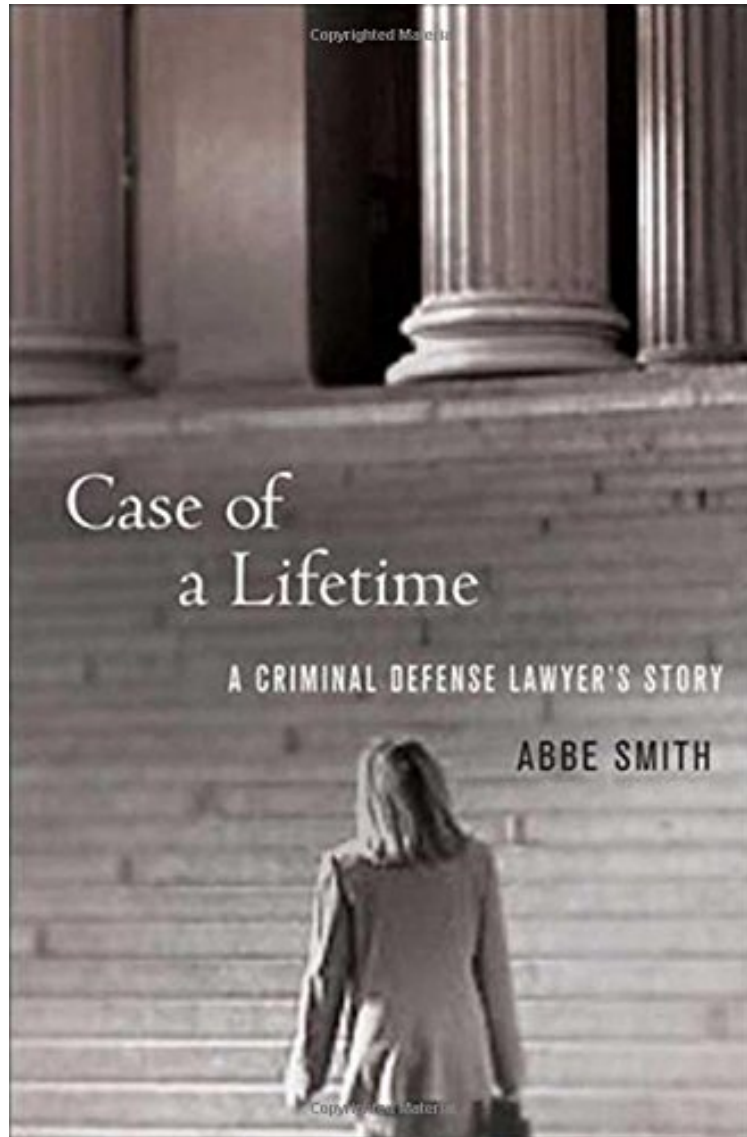


Case of a Lifetime: A Criminal Defense Lawyer's Story

Abbe Smith

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Abbe Smith : Case of a Lifetime: A Criminal Defense Lawyer's Story before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Case of a Lifetime: A Criminal Defense Lawyer's Story:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Rating related to the cohesiveness of the book By BLS Carmel If a potential reader believes that only guilty people are in jail and that our court system is fair, they should read this book. It does a good narrative job of laying that myth to rest. Would give it more stars on that point. As a piece of narrative, I found it less satisfying, once we got past the actual facts of the injustice. I believed that this child, then woman, then

old woman, was an innocent who was in the wrong place at the wrong time, with the wrong associates. I learned entirely too much about Ms. Smith's feeling of guilt, although I did think that it was a good thing that she hung in all those years in a quest for relief for an innocent person. As a narrative, the book would have worked at about half the length. Would have liked the author to explicate how subtle, and not so subtle, prejudices operate in the criminal justice system, and to expand Kelly's plight to all the folks in our society who are viewed as "other" by our system. In Kelly's case, the prejudices included that she was poor and that she was gay and that she was tried alongside an already convicted associate. An upper middle class woman, with family sitting behind her, and expensive representation, would likely have been treated very differently. On the legal points, I would have liked to learn more about whether there was a legal way to sever her from Billy, or to appeal that her case was not severed. I thought it unfair to offer diffuse criticism of Kelly's original attorney, particularly with respect to Kelly's gayness. He appears to have believed that volunteering it would have hurt her, but it apparently was nevertheless introduced. The recounting was unclear on whether Kelly was truthful on this issue. Near as I could tell, the fact of her omission and/or perjury worked against her. Others have written about the disproportionate penalties in felony murder and this issue could have had more discussion. The burden of proof in felony murder often entirely rests on whether the defendant can prove that they were somewhere else (on a particular day in the distant past). In the movie "Casablanca" the police chief says: "go out and round up the usual suspects" and there is a truth in this. Kelly was a "usual suspect" in that she had a bad associate and had poor judgment. In our society, poor people have bad associates and many have poor judgment and our system gives them no quarter. If I had been the author, I would have been more upfront about Kelly's errors in judgment (particularly her prison escape). Similarly, I would have been upfront about the "facts" being horrible for Kelly. If I had been the potentially helpful police official, I daresay I would have had the same response to the "bad facts". For folks who are touched by this tragic story of injustice, I suggest that they think about which advocacy organization they would like to support. I support the Southern Poverty Law Center. The important point is that the presumption of innocence is restricted by class and by race and that much of this restriction is built into the system. I wish that this book had been clearer about systematic injustice.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This book is about one Criminal Defense Lawyer who is ...By flagcollegemom This book is about one Criminal Defense Lawyer who is defending one person who is actually innocent yet is wrongfully accused and jailed. The case takes place in the 1970's in a town that is very closed minded about gays and lesbians as the person accused is a lesbian. The book talks about how Kelly met up with this man who has a criminal record and she has no idea about his criminal record.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An Inside Look at a Criminal Defense Lawyer and a Wrongly Convicted Client By Gloria Wolk This was the case of a lifetime because the author worked for nearly 30 years to help the victim of a wrongful conviction. It is an intimate portrait of a criminal defense attorney, a bit too intimate at times--I did not think it relevant to know about her family.

