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INSIDE THE
HEAVEN'S
GATE MASS
SUICIDE

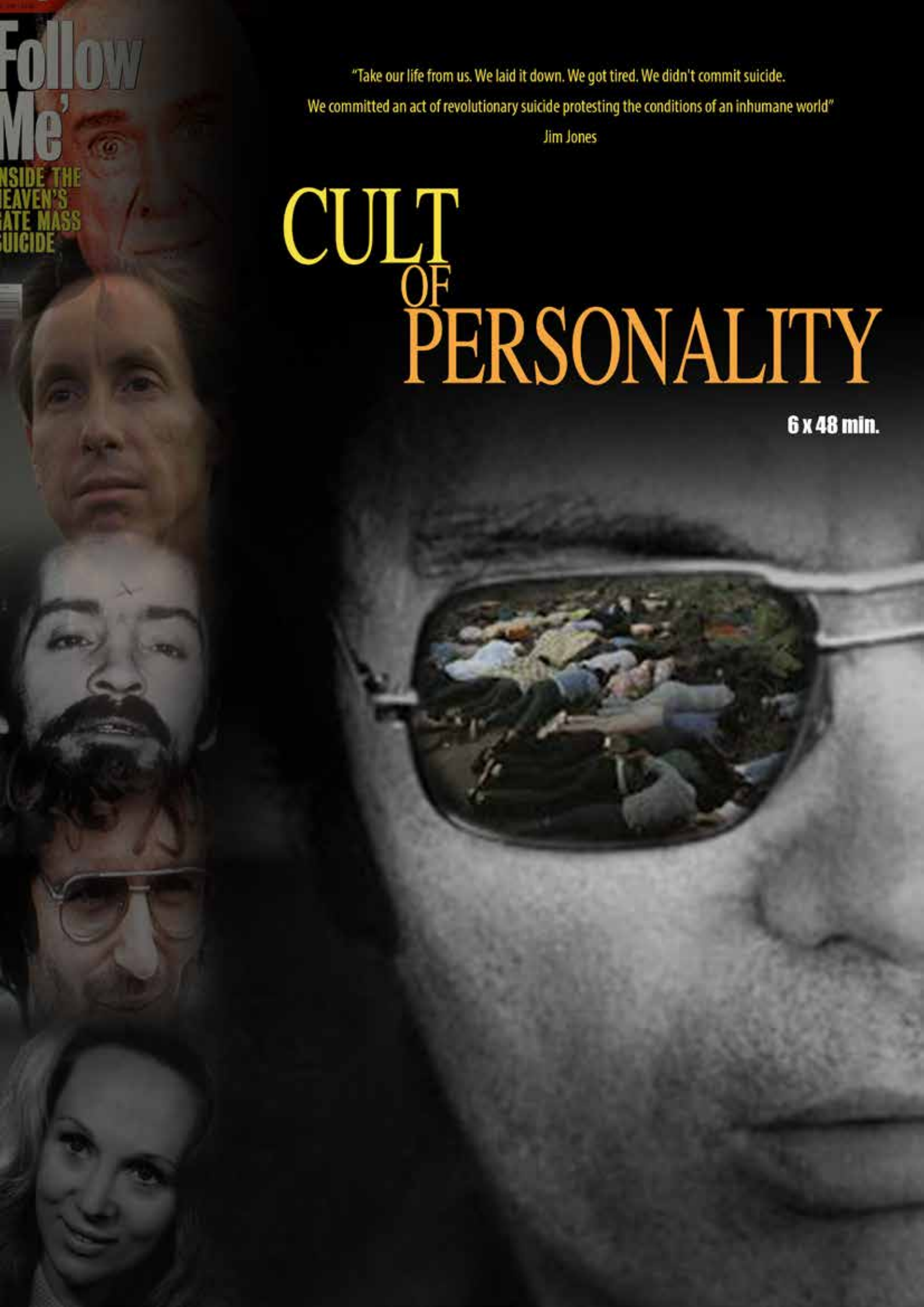
"Take our life from us. We laid it down. We got tired. We didn't commit suicide.

We committed an act of revolutionary suicide protesting the conditions of an inhumane world"

Jim Jones

CULT OF PERSONALITY

6 x 48 min.



