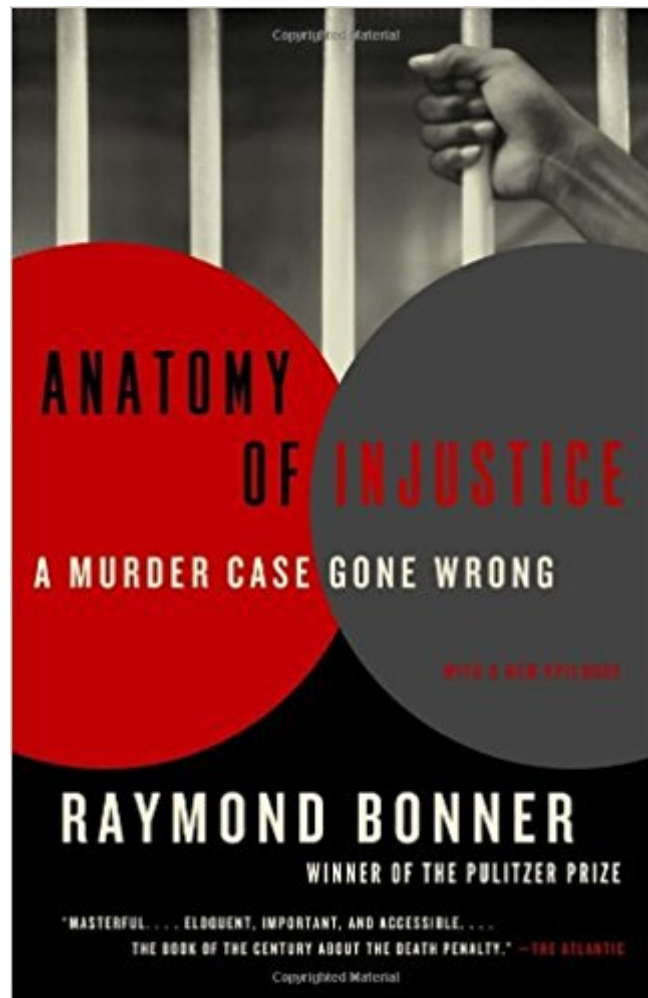


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# Anatomy Of Injustice: A Murder Case Gone Wrong



## Synopsis

From Pulitzer Prize winner Raymond Bonner, the gripping story of a grievously mishandled murder case that put a twenty-three-year-old man on death row. In January 1982, an elderly white widow was found brutally murdered in the small town of Greenwood, South Carolina. Police immediately arrested Edward Lee Elmore, a semiliterate, mentally retarded black man with no previous felony record. His only connection to the victim was having cleaned her gutters and windows, but barely ninety days after the victim's body was found, he was tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. Elmore had been on death row for eleven years when a young attorney named Diana Holt first learned of his case. With the exemplary moral commitment and tenacious investigation that have distinguished his reporting career, Bonner follows Holt's battle to save Elmore's life and shows us how his case is a textbook example of what can go wrong in the American justice system. Moving, enraging, suspenseful, and enlightening, *Anatomy of Injustice* is a vital contribution to our nation's ongoing, increasingly important debate about inequality and the death penalty.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Bonner, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his foreign correspondence for the New York Times, turns his considerable reportorial gifts to the issue of wrongful conviction as seen through the lens of a particular, outrageously mishandled case. The case, from 1982, centered on the conviction of a young black man for the murder of a white widow in South Carolina. Although the trial dates back decades, Bonner reanimates the wrongs of racism, inept defense, and prosecutorial misconduct

seen in this case and also in cases across the U.S. The narrative, which moves through the initial trial and eventual freeing of the convicted prisoner, Edward Lee Elmore, is given a face and a voice through Bonner's focus on the young female lawyer who never gave up on trying to free her client. Far-ranging in its implications, thoughtful, and utterly absorbing, this book is a fine example of involving narrative nonfiction. --Connie Fletcher --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

"Masterful. . . . Eloquent, important, and accessible. . . . The book of the century about the death penalty." --Andrew Cohen, *The Atlantic*

"Mesmerizing. . . . Powerful. . . . An utterly engrossing true-crime tale." --Kevin Boyle, *The New York Times Book Review*

"A genuine whodunit, a page-turner, and a tale of redemption. And it's all true. For all that, however, *Anatomy of Injustice* is also a blistering indictment of the death penalty. . . . Bonner delivers a crackerjack feat of storytelling that steadily administers the truth about capital punishment like a slow, toxic IV drip. . . . In his expert hands, the twists and turns of Elmore's appeals, and the gradual discovery of the travesties in the original investigation and trial by Holt's team, make for excruciatingly suspenseful reading." --Laura Miller, *Salon.com*

