**The Whip  
by Karen Kondazian**

**About the Book**

The Whip is inspired by the true story of a woman, Charlotte "Charley" Parkhurst (1812-1879) who lived most of her extraordinary life as a man in the old west.  
  
As a young woman in Rhode Island, she fell in love with a runaway slave and had his child. The destruction of her family drove her west to California, dressed as a man, to track the killer.   
  
Charley became a renowned stagecoach driver for Wells Fargo. She killed a famous outlaw, had a secret love affair, and lived with a housekeeper who, unaware of her true sex, fell in love with her.  
Charley was the first woman to vote in America (as a man). Her grave lies in Watsonville, California.

**About the Author**

Karen Kondazian's career as an actor, author, journalist and producer, started early in life... At the age of eight, Karen was chosen to be one of the infamous children on Art Linkletter's famous “Kids Say the Darndest Things.” The opportunity to miss school during tapings was all it took for Karen to abandon her life's goal of becoming a CIA spy and focus on acting.  
  
She was born in Boston, completing her education at The University of Vienna and The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts, after which she began her acting career in New York. Her first professional work was in the Off Broadway, award-winning production of Michael Cacoyannis' “The Trojan Women,” later winning the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Actress in “The Rose Tattoo.” Tennessee Williams, after seeing her work, was so impressed that he gave her carte blanche to produce any of his plays in his lifetime. Other award-winning performances include “Sweet Bird of Youth” (with Ed Harris), “Vieux Carre” (with Ray Stricklyn) and Maria Callas in “Master Class.” On television, she has appeared as a series regular lead in CBS's “Shannon,” and also guest starred in over 50 television shows and films including: “James Dean” (with James Franco) and “Yes Giorgio” (with Luciano Pavarotti) -- also playing Kate Holiday in David Wolper's award running series: “Showdown at OK Corral.”   
  
She is a lifetime member of the Actors Studio and a member of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.   
  
As an author, Kondazian is a multi-award winning novelist. Her debut novel, “The Whip,” won the USA News Book Award (Best Historical Fiction), Readers Favorite Award (Best Western Fiction), among other awards. The book was also featured on the cover of Publishers Weekly and is a screenplay.  
  
As a journalist, her long running weekly column, “Sculpting Your Career,” appeared in BackStage, and Drama-Logue newspapers. Out of those columns, she created her first non fiction book: “The Actor's Encyclopedia of Casting Directors.”  
  
Karen currently resides in Los Angeles, California and is working on her second novel.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What was your opinion of the opening stagecoach ride?
2. What do you think of the seeming reversal of the attitudes of the Democrat and Republican parties?
3. What did you think of the changes at the orphanage thanks to Miss Haden?
4. What do you think of the following quote: “But even when we don’t like someone, we gotta treat them with respect. With compassion. Humans and otherwise.”?
5. Do you think family has to be blood? Why do you think Miss Haden can’t accept Charlotte’s familial ties with Lee and Jonas?
6. What do you think about the following observation: “Or perhaps it was just that people were too involved with their own person to really look, observe, and give a damn.”?
7. Why do you think the author chose to use feminine pronouns for Charley?

**If you enjoyed *The Whip*:**

* *Resolution* by Robert B. Parker
* *Bad Men Die* by William W. Johnstone
* *Little Big Man* by Thomas Berger
* *Hard Country* by Michael McGarrity
* *The Big Sky* by A.B. Guthrie
* *Far as the Eye Can See* by Robert Bausch
* *Destiny, Texas* by Brett Cogburn
* *Lightning of Gold* by Max Brand
* *The Complete Western Stories of Elmore Leonard*