer work at the California Institution for Women; my mind was racing with scenes from movies of barbed wire barricades and hardened criminals. As the guard slammed the gate behind me, I wondered if I had made the right decision. Walking toward the visiting room, the fluorescent lights seemed blinding. The smells from the dairy farms nearby were somewhat nauseating; the sounds of the alarms ringing and guard announcements kept me on edge. As I entered the inmate support group that evening back in 2001, all my preconceived notions seemed to fly back over the barbed wire fence. I was introduced to women who looked like they could be my grandmother, mother or even...myself. Were these women really murderers?

I still remember one of the first women I met who introduced herself as "Krenny." As I continued to volunteer, I slowly got to know this quiet woman who mainly stayed to the side of the group listening. I was always struck by the lines of age and worry on her face. While she seemed to be unsure of herself, there were simultaneous signs of strength. She seemed to keep to herself. Yet, when she spoke, all the other inmates paid respectful attention. Her shyness didn't keep her from giving of her wisdom as a mentor among the group when she felt it was needed. I was intrigued by what might be behind the walls that Krenny built around herself as protection. Still, I felt that this woman was the type of person who would open up to me in her own time.

It wasn't until about five years into my volunteer role at the prison that I finally got my answers as to who Krenny really was as I began documenting the support group for my last film, *Sin by Silence*. I was interviewing Norma, one of the support group's leaders, asking her to tell me about any good times in prison. Prison is a horrible place to have to call home, but I also had been witness to snippets of happiness in such an ugly and dark place. Norma started to tell me a story about her struggles to go to college. There was a program at the institution that allowed selected inmates to get their AA degree. Norma wanted to attend these college classes, but couldn't afford the fees on her 10 cent an hour wage. One of her fellow inmates stepped forward and offered to sponsor Norma in the special degree program. She saw in Norma an opportunity to invest in the future, empowering a woman who would actually have a chance at a future release from prison. Norma kept telling me how much it meant that her friend Krenny believed in her and with tears streaming down her face she called Krenny by her real name - Patricia Krenwinkel. My jaw dropped!

I had read *Helter Skelter*. I had heard the stories from older family members who had lived through the period of time when those crimes that had shocked the world. Like so many, I had always been mesmerized by the mysteries of the Manson Family. Was the woman I had gotten to know over the last 5 years actually Patricia Krenwinkel? Once again, the remaining preconceived notions I had were thrown beyond that barbed wire fence. Over the years, I had gotten to know Krenny as a person; not the Patricia Krenwinkel that the rest of the world knew her as. I had had many conversations with Krenny about life, love, politics and so much more. As she revealed slivers of her past in the support group, I knew that she had gone through some extremely terrible times. But, I had never connected all the dots; that those rough times might include horrific crimes like the infamous Manson Family murders.

About a year later, as I continued to document the support group, Krenny came up to me and said that she would like to go on camera. I was filming the concept of having women speak directly into the camera against a black backdrop to create a style of a visual diary. As Krenny and I walked into the hallway, I got her in position and told her where to look into the camera. It took a few moments for her to think about where to begin, but then the floodgates opened. It was obvious that this woman had remained silent about too many secrets and had kept so much pain wrapped up inside for years. As we stood in the hallway, it was as if this filming process became a therapeutic purge of her soul. I guess it was because of the years I had known her up to this point, that she finally felt she could trust someone with her deepest, darkest secrets. Even if it meant that someone had a camera in her face, it was as if Krenny had been waiting for this one moment her entire lifetime.

It was no small miracle that I was actually allowed to capture Krenny on camera. California has legislation in place that allows the Corrections Department to censor the media from interviewing their high profile inmates behind bars. However, since she was legitimately part of the support group I was documenting, there we stood together participating in a moment of unparalleled reality. As I quietly stood in that empty prison hallway, with nothing but a camera separating me and one of the world's most notorious female killers, my mind did not race to thoughts of terror. Krenny was revealing the story of her life and the choices she had made that led her down the path toward destruction. I found a very unexpected, personal connection to her. She had been part of something so horrible and had crossed so many moral lines, could it be I was actually sympathizing for her?

As I continued to listen to this broken woman, I heard her message and "I got it." Nothing excuses her actions nor negates the horrible things that happened. But, as she continued to share her journey, I understood more how a young girl, so beaten down physically, emotionally and sexually could get caught in the spell of madman. As a woman my heart broke for her, and I understood how at such a young, impressionable age the simplest choices can lead someone down a slippery slope. From that moment on, I began to better understand the dividing line between who this woman was and had become. The tragedy whose name was Patricia Krenwinkel and the mentor, Krenny, who struggles on a daily basis in prison to be the woman she is today.