"Gripping and enraging. . . . Bonner's book is not a treatise against the death penalty. Rather, it is a look at what happens in America's justice system when justice is absent." --The *Economist*

"Accomplished and meticulously researched. . . . Convincing . . . As a piece of reporting, the book is masterful. Bonner builds the story, and his argument, carefully, rarely editorializing, mixing in a profusion of capital punishment in the United States. . . . Bonner's book is an important addition to the body of evidence against the death penalty." --Ethan Gilsdorf, *The Boston Globe*

"A revealing look at how police and courts grapple with death penalty cases. . . . If you are a staunch advocate of the death penalty . . . you're precisely the person who should read *Anatomy of Injustice*." --Nicholas Varchaver, *Fortune*

"The investigation . . . makes for a gripping read, and exposes some outrageous failures of American justice." --The *Must List*, *Entertainment Weekly*

"Compelling. . . . Bonner makes us feel the frustration and inhumanity of a justice system gone awry." --Wilbert Rideau, *Financial Times*

"Fascinating. . . . *Anatomy of Injustice* moves as swiftly as a great courtroom thriller, and Bonner's astutely observed characters are as memorable as any

you're likely to encounter in a John Grisham-penned best seller. "One of the best books written about a dubious conviction. . . . Bonner's volume is special for the way it entwines the lives of the principal characters with the nation's inglorious history of racial discrimination and capital punishment. "Gripping, suspenseful, and electrifying. . . . This should be required reading for anyone who believes in justice. "A gifted storyteller, Bonner's prose is at once stately and matter-of-fact. . . . In the context of true crime, of murder stories most especially, [Bonner's details] assume a captivating glow. . . . As a portrait of contemporary American life, immersed in culture wars and classism, and clogged with the residues of racism, *Anatomy of Injustice* is authoritative and fascinating. As a study in how things can go from bad to worse, how entire lives can be crushed under the wheels of the justice system, it's also urgent and necessary. "Jos f Teodoro, *The Edmonton Journal* "A lucid, page-turning account. . . . Elmore's defense winds through nearly three decades of legal maneuverings as suspenseful as the investigation of the mysterious crime itself. Painstakingly researched by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Bonner, the case illustrates in fascinating and wrenching specificity the widely acknowledged inequality and moral failings of the death penalty, while illuminating the less understood details of a criminal justice system deeply compromised by race and class. Indeed, Bonner's ability to succinctly and vividly incorporate the relevant case history and explain the operative legal procedures and principles at work—including the bizarre way in which court-acknowledged innocence is not necessarily enough to spare a life on death row—makes this not only a gripping human story but a first-rate introduction to the more problematic aspects of American criminal law. "Starred review, *Publishers Weekly* "Fascinating. . . . Dexterous. . . . Well-researched. . . . Bonner's description of decades of bungling is a reminder of the ways class and race can shape outcomes in the American legal system. "Margaret Quamme, *The Columbus Dispatch* "Far-ranging in its implications, thoughtful, and utterly absorbing, this book is a fine example of involving narrative nonfiction. "Booklist "Sharp. . . . A powerfully intimate look at how the justice system works—or doesn't work—in capital cases. "Kirkus "Those interested in human rights, issues of race, and inner workings of the U.S. legal system—not to mention true crime fans—will want

to read this book. *Library Journal* "Bonner's gripping true-crime thriller shines a shocking light on American justice. I couldn't put it down." Jane Mayer, author of *The Dark Side* "Race, sex, and murder in a Southern town are the explosive core of Raymond Bonner's legal drama. *Anatomy of Injustice* is also a brave dispatch from the trenches of a forgotten war over capital punishment. Told with a reporter's tenacity, a lawyer's acumen, and an advocate's zeal, this book is both a gripping narrative and a chilling indictment of America's justice system." Tony Horwitz, author of *Confederates in the Attic* "Anatomy of Injustice demonstrates dramatically and shockingly what bad lawyers are capable of doing, and is an inspiring example of what a good one can do. For that alone, law schools should assign it to every entering student." Stephen Engelberg, managing editor, *ProPublica* "Raymond Bonner uses his skill as a lawyer and journalist to take us on a fascinating journey deep into the heart of the criminal justice system, where the stakes could not be higher or the failures more disturbing. *Anatomy of Injustice* reads like a novel, but it is, tragically, all too true." Linda Greenhouse, author of *Becoming Justice Blackmun* "Most of us Americans don't have a clue about how the criminal court system really operates and we need a good writer like Bonner to take us through, step by step. But be warned: If you have pressing duties waiting, don't begin reading this book. This is seductive storytelling at its best." Sister Helen Prejean, author of *Dead Man Walking* "Reading Raymond Bonner's compelling account of a grossly botched murder case, I was overcome by outrage at the state of our criminal justice system. Rigorously researched and powerfully told, *Anatomy of Injustice* could and should change the national debate on the death penalty." Michael Massing "Raymond Bonner's *Anatomy of Injustice* is a powerful and poignant analysis of the case of Edward Lee Elmore. Bonner's voice is a profound force for truth and justice in our difficult times!" Cornel West

