



Thirty-Eight Witnesses: The Kitty Genovese Case

A.M. Rosenthal

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"[Rosenthal] told a stunning, tragic story and called each one of us to account for averting our eyesâ€™ and heartsâ€™ and voices."

-Mike Wallace, 60 Minutes

It remains one of the most notorious deaths in New York City history not because of who was murdered but because of the circumstances: 28-year-old Kitty Genovese was brutally murdered, in an attack that took nearly thirty minutes and had thirty-eight witnesses...not one of whom did a thing to stop the murderer or even call for help.

A.M. Rosenthal, who would later become one of the most famous and controversial editors *The New York Times* has ever had, was the newspaper's city editor then; the murder happened on his beat. He first published this book in 1964, the year of the murder. It is part memoir, part investigative journalism, and part public service.

Thirty-Eight Witnesses: The Kitty Genovese Case Details

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Author : A.M. Rosenthal

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From Reader Review *Thirty-Eight Witnesses: The Kitty Genovese Case* for online ebook

Carrie says

On March 13, 1964 Catherine “Kitty” Genovese was returning home from work around 3am when she was brutally attacked and murdered near her building. The attack took place over a period of thirty five minutes with thirty eight people in nearby apartments listening to her screams but not helping or calling the police.

This short true crime book mainly covers the journalistic side of the case of Catherine Genovese and the fact that so many people were a witness to the crime but did not help in any way. Had any one of them called for help shortly after hearing Kitty scream she would have survived the attack. There is a few short explanations of the entire episode of the attack with a few images of where it took place and a bit of a follow up on what happened with the attacker but the majority is focused on the lack of help.

Overall, not a bad read but felt it could have covered the actual crime a bit more.

I received an advance copy from the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

For more reviews please visit <https://carriesbookreviews.wordpress.com>.

Ronnie Cramer says

A very slim volume (even with two new introductions it's only sixty pages) about the notorious 1964 murder case where nobody lifted a finger to help the victim. The author admirably set out to write about more than the crime itself, but ends up talking mostly about himself and the newspaper culture (he was a longtime New York Times editor and this edition includes a worshipful tribute to him). Despite all the lofty rhetoric, the insight contained here would barely fill a thimble.

George says

INTERESTING, BUT UNSATISFYING.

“...is the ugliness in the number or is it in the act itself, and are thirty-eight sins truly more important than one?” (Kindle Locations 345-346).

I have been intrigued with the Kitty Genovese story for more than fifty years, now. So, when A. M. Rosenthal’s book: *Thirty-eight Witnesses: The Kitty Genovese Case* turned up as a bargain-priced Kindle ebook, I couldn't resist.

Rosenthal offers a journalist’s perspective of the events and attitudes—fear and apathy—of the period. But, as there probably can never be, he can offer no answer as to why thirty-eight people would turn their backs to a neighbor’s desperate cries for help.

We can only hope that today, with the easier to use, more familiar, emergency 911 dispatchers, there would be less resistance to at least calling for help for a stranger in need. Wishful thinking, perhaps? Perhaps not.

Recommendation: One of the strangest of true-crime stories of a bygone era. Worth the 99¢ I think I paid for it.

"Indifference to one's neighbor and his troubles is a conditioned reflex of life in New York as it is in other big cities." (Kindle Locations 931-932).

Open Road Media. Kindle Edition. 1014 Kindle Locations

Sheryl says

This case has always intrigued me, it's about a young woman, Kitty Genovese who was murdered in 1964. She was coming home after closing a bar that she managed to her safe, neighborhood in Queens. She is being followed by a man who randomly follows women home who are driving alone at night to kill them. While she's parking her car she notices the man is approaching her so she tries to get to a police call box to call for help. He's on her before she can get there and stabs her in the stomach, she cries out for help, several times. The lights are being turned on in the building of her home and several windows were opened and some people are shouting out for the man to leave her alone, they are more irritated by being woken up at 3:00 AM than hearing a woman fight for her life.

The assailant runs from the scene after the first attack which gives Kitty time to try to make it to the door of her home. He's come back to finish what he started while she's still screaming out for help. He finally stabs her in the throat to stop her from screaming. All the while thirty-eight people are watching. Anyone of them could have picked up their phone and dialed "0" to get help if they didn't want to physically get involved. It didn't seem to take much to scare the man off since they had already done it once. One man calls the police but it was too late, he calls from a neighbor's phone after he calls his friend for advice. It's unbelievable.

