

Did The Devil Make Her Do It: The Killings of Lindsay Clancy

As I think about the Lindsey Clancy trial, which is nearing its end, two images stay with me. The first is Lindsey Clancy strangling her three children, one by one, even chasing one around to finish the job. Gruesome! Monstrous! The other—almost as gruesome—is Clancy, following the killings, jumping from a second-story window in her home in Duxbury, Massachusetts. She had already cut her wrists and neck. The fall left her paralyzed from the waist down.

Now who jumps out of windows? Well, people who are facing an even worse fate. We saw people jump out of windows and plunge to their death on 9/11. A second group that jumps out of windows is people who are demonically possessed. Remember the scene in *The Exorcist* when Father Karras hurls himself out of the bedroom window and plummets to his death? I knew the author of *The Exorcist*, William Peter Blatty. He wrote a blurb for one of my books, *Hillary's America*, and he called it one of the most terrifying things he had ever encountered.

He also told me the film he wrote and produced, *The Exorcist*, was based on a true case. In the film, it was Karras who jumped, but the demon who possessed him and made him do it. And lest we dismiss the relevance of a demon in the Lindsey Clancy case, notice her insistence that she heard a male voice telling her to kill her children. Now there is a powerful maternal instinct that prevents mothers from killing their children. This is what makes abortion such a monstrosity.

The monstrosity of abortion is not merely that a woman kills a child, but rather that a mother kills her own child. I do not believe that Lindsey Clancy, who we know from lots of

testimony was a good mother, would under normal circumstances kill her three children. Something, or someone, drove her to do it, and then to attempt to kill herself in the aftermath. Soon after that, in the hospital, Lindsey Clancy recovered her faculties and returned to being a human being.

In the moments—actually minutes—when she was killing her children, she was something other than human. If she was not acting on demonic instruction, she nevertheless did something inhuman, unspeakable, demonic. Andrea Yates, who drowned her children in the early 2000s, also reported demonic influences on her action. She said she heard the voice of Satan. Now significantly Andrea Yates reported the satanic voice telling her that her children were evil and heading for hell, and only by killing them while they were still young could she save their souls.

This testimony closely mirrors Lindsey Clancy's report to the hospital chaplain Sheila Cavanaugh that the male voice told her that she should kill herself, but first killing her children because they could not do without her. In other words, she should kill herself and then her children for their own good. Forensic psychologist Philip Resnick testified for the defense. He said, interpreting the voice that spoke to Clancy, "It was almost like she was a puppet and someone else was pulling the strings." Someone else!



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When I first heard about Clancy jumping out the window, I thought it was from the immediate realization of what she had done. A moment of moral horror and contrition. But no! She jumped because the male voice told her to jump. Both her killing of her children and her subsequent suicide attempt seemingly arose out of the same male prompt. Notice how these instructions, both to Yates and to Clancy, steer the maternal instinct against itself. The best way to keep your children

out of hell is to kill them now.

The best way to protect your children who cannot live without you is to strangle them. Who, if not the devil, comes up with this? Who, if not the devil, operates under the motto ascribed to Lucifer by Milton, "Evil, be thou my good"? I looked up cases where demon voices cause people to jump out of windows. Turns out, there are several. In 2006, in a widely reported case, Amy Stamatis reported cognitive breakdown, memory distortions and suicidal thoughts.

She also said she heard voices inside her head. She underwent several psychiatric evaluations which found no apparent cause. A few months later, she deliberately fell backward out of her 2 story window sill onto a brick patio and suffered serious injuries. Later, an evangelist named Cindy Lawson claimed to see demons in her and performed a deliverance or exorcism. Stamatis reports that she recovered her mental clarity and the voices went away. She subsequently attributed what happened to her as demon possession.

There are several other such cases. Now in neither the Yates case, nor the Clancy case, did the defense argue, "The devil made her do it." In both cases, the defense insists that these mothers killed their offspring because they suffer from "psychosis," specifically post-partum psychosis. I'll return to this diagnosis of psychosis, but before that I want to mention a 1981 case in which a man stabbed his landlord to death and his actual legal defense was that he was demonically possessed and that the devil made him do it.