Do not read this book unless you are prepared to have your views on the death penalty and our American justice system challenged. This is a powerful story of a South Carolina murder trial where planted evidence and perjury were used to convict and sentence to death a mentally retarded African American man; it's the story of inept defense lawyers and a politically driven "justice" system which rewards winning over fairness and truth - even when a man's life is at stake. This journey through our court system is engaging, thought-provoking, and often disturbing. When I started

reading this book, I did so because of a general interest in true crime and our court system. At page one, my belief was that while the death penalty is often applied unjustly and capriciously in some states, it is appropriate for our more heinous criminals. As the author states, there are certain "horrific crimes" which "swell the ranks of capital punishment advocates and makes it hard for death penalty agnostics not to become believers." I didn't expect to be swayed from this belief. I was wrong. In particular, I was shocked to learn how difficult it is to be granted a re-trial after one is convicted, fairly or not, of a crime - even if that conviction results in a death sentence. As the author bluntly states, "Innocence alone does not entitle a defendant to a new trial." He quotes *Herrera v. Collins*: "Due process does not require that every conceivable step be taken, at whatever cost, to eliminate the possibility of convicting an innocent person. To conclude otherwise would all but paralyze our system for enforcement of the criminal law." The author summarizes this by saying, "the need for finality in legal proceedings sometimes trumps what might be seen as fundamental fairness." The Supreme Court further states that once a defendant has had a fair trial, "the presumption of innocence disappears." In dissent, Justice Blackmun stated, "I believe it contrary to any standard of decency to execute someone who is actually innocent. The execution of a person who can show that he is innocent comes perilously close to simple murder." It's too bad that his was a minority opinion. "Anatomy of Injustice" is as captivating as any thriller; the characters in this tale are intriguing and the plot chillingly unbelievable for a work of non-fiction. "If there is a flaw in the adversarial system of justice that has developed in America, it is that the adversarial nature of it outweighs justice." Highly recommended.

I read a lot about the injustices of our "justice" system, so I did not expect to be all that surprised by the details in this book. I was, in fact, shocked. The enormity of corruption and prejudice, from the police to the lawyers (both prosecution and so-called defense) and right to the judge, is just appalling. While the initial trial was a farce, what really struck me hard were the hurdles and blockades involved in obtaining a new, fair trial. Once a person has been convicted, the system wants to keep its hold. Despite obvious corruption, suppressed evidence, perjury, and more, our justice system was intent on killing a poor, mentally retarded, innocent black man. This is not justice. This is state-sanctioned murder. The research here is impeccable, and Raymond Bonner lays out the facts in a compelling manner. This book is easy to read, as far as writing style. But the content will - and should - leave you questioning everything you thought you knew about the way our legal system works.

Before reading this book, I was not ardently for or against the death penalty. For certain criminals and crimes, I find it tough to argue against a sentence of death. However, I have always been troubled that an innocent person may be put to death and find it hard to support a system that could sanction the death of someone that didn't commit such a crime. "Anatomy of Injustice" examines capital punishment, the fairness of our criminal justice system by provocatively dissecting the case of Edward Elmore. After reading this book, I'd hope even the most hardened capital punishment advocate recognizes the flaws and problems with our current system. This is the system that led someone like former Illinois Governor Ryan, a previously staunch capital punishment supporter, to suspend the death penalty in that state. Elmore's case touches on all the aspects of the death penalty for the reader to reflect and consider. Does the death penalty disproportionately get applied to poor, minority criminals? Do these individuals get adequate counsel? Has our criminal justice system become too adversarial rather than seeking the truth? How do we handle prosecutorial overreach and the denial of basic constitutional rights? These are all questions worth asking, not at the expense of victims and their families, but to ensure the system upholds the standards the founders set forth in the Constitution and the citizens of this country expect. As a society, if we decide the just punishment for heinous crimes is death, we can demand that the individual being put to death is guilty of the crimes and the system has enough checks and balances to prevent an innocent life from being taken. "Anatomy of Injustice" may not change your mind on the death penalty ---it didn't change mine --- but it certainly forces one to question whether the way our system is functioning today is acceptable.

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