This is a short book that was written from a famous newspaper editor's point of view, he is so torn as to why no one bothered to call the police sooner and what stopped them. He sends a reporter out there to interview some of the witnesses and also get the feel of the neighborhood. The excuses he gets are just awful, it's like they didn't care. They didn't want to get involved that's the bottom line. Some would have the nerve to blame the police, from past bad experiences that they had when talking to them.

It's was interesting to read how archaic police communications were back then. This crime did prompt a change in police communications in New York city. Even though if they would have been called while the first attack was waking was taking place, Kitty's life would have been saved.

I was disappointed in the fact that the book didn't focus more on the crime and the investigation itself. It was a bit dry in places when the author would make comparisons regarding what he saw while he was a foreign correspondent in third world countries and what happened that night in Queens, it's was almost like he was wrestling with his own conscience.

This book was mainly from a journalistic point of view. I felt I reading a personal journal of the author's account of his feelings regarding this incident.

I would like to thank Open Road Media and NetGalley for providing me a copy of this e-galley to read and give my honest opinion.

Merel says

I expected more from this book. I ordered it online, and I was surprised that it was such a small, thin book. The book feels more like a memento for the writer, than a serious attempt to research the whole case.

Disappointing.

Fishface says

Disturbing little book about the Kitty Genovese murder. Effective and chilling.

CL says

This is a true story and a sad story of the lack of concern for a fellow human being by people who could have helped with a simple phone call. In the early hours of March 13th in 1964 a young woman is coming home from work. As she exits her car she doesn't notice the man watching her until he starts to follow her. As she hurries to get away the man attacks and stabs her repeatedly over a period of 35 minutes. There were 38 people in the apartments that heard her cries for help and no one intervened or called the police. Some admitted they did not want to get involved and others could not be bothered. Had a single person made any effort the story might have had a different ending but as they all did nothing a woman lost her life and this books covers the sad story. I would like to thank the publisher and Net Galley for a chance to read this true crime story.

Cindy says

I had never heard of this case and thought the title sounded interesting. It happened in Queens, in 1964. It is so horribly sad that Kitty Genovese was attacked three times and brutally murdered on the street after getting off work at night. But what is more horrifying is that thirty-eight people heard her cries for help and did not call the police! I would expect that more from today's times than in 1964.

This is a short book that basically gives you the journalist side of the story. At times, I slogged my way through it. I would have liked to have know more about Kitty.

It was an okay book but a bit boring in spots. I'd like to read more accounts of this true crime.

* I received an ARC from the publisher and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

AdiTurbo says

A fascinating explanation of the famous case of Kitty Genovese, how the media story around it developed and its consequences. Short and to the point, this book is an eye-opener on how the horrid, disturbing murder of a young woman became so iconic, how it was perceived by the different sides involved in it, and how it influenced all of our lives, even far beyond New York and the States. Recommended.

Lennie says

Catherine Genovese worked as a bar manager and on the night of March 13th she was returning home from work to her apartment in Queens. It was 3 am when she pulled into the parking lot to park her car. There was a man nearby watching her and when she finally noticed him she hurriedly walked away but he pursued her and then when he finally caught up to her, he stabbed her. Over the next half-hour he would stab her, leave and then return to seek her out and stab her again while she tried to crawl away to safety. Neighbors who heard her scream and cry out for help never walked down the stairs to help her nor did they even call the police. Her murder became a symbol of apathy that seems to spread throughout urban communities.

Reading about this true crime story evoked a lot of emotions in me and it made me wonder how this could have happened. How could thirty-eight people hear this woman scream while she lay dying and not get involved? It's a shame to think that as a society, this is what we've become. If this is the case then we need to examine ourselves so that we can fix the deficiencies that prevent us from being better human beings towards one another.

Cats of Ulthar February Weird Fiction says

Review: THIRTY-EIGHT WITNESSES by A.M. Rosenthal

On March 13, 1964, a twenty-eight-year old woman died in Queens, New York--brutally murdered. Perhaps the initial assault could not have been circumvented--but more than likely the second and third attacks, and her death, could have been avoided IF thirty-eight residents who heard her screams had even tried to intervene, or to call police.

THIRTY-EIGHT WITNESSES is not a true-crime account, nor technically is it initially a book. A. M. Rosenthal was the Metropolitan editor of the New York Times, a journalist of repute and long standing. For Mr. Rosenthal, what mattered was both maintaining respect for the deceased, who had suffered so brutally, and exploring the context of the "thirty-eight witnesses" who remained silent and uninvolved, in the wider context of the meaning and consequences for society and culture.

