



Until Proven Innocent: Political Correctness and the Shameful Injustices of the Duke Lacrosse Rape Case

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What began that night shocked Duke University and Durham, North Carolina.

And it continues to captivate the nation: the Duke lacrosse team members' alleged rape of an African-American stripper and the unraveling of the case against them.

In this ever-deepening American tragedy, Stuart Taylor Jr. and KC Johnson argue, law enforcement, a campaigning prosecutor, biased journalists, and left-leaning academics repeatedly refused to pursue the truth while scapegoats were made of these young men, recklessly tarnishing their lives.

The story harbors multiple dramas, including the actions of a DA running for office; the inappropriate charges that should have been apparent to academics at Duke many months ago; the local and national media, who were so slow to take account of the publicly available evidence; and the appalling reactions of law enforcement, academia, and many black leaders.

Until Proven Innocent is the only book that covers all five aspects of the case (personal, legal, academic, political, and media) in a comprehensive fashion. Based on interviews with key members of the defense team, many of the unindicted lacrosse players, and Duke officials, it is also the only book to include interviews with all three of the defendants, their families, and their legal teams.

Taylor and Johnson's coverage of the Duke case was the earliest, most honest, and most comprehensive in the country, and here they take the idiocies and dishonesty of right- and left-wingers alike head on, shedding new light on the dangers of rogue prosecutors and police and a cultural tendency toward media-fueled travesties of justice. The context of the Duke case has vast import and contains likable heroes, unfortunate victims, and memorable villains--and in its full telling, it is captivating nonfiction with broad political, racial, and cultural relevance to our times.

Until Proven Innocent: Political Correctness and the Shameful Injustices of the Duke Lacrosse Rape Case Details

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Injustices of the Duke Lacrosse Rape Case Stuart Taylor Jr.

From Reader Review Until Proven Innocent: Political Correctness and the Shameful Injustices of the Duke Lacrosse Rape Case for online ebook

Neil McGarry says

I thought that *Until Proven Innocent* would be a sober analysis of abuse of power and the dangers of rushing to judgment; instead, I got a jeremiad about various liberal offenses. If I want that, I'll tune into Sean Hannity. Do not read this.

Michael says

5 stars for research, 3 stars for the writing (the authors are definitely not prose stylists), averaged out to 4. I remember reading this book about 3 years ago and feeling my blood pressure rise as the chapters wore on. So much blame to go around, well above and beyond the kamikaze legal strategies of Mike Nifong. His misdeeds were only the most glaring.

The takeaway of this entire fiasco isn't that one particular group or institution railroaded these students for something they didn't do, it's that four different groups -- law enforcement officials, the media, Duke faculty, and the Duke administration -- all working in concert with each other, fused together to perpetrate this crime; one couldn't have gone as far as it did without the tacit approval of the others.

Other disgraces that linger years after the dust has settled: Nancy Grace is still allowed to have a daily talk show -- and people continue to watch it and accord her authority. The "Group of 88" still has not publicly acknowledged they rushed to judgment by signing that highly prejudicial advertisement. It's more than just one woman falsely accusing some men of raping her, it's that all the institutional safeguards these students thought they had also failed them.

It's infuriating, it's sobering, and it's scary. This can happen again. Those in authority will subvert it if it suits their agendas, we all know that. The bigger question is whether incidents like this make the rest of us more world-weary, more patient, less inclined to convict people before a trial has even begun. We'll see.

Stephanie Driscoll says

Sigh.....This review makes me a little bit nervous because I understand that this is such a hot button issue....but c'mon. Stuart Taylor takes one extreme and runs with it as far as he can possibly go. This book is so incredibly bias the other way that it was getting ridiculous to read. I'm paraphrasing here, but as Taylor describes the incidents that happened that night, and as we now all know, those boys did not rape anyone, but he made them seem like EVERYTHING they did that night was completely fine and normal. The racial slurs, the suggestion of using a broom on one of the strippers..... I get it. The author titled his book the "Shameful Injustice" and it absolutely was, but this book could have been written with A LOT less anger, isn't it all the anger that started this out of control issue in the first place? I recommend going somewhere else if you're looking for a full picture of what happened in that case.

Tim O'Hearn says

During my sophomore year of college, political correctness began to pervade all aspects of student life. I thought I could escape it by spending all my time in the engineering building, but that reality came crashing down when a computer science professor dedicated an entire class to discussing what he perceived were campus inequalities. At that point, I realized I needed to make an effort to understand what was happening both on campus and at similar schools in the northeast such as Dartmouth and Yale.

