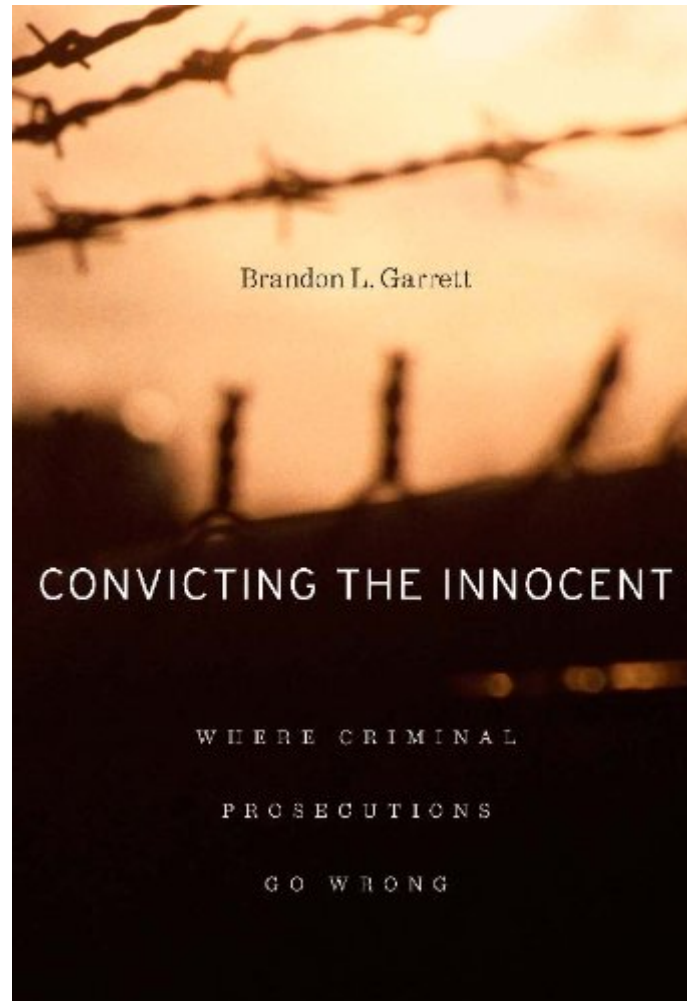




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Convicting The Innocent



Synopsis

DNA exonerations have shattered confidence in the criminal justice system by exposing how often we have convicted the innocent and let the guilty walk free. In this unsettling analysis, Garrett examines what went wrong in the cases of the first 250 people exonerated by DNA testing, and proposes systemic reforms.

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Customer Reviews

I read Brandon Garrett's book "Convicting The Innocent" in the Carlow University Master's of Science in Fraud and Forensics course on Forensic Research and Analysis. If you click on the link you can explore our program. [...] Prior to reading Garrett's book I only really thought about innocent being convicted on the criminal shows I watched. I knew it was occurring but not to the extent that Garrett goes into. I learned many new insights and valuable information. I realized how important valid and reliable evidence is as well as correct testimony's free from bias's and alterer motives. One particular exonoree case really caught my attention. Gary Dotson was prosecuted on a rape case using unreliable forensic methods. Because of the forensic analysts false testimony of

inconclusive scientific evidence, Dotson was convicted of rape. The victim later admitted it was all a lie. Can you imagine being Gary Dotson? I know I can't even imagine. The actual case shocked me but also the fact how long drawn out of a process it is to exonerate someone. Garrett says, "An innocent person who is convicted does not face an easy road to freedom. Judges do not encourage convicts to assert their factual innocence on appeal or post conviction"(210). Not only is it timely and expensive but also as time goes on memories and witnesses fade. I now have such a different outlook and realize how big of an issue false and misleading evidence is. People's lives depend on it! The only weakness the book had was all of the percentages and data. I know it was need to support his case, but at times it was difficult to navigate through the percentages. It helped me understand how big of a problem prosecutions going wrong were, but the numbers were hard to put together and read. As I prepare to become a fraud investigator. I realized how important it is to ensure the evidence we uncover is both reliable and valid as it is for forensic analysts investigating evidence at crime scenes. I am committed to base my observations on valid and reliable evidence so I can eliminate wrongful convictions. Although most of the book was based on vicious crimes. I still took away many valuable aspects as I start my career in fraud. This book is a must read to better understand the issue in our society! You will not be disappointed!

I recently had the opportunity to read this book as part of my graduate studies as a student in the Carlow University Master's of Science in Fraud and Forensics program while enrolled in the course "Forensic Research and Analysis.[...] This book exposes the need to continuously revise and evaluate the methods used to conduct scientific examinations of criminal evidence in violent crimes. The author highlights how various levels of law enforcement personnel failed to comply and even engaged in official misconduct while investigating and testifying in criminal investigations. I was happy to see that the judicial system was able to provide individuals who were wrongfully convicted the opportunity to prove that they were innocent through the use of DNA testing. The events addressed in this book have driven me to go that extra step while conducting investigations, as a detective, to ensure that my evidence supports the individual or individuals that committed a criminal act. I understand that his book was written to highlight the use of DNA testing and scientific examination to exonerate individuals who were wrongfully convicted, but I also felt that the author tried to draw attention to how law enforcement personnel failed to do their job. I felt this was a weakness of the book because the view should have been on the methods used during the investigations; not the individuals conducting or involved in the investigation. There are individuals in every industry that fail to do their job with integrity and honor, but the public must not judge all police

officers on the actions of a few. This book expressed the need for continuous training for all law enforcement personnel in the techniques of investigations, interviewing, evidence collection and examination, and court room testimony. This book supports the need for this training, which must be conducted throughout an officer's career from the first year officer all the way up the chain of command to the chief of the department.

When I was a child, I was taught that one of the hallmarks of our system of criminal justice was the notion that it was better to let five guilty people go free, than to incarcerate one innocent person. It made me proud. This book made me ashamed, as it becomes clear that far too often, the operating principle is just the opposite: better to incarcerate innocent persons, and countless numbers of them, than to let one guilty person go free. The book makes it clear that there's plenty of blame to go around: incompetent or corrupt crime lab investigators, clueless judges, many of whom seem to believe that the system is incapable of error, overzealous or dishonest police and prosecutors, and, sad to say, us. Us, if we don't start paying attention to this horrible problem and demand better. Happily, the author does share many examples of improvement and corrections that have been made. If we stay diligent, there will be more. An excellent, and very important book.

"The criminal justice system has been imperfect, is imperfect, and will remain imperfect. The reason being is the individuals managing the criminal justice system can and will make mistakes. The book, *Convicting the Innocent*, written by a Brandon Garrett, a professor at the University of Virginia law school, explores these errors within the criminal justice system by observing numerous examples. In general, he writes about the mistakes of the court in regards to properly utilizing scientific evidence and improper investigations that lead to false convictions. Furthermore, he categorizes the most common flaws that occurs during a false conviction, and concludes with a solution to these problems. While the author's solutions are possibility idealized and prone to mistakes, Garrett's discussion is written in a meticulous and convincing manner." - Joseph Lim

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