

The Menendez Brothers in the Media (Corpuz's Corner)

Matt Corpuz explores how the media has impacted old criminal cases

Inside Edition Newsreel: It has been 28 years since Lyle and Erik Menendez were in court. The Menendez brothers won't know until next.

Fox News newsreel: Year year whether they'll become eligible to walk free.

13WMAZ Newsreel: The Menendez brothers who killed their parents.

Matt: Back in 1989 two brothers who killed their parents on in August night in 1989 children to RCA records executive Jose Menendez and his wife Kitty. Multiple shotgun blasts were heard. It wasn't until a year after the killings were e confessed to his therapist. The horrific murders that took place in 1989. Flash forward after almost three decades of being sentenced to life in prison without any possibility of parole, there's a possibility that they may walk free. What could have caused a sudden shift in the case that took place in the early 90s? The media in a day and age where the media has shifted society, things from the past have reerged. The case of the Menendez brothers happens to fall under this sunmbella but how has the media impacted old criminal cases being resurfaced? Today's episode of Corpuz's Corner will delve into the timeline of the Meneta brothers case. Discussion about specific types of media will also contribute heavily to answering this burning question that has been on my mind for the longest time. Quick disclaimer for anyone who may be listening. There may be sound bitites that could be disturbing to listeners. I'm your host Matt Corpuz and you're

listening to Cororpus Corner. You may be asking yourself why the interest in the case about the Menendez brothers? Let me rephrase that Matt. Why is there a curiosity about two brothers that killed their parents? Thank is her in streaming service for that. On September 19th of this year, Netflix released season two of their monster series, with season one focusing on Jeffrey Dahmer. Ryan Murphy took this story to the west coast home of the Menendez brothers as a reenactment of the events that involved Lyle and Erik. I had heard buzz about this show not just for my roommate but everyone. Remember how earlier I mentioned how media has shifted society? Well it really has. Scrolling on TikTok one day I got a video about the monster show that dove into Erik and Lyle's story. I didnt think much of it so I just scrolled. A day later I scroll again and I am suddenly flooded with videos ranging from clips of the show to edits about the actors who portrayed Eric and Lyle Menendez. I really couldnt t escape it. Everywhere I turned, Ryan Murphy's depiction of what happened between the two brothers was all over my Social media. So I caved. One weekend, my girlfriend had come up to visit me here at school. With nothing really planned, I asked her shed be willing to watch Monsters with me, or at least this season of Monsters. After confirmation, we watched all 10 episodes within the weekend. As someone who knew virtually nothing about the case, my girlfriend suddenly had so many questions, she later told me that she did more research about the case and its components. As for myself, I learned more about the case that I didn't know before. But there was this question that came to mind. How have different types of media impacted old criminal cases being brought back into the spotlight? Curious for answers, I went down the rabbit hole, trying to understand the case and what went down based on Ryan Murphy's series. From Reddit forums to rewatching parts of the show and lining it up with what actually happened, I was all over the place. What I really should have been doing is finding someone who understood not just the law, but media. Since that question kept lingering in my head.

Amanda Crawford: What impact can the media have toward old criminal cases

How have different types of media impacted old criminal cases being brought back into the spotlight? Oh, wait. I know someone who understands both media and law.

Prof. Crawford: I'm Amanda Crawford. I am an assistant professor of Journalism at the University of Connecticut. I've been here since the fall of 2018.

Matt: Professor Crawford here at UConn teaches my media law class. Why use Reddit forums to understand the media impact on old criminal cases when there is someone who is accessible to help me understand that? So that's exactly what I did.

Matt: What impact can the media have toward old criminal cases?

Prof. Crawford: I think they could have a huge impact. we've seen a lot of cases where journalists take up cold cases. We've seen similar things with innocence projects where journalists have investigated old crimes and found that someone was convicted under false pretenses, under, with poor evidence, with issues in the prosecution or in the police misconduct. When journalists kind of dig in and expose those problems, they can have a big influence in having the judicial system reopen cases or furthering an appeal, those kind of things.

Matt: Wanting to understand more of how the media could play in criminal cases, I dug even deeper.

Matt: Do you think that reconsideration of a prior sentence in a criminal case can

happen because of media coverage?

Prof. Crawford: Absolutely. And I think, you know, the Innocence Project has been extremely important. These are where journalists pair with legal investigators to really prove that someone was convicted wrongly, as they are innocent. And we've seen lots of people get out of prison, because they were innocent, that they shouldn't have been convicted in the first place. And so when a lot of times in criminal appeals, you know, there's only certain things that people can appeal under. And sometimes court or prosecutors

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Prof. Crawford: aren't open to reconsidering old cases. So the media pressure to do so, can have a big impact. It can also cause politicians to reconsider a case or offer clemency as well.

How much does social media factor into older criminal cases being brought back

Matt: I'm just curious, how much does social media factor into older criminal cases being brought back into the public eye? with this case specifically, there's a young generation, my generation specifically, where the Menendez brothers are just on TikTok or just Instagram, you just see a lot of talk about the Menendez brothers. And it's not even news organizations that are posting these TikToks, like, say, like the Daily Mail or like the AP. But it's people that have took the time to read the case, understand the facts, and just kind of come to conclusion. How much of a factor does social media play

into these cases being brought back?