P.e. lolo says

A true crime story and reissue of a book and story, about a women Kathy Genovese who was stabbed to death in a middle class neighborhood, Key Gardens of Queens. The author takes you through the crime. How the he assailant after the first attack was able to leave move his car, change his hat, come back and kill and rape just steps from her door. The attack lasted a little longer than a half hour and yet there was 38 witnesses and no one called for help. When you read this story you have to realize this took place in 1964, and the author had been overseas for 10 years and had just come back to New York to for the Times. While being told this story by the Police Commissioner. He is really giving his outlook on what we have become since he left and has come back to America. He is also wondering where we are heading to. Well this was 1964 and who would know that just in a few short months the across the country that there would be multiple riots, and that this crime of no one coming forward was really just the beginning of more and more of crimes being committed and people across the country not wanting to get involved and saying nothing. The real tragedy is and was is that if someone would have called at the first attack she would have lived. This is all explained in this book, and really all this book or story did was make me upset and mad at how we became as a nation and most people don't care and it has been going on for decades. A good book especially if you are into true crime. I received this book from Netgalley.com I gave it 4 stars. Follow us at www.1rad-readerreviews.com

Vicki says

Such a sad account of one young woman's murder in the middle of the night/early morning hours in New York as 38 witnesses watched and/or heard her screams for help for over 30 minutes. Yet no one even called the police.

I personally remember when this story came out and the shock that no one even called as this woman was being murdered. It's horrible to read about.

Recommendation: I think this is a good book to read to remind ourselves that we are part of the problem or part of the solution. We need to watch out for each other.

Kyle Miller says

I wasn't very impressed. Very short and not very informational, on a psychological or fact only level. Basically felt like reading a long amateur editorial. I think I was just expecting something very different - such as an in depth analysis of why the witnesses did not come forward, etc.

Christian Engler says

Not that far back, I was with a group of friends and one of them recounted how he had seen a woman fall in front of a restaurant. We inquired if she had gotten up, and he said no. But, he insisted, other people were there to help. We asked why he did not volunteer to help the injured woman. He said that he would have been more of a burden than a help. And it was through this simple discussion that the case of murdered New Yorker Catherine "Kitty" Genovese popped up.

A.M. Rosenthal's little book, consisting of only 69 pages, is really an essay on the dangers of apathy and inaction. It details only the facts and is not laced with personal opinions. It does not offer any psychological insights nor expert viewpoints in relation to the criminality of the human mind. All that is given is just the cold hard facts. And sometimes that alone is sufficient, especially in this case.

At three in the morning on March 13, 1964, Kitty, as she was commonly referred to, was returning home to Kew Gardens in the borough of Queens after her bar shift was completed. Upon exiting her vehicle, she saw a man in the darkened shadows, stealthily moving towards her. The man in question was Winston Mosley, a married man with two kids, a house and a good paying job. But on that particular night, while his wife worked the evening shift as a nurse, he deliberately scoped and prowled the area with the sole intention of committing murder on a helpless woman, all because he simply felt like it. Sensing the danger that she was in, Kitty Genovese ran towards a police call box, but it was too late, for he stabbed her repeatedly as she screamed at full volume, "He's trying to kill me."

Witnessing this were thirty-eight neighbors, who watched from their windows and yet, did nothing. Even before the attack and rape happened, people saw and knew that something vile was going to take place. And when it did and the screams became audibly clear in the crystal cold night, apathy soaked the consciences of those who were privy to the dark happenings while they sat on their perch and watched. Nobody picked up a phone to call the police while tortured screams saturated the night. People were at a standstill and others simply went back to bed, even though they knew full well what was happening. One witness said that he just didn't want to be bothered.

Rosenthal's pamphlet is an excellent piece of journalism, because it is not embossed with any caliber of bias. It is not embellished in order to evoke feelings that are favored to sway in any particular direction. It is an apolitical work. Yet, Rosenthal has enough confidence in his readers and in their intelligence to just leave it alone at the facts and nothing else. He also does not pass judgement on the witnesses, not profiling them in any way or putting them in compartmentalized boxes with labels that only a neophyte psychoanalyst could come up with. He does his job and reports the facts alone. By so doing, he shines a light to the reader and makes them reflect, What if I was one of those thirty-eight witnesses? What would I have done?

Journalism of this nature is unfortunately a dying craft; the media on both sides of the spectrum do seem to have their favorites. And they make it blatantly known. But what this work is really great at showing-by the facts alone-is that Catherine Genovese was a human being who had something absolutely horrible befall her. Her death was not in vain, as is showcased in numerous laws and conferences bearing her name, each avenue exploring apathy and indifference and what can happen if they are married into violent crimes. Thirty-Eight Witnesses was an eye-opening work that had a powerful message to convey.