His lawyer entered a plea, "Not guilty by reason of demonic possession." The judge rejected the defense on the grounds that it could not be proven scientifically, and was therefore inadmissible. Johnson was convicted of first-degree manslaughter. Incidentally, the case became the primary inspiration for the 2021 film—an excellent film, by the way—called "The Conjuring." Subtitle: "The Devil Made Me Do

it.” And the same theme is ingeniously pursued in a film made by two of my friends, Cary Solomon and Chuck Konzelman.

It’s called Nefarious and that’s the name of the demon who enters a serial killer and allegedly drives him to commit his unspeakable crimes. If you haven’t seen Nefarious, check it out. Outstanding movie! But back to Lindsey Clancy. Isn’t it interesting that we live in an age where spiritual influences are considered unreal, unscientific, and therefore morally monstrous actions must be explained entirely in terms of medical illness? Oh no, we hear, the voices that Andrea Yates and Lindsey Clancy heard were not voices.

They did not come from any external source, whether material or spiritual. They must at the outset be classified as delusions. They must be presumed to be voices generated from inside their own minds. So how do our minds make us do things that we don’t want to do, that we would never otherwise do? For this we turn to a community of half-crazy people, otherwise known as psychiatrists. I use this term deliberately. Psychiatrists are not normal. We can confirm this through the ones we meet, sometimes just through their weird deportment, weird behavior and crazy eyes.

A Danish study concluded that 32 percent of psychiatrists suffer from some sort of mental illness. Other studies in the US and Europe range from 16 percent to 39 percent. Let’s just stay this is not a particularly stable group. Many of these psychiatrists are treated by other psychiatrists. And the treatment is ongoing, which is to say it rarely cures them. Maybe they all just like to sit on each other’s couches. This is not like getting the flu or getting your appendix out, where you get treated and then you get well.

According to the verdict of this unbalanced psychiatric community—what courts charitably call scientific opinion—the reason mothers kill their children is they suffer from “psychosis.” But what is psychosis? We get some idea from the

related term “psycho.” Remember the movie? Oh man, that Norman Bates was just psycho. He suffered from “delusions.” He lost contact with “reality.” That’s why he did what he did. I’m not contesting the delusions. I’m contesting the diagnosis that Norman Bates was somehow “sick.” Sick of what?

The guy killed his mom, and then he killed the beautiful young woman who checked into his hotel. These are immoral, criminal actions. How are they somehow better understood, or even more questionably, treated, if they are labeled “psychosis”? Sure, you can give Norman Bates drugs that render him catatonic. That seems to be what we’re seeing with Lindsey Clancy. She’s largely unresponsive in court because she’s heavily medicated. I recognize that in some cases this is the best you can do.

And this approach is simply the modern equivalent of tying someone down with ropes. In ancient times, if you caught a bad guy doing a really bad thing, you’d tie him up for the moment, so he couldn’t continue to do bad things, and then you would lock him up or execute him. The drugs do the same thing. They temporarily render the perpetrator helpless, tied up from the inside, so to speak. But this is not “treatment” in the normal meaning of that term.

It doesn’t cure anybody. It merely renders them helpless for now in the hope that they will stop doing such horrible things in the future. Let’s say Lindsey Clancy goes to the mental hospital. There she is subject to the usual rigmarole of testing, evaluation, endless therapies, more evaluations, and finally a group of psychiatrists says, “She’s fine.” What do they mean? They have no idea. They are merely guessing, based on her conduct at the hospital, that in their entirely subjective opinion, she can be trusted not to go psycho on us again.

Do they know she won’t? Of course not. Can we hold them responsible if she does? Oh no, that’s not appropriate! Surely you don’t want to hold the psychiatric community to the

standards of normal doctors, do you? We're half-crazy ourselves, remember? I find it amusing, in a dark sort of way, that Lindsay Clancy and her husband are both suing the people who treated her. In other words, they are blaming the very medical personnel and the very drugs that were aimed at addressing her psychosis for causing, or exacerbating, it.

Kind of tells you that psychiatry is still in the dark ages, or just coming out of the dark ages. It's not clear the medicine is less deadly than the disease. I doubt the drugs made her do it. If you think I'm wrong, let's run a test. Let's give a random sample of women the same cocktail of drugs that she took, and let's see if they respond by killing their kids. You can be fairly sure they won't. They certainly haven't in all the other women who right now are taking the same drugs under the same type of diagnoses.

