



# SAFVIC ON THE SCENE

## **PATRICIA KRENWINKEL: JOURNEY FROM MONSTER TO SURVIVOR**

Written by: Olivia Klaus

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. 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 nauseating. The sound of the alarms and guard announcements blaring kept me on edge. As I entered the incarcerated battered women's support group that evening in 2001, all my preconceived notions seemed to fly back over the barbed wire fence.

The group Convicted Women Against Abuse (CWAA) was formed by several women serving life sentences for killing their abusers, and has since grown to a membership of nearly 60 inmates. This historic group was the first inmate initiated and led group in the California prison system. They meet twice a month and provide a setting for abused women behind bars to share their past experiences of victimization and come together to heal. With nearly 80% of incarcerated women coming to prison with an experience of an abusive past, I was blown away as I was introduced to women who looked like they could be my grandmother, mother or even...myself. Were these women really murderers?

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**Olivia Klaus**

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**Patricia Krenwinkel**

October 16th , 2014

**Texas Goes Purple**



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SAFVIC Instructors and Staff take Start By Believing Pledge

## Start by Believing

Start by Believing is a public awareness campaign focused on improving the public's response to sexual violence. Created by End Violence Against Women International, the Start by Believing campaign's goal is to "inform the public, unite supporters and improve reactions by changing the world, one response at a time."

### Your Reaction Makes A Difference

Sexual assault offenders attack an average of six times. A friend or family member is typically the first person a victim confides in after being assaulted and their reaction is critical to reporting, trauma response, and further victimization.

### SAFVIC Vows to Start By Believing

SAFVIC is committed to supporting all survivors of sexual violence by providing Texas law enforcement with the tools they need to effectively investigate, prevent, and respond to sexual assault cases. When someone tells us they were raped or sexually assaulted, SAFVIC Starts by Believing. For more information on Start by Believing, please visit their website at [www.startbybelieving.org](http://www.startbybelieving.org).

## Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Over 100 women lose their lives to domestic violence each year in the state of Texas. October shines a light on domestic violence, and this year we vow to **GO PURPLE** and focus our energy on education, prevention, and increased awareness. Thursday, October 16th show your support and wear **purple!**



## Life After Manson



“Life After Manson is an intimate portrait of one of the world’s most infamous crimes. At 21-years-old, Patricia Krenwinkel callously murdered 3 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.”

**SAFVIC newsletter recipients will receive a special discounted rate of 25% off.**

To watch the trailer for [Life After Manson](#), and for more information about the film and the SAFVIC member discount, please visit the website at:

[www.lifeaftermanson.com/safvic/](http://www.lifeaftermanson.com/safvic/)

## Journey from Monster to Survivor

I still remember one of the first women I met who introduced herself as “Krenny.” As I continued to volunteer over the years, I slowly got to know this quiet woman who mainly stayed to the side of the group listening. As I got to know Krenny, 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 her shyness didn’t keep her from sharing insight 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 Krenny 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*. One of the inmates I was interviewing called Krenny by her real name - Patricia Krenwinkel. My jaw dropped! I had read *Helter Skelter*. Like so many, I had always been mesmerized by the mysteries of the Manson Family. Was the Krenny I had known for the last 5 years actually Patricia Krenwinkel? Once again, the remaining preconceived notions I had were thrown beyond that barbed wire fence. 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 that those rough times might include horrific crimes like the Manson Family murders.

About a year later, as I continued document the support group, Krenny came up to me and said that she would like to go on camera. As we walked into the hallway, I got her in position and told her where to look into the camera. It was obvious that this woman had remained silent about her past and had kept so much pain wrapped up inside for years. Yet, as she stood in front of that camera, it was as if this filming process became a therapeutic purge of her soul. As I quietly stood in that empty prison hallway, with nothing but a camera separating me and one of the world’s most infamous female killers, my mind did not come to rest in thoughts of terror. Krenny was revealing the choices she had made that led her down the path toward destruction, and 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 that she was slowly revealing a similar story to her fellow incarcerated survivors?

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## First Love

When 19-year-old Patricia met Charles, it wasn't love at first sight. They were at a party and Patricia was introduced to a 5'4" man who was just let out of prison on parole. As the partying continued, Patricia started warming up to this charismatic man while he played his guitar and complimented her on how beautiful she was. Patricia had never felt special. She grew up in a family that was silent and detached. Supportive, but broken. Having struggled with her weight most of her life, she never felt beautiful. She has always been the one that went unnoticed by others, so why was this man paying attention to her?

As the night continued, Patricia began to let her protective wall down and Charles got a hold of her heart. They slept together and Patricia had never felt so loved. She had never felt such a connection to someone, and had a man treat her as if she were the prettiest girl in the entire world. The next morning, she decided to leave her life behind to start a new chapter with the love of her life.