Prof. Crawford: Think of social media as being the modern place where we talk about things. So when a case like this comes to the forefront and there's a lot of interest in true crime on social media and podcasts, not always good. It's not always good for victims. It's not always good for law enforcement, for the justice system. Sometimes it's bad, and sometimes with bad intention, sometimes social media. And, you know, folks doing a YouTube video or a TikTok video are actually doing investigation that is worthy, every bit as worthy as the investigation done by journalists or by lawyers into someone's innocence. I think that the problem is we just don't know what we're getting a lot of times with that. And often you have people pretending like they know more than they do. So I think its value is just like it is in all things, in if it's, you know, well researched and it's truthful, it could have the same kind of impact that, like a media article or a documentary, you know, can in getting the justice system to reconsider a case.

Matt: But how does this contribute to a resurgence and interest in the case of two brothers who killed their parents?

Prof. Crawford: Well, I do think that, like, the modern, focus on true crime is where this is all coming from, but it has some resonance. You know, there was young people accused of a crime who, who claim to have been abused. And that resonates with, you know, a lot of the things we're talking about in society today. And there is a concern that people have been convicted of crimes wrongly in years past and that we need to.

Matt: Reopen those kind of cases with high watch value.

I wanted to hear more about why a reenactment of events involving killers sparked interest

I wanted to hear more about why a reenactment of events involving killers sparked so much interest. So I talk to a fan of the show.

Gabi Nartowicz: My name is Gabi Nartowicz I am a student at Quinnipiac University. I am a marketing major and a film minor.

Matt: After hearing from an expert, I needed to seek someone who had watched a show and enjoyed it. That's where I met Gabi, who happened to be a hometown friend of my roommate.

Gabi Nartowicz: I feel like I enjoyed just, like, entertainment wise, because I feel like Ryan Murphy is good at directing and, like, adding a lot of drama and like, there were so many elements of, like, American Horror Story in the series, which I am a fan of American Horror Story. I can see why, like, I guess, like the family members or even the Menendez brothers themselves wouldn't like the series because it was very exaggerated and over the top and watching, like, the more, I guess, like, professional, like, real, like, documentary afterwards.

Netflix releasing a documentary that included phone calls about the Menendez brothers

Matt: There is an entertainment aspect to this, as Gabi had mentioned, but how does

abuse come into play? Like Professor Crawford mentioned? Gabi shared some thoughts of her own on this.

Gabi Nartowicz: It was uncomfortable to watch, like, Ryan Murphy, like, I guess, sexualize both of them in, like, an incestual kind of way because, like, I feel like that kind of shines a negative light on, like, male sexual abuse victims.

Matt: It can be argued that Ryan Murphy's interpretation of the Menendez brothers doesn't have everything down to it too. Netflix releasing a documentary that included phone calls. Both Lyle and Erike from prison do more to uphold the validity of the case and its events. Do you think that if you watched, like, the documentary before, like, the series, that it would have affected your perception about the case and stuff? Or do you think that order particularly doesn't matter in context where you're viewing certain media on the same topic?

Gabi Nartowicz: I totally think that order matters. U. I watched the series first and I went into it knowing virtually nothing. I am a fan of true crime, but that was like, the one case that I just never heard, like, anything about. this series definitely portrayed them as, like, spoiled rich kids and, like, took more of the perspective of, like, you know, like, the public at the time when the crimes happened. Or I feel like the documentary portrayed them more like, as victims. I feel like it gave more of a, like, modern perspective where people are more sympathetic with them now and don't, like, believe that they, like, deserve to be in jail for,

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Gabi Nartowicz: like, the rest of their lives and a lot of people don't think the trial was

fair. So I feel like depending on which one you watch first, like, I feel like it kind of sways your view because like either or you, like you. You agree that, you know, they are just spoiled rich kids that did it for the money and they're horrible psychopaths or you sympathize that they're victims and they don't belong in jail.

Mainstream media and even social media play a factor into cases being brought back

Matt: I'm curious, do you think that.

Matt: Mainstream media and even social media play a factor into, you know, cases being.

Matt: Kind of dug out of the the.

Matt: Grave again and kind of being shoved.

Matt: Into the public eye?

Gabi Nartowicz: I totally think that social media has helped them a lot. It kind of like brought a whole new light to their case because like, I feel like it wasn't really talked about for like a few, like a. Not even a few years, like decades until I think like even they mentioned it like in the documentary, like people on TikTok like started researching their case and kind of like sort of talking about how like it wasn't fair and kind of. Or rooting for them to get a retrial and stuff. And I feel like that's what inspired like the like new wave for them. like I feel like the, the people like on social media campaigning for them

definitely inspired the documentary, the series. Just like in general, like bringing more attention to it.

Matt: Again, the media does in fact leave an impact on certain things being brought back. Like we've just learned. Through my interviews, I found it fascinating how social media and a new wave of people have found an interest in the case of the Menendez brothers. So much so that research of the case is being done and convey to people all across social media platforms. With no confirmation just yet of the two brothers being set free from prison, it only has you thinking more about how the media may have played a direct or indirect factor to a potentially new life of the brothers outside of the shackles they have been put in for decades. Not just for this case, but anything that requires research. It's important to understand how looking into something and getting it right can spark potential change. Just some food for thought. Media and the power it holds carries a great way in our society. It just goes to show that there are always going to be people that are curious and dig into stuff from the past, whether that be how two brothers may see freedom or something later down the road. The media is a driving force to society. However you may feel about this case, in any other case, it all comes down to media, media, media. None of what has happened recently would have taken place without the media and its many services. I'm your host, Matt Corpuz and you have just listened to Corpuz's Corner. Thank you for tuning in and have a great day.

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