Has Patricia Krenwinkel committed unspeakable crimes? Yes. Has Patricia Krenwinkel made decisions with horrific consequences? Yes. But, Patricia Krenwinkel has also become a new person and the world now has an opportunity to learn from this woman who society has labeled a "monster." *Life After Manson* provides that doorway through which to view and actually see the transformation from the monster into a mentor and inspiration behind bars; arguably taking the focus past the final sting of such horrific crimes to offer us a never-before-seen perspective of the fragile identity of women and the process of rehabilitation. Instead of keeping Patricia's story frozen in time, I truly hope people will listen with open ears in the present, just as I did that day in the prison hallway.

I created *Life After Manson* to embody a critical lesson for society and an opportunity for personal reflection as Krenny holds up the mirror to herself, to powerfully reveal the lessons she has so painfully learned that dares the viewer to do the same.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GENERAL PRE-FILM DISCUSSION

- 1) What do you know about Charles Manson, the Manson Family, and their crimes? How did this event impact the world at the time it occurred?
- 2) During the 1960's, many youth were experimenting with alternative lifestyles and "trying to find out who they were." How do you think this era helped make it possible for the Manson Family's crimes to be committed?
- 3) How does the Manson Family continue to impact society today?
- 4) How have we become immune to the horrific nature of murderous tragedies?

GENERAL POST-FILM DISCUSSION

- 1) What did you learn from this film? What insights did it provide about the Manson Family and their crimes?
 - What one fact, that you previously did not know, caught your attention?
- 2) Describe a moment or scene in the film that you found particularly disturbing or moving. What was it about that scene that was especially compelling for you?
- 3) If you could ask Patricia Krenwinkel a single question, what would you ask her?
- 4) To most, Patricia represents the worst in humanity. How has this film challenged that opinion?
- 5) How could Patricia be considered a victim of an abusive relationship? How might this change your perception of her crimes?
- 6) *Life After Manson* does not excuse Patricia's crimes, but when she says that she is taking "full responsibility for the damage, the wreckage, and the horror," do you believe her? Why or why not?
- 7) In 1971, Patricia Krenwinkel was sentenced to death for her part in the Charles Manson murders and her received life in prison after the death penalty was reversed the following year. Did watching the film impact your view of the death penalty at all? If so, how?
 - What were your feelings about the death penalty before watching the film? What are they now?
- 8) Have your views on the rehabilitation of criminals changed? Why or why not?
- 9) After getting to know Patricia behind bars, what do you see as the continuing challenges facing the American criminal justice system?
- 10) Patricia has been denied parole 13 times, and is not eligible for another hearing until 2018. If you were a Parole Commissioner at her next hearing, what position would you take on her eligibility for parole?
 - What reasons would you have to deny her parole?
 - What reasons would you have for finding her suitable for parole?

SOCIOLOGY & PSYCHOLOGY

1) The Milgram experiment studied the willingness of individuals to obey authority figures who instructed them to perform acts conflicting with their personal conscience. The study tried to reveal how far we are willing to go when we are told to do something by someone that we perceive to have power and authority over us.

- How is Patricia's story a modern day Milgram experiment?
- How did Manson's perceived power over Patricia affect her and ultimately become the driving force for such destruction?
- Put yourself in Patricia shoes, and the abuse she endured while part of the Manson Family. Do you feel you would have taken different action?

2) George Herbert Mead described "the self" as a person's distinct identity that is developed through social interaction. In order to engage in this process of "self," an individual has to be able to view him or herself through the eyes of others.

- When Patricia states, "Who am I? Who is he?" How does this impact her development of self identity?
- How did Patricia's experience in her family and teenage years impact her sense of self?
- How did Patricia's perceived sense of self in her teenage years leave her susceptible to someone like Manson?

3) Families are universally important social institutions relating people biologically and socially. All of us have experienced family life as individuals, we cannot fully understand this experience without a deeper understanding of the environment in which it takes place.

- From Dot Krenwinkel, Patricia's mother, description of Patricia's early years, do you feel that Patricia's family provided a healthy foundation for her development years?
- How do you think the troubled step-sister played a role in negatively impacting Patricia's youth?
- Do you get the sense that Patricia's mother was emotionally disconnected from the reality of Patricia's life?

4) We are all socialized to act in accordance with our gender, class, race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation etc. Primary socialization occurs when we are children and learning from the people who raise us. Socialization continues throughout childhood and can be influenced by family, school, peer groups, and the media. Resocialization occurs later in life, when we must adapt to changes.