*"When Patricia tried to leave what quickly turned into a cult-like group, Charles grabbed her by her hair into a car and while driving 100 mph kicked the door open so that she could jump out if she truly wanted to leave."*

## Crossing the Line

During the next year Patricia let Charles take over her life. In the beginning it remained just the two of them in their relationship, but slowly Charles started testing her boundaries by introducing more drugs, captivating more girlfriends to join their group, and even encouraging them to steal a car here and there. He changed her name, took all of her clothes and money, and the isolation began so that he could gain full control of every aspect of her life. Patricia was never truly comfortable with the path Charles was leading her down, but continued to stay. She continued to stay because of the good times when she felt loved, adored, and as if she were the only girl that Charles truly cherished. But, the good times partnered with even more bad times, as Charles forced her to have sex with others, made her eat her meals outside with the dogs if she didn't have food on the table fast enough, and even stripped her naked in the middle of a group while everyone ridiculed the flaws on her body. What started as love, steadily progressed into a textbook abuse scenario.

When Patricia tried to leave what quickly turned into a cult-like group, Charles dragged her by her hair into a car and while driving 100 mph kicked the door open so that she could jump out if she truly wanted to leave. The downward spiral continued as he commanded every minute of her day to do exactly what he told her to do, with fear that if she didn't follow along, he would kill her. After a year of verbal, emotional, and sexual degradation, mixed with over 250 LSD trips, she became a sponge that followed his every command in hopes to continue to win his daily approval. In the end, Patricia followed Charles Manson out of blind devotion. As she tried to win the approval of the man she thought she loved, she took part in the death of seven innocent victims in crimes the world will never forget.

## Life After Manson

Patricia may be an extreme case of abuse, but she is not so much a unique case compared to the other incarcerated battered women that I have worked with over the last decade. The one factor that separates her being publicly labeled and accepted as an abused woman, are her crimes. But, what can we learn from her experiences to better understand the steps victims of violence will take to win the approval of the people who control them?

I remember the day I captured Patricia on camera as if it were yesterday. As I continued to hear from this broken woman, I heard her message and understood how at such a young impressionable age, the simplest choices can lead down a path of destruction. Nothing excuses her actions, nor negates the horrible things that happened.





## 2014 Instructor of the Year

The SAFVIC Staff would like to congratulate Detective B.W. Smith for being the recipient of the 2014 SAFVIC Instructor of the Year Award! B.W. has been a SAFVIC Instructor for over 10 years, and has over 40 years of experience as a Texas Peace Officer, and an extensive background in domestic violence and sexual assault investigations.

B.W. is pictured (left) next to survivor Montoya Jackson. Montoya honored B.W. at this years summit for saving her life - just another reason why we love him so much!

*“Words cannot express my gratitude...Because of you, I’m a better mother, a better daughter, a better teacher, a better coach, a better person. I love you B.W.”- M. Jackson*

*Continued...*

But, I now better understand how a young girl, so beaten down physically, emotionally and sexually could get caught in the madness of a man like Charles Manson. I now better understand the dividing line between who she was and had become. The tragedy whose name was Patricia Krenwinkel and the inmate, Krenny, who struggles on a daily basis in prison to be the woman she is today.

With this year being the 45th anniversary of the crimes, I created the new documentary *Life After Manson* to tell Patricia’s untold story so that the world would finally have an opportunity to learn from this woman who previously had been labeled a “monster.” Her story embodies a critical case study of the extreme fringe of abusive relationships to better understand those who commit the worst of crimes. From our premiere this year at the Tribeca Film Festival, to an excerpt of the film we debuted on the NY Times to millions of viewers, it’s been exciting to open audience’s eyes to these never before revealed aspects of Patricia’s story.

Has Patricia Krenwinkel committed unspeakable crimes? Yes. Has Patricia Krenwinkel made decisions with horrific consequences? Yes. But, Patricia didn’t just wake up one day and partake in the killing of seven people. Slowly she gave up every aspect of her life to an abusive, madman that took every opportunity to mold her into who he wanted her to be. *Life After Manson* provides a look into that doorway through which to view and actually see the transformation from the monster into the longest incarcerated woman in California prisons who has become an inspiration behind bars. By studying that transformation, we can arguably take the focus passed 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 the past, I truly hope people will listen with open ears in the present, just as I did that day filming in the prison hallway. I created *Life After Manson* to embody a valuable lesson for society and opportunity for personal reflection as this woman candidly holds up the mirror to herself to powerfully reveal the lessons she has so painfully learned that dares every viewer to do the same.

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*“Piecing together  
the tools needed to  
effectively investigate &  
prevent sexual assault,  
family violence, stalking,  
& human trafficking.”*