A recent study estimates that thousands of innocent people are wrongfully imprisoned each year in the United States. Some are exonerated through DNA evidence, but many more languish in prison because their convictions were based on faulty eyewitness accounts and no DNA is available. Prominent criminal lawyer and law professor Abbe Smith weaves together real life cases to show what it is like to champion the rights of the accused. Smith describes the moral and ethical dilemmas of representing the guilty and the weighty burden of fighting for the innocent, including the victorious story of how she helped free a woman wrongly imprisoned for nearly three decades. For fans of Law and Order and investigative news programs like 20/20, Case of a Lifetime is a chilling look at what really determines a person's innocence.

A moving and important book. Case of a Lifetime offers a disconcerting look at the realities that determine why some people walk free and others spend their lives in prison. Boston Globe The book's strength is Smith's openness about her life as a criminal defense attorney and her sophisticated thinking about the moral and ethical dilemmas criminal lawyers routinely navigate, such as how to represent the guilty, how far to go to ensure their clients' freedom and the ultimate question, what is their responsibility to the truth? Aspiring lawyers and anyone interested in the criminal justice system will benefit from reading Smith's account. Publishers Weekly A captivating, emotionally intense investigation of the complicated relationship between truth and the justice system. Kirkus (starred) This is an extraordinary, profoundly moving book. Abbe Smith tells the story of Patsy Kelly Jarrett, who spent 28 years in prison for a crime she did not commit--and tells her own story. She was Kelly's volunteer lawyer, and over those years she became Kelly's desperate friend. I know of no other book that says as much about a defense lawyer's motivations, self-doubt, frustrations. I finished it with tears in my eyes. Anthony Lewis, Pulitzer Prize winning author of Freedom for the Thought that We Hate: a Biography of the First Amendment This is a substantial work: intelligent, subtle, and honest. I couldn't put the book down. Abbe Smith examines a range of complex issues with insight and wit - the challenge innocence poses in a system focused on processing the guilty, the complicated relationship between truth and proof, the impossibility and importance of hope for long-time prisoners, the struggle for meaning for anyone who ventures into the criminal justice system. The way the author turns her skepticism on herself, without mercy, is

especially engaging and impressive. In the end, the book transcends lawyers and clients, guilt and innocence, crime and punishment. It is a testament to what can happen when one person reaches out to another in need. Sister Helen Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking* A wonderful writer Clear transparent style in telling of things [that are] so complicated and deep. Unaffected, unpretentious to an amazing degree. A real feminist book--as well as a defender story. Barbara Babcock, Judge John Crown Professor of Law, Emerita, Stanford University Law School Less a story of law than of two extraordinary people. Kelly Jarrett had barely left adolescence when she found herself spending the rest of her youth and much of her adult life behind bars. And yet she managed to preserve her sense of self. Smith was the attorney who, even as she pursued a glittering career that included teaching at Harvard Law, still had to help free Jarrett.... A moving and important book. We're bombarded with TV dramas about cops and crime and the pursuit of justice. "Case of a Lifetime" offers a disconcerting look at the realities that determine why some people walk free and others spend their lives in prison. Boston Globe Smith...demonstrates her wisdom and insightfulness in *Case of a Lifetime*. She does more than eloquently tell the compelling and heart-rending story of Jarrett and their relationship; she uses Jarrett's case as a lens to explore four ideals of our legal system -- innocence, truth, hope, and freedom -- and the ways in which criminal defense attorneys can ethically and professionally navigate the judicial system on behalf of clients. Rhode Island Lawyers' Weekly A stunningly honest book. In this compelling story of her 25-year fight on behalf of an innocent woman imprisoned for murder, Abbe Smith candidly and dramatically portrays the frustrations and triumphs, ugliness and nobility of criminal defense. You will never read a truer, more informative, or more moving account of what we call criminal justice. Professor Monroe Freedman, Hofstra University of Law A profound, beautifully written book. so personal and so wise. I loved it. Stephen Wizner, William O. Douglas Clinical Professor of Law, Yale Law School About the Author Abbe Smith is the Co-Director of the Criminal Justice Clinic and Professor of Law at Georgetown Law School. She began her career as a public defender and has been a criminal lawyer for more than 25 years. She lives in Washington, D.C.