- How did primary socialization impact Patricia's life? How were her parents responsible for the woman she became?
- How did the socialization of Patricia's teenage years mold her sense of identity, worth, and self-esteem?
- With the idea of resocialization, when Patricia became part of the Manson Family, how did this new environment, norms and values dramatically change the person that she was?
- How has Patricia's prison experience been an additional form of resocialization?

WOMEN'S STUDIES

- 1) During the 1960's, pregnancy was a fireable offense. Women couldn't open a bank account or establish a line of credit unless a husband would co-sign. How did growing up in this era impact Patricia?
- 2) Gender analysis is a systematic process used to identify, understand, and describe gender differences and the relevance of gender roles and power dynamics in a specific context.
 - Do you believe that Patricia Krenwinkel was in an abusive relationship with Charles Manson? What factors make you believe or disbelieve this idea?
 - Describe the cycle of violence and discuss factors that could have kept Patricia from leaving such a violent environment where she lived with Charles Manson and others.
 - One of Charles Manson's most known philosophies was how he believed a woman's sole purpose was to serve and please men. How do you feel this emotionally influenced Patricia and her relationship with Manson?
- 3) In our culture, we punish those who commit acts of violence, but our mainstream television, films, and books often show characters who prove themselves through acts of violence and masculinity. Does a society that celebrates masculinity inherently leave women vulnerable to abuse? How does a violent environment affect a woman's sense of security?
- 4) If Patricia was born and raised in the 2000's, how might her life have been different?
- 5) Reflect on how the film has challenged you, as a woman, to look at your own life, relationships, and sense of self.

CRIMINOLOGY

- 1) Of the more than 120,000 women incarcerated in the U.S., over 80% are survivors of abuse. What might this correlation between imprisonment and a history of abuse indicate about the nature of crimes committed by women? To what extent could this correlation inform ways to prevent crimes committed by victims of abuse?
- 2) Patricia Krenwinkel's story is very similar in many ways to a majority of women that are incarcerated. As shown in this film, she felt uncared for and alone, causing her to turn to another person for comfort and love. How did her adolescence lead her down a path toward incarceration?
- 3) Patricia has been able to learn and change during her incarceration, as many inmates do. Depicted in this film is her road to a new life, which she may or may not be able to live as a free person. How do you feel that Patricia has made the best of her time in prison?

4) Many criminals have been released from prison over the years whose crimes were worse than Patricia's, but much less controversial. Does this create a fair and equal justice system?

5) Do you feel that Patricia is held to a different standard when under consideration for release at a Parole Board hearing? Why or why not?

6) If you were a prisoner, would you have been able to endure the 45 years of incarceration that Patricia has served? What would you do to deal with the reality that you might never be granted freedom?

RHETORIC

1) If you had to argue in support of the death penalty, how could Patricia be used in the discussion?

2) If you had to argue against the death penalty, how could Patricia be used in the discussion?

3) What do you think are the important aspects of Patricia's story? What is the message she conveys in the film, and how does that compare to the legacy she leaves behind?

4) If you had to argue that Patricia Krenwinkel should stay in prison for the rest of her life, how would you make your argument?

5) If you had to argue that Patricia Krenwinkel has served enough time in prison and should be released, how would you make your argument?

6) Are there any phrases or rhetorical approaches in the film that stood out to you? Did certain lines or scenes move you, and if so, why? How might these phrases be applied in a broader content?

FAITH-BASED

1) The Christian concept of grace might be described as "getting what we do not deserve; but because of God's love we receive the great blessing of redemption." How does this concept relate to Patricia's journey?

2) In the Bible, Matthew 6:12 states, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." If one of the Manson Family victims were from your family would you be able to take the steps toward forgiveness? Why or why not?

3) Mohandas Gandhi once stated, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind." Reflect on how this statement relates to Patricia Krenwinkel.

4) If you are atheist or agnostic, do you have any transcendent reference point with which to gain perspective on this tragic event?

5) If you are Muslim, how might your understanding of Allah impact the way you would view the Manson Family tragedy?



WRITE TO PATRICIA

As a class assignment after watching the film, have your students write to Patricia via the information below. Have them share their thoughts on the film and what it meant to them to hear her story. Have them share their thoughts on the criminal justice system, her incarceration, as well as how they might relate to what she went through in her childhood and teenage years.

Please keep in mind to be respectful of Patricia. She has been incarcerated for 45 years, and this is the first time she has opened up about the intimate details of her story. Please do not use this activity as an avenue of continued hatred, but an opportunity for openness.

To send you message(s) via our website, please visit www.LifeAfterManson/Message

To mail your letter(s), please write to:

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