INTRO

"So here we are in the day of the Lord. All the prophets talk about the great and dreadful day of the Lord when God will make inquisition for blood."

- David Koresh

"These children that come at you with knives, they are your children. You taught them. I didn't teach them. I just tried to help them stand up."

- Charles Manson

"Take our life from us. We laid it down. We got tired. We didn't commit suicide. We committed an act of revolutionary suicide protesting the conditions of an inhumane world."

- Jim Jones

"You ought to become Buddhas yourselves. You should preach my teachings, or rather the cosmic truth, and should produce many Buddhas."

- Shoko Asahara

"We do in all honesty hate this world."

- Marshall Applewhite

"And ladies, build up your husband by being submissive. That's how you will give your children success; you will want your children to be obedient, to be submissive to righteous living."

- Warren Jeffs

"My idea of Heaven is what we've got right now, right here!-All this beauty and pleasure and fun and inspiration and spirit and fellowship and joy, all of this and more so and more of it."

- David Berg

"I wanted them to look like brothers and sisters, I must admit this. I loved them in their little smocks and jeans and the long hair and ribbons. It was beautiful. It was lovely to see."

- Anne Hamilton-Byrne

People have called him the Devil, but today the Devil is a grey haired, denture wearing 82 year-old living out his life at the maximum security Corcoran State Prison. 2019 will be 50 years since the Manson family killing spree. It's hard to imagine anyone would still take the ramblings of **Charles Manson** seriously yet he still has followers – and a new cult – the Church of ATWA [Air/Tree /Water] run through a website from prison with the help of one of his followers, a pretty 28-year old named Star who also hopes to marry him one day. Like the young girls in the original Manson family, she too has an X cut deep into her forehead as a sign of allegiance.

But, Manson isn't the only one with followers.

2018 marks 25 years since the tragic siege in Waco, Texas where eighty people were killed including Branch Davidian leader, **David Koresh**. Yet the group didn't just fold up and disappear. The Branch Davidians reassembled to continue to follow the teaching of Koresh under a new leader, Pastor Charles Pace, who maintains Koresh belief that the end times will come. Self-proclaimed prophet and former President **Warren Jeffs** of FLDS [The Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Chris of Latter-Day Saints] is serving a life sentence in Texas for multiple convictions of child rape, yet still holds full control of Short Creek, the largest polygamist enclave in America. Twenty years after the bizarre suicides of 39 members of Heaven's Gate, remaining followers of **Marshall Applewhite** still run a website with the belief that another great comet will arrive for them. Even Jim Jones had defenders after the forced suicide of over 900 of his disciples!

MAIN CONCEPT

The big question is why? Why after knowing the horrors, the murders, the abuse, revelations of manipulation and lies would anyone willingly follow a leader who has already been proven, at least by the court system to be a fake and a criminal and in most people's eyes the very epitome of evil. Our unique six-part, one-hour series takes a completely new look at an often-told story. CULT OF PERSONALITY puts a spotlight on unquestioning devotion, to better understand the massive hold the worlds most infamous cult leaders had on their members at large during their prime, but also how they continue to command power and attention by the public today. We also seek to find out what became of the cult days after the collapse – did they regroup, hide, continue; who are the new leaders and what are their beliefs? What did former members do after the fall, how did they survive, reconcile their experience and what can they teach us about the blurred lines between manipulation, devotion and faith.

David Koresh, Charles Manson, Warren Jeffs, Jim Jones, Marshall Applewhite, their names alone evoke a mix of fear and fascination. These are the charismatic and cruel leaders who all shared a common messianic complex, appetite for violence, and the ability to make those around them succumb to their wishes at any cost - including kidnapping, death and murder.

CULT OF PERSONALITY reveals new information about the shocking lives of the notorious cult leaders who are still manipulating and pulling the strings from behind prison walls and even from the grave. Our fascinating series digs into the psyche of the leadership of each of these destructive cults, their personal history's, their initial motivation and inspiration and final evolution into cult status. Before Jim Jones was the notorious leader of a death cult, he fought for social and civil rights.

