



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT

Lisa Tawil, ITVS 415-356-8383 lisa_tawil@itvs.org
Mary Lugo 770-623-8190 lugo@negia.net
Cara White 843-881-1480 cara.white@mac.com

For downloadable images, visit pbs.org/pressroom/

***The Witness* Premieres on *Independent Lens*
Monday, January 23, 2017 on PBS**

Online Streaming Begins January 24

New Film Investigates the Notorious Kitty Genovese Murder Case



Kitty Genovese, circa 1956.
Credit: Courtesy of *The Witnesses Film, LLC.*; photo from June Murley

(San Francisco, CA) — The name Kitty Genovese became synonymous with bystander apathy after *The New York Times* reported that 38 witnesses watched her being murdered — and did nothing to help. This version of events went largely unchallenged for half a century. The horrifying implications of the *Times* story reached across the city and the country, and would eventually impact lawmakers and lecture halls across the globe. At home, determined to prove he wasn't like the witnesses who watched and did nothing, Kitty's younger brother Bill Genovese volunteered to serve in Vietnam where he would lose both his legs in combat.

More than 50 years later, ***The Witness*** follows a brother's search for the truth. In the process, he unravels a myth that transformed his life, condemned a city, and defined an era. In his decade-long investigation, Bill confronts those closest to the crime, including the surviving witnesses to Kitty's death as well as journalists Mike Wallace, Gabe Pressman, and A.M. Rosenthal, *The New York Times* editor who wrote the initial coverage of the murder that launched the legend. Filmed over the course of 11 years, *The Witness*, directed and produced by James Solomon, premieres on *Independent Lens* Monday, January 23, 2017, 10:00-11:30 PM ET ([check local listings](#)) on PBS.

Filmmaker James Solomon came of age in New York during the 1970s, at a time when the cautionary tale of Kitty Genovese hung over the city. Solomon grew up to become a screenwriter and would find the opportunity to write a script about the 1964 Genovese murder. "I was originally attracted to the story as a morality play and wanted to explore what happened in those apartments. I had no reason to doubt the popular narrative of the 38 witnesses who watched."

In 2004, *The New York Times* published an article on the 40th anniversary of the murder that raised questions about the accuracy of its original account, what the witnesses actually saw and heard, and whether there really even were 38 of them. Bill Genovese, who had been close to his big sister, decided to find out for himself what actually took place that night and Solomon proposed the idea of documenting his investigation. Solomon added, "When my research for the script led me to Bill and I began speaking with the people most affected by what happened that



1435 Folsom Street
San Francisco CA 94103
T. 415 356 8383
F. 415 356 8391
pbs.org/independentlens

night, I came to believe there had been enough fictionalizing of the Genovese story and that a documentary would bring us closer to the truth.”

“At a time when there is a renewed focus on the responsibility of the press and public institutions to ask tough questions to distinguish myth from truth, *The Witness* shows the consequences when we don't," said Lois Vossen, *Independent Lens* executive producer. "James' documentary reminds us how ambiguous events get reshaped into narratives to fit our collective and individual needs in the absence of the whole truth.”

A gripping mystery, *The Witness* debunks one of America’s most chilling crime stories as a brother reclaims his sister’s forgotten life from her infamous death.

Visit [The Witness](#) page on *Independent Lens*, which features more information about the film. *The Witness* will be available for online viewing on the site beginning January 24, 2017.

About the Filmmakers

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 that delve into the truth behind legends. 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.

William Genovese (Subject/Executive Producer) 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 the Chief Operating Officer of various mental health and educational organizations until his retirement. He and his wife, Dale, have three children and four grandchildren.



CREDITS

Directed and Produced by	James Solomon
Executive Produced by	William Genovese
Co-Produced by	Melissa Jacobson
Edited by	Gabriel Rhodes 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

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS Monday nights at 10:00 PM. The acclaimed series, with Lois Vossen as executive producer, features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens. Join the conversation: [facebook.com/independentlens](https://www.facebook.com/independentlens) and on Twitter [@IndependentLens](https://twitter.com/IndependentLens).

###



1435 Folsom Street
San Francisco CA 94103
T. 415 356 8383
F. 415 356 8391
pbs.org/independentlens