Anthia Gillick Discusses the Dangerous Truth About Cults—and Why They Can Happen Anywhere

Cult survivor, actor and filmmaker Anthia Gillick says manipulation, isolation and exploitation can cross national, cultural and geographic boundaries



LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, September 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When people think of cults, they often picture isolated compounds, charismatic American leaders and shocking stories pulled from documentaries or headlines. But cult survivor, actor and filmmaker Anthia Gillick believes one of the most dangerous misconceptions is that cults are uniquely an American problem.

“Cults do not need a particular flag, accent or nationality to exist,” says Gillick. “The details may change from one country to another, but manipulation, isolation, fear and control can take on very similar forms. The danger is believing that something like this could never happen where you live.”

Recent discussion in the United Kingdom has highlighted a reality that survivors have long understood: extremist and coercive groups are not confined by nationality. A recent article in The Big Issue argued that the UK is no more immune to the allure of cults than other countries, pointing to striking similarities between groups operating on both sides of the Atlantic.

Gillick, a survivor who testified against one of America's most notorious sex cults, says the underlying methods of manipulation can look remarkably familiar regardless of where they occur.

“One of the reasons people miss the warning signs is because they are looking for something that looks obviously dangerous,” Gillick says. “But manipulation does not always announce itself. It can begin with promises of belonging, purpose, love, opportunity or transformation. By the

time someone realizes they are being controlled, their world may have become much smaller than they ever imagined."

Gillick knows firsthand how easily the public can misunderstand coercive groups. Today, she is using storytelling and filmmaking to explore the realities of survival and manipulation. Her original limited series, The Taste, is based on her own experience surviving and testifying against a notorious sex cult.

She hopes stories such as The Taste can challenge stereotypes about who becomes vulnerable to coercive control and encourage audiences to recognize that the need for belonging and connection is universal.

The issue is increasingly international. Communities can now form across borders, allowing influential leaders and tightly controlled groups to reach people thousands of miles away. Social media, private online communities, podcasts and other digital platforms have changed how people find connection—and how influence can spread.

"We have to stop thinking about cults as something that only happens somewhere else," says Gillick. "The internet has made connection global, and that can be a wonderful thing. But it also means that influence can travel globally. A person does not necessarily have to walk through the gates of a compound to become deeply involved with a controlling group or leader."

"Different countries may have different cultures, beliefs and histories," Gillick says. "But human beings everywhere want connection, meaning and somewhere to belong. That is why we cannot treat cults as someone else's problem. Awareness has to cross borders too."

Through her storytelling, Gillick hopes to challenge misconceptions and encourage greater understanding of survivors.

"The story of survival is not just about what happened to you," says Gillick. "It is also about what you do with the truth afterward. For me, that means telling stories that are honest, complicated and human. If those stories help someone recognize manipulation sooner, feel less alone or understand a survivor with more compassion, then they matter."

About Anthia Gillick

Anthia Gillick is a SAG-AFTRA actor, writer, producer, and filmmaker based between Los Angeles and Colorado. A cult survivor, she brings her lived experience into her storytelling and is currently pitching The Taste, an original limited series based on her true story of surviving and testifying against one of America's most notorious sex cults.

For more information, visit Gillick's official website: https://www.anthiagillick.com/

Anthia Gillick is available for interviews.

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