My parents and I are two generations apart, and I was raised with what is now considered an old-fashioned worldview. I grew up without the vaguest notion of what political correctness was. I recall the Good Morning America coverage of the Duke lacrosse scandal, which probably coincided with the last year that what GMA aired could have passed as journalism. I remember the stripper being described only as an exotic dancer. I remember the Duke lacrosse team being pitched as wealthy, privileged, white, and above average at lacrosse.

I remember the coverage ceasing. But the Duke lacrosse scandal never ended. It just served as the jumping off point for a crusade has turned venerable institutions into laughing stocks and those who fight back into villains. The parallels between what happened at Duke and what I experienced in college are striking.

One fall night, a group of fraternity brothers was leaving a bar. They got in a heated argument with some football players. The N Word was uttered. As the group of white guys walked away, one of the football players caught someone straggling behind the group and beat him within inches of his life. This included some flavor of curb stomping. The details of the man's trauma were shocking. Doctors noted that *yawning* will be accompanied by paralyzing pain for the rest of his life.

This was a case of white versus black. Privileged fraternity members versus stereotypically undereducated football players. Vaguely, rich versus poor. The dichotomy was clear cut. This story didn't have a hero, but the villain only ended up getting convicted for simple assault, despite the judge declaring "the brutality of the assault, the viciousness of the assault, is beyond belief."

As a direct response to this incident, a new grassroots movement was started to "address campus inequalities." And the football player became the group's pariah.

Specifically, this group, called From Beneath the Rug, was "A UNITED COALITION OF ALL MARGINALIZED GROUPS THAT IS CALLING ATTENTION TO ALL THE ISSUES THAT [THE SCHOOL] PUSHES 'BENEATH THE RUG'."

Similar to how the Duke administration and the rest of the country assaulted the character of the Duke lacrosse players, almost overnight, everyone who was straight and white at my school had to go on the defensive. There were vague accusations of a racially hostile campus climate. There was insistence that the campus was unwelcoming to people who weren't straight. There was the notion that the school's administration had been systematically sweeping incidents beneath the rug.

The group immediately had full support of professors from academic departments that Stuart Taylor and KC Johnson go to great lengths not to describe as total jokes. There were protests, Facebook posts, and then a march in which the members of this student group affixed duct tape to their lips. After all the initial hubbub,

a reporter from the student newspaper had the bright idea to ask members of the group what exactly they were asking for. They refused comment.

A few days later, they posted a long, rambling list of injustices and corresponding demands online. The only evidence of incidents of racial bias they included was quoted directly from an anonymous Tumblr page the group had set up because apparently nobody involved could write a cohesive essay providing evidence of a single significant injustice. While none of these demands were ever taken seriously, the administration then spent hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars to facilitate campus-wide adoption of political correctness, create new bureaus and hire more bureaucrats, and lull everyone into thinking it was normal and necessary.

Through the madness, I sought to gain understanding by speaking with those involved. I was repeatedly told that I could never understand. A few times, I debated issues on Facebook and was ganged up on and threatened. People agreed with me in whispers but nobody wanted to risk publicly standing by my side. The opposing arguments often came down to “if I decide that a word or action hurts me, it shouldn’t be allowed to transpire.” Recall the video from Yale where a professor walks into a mob and starts debating the protestors on their being offended about his wife’s email regarding Halloween costumes. If you haven’t ever watched it, check it out, it’s one of the scariest things I’ve ever seen and is a stark reminder of why this book is so important: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMc8p....>

I started to feel marginalized myself. Some of my fraternity brothers shared my fear that the campus climate was becoming hellish, but others, who *were* choirboys, were okay with having their characters assaulted while watching the chances of our administration guiding our once-great school on any path to prominence vanish in the face of political correctness. The football player picked up a DUI charge while awaiting trial and just last year was arrested for his role in a drug dealing operation. One of the main takeaways from Rosa Parks and her arrest leading to the Montgomery Bus Boycott is that she was carefully selected from a pool of several women due to her character being relatively unassailable. Choose your pariah carefully!

