



Five More Minutes Productions

presents

The Witness

A Film by James Solomon



World Premiered at the 53rd New York Film Festival (October 2015)

2015 / 89 minutes / USA

www.kittygenovesefilm.com

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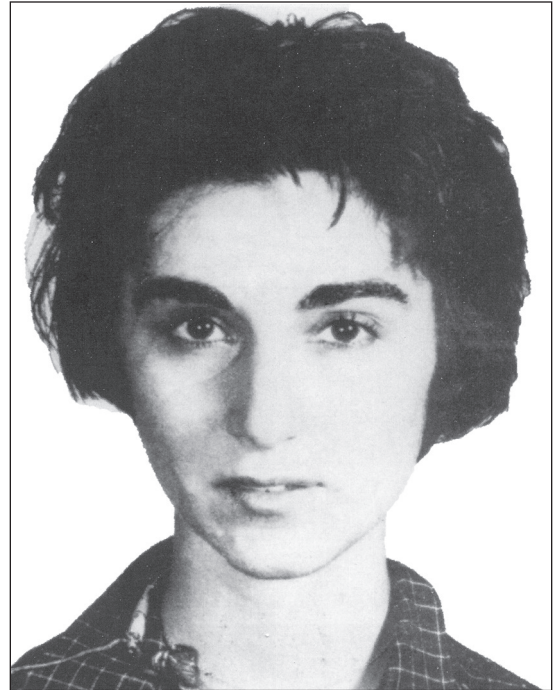
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Synopsis

Fifty years ago, the name “Kitty Genovese” became synonymous with urban apathy after news that she was stabbed to death on a Queens street while 38 witnesses in nearby apartments did nothing. “For more than half an hour,” The New York Times report began, “38 respectable, law-abiding citizens... watched a killer stalk and stab a woman in three separate attacks... Not one person called the police.” Forty years later, her brother Bill, who was 16 at the time of his sister’s death, decides to find the truth buried beneath the story. In the process, he uncovers a lie that transformed his life, condemned a city, and defined an era.

Both a probing investigation into an iconic crime and a devastating look at the effect Kitty’s murder had on those who loved her, *The Witness* illuminates how much stories shape the way we see ourselves and the world around us, and how important it is that those stories are built not only on facts, but on truths. It is a film that brings healing to the family who lost so much that cold March day in Kew Gardens, and asks us all: what do we owe each other?



Director's Statement

Like many New Yorkers, I grew up familiar with the name, “Kitty Genovese”, and the infamous story of her death: 38 neighbors watched a young woman being repeatedly stabbed to death, as if in an amphitheater, while none called the police.

Her murder defined New York City in the 1960s as dangerous and cruel, and declared that we were all fundamentally alone. It is credited with inspiring the 9-1-1 Emergency System, Good Samaritan Laws and Neighborhood Watch Groups like the Guardian Angels. It spawned countless studies on bystander inaction (“Kitty Genovese syndrome”), is taught in introductory psychology and sociology classes, and has been portrayed in songs, books, dramas, an opera and a graphic novel. It is even said to have influenced the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

As a screenwriter, I am drawn to iconic stories and figures we think we know, on subjects ranging from the Lincoln assassination (*The Conspirator*) to George Steinbrenner’s Yankees (*The Bronx is Burning*). In 1999, on the 35th anniversary of Kitty’s murder, the literary agent, Andrew Blauner, orchestrated the reprinting of *The New York Times*’ A.M. Rosenthal’s seminal account of the Kitty Genovese murder entitled, *Thirty-Eight Witnesses*. Mr. Rosenthal had been the *Times*’ Metropolitan Editor in 1964 and is cited as having broken the story. Intrigued to find out more about the case, I began researching a scripted film for HBO based on Kitty’s murder, in collaboration with the filmmaker, Joe Berlinger, and playwright, Alfred Uhry.

Strikingly, virtually nothing was known about Kitty’s life—except for her death. For decades, the Genovese family remained private in their grief. They did not attend the 1964 trial of Kitty’s killer, Winston Moseley, and seldom gave interviews. I met with many whose lives had been irrevocably altered by the tragedy, none more so than her younger brother, Bill, who was just 16 at the time. Though twelve years younger, he and Kitty were very close. It was not just the death of his beloved sister that profoundly impacted Bill’s life, but also the way it reportedly happened.

The HBO scripted project did not come to fruition, and my focus turned to other endeavors.

Then, in 2004, *The New York Times* published an article on the 40th anniversary of Kitty Genovese’s murder raising questions about the accuracy of its original account: what the witnesses saw and heard; even the number “38 Witnesses.”

Bill Genovese, who had recently retired, wished to find out for himself what actually took place that night. I approached Bill with the idea of documenting his journey, on camera, as I realized the most affecting way for me to tell Kitty’s story would be via those who had actually lived it. After several conversations, he agreed with some trepidation to let me do so, though little did we know at the time filming would span a decade.

Eleven years in the making, *The Witness* is about Bill’s unraveling of the truth surrounding the mythic death and little known life of his sister, Kitty. Breaking his family’s half-century long silence regarding Kitty’s murder, Bill relentlessly tracks down anyone still living that knew his sister in life—or through her death.

Through unwavering devotion and obsessive determination, propelled by love and loss, Bill attempts to reclaim Kitty’s life from her death. Thanks to Bill, I believe “Kitty Genovese” becomes a person not just a victim. The witnesses are no longer “them.” They are more like “us.”

By dispelling myths and confronting lies, Bill peels away the layers of a story that shaped his life and illuminates how narratives (real and imagined) impact our lives as well.

On a personal note, when I began making *The Witness* I had only an abstract understanding of sibling loss. But while in the course of filming, my only sibling, John, the most wonderful person I will ever know, was diagnosed with leukemia and passed away, in 2010. And so, in making a film about Bill’s profound loss, I began to comprehend my own.

Without the passion, commitment and sacrifice of so many whose names appear in these pages—and to whom I am beyond grateful—it would *never* have happened. Above all, I am deeply grateful to Bill Genovese and his family for generously sharing their story, for trusting in me to tell it, and for their friendship.

—James Solomon

Key Interview Subjects (in order of appearance)

Charles Skoller	The former Queens Assistant District Attorney helped prosecute Winston Moseley in 1964.
Michael Farrar	Kitty's neighbor was 13 years old when his mother, Sophia, raced from her home to try to save Kitty.
Vincent Genovese	Kitty's younger brother (by two years).
Frank Genovese	Kitty's youngest brother (by 16 years).
Lynne and Tod Tillotson	The siblings were residents of Kew Gardens, Queens in 1964, at the time, 18 and 15, respectively.
Hattie Grund	A Kew Gardens resident awoken by Kitty's screams, early the morning of March 13, 1964.
Dale Genovese	Bill's wife.
A.M. Rosenthal	The former Executive Editor of The New York Times (1977-88), Mr. Rosenthal was the paper's Metropolitan Editor in 1964 when he broke the story that dozens had witnessed Kitty Genovese's murder two weeks earlier. Later that year, Rosenthal wrote a book about the case called <i>Thirty-Eight Witnesses</i> .
Joseph De May	A long-time resident of Kew Gardens, the amateur historian's blogging on the website, <i>A Picture History of Kew Gardens</i> , challenged the accuracy of the original New York Times story.
Jim Rasenberger	A journalist/author who, 40 years after the original New York Times story appeared, wrote an article in The Times questioning its 1964 account
Mike Wallace	The legendary correspondent hosted a 30-minute long nationally broadcast CBS Radio special on the case in 1964 entitled "The Apathetic American."
Joseph Lelyveld	The former Executive Editor of The New York Times (1994-2001, 2003), Mr. Lelyveld began working at the paper in 1963.
Richard Wald	In 1964, Mr. Wald was Managing Editor of the New York Herald Tribune, a daily newspaper largely considered the Times' main competitor.
Gabe Pressman	The venerable local reporter has covered New York City for more than a half-century, mostly for WNBC-TV.
Michael Daly	A correspondent and columnist, Mr. Daly reported on Winston Moseley's unsuccessful appeal for a new trial in 1995.
Josh, Maegan and Matthew Genovese	Bill and Dale Genovese's children.
Ilse Hirsch-Metchek	A Prospect Heights High School classmate of Kitty's in Brooklyn (Class of 1953).
Victor Horan and Walter Brosnan	At the time of her death, Kitty was the bar manager at Ev's Eleventh Hour in Hollis, Queens, where Mr. Horan and Mr. Brosnan were a bartender and customer, respectively.
Angelo Lanzone	A close friend of Kitty's in Queens, NY.
Mary Ann Zielonko	Kitty's roommate and girlfriend, the pair moved to Kew Gardens the year before Kitty's death after meeting in Greenwich Village.
Kensworth Cleare	His father was a "Good Samaritan" whose actions directly led to the arrest of Winston Moseley in Queens, NY – five days after Kitty's murder.
Albert Seedman	The former Chief of Detectives for the New York Police Department. Mr. Seedman was a Deputy Inspector for NYPD in 1964 and helped oversee the case.
Robert Sparrow	His father, Sidney Sparrow, was assigned to defend Winston Moseley in 1964. Robert was a junior lawyer in his father's Kew Gardens-based legal office and assisted on the case.
Neil Welch	The former FBI Special Agent, Mr. Welch ran the Bureau's Western New York office when Moseley escaped in 1968. After an hour-long armed, face-to-face standoff, Welch negotiated Moseley's surrender.
Steven Moseley	Winston Moseley's son was seven years old at the time of Kitty's murder.
Sophia Farrar	Kitty's friend and next-door neighbor, Ms. Farrar rushed outside, in her robe, just after 3 o'clock in the morning in an attempt to save Kitty's life.

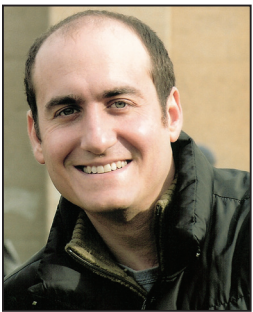
About the Subject



William Genovese

Bill was 16 years old at the time of his sister Kitty's murder. Their parents, Vincent and Rachel Genovese, had five children (in order): Kitty, Vincent, Susan, Bill and Frank. Though 12 years younger, Bill and Kitty were very close. A self-described "amateur ethologist," Bill was until his retirement the COO to various mental health and educational organizations. He and his wife, Dale, have three children and four grandchildren.

About the Creative Team



James Solomon, Director/Producer

Eleven years in the making, *The Witness* is James Solomon's directorial debut.

As a screenwriter, Solomon is drawn to stories we *think* we know. Most recently, he wrote the feature film, *The Conspirator*, directed by Robert Redford. The legal thriller about the Lincoln assassination starred James McAvoy, Robin Wright, Kevin Kline, and Tom Wilkinson. Solomon's original screenplay received the Humanitas Prize.

Previously, Solomon was a lead writer and Executive Producer of ESPN's critically acclaimed eight-hour mini-series, *The Bronx is Burning*, starring John Turturro and Oliver Platt, which, like *The Witness*, is about a seminal moment in New York City history.

Solomon began as a writer on several television series including Sidney Lumet's 100 Centre Street and the Emmy Award-winning *The Practice*. He graduated from Harvard College and was a directing fellow at the American Film Institute before assisting directors on two Oscar-nominated films: Barry Levinson's *Avalon* and Arne Glimcher's *The Mambo Kings*.

Prior to working in film and television, he was a journalist based in Asia and Australia.

Solomon grew up and lives in New York City.

Melissa Jacobson, Co-Producer

Melissa Jacobson is the head of development for Five More Minutes Productions. In addition, she oversaw research for the film, *The Conspirator*, and the ESPN limited series, *The Bronx is Burning*. Previously, she was co-founder of a stock footage research company, Alternative Images, and Acquisitions Specialist at Getty Images / The Image Bank. This is her first documentary.

Gabriel Rhodes, Editor

Gabriel Rhodes is both an editor and a filmmaker. His theatrical documentary credits include *The Tillman Story*, *Without Shepherds* and most recently, *1971*. His work has premiered at prestigious festivals such as Sundance and Cannes and has been broadcast on Sundance Channel, A&E, Animal Planet, CNN, PBS, and on the NPR radio show "This American Life." In 2011, two of his edited films (*The Tillman Story* and *Quest for Honor*) were shortlisted for the Academy Awards. He was a fellow at the 2015 Sundance Documentary Edit & Story Lab and was awarded a fellowship from the New York State Council for the Arts in 2004. He received his Master's Degree in Documentary Film from Stanford University in 2000.

Russell Greene, Editor

Russell Greene is a film editor and director based in Brooklyn, NY. His feature film credits include *Famous Nathan*, *Harry Dean Stanton: Partly Fiction*, *Ordinary Miracles: The Photo League's New York*, *Hungry is the Tiger*, and *2B*. His edited films have appeared in top US and International festivals including Venice, New York, SXSW, Tribeca, IDFA, Edinburgh, and Los Angeles.

In addition to feature films, Russell has edited and directed numerous short films, commercials, web series and branded content films. They include the award-winning short film *Easy Street* and the acclaimed web series *Made HERE* about New York performing artists.

His assistant editor credits include the Academy Award-nominated *Nerakhoon: The Betrayal* and the Sundance award-winning *Patti Smith: Dream of Life*.

Trish Govoni, Director of Photography

A graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and the American Film Institute, Trish Govoni has collaborated with acclaimed directors ranging from Joe Berlinger (*Iconoclasts*) to the iconic experimental filmmaker Godfrey Reggio (*Visitors*).

In addition to *Visitors*, which premiered at the 2013 Toronto International Film Festival, Govoni's documentary credits include *The Wrecking Crew*, the story of LA studio musicians; *Operation Fine Girl*, about the atrocities committed during the civil war in Sierra Leone; and; *Pretty Old*, which looks at the 30th anniversary of the Ms. Senior Sweetheart Pageant.

Her television credits include *Iconoclasts* for the Sundance Channel; National Geographic Explorer, *DEA*, directed by Tony Gerber, and numerous concerts on VH1 for artists including Paul Simon, Billy Joel, Dave Mathews, and Tom Waits. Other narrative work includes projects with directors Dito Montiel, Trudie Styler and Carol Leifer.

Nathan Halpern, Composer

Nathan Halpern is a Brooklyn-based composer, recently named as one of Indiewire's "Composers to Watch" for 2015. His film scores include *Rich Hill*, winner of the 2014 Sundance Film Festival Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary. He is also known for his original score for *Marina Abramovic: The Artist is Present* (HBO Films), winner of the Emmy Award for Best Arts and Cultural Programming, the George Foster Peabody Award, The Panorama Audience Award at the Berlin International Film Festival, and numerous additional festival awards.

Other recent film credits include The PBS documentary films *Poisoner's Handbook* (currently nominated for an Emmy) and *Kehinde Wiley: An Economy of Grace*, winner of the 2014 South by Southwest Grand Jury Prize. In 2013, he scored Robert Redford's *All The President's Men Revisited* (Discovery), which was nominated for a Primetime Emmy. That same year, Halpern was commissioned to create "1913," a sound/music installation at New York City's Lexington Armory, commemorating the 100 year anniversary of the first International Exhibition of Modern Art. Halpern made his film-scoring debut in 2011 with *Renee* (ESPN Films / 30 for 30).

Moth Collective, Animator

Moth Collective is a multi-award winning animation studio formed by Daniel Chester, Dave Prosser and Marie-Margaux Tsakiri-Scanatovits. They formed in 2010 after meeting at the Royal College of Art to share a collective passion for all things drawn. Moth's work made their feature debut in *Maidentrip*, which won the Audience Visions Award at the 2013 SXSW Film Festival. Moth are acclaimed for their sensitive and thought provoking hand-drawn work with an emphasis on design and story.

Credits

Directed and Produced by
James Solomon

Executive Produced by
William Genovese

Co-Produced by
Melissa Jacobson

Edited by
Gabriel Rhodes

Edited by
Russell Greene

Cinematography by
Trish Govoni

Original Music by
Nathan Halpern

Animations by
Moth Collective

Post-Production Supervisor
Steven Bennett

Archival Producer
Chris Cliadakis

Associate Producer
Maria Valva

Production Associate
Karen Wheeler

Featuring in Order of Appearance

William Genovese
Aaron Adler
Charles Skoller
Bill Hirsch
Michael Farrar
Vincent Genovese
Frank Genovese
Aram Boyajian
Lynne Tillotson
Tod Tillotson
Hattie Grund
Dale Genovese
A.M. Rosenthal
Joseph De May
Jim Rasenberger
Mike Wallace
Joseph Lelyveld
Richard Wald

Gabe Pressman
Michael Daly
Janet Genovese
Josh Genovese
Maegan Genovese
Jordan Genovese
Jaime Genovese
Justin Genovese
Matthew Genovese
Ilse Hirsch-Metchek
Walter Brosnan
Victor Horan
Angelo Lanzzone
Mary Ann Zielonko
Kensworth Cleare
Albert Seedman
Robert Sparrow
Neil Welch

Mark Collins
Janet Koupash
Steven Moseley
Linda Ellen Bonekoskey
Sandra Brooks
Christine King
Sophia Farrar
Melissa Genovese
Avery Genovese
Brooke Genovese
Kayla Connolly
Christopher Wakeman
Ronan Genovese-Flaherty
Harold Takooshian
Kevin Cook
Catherine Pelonaro
Curtis Sliwa

Narration Written by

William Genovese
Russell Greene
Gabriel Rhodes
James Solomon

Camera Operators

Jonathan Nelson
Chris Besecker
Mike Debbie

Sound Recordists

Mike Silvestri
Mike Gassert

First Assistant Editor

Alex Bayer

Second Assistant Editors

Hannah Buck
Erin Taylor Kennedy
Michael Peterson

Post-Production Assistants

Claire Ave'Lallemant
Glen Loreio
Chris Radcliff

2D Animation

Ignatz Johnson Higham
Daniela Negrin Ochoa
Marie-Margaux Tsakiri-Scanatovits

Compositing

Harj Bains
Joe Bichard
Leo Brindle
Daniel Chester
Aaron Lampert
Claudio Salas
Ian Sargent

Title Design / After Effects Artist

Scott Strange

Voice-Over Casting

ACM Talent
Billy Hopkins Casting

Voice-Over Artists

Nelson Avidon
Alison Fraser
Nadette Stasa

Picture Post-Production Facility

Prime Focus

Colorist

Alex Berman

Online Editor

David Gauff

Post-Producer for Prime Focus

Anthony Matt

Compositing/ VFX

Eugene Lenhert

Archival Image Enhancement

Lowry Digital (a Prime Focus Company)

Audio Post-Production Facility

Creative Audio Post

Sound Design and Re-recording mixer

Jacques Boulanger

Post-Producer for Creative Audio Post

Holly Grace

Consulting Editor

Penelope Falk

Music Consultant

Abigail Kende

Beth Amy Rosenblatt

Archival Material Courtesy of

Aram Boyajian, 1978-1979,
Cecile Starr Papers, Rare Book & Manuscript Library,
Columbia University in the City of New York

Peggy Cahill

CBS News

Classic Images Stock Footage

Critical Past

Kensworth Cleare

Kenny Cyr

Joseph De May

Michael Farrar

The Genovese Family

Lucille Giordano

Robert Giordano

GLBT Historical Society, SF

Syd and Beverly Greenberg

Bill Hirsch

Ilse Hirsch-Metchek

Angelo Lanzone

Leonard Lopate Show – WNYC Radio

Library of Congress

Dan Meenan

Kathy Mikolasy

June Murley

NBC Universal Archives
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Gabe Pressman
Daniel M. Rosenthal
Bob Sparrow
Lynne Tillotson
Wazee Digital
Neil Welch

William J. Clinton Presidential Library & Museum
Interview of Chief Albert A. Seedman Footage courtesy of
Fredric King, Fountainhead Transmedia, Inc.

Original Score by Nathan Halpern
Courtesy of Copticon Music (ASCAP)

Additional Music
Chris Ruggiero

The Filmmakers Are Grateful to Those Who Were Also Interviewed

Richard Beauvais	Lucille Giordano	Owen Moritz
Jimmy Breslin	Robert Giordano	June Murley
Joe Cardinale	Brooke Gladstone	Phil and Cynthia Muth
Mike Chernetsky	Beverly and Syd Greenberg	Hera Navassardian
Bill Corrado	Harriet Haims	Butch Peterson
Tony Corrado	Peter Hellman	Winnie Ringers
Kenny and Mary Cyr	Diane Hoffman	Constance Rosenblum
John Darley	Chris Hussey	Curtis Sliwa
Ronnie Eldridge	Dorothy Kahaner	John Tartaglia
TJ English	Edith Kauffman	Ed Timmons
Rosemary Festo	Barry Lewis	Martin Tolchin
Irwin Friedman	Betty Lorenzo	Bonnie Underwood
Marcia Gallo	Vinnie Lorenzo	Christopher Wakeman
Alan Gansberg	John Melia	Paul Wolfowitz
Kitty Gatto	Tara Mendez	Rayna Zeidenberg
	Kathy Mikolasy	

**The filmmakers are deeply grateful to The Genovese Family
for their kindness, generosity, trust and friendship.**

For Kitty
and
For John

FIVE MORE MINUTES PRODUCTIONS

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