



Chasing Justice: My Story of Freeing Myself After Two Decades on Death Row for a Crime I Didn't Commit

Kerry Max Cook

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Kerry Cook is an innocent man who wrongly served two decades in Texas's notorious death house for the brutal 1977 rape and murder of 21-year-old Linda Jo Edwards. His struggle for freedom is said to be one of the worst cases of police and prosecutorial misconduct in American history.

In the summer of 1977, Cook was staying in Tyler, TX. He met an attractive young woman named Linda Edwards and was invited back to her apartment for a drink and left his fingerprints on the sliding glass door. Four days later, Ms. Edwards was found brutally murdered. When the police dusted for prints, they found Cook's and immediately arrested him. Edward Jackson testified that Cook confessed to the murder during a jailhouse conversation. Jackson was set free, only to kill again several years later. Cook, on the other hand, was convicted and sentenced to death.

He was thrown into a world for which no one could be prepared, and he survived beatings, sexual abuse, and depression; all the while, he fought against a justice system that was determined to keep him quiet and loath to admit a mistake. Through the work of a crusading group of lawyers who forced a series of retrials, his case made its way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ordered the case be reconsidered. It wasn't until the spring of 1999 that Cook was finally able to put the nightmare behind him: long-suppressed DNA evidence had linked James Mayfield, Linda Edwards's ex-lover, to the crime.

Chasing Justice: My Story of Freeing Myself After Two Decades on Death Row for a Crime I Didn't Commit Details

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From Reader Review Chasing Justice: My Story of Freeing Myself After Two Decades on Death Row for a Crime I Didn't Commit for online ebook

Erin says

I read this book after hearing about it from the "Truth and Justice" podcast with Bob Ruff. He's currently knee-deep in two cases out of Smith County, Texas, both of which involve two convicted murderers--Kenny Snow and Edward Ates--who have always maintained their innocence. Both of these cases involve shoddy investigation and questionable prosecutorial ethics and conduct. Kerry Max Cook's story precedes these two; Cook's case is known as one of the worst cases of prosecutorial misconduct in the country.

This book was difficult to read in some parts--when Cook recounts some of the things that happened to him while on Death Row--but it was best, in my opinion, when it addressed the trials and legal issues. It's the story that really kept me glued. Soon, Cook will appear for an Actual Innocence Hearing, nearly 40 years after he was arrested for the crime. I'm now very interested to see what happens there as well as to follow Bob Ruff along in his efforts to bring new trials to Kenny Snow and Edward Ates and bring to light the corruption in Smith County.

Sarah says

An utterly disturbing recount of the "justice" system. As I delved further and further into this book, I couldn't believe the flagrant corruption. It's incredible to believe this is a true story, it seems like a joke; how can the justice system be this corrupt, how did this happen to such a blatantly innocent victim?! I found myself cringing at the situations, but not able to put the book down. I just kept reading and reading, growing more and more disgusted, but needing to know when and how this 'wrong' was finally amended... How do you compensate someone for 30 lost years of their life?!

Nitya Sivasubramanian says

I picked this book up on the recommendation of podcaster Bob Ruff of Truth and Justice fame. There are many things to be said about this book, but prime among those, I must mention how hard this book was to read. Not only was it endlessly repetitive in listing injustices perpetrated by the prosecution and judges, but with the author also portraying himself as almost a simpleton swept up by the system with no real understanding of what was happening to him, it made the protagonist fairly unlikable. So why was I so moved by the book? Because that's the point, isn't it? The system isn't systematically destroying the lives of the rich, well-educated, powerful, or charismatic; It's stepping on the rights of those who are essentially distasteful to remember because of their existing lack of privilege. But rather than making these missteps in justice excusable, the vulnerability of the target emphasizes how horrifying broken the justice system can be.

Yes, there must be another side to the story. There must be some thought process that explains the behavior of the various police officers, attorneys and judges involved in the case. But after having sat through hearing the travesty that was Adnan Syed's time in court, I'm not sure I want to waste time searching for that side. I'd

rather use that time to teach my son how best to react if he is ever unfairly targeted by the police or justice system.

Carrie Matthews says

"Jerry Joe Byrd suffered a massive heart attack on the eve of his execution. Medical officials saved him long enough so that he could still be alive to execute." -- For what reason?!

This book will have you questioning your opinion of the "justice" system and capital crimes punishable by execution. Seeing injustice first hand from a family member wrongfully accused and imprisoned for many years, this book really hits home. Definitely a page turner! Cook will have you flipping through the pages as fast as you can read them just to see what happens next.

Amy says

I know this story turns out well in the end, but I spent much of my time reading this book being angry. It's bad enough when you have an unethical prosecutor, but add to that a judge who rules in favor of that prosecutor time and time again...you're screwed. I have a hard time believing in our justice system anymore. The system would work if people didn't have their own personal agendas going on and truly cared about finding the truth, but sadly they don't. How can you completely ignore the one likely suspect in her ex-lover, especially when he's the guy the roommate saw in the apartment? How do you do that? How do you dismiss dna evidence of his in her underwear and write that off? The anger is setting back in.

Kristen611 says

Really interesting and horrifying story. But not well written. I would have liked to read this story with more sophistication in the writing and legal issues. I am, however, happy to support an exonoree who wrote this book himself.