EPISODE STRUCTUR

This compelling six-part one-hour series takes a unique look at the leaders of the world's most famous cults along with their legacy. Each hour will focus on a specific cult, mixing exclusive [never before-seen] and archival footage with stylistic recreations. To include interviews with cult insiders, psychologists and "de-programmers" to expose secret rituals, rules, bizarre belief systems, and unspeakable crimes to reveal the innate vulnerabilities we all have when we come face-to-face with the devil.

BIZARRE RITUALS
SUICIDE
SEX
COERCION
MESSIANIC COMPLEX
MURDER
POLYGAMY

EPISODES 1

CHARLES MANSON & THE MANSON FAMILY

The Manson family evolved over the late 1960's as the counterculture, anti-establishment generation was coming of age. Manson picked up on the vulnerabilities of disenfranchised youth by creating a sex and drug fueled quasi-commune in California's Death Valley. Manson's followers committed a series of nine murders at four locations over a period of five weeks in the middle of 1969. In 1971 he was found guilty of conspiracy to commit the murders of seven people – most notably of the actress Sharon Tate – all of which were carried out by members of the group at his instruction. Manson and many of his followers are serving life sentences.



EPISODES 2

WARREN JEFFS & THE FLDS [The Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints]

The Fundamentalist Church of Latter Day Saints is a radical polygamist sect that splintered off from the Mormon Church, a religion more formally called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, more than a century ago. FLDS ancestors broke away from the Mormon Church over the issue of polygamy after the church renounced its practice. Jeff's father was the leader of the group before his death. He was survived by 20 wives and 60 children. Warren Jeffs took over after his father's death and he himself has over 70 wives. As the sole individual in the church with the authority to perform marriages, Jeffs was responsible for assigning wives to husbands. He also had the authority to discipline male church members by "reassigning their wives, children and homes to another man." In May 2006 Jeff's was placed on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List for unlawful flight to avoid prosecution on Utah state charges related to his alleged arrangement of illegal marriages between his adult male followers and underage girls.



EPISODES 3

MARSHALL APPLEWHITE

In the 1970s, Marshall Applewhite and Bonnie Nettles formed Heaven's Gate, an American UFO religious Millenarian Group. Their belief: a spaceship following the Hale-Bopp comet would save them if they committed suicide as it passed the Earth; they would hitch a ride on the alien spaceship to salvation. Police discovered the bodies of 39 members on March 26, 1997. While alive, members of Heaven's Gate distanced themselves emotionally, refrained from sex and even castrated themselves. Members were coerced to disassociate from family members and surrendered their belongings. The practices were intended to prepare members for a life beyond the constraints of being human, a life free of human-like characteristics. Suicide was the only way they could, "evacuate this Earth," according to Marshall Applewhite.



EPISODES 4

JIM JONES & THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE

The charismatic Revered Jim Jones founded the People's Temple in the 1950s. His persuasive sermons attracted numerous followers, and several churches were built in the name of the cult. Radical preaching concerned the United States government, leading the People's Temple to flee the United States for Guyana in South America, where they established a community, calling it Jonestown. Concerned family members in the States, who had been excommunicated by their family in People's Temple, lead Congressman Leo Ryan to investigate Jonestown. He intended to bring disenfranchised members back to the US, but was killed by Jones' personal guard. The event prompted Jones to order his followers to commit suicide. Men, women, and children drank fruit punch laced with cyanide. More than 900 people lay strewn about the ruins of the false utopia, including 276 children.



EPISODES 5

SHOKO ASAHARA

Shoko Asahara, the founder, mashed the teachings of Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Nostradamus, and Yoga into a belief system for the new age, basically a doomsday cult. He claimed divinity, and promised followers they would be saved from the inevitable nuclear apocalypse. In the 1990s, members of the cult stockpiled military grade weapons and began behaving violently. Expecting the police to interfere with their operation, cult members used sarin gas in a Tokyo subway before opening fire on a crowd, killing 12 and injuring more than 1,000 people. Investigators tracked the attack back to the cult, arresting Asahara and sentenced the false prophet to death. It soon became clear that cults were not only a danger to their own members, but a threat to the general public as well.



