Honors History Biography Project  
Charles Manson: The Making of a Monster



Charles Manson is a man infamous for his orchestration of the Tate-LaBianca Murders, a brutal massacre that stunned Americans in 1969. His heinous crime earned him life in prison, as well as the reputation of America’s most prolific monstrosity. Many feel that his crimes were born from an inherent evil held within, but recent interviews reveal that a traumatic, lonely childhood was likely the true root of his behavior.

## From the moment of his birth, it was clear that young Charles would not experience a happy childhood. His mother Kathleen, who was speculated to be a teenage prostitute, gave birth to him at nineteen and spent most of her life neglecting her son’s well being. She was an emotionally unstable person, one who was clearly not ready or equipped to take on the responsibilities of motherhood. To this day, his official birth certificate reads “No Name Maddox” because his mother outright refused to grant him a name. Another incident recalls how Manson’s mother once took him to a local bar and tried to trade him for an extra pitcher of beer. When the waitress (with whom the trade was initiated) refused her offer, Kathleen stormed out, leaving her infant son behind. A nearby patron, who so happened to be Kathleen’s neighbor, was the one who brought him home. About five years later, she was sent to prison for robbing and assaulting an innocent bystander, while Charles was sent to live with his aunt and her family.

Life didn’t improve for Manson after his Mother went to prison. He was sent to live with his Aunt’s family in Virginia, where he was whipped for misbehaving and bullied at the local public school. Money was tight at his Aunt’s house, to the point where he and his cousins often went to bed hungry. Prior to her sentence, Manson’s mother hadn’t spoken to her sister in years as the two were apparently on poor terms. When Charles arrived to live with his relatives, the residual tension lead his family to see him as another mouth to feed rather than a growing child. Manson continued to have a poor relationship with his mother, as evidenced by the incidents that transpired after her prison release. Upon their next meeting, his mother hugged him for the first time in his life, which Charles cites to be one of “the happiest moments of his life.” This happiness, however, didn’t last long. His mother tried to sell him at a local bar the next day. When that didn’t work, she began looking into other ways of getting rid of him.

By the time he was 13, Manson’s mother was spending most of her time looking for ways to get rid of him (foster care, selling, abandoning, etc.) He lashed out by getting into trouble, usually by stealing bicycles. His mother responded by placing him into a reform school called the Gibault School for Boys, where he experienced intense instances of bullying and a profound sense of isolation. He recalls his only happy moments to be his mother’s rare visits, which were always spontaneous and short. Manson eventually resolved to get out of Gibault on his own, because his mother soon after refused to facilitate any more contact with him. He was arrested at 13 for robbing a local convenience store as a means of acquiring funds. From there, he was sent to another institution called the Indiana Boys School. There, he experienced intense physical and sexual violence over the course of three years. Following his time there, he was given a psychological evaluation at age 16 after being arrested for the second time. Despite having an IQ of 109, it was revealed that he could barely read or write due to an inadequate education.

Charles Manson was by no means a good person, as he spent most of his life harming others and committing crimes. He spent half of his entire life in prison, and he was clearly a threat to society from a very young age. However, he did not commit crimes because he was an inherently evil person. According to his criminal psychiatrist, “Manson blamed many of his problems on his strained relationship with his mother. The amount of rejection, instability and psychic trauma that Manson had experienced meant that he constantly struggled to impress the other boys because of his “lack of parental love.”” This analysis allows one to adequately conclude that Charles Manson’s heinous crimes were clearly a result of an equally heinous upbringing, as opposed to the actions of an fundamentally evil human being.

Works Cited

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