

Book Review: Framed

By John Grisham and Jim McCloskey

And now for something completely different. (Apologies to Monty Python)

I've enjoyed reading John Grisham's novels since "The Firm" was published more than thirty years ago. So, when he teamed up with Centurion Ministries founder Jim McCloskey to write "Framed," an in-depth look at real-life wrongful convictions, I had to give it a shot.

I was not disappointed.

Grisham's writing skills, as well as McCloskey's, give the ten stories they chose to focus on the feel of an intense, page-turning novel. Unfortunately, the racism, judicial misconduct, flawed testimony, and corruption in our nation's court system are all too real. And it can be hard to stomach some of the outlandish oversights that robbed innocent men of decades of their lives.

For example, in the story *Guilty till Proven Innocent*, " a black man in Conroe, Texas, is sentenced to death for the rape and murder of a white teenager. What led to that conviction is mind-boggling. Swabs of evidence were discarded. Police fabricated stories, then fed them to potential witnesses. Evidence disappeared. The accused spent nearly ten years in prison for a crime he did not commit, until McCloskey and the team at Centurion Ministries uncovered the corruption the prosecutors and judges had hoped to keep buried.

Even when the falsely accused man was exonerated, not only was he denied compensation for wrongful imprisonment, but he was also ordered to pay \$25,000 in back child support.

It's quite astonishing how in almost every case, circumstantial evidence, along with testimony from current inmates who were promised deals lightening their sentences if they cooperated, carried the day. Absent motive, police and prosecutors created fictional scenarios of what they believed occurred, then set out to prove them. Truth be damned.

Point of observation: juries are comprised of idiots who willingly believe what the police, prosecutors, and judges tell them because, well, aren't those people supposed to protect us?

Second point of observation: Of the ten cases presented, eight of them occurred in southern states; three of them in Texas.

Coincidence?

"Framed" is an excellent read. It will likely upset you because it's not fiction. And in one case, the truth came out too late and an innocent young man was put to death. These are tragically real stories. And it's important to call them out so that, hopefully, these travesties of justice can be eliminated.

Five stars for "Framed." It would make for a great novel if it wasn't so real.