Until Proven Innocent helped me reconcile many of the raw thoughts I have had regarding political correctness with factual evidence and verbose, exhaustive arguments. The book’s length and somewhat repetitive nature is necessary because the authors’ goal was to slam the door shut on the Duke lacrosse case. It was done well and in a balanced manner. You know, as humans we actively seek out that which confirms our own biases. Mine, as they pertain to this subject, are as clear as day. While the authors took a side (the winning side; the other side being presented in the book Crystal Mangnum wrote before being convicted of murder), they don’t let any of their biases bleed through.

It can be lonely when it feels like everyone is against you, and this was a vindicating read for me. My new sense of comfort, however, was marginalized by the facts as they pertain to this case. What happened is horrifying. The myriad injustices are too many to name. It was bad to the point that I’m surprised not a single member of the lacrosse team or their parents ended up dying due to the stress and anxiety.

This is one of those books that stays with you forever. It keeps you up at night. It ever so slightly changes the way you analyze the world around you as you walk down the street. It’s so powerful that I can’t put it eloquently. I would find myself so, for lack of a better term, damaged, after a long reading session that my comments on the book would be reduced to “Man, this Duke lacrosse book...” But I felt a lump in my throat whenever I reached the point in conversation at which my friends are used to hearing me pitch them to buy the book. I know we’d all be better off if more people read this book, but I have trouble recommending it because, especially if you attended college in the last decade, it will lead to you becoming more cynical.

Edmund says

The writers researched this topic and detailed the entire line of events from the beginning to end almost religiously. Unfortunately, Taylor and Johnson tend to mercilessly attack those who ended up being wrong...in an unwarranted way. Overall, a very informative read; and in many ways, rather chilling. While it did make me stop and think critically about my own beliefs, I do caution that in the process of warning against extremism, the authors have put themselves dangerously close to the other side of the spectrum.

Joe says

It is sickening to realize that this is world in which we live. Our news sources are motivated not by the spread of accurate information but rather by the dramatic impact of the slants that can make the best headlines. This case is sickening, though not because of the "crime," but because of the reactions we the masses had to it. Truly eye-opening. Something like this should be required reading in every college journalism course in the country.

Robert says

This book is a laboriously researched (but too long) study of the unfounded rape indictments of three Duke University students in 2006. It is a tale of prosecutorial abuse, police incompetence/complicity, university spinelessness, and stomach-turning undergraduate excess that culminated in a district attorney's disgrace and a dismissal of charges--after the students had been hounded out of school, subjected to faculty and student vituperation, and pilloried in local and national media for a crime they did not commit.

The authors don't hide the fact that they have contempt for the political correctness that led to a widely accepted premise of guilty until proven innocent. Curiously, one of the main villains in the story, Durham, N.C. District Attorney Mike Nifong, receives extensive attention while remaining something of a blank. He seized on the rape allegation--virtually encouraged and developed it--to help him win votes in an election campaign. Clearly he was an arrogant, duplicitous prosecutor, but it's still difficult to understand his reality-denying downward spiral, bad judgment, cynicism, and self-destructive actions.

Duke is a nationally prominent, well-endowed university, so this episode made news, generating a media loop that spun around and around for almost a year. But Nifong ultimately could not hide all the exculpatory evidence he illegally kept from the defense, and he ceased to be a local hero for prosecuting privileged white students who did not do what he, and their accuser, said they did. Nifong had the case taken out of his hands, then the North Carolina bar association drove him out of the legal profession.

For more details, read the book. It is chock-full of details, most of which are depressing but appear grounded in fact.

Rebecca says

This book was hard, almost impossible to get all the way through--not because it was poorly written, but because it was almost *too* involving. This is a case where truth really is stranger than fiction; I've never had a movie or a novel I couldn't finish, but this horrified me to such an extent that I could only get through a few pages at a time before getting so depressed I had to put it down. I'm normally a believer in the system as a whole; obviously it has its flaws and its bad actors, but there are (supposed to be) so many checks and balances that something like this shouldn't be able to happen. For the DA--for the entire criminal justice system--to hold three clearly innocent men hostages for over *nine months* with absolutely no one able or willing to stop them, is shocking. We're not in Mexico, we're not in the USSR, we're not any place in the world where someone could be picked at randomly and charged with heinous crimes, against and in spite of the evidence, for no reason other than having upset the ruling powers. Here, though, there was a perfect storm of media, academia, the administration, the "ruling class," and the judicial system all picked these three boys virtually at random, all to advance their own pet theories and interests.

Some people will react to my shock and awe with "Where have you been?" I know that the system isn't perfect, obviously innocent people are sometimes arrested or put through a trial, