

Justice Denied: Extraordinary Miscarriages of Justice

James Morton



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This is an incisive examination by the bestselling author of *The Mammoth Book of Gangs* of some of the many miscarriages of justice of this and the previous century, which have seen innocent men and women found guilty, and sometimes executed. This shocking "manual of injustice" exposes wrongful convictions and acquittals as a result of the chicanery of some forensic scientists, over-zealous or negligent police officers under pressure to get results, incompetent lawyers, lying witnesses, bribed juries, judicial blunders, and feeble politicians. Sometimes, however, it is truculent and uncooperative defendants who prove their own worst enemies. It shows the mistakes that can be made in the face of a baying public and a rabid press, mistakes which have seen innocent men and women found guilty, and sometimes executed, while others have served lengthy sentences. It reveals critical flaws in criminal justice systems throughout the world (it is estimated, for example, that two per cent of felony cases in America result in wrongful convictions). Morton explores folk devils and moral panics, both historical, such as the "witches" of Salem, and and much more recent cases, like that of the West Memphis Three. It considers cases of race hatred, the impact of DNA, fitups, fake "experts," doubtful science, and the long road to the court of appeal. He also looks at what happens to the victims of miscarriages of justice, whether they go on to prosper or, as is sadly so often the case, never really recover. How did the boxer Rubin "The Hurricane" Carter come to be wrongly convicted of a triple homicide? The alibi of Joe Hill, the Industrial Workers of the World activist wrongly executed for the murder of a Utah grocer and his son, came too late to save him from execution. On the other hand, Lindy Chamberlain (famously portrayed by Meryl Streep in A Cry in the Dark), has finally, over 30 years after the fact, had her claim that her baby Azaria was taken by a dingo at Ayers Rock in the Australian Outback upheld by a coroner. Among many other cases, Morton also considers the 1910 case of two men convicted of the murder of a man still alive in 1926, and case of the West Memphis Three, who were convicted as teenagers in 1994 of the murders of three boys in Arkansas and released in 2011 in a plea bargain after 18 years, though the prosecution still refuses to accept their innocence.

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Brett Nash:

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