EPISODES 6

DAVID KORESH & THE BRANCH DAVIDIANS

As the 25th Anniversary of the Waco siege, a fifty-day conflict between Branch Davidian members and U.S Law Enforcement Agents, approach many still try to grasp the reality of the unfortunate and horrifying events that led to the tragedy at the Waco compound in 1993. One group has their own theory — they believe Koresh and his followers were purposely targeted by law enforcement and brutally murdered. 80 died on that sad day, many of them children. Today, the Branch Davidians continue with a new leader in Pastor Charles Pace who deeply believes Koresh was Christ incarnate. So let's rewind — how did this all come to pass?

The Branch Davidians are a religious group that originated in 1955 as a splinter of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Lois Roden, the groups original founder anointed Koresh as her successor. Koresh became the groups spiritual leader and interpreted Revelation 5:2 to identify himself with the Lamb mentioned in the verse. This is traditionally interpreted as a symbol of Jesus Christ. Koresh suggested that the Lamb was to lay a path ahead of the second coming of Jesus Christ. In theory he was leading the way. Koresh was a charismatic leader with doomsday visions and prophecies, leading him to take his power to new heights. He would soon declare himself the spiritual husband of all women in the cult.

The group and its unorthodox practices attracted the attention of law enforcement following allegations of polygamy, sexual abuse and possession of illegal weapons — like many doomsday groups, Koresh had stockpiled weapons in anticipation for the end of the world. The ATF grew suspicious of Koresh, and raided his holdout at Mt. Carmel in 1993. In the ensuing raid, four ATF agents were killed during the initial firefight. The subsequent siege by the FBI ended as a fire broke out killing around 79 followers, including many children and Koresh.

The assault and its aftermath became one of the most controversial moments in American history with many pointing the blame for the deaths at ATF and US law enforcement.

In the aftermath— ATF and FBI are still dealing with the negative repercussions of the deadly siege and while many former members turned their back on the group, others began to form new bible groups under the same name — secretly meeting in various homes. Today the Branch Davidians number as many as those that perished at Waco to continue Koresh teachings, to continue the belief that Koresh will return, and to continue waiting for the end times.



Additional Episode Options

DAVID BERG

David Berg, who called himself Moses David, founded Children of God in 1968. The so-called Jesus Movement was on the rise in the late 1960s and a lot of disenfranchised hippies were ripe for the picking. Berg started his first "colony" in Huntington Beach, California, and similar colonies soon sprung up in other states, as well as Europe and South America.

Members were required to relinquish all their worldly possessions to the commune and cut off all ties with their families. In the beginning, members panhandled to earn money to pay for food and other supplies. But as their numbers increased, Moses implemented a fund-raising effort called "firty fishing" or religious prostitution. Children of God have changed its name several times over the years after a barrage of bad publicity, including accusations of incest and other abuse. Berg passed away in 1994 and the group, now known as The Family International, is led by Steven Kelly (who calls himself King Peter).



ANNE HAMILTON-BYRNE

A handful of loyal sect members still visit Anne Hamilton-Byrne daily, and will no doubt benefit from the sale of her many properties when she dies. Today Anne is a 97 year-old with dementia, but 30 years ago many believed she was the female incarnation of Jesus Christ. Anne Hamilton-Byrne, was the infamous founder of an Australian cult called The Family. It drew 500 members from around the world – professionals – doctors, nurses and lawyers. One even owned a local psychiatric ward where police say sect members would be given LSD. Followers described Anne as a glamorous, charismatic woman who seemed to possess special powers. Anne married Bill Byrne in 1978 and the couple began to collect children claiming to have fourteen biological children, but investigators say Anne only had one biological child. Of the others, a few were stolen. Some were taken from unwed mothers who thought their children were going to good homes. Others were the offspring of cult members. The children say Anne Hamilton-Byrne wanted them to look alike and be a master race. Their hair was bleached and they often wore matching outfits. They say they were starved, beaten and forced to take LSD, until 1987 when federal and local police stormed the compound and rescued the children. Anne was nowhere to be found until a detective eventually tracked her to a farmhouse in upstate New York. By then her mental health had diminished to the point she couldn't stand trial – Anne Hamilton-Byrne's days may be numbered, but sadly she has never had to pay for the torture, kidnapping and hardship she committed against the kids in her group.



CULT OF PERSONALITY

Conceived and Developed by Maria Berry and Max Serio

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