Michelle says

After listening to the Serial podcast, and hearing Bob Ruff of Serial Dynasty (now Truth and Justice) recommend this book, I thought nothing in it would surprise me. I was wrong. This case went so above and beyond the worst behavior of people in power, it sickened and enraged me. So many times my mouth literally dropped reading this, well after I thought justice would finally be served. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND this book for EVERYONE. It is an eye-opener to what really goes on in our legal system. I find myself less and less able to trust anyone in power the more I learn. Everyone should know the ability of our legal system to railroad anyone innocent into prison or even pleading guilty to crime they did not commit.

Jeff says

It's a riveting story but unfortunately it reads like a made-for-tv movie. And wtf is up with "Momma and Daddy" and the a little-too-brotherly love for his brother? Freaky.

Sheri says

This has to be the most frightening book I have ever read. This is the story of a young man (20) who was railroaded into a death sentence by the Smith County Prosecutors in Tyler Texas. He was eventually exonerated after nearly 22 years on Death Row, multiple courts - all the way to the US Supreme Court, overturning the convictions not once but three times.

This book shows how the wins and the careers are often placed above truth and justice. In the end, the only exoneration came in 1999 after DNA found in the victim's underwear (rape and murder) matched not this man but the one that should have been tried in his place. Over the course of three, nearly four trials, the Prosecutors lied, mislead the defense, manipulated witnesses to the point of them dramatically changing their testimony from initial statements to fit the defendant. It shows how, with the help of sympathetic judges they were able to suppress key evidence that would have ruled out this young man as a suspect in the crime and would have indicated someone else.

This book shows the fundamental flaw of the United States' Justice System and clearly points to the fact that we have most likely executed innocent people in the name of blind justice.

Adele Pitman-Jones says

It took me longer to read this book than expected as I kept getting so mad at the 'forensics' done in the case I'd have to put it down and take a bit to calm down. This was horrific and infuriating, but it happens more than we realise. I thank Kerry for telling his story.

Sheri says

2 1/2 disappointing stars. See my full review [here](#)

My rating: C-

My review: I'm going to say right off the bat that I only read this book because of the Truth & Justice podcast. Bob (the host) asked us to read it relating to a case he'll be discussing. I hope the case we're discussing is good because this book was BORING.

Kerry Max Cook was convicted of rape and murder in Tyler, Texas in 1978. He maintained his innocence

the entire time. There were SO many plot holes in this book. Here are a few examples:

?One of the witnesses against Kerry claimed he was a homosexual and a pervert. Many people claimed this. Mr. Cook NEVER addressed these claims. Was he homosexual? It was a question never answered.

?Doyle Wayne. Kerry's brother, who he "spoke" to frequently. I don't know if there was mental illness there, but something was off and it was never addressed.

?Kerry's alibi. He maintained his innocence but NEVER said what he was doing or where he was at the time of the murder.

This book was so detail heavy. I skipped through a lot of detail because it was both cumbersome and boring. There were so many "characters" that it was hard to keep up with it and very confusing.

In the end, DNA evidence proved that Kerry was not the killer, and it was the person he thought it was all along.

I would skip this book.

Angel says

Our cataloguer at work finished reading it, and she was extolling it to anyone who would listen. She donated her copy to the library, and she had it processed within the hour for circulation. Given her passion for it, I got curious, so I checked it out. I am told it will be an engrossing read. While this book genre is not usually what I like reading, she made it sound interesting. Plus the events happened here in Tyler, TX, so the local story now interests me as well. We'll see how it goes.

* * * *

I gave it two stars. It was not because it was a bad book. Far from it. It can be riveting and engaging, but I guess I was not in the mood for this type of book. Thus, "it was ok." I do recommend it for readers with an interest in reading things like true crime, criminal justice, legal and law. I can definitely appreciate why our cataloguer recommends it so highly. It does give a glimpse of Tyler and East Texas, one that some people might prefer not to have the world see.

Molly says

I read this book because of the Truth and Justice podcast and, while I care very much about the subject matter, the writing was absolutely terrible. It would have benefited from quite a bit of editing and/or a ghostwriter. It was like reading a cheesy lifetime movie. Of course the subject matter is serious and what Cook went through was appalling, but the quality of the writing ended up taking the focus away from the seriousness of the subject matter and made Cook come off as really unlikable.

Amber Eats Books says

3.5 stars

I found this a fascinating read yet there were a few problems that kept me from rating it higher.

Leila says

Leila Habayeb
Independent Reading
January 2013

"Chasing Justice- Kerry Max Cook- 352 pages"

Adult

Chasing Justice is a novel by Kerry Max Cook, about his own life and his story of "freeing [himself] after two decades on death row for a crime [he] didn't commit." Kerry Cook is an innocent man who in 1977, was wrongly convicted for the rape and murder of a 21 year old girl in his town. The novel is an incredible story of perseverance, dedication, positivity, hope, faith and never giving up. I really enjoyed this book for several reasons, for one, I have actually met Kerry Max Cook two times. His talks really were motivational and his story was incredible. His talks made me want to read the novel, and I enjoyed the read just as much as I enjoyed his lectures. I would suggest the novel to someone interested in a motivational type novel of a true story with an incredible plot. I would warn anyone interested in the read, that Cook does get quite in depth and some of his descriptions of life on death row are quite vivid. The novel is incredible and his story is amazing, Kerry Max Cook is not the best author, but that does not take away from his incredible story and inspirational person he is.