Let me be clear. I'm not denying the reality of postpartum depression, which is a fairly common hormonal conditions attending pregnancy. Debbie my wife experienced it. She was despondent for months. During this time she took medication to relax her—actually Zoloft, which Lindsey Clancy also took. Debbie says she felt numb as a result of the Zoloft, and so she weaned herself off it. Eventually she came out of the funk and resumed her normal life. There is no moral issue here.

The moral issue arises when you invoke your postpartum condition to kill your kids. And now we are in a completely different zone. Men too have depression, anxiety, PTSD, periods of losing themselves and maybe even losing touch with reality. Yet who would excuse a man who used such pretexts to murder his children? I think this is why there is such a male-female divide on the Clancy case. Women are like, "Yeah, I know what she went through" and men are like, "Who gives a damn?"

The woman strangled her own kids!" I think the real issue in this case is not "psychosis." Psychosis is a lofty term for

"We don't know what the heck made this happen." Psychosis means "out there," "f-ed up," "whatever people do that people should absolutely not be doing." That's all it means. It's not like heart disease or cancer. Psychosis is simply a term to describe something we don't know how to describe. Psychiatrists don't understand it any better than you do, and they invented the term to give us the illusion that they do.

If I were a juror on the Lindsey Clancy case, I would focus on the factual question, did she or did she not hear a voice outside of herself giving her the demonic instruction to kill her children? I'm not talking about her having demonic thoughts. I'm talking about her audibly hearing a voice, not from herself, ordering her to take her children's lives? If yes—if she did and then acted on it without having control over her actions, in other words, as if possessed—then she's not guilty by reason of demonic possession.

Yeah, I know you can't put it that way. So here you go: not guilty by reason of not being criminally responsible. But in this case, it's not "psychosis." It's the demon. What she needs is not just medication or endless therapy sessions. Probably what she needs, as much or more than any of that, is a good exorcist. Alternatively, if Lindsey Clancy did not hear the external voice, if she merely had thoughts of killing her children and then chose to do it, that's an entirely different matter.

In that case she's guilty of premeditated first degree murder. She thought about strangling her children, she decided to do it, and then she went about doing it. She is fully responsible for the consequences of her actions. In this case, she herself is the demon. An exorcist would do her no good because he cannot get her to come out of herself. Once again, I'm not ruling out the psychiatric explanation entirely. I'm adding to it another plausible explanation.

And of course it's quite possible the two go together, in

other words, that the psychic disturbance opens up a portal to the demonic. In that case the psychiatrists, who generally rule out the demonic, are dealing with only half the problem—the half that they are capable of recognizing. I realize all of this may strike some people as a very peculiar, out-there interpretation of these events. But the events themselves are so strange that they demand original, out-of-the-box thinking.

That's why I'm here; that's what you get from my show. What's going to happen to Lindsey Clancy? I don't know. Polymarket says she has a 36 percent chance of being convicted of murder. Most people seem to be betting on a hung jury. That's probably what will happen. I'm focused here, however, on what should happen, and on what criteria should govern the outcome. We're too used to lapsing into meaningless psychobabble delivered to us by the psychiatrists who are themselves messed up and probably do more harm than good.

Every now and then a moral and spiritual approach, using our normal human understanding, our conscience, and our and deepest religious convictions, might get us closer to the truth. And that's the way I see it.

*Born in Mumbai, India, **Dinesh D'Souza** came to the United States as an exchange student in 1978. After graduating from Dartmouth College, he served as a policy analyst in the Reagan White House and a scholar in two prominent think tanks, the American Enterprise Institute and the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. He is a New York Times best-selling author who has written books on politics, religion, culture, and economics— including Illiberal Education, The End of Racism, What's So Great About America, and United States of Socialism—and three books on Christian apologetics: What's So Great About Christianity, Life After Death, and Godforsaken. D'Souza has made eight political documentary films and produces a daily podcast called The Dinesh D'Souza Podcast, which is seen and heard by about 100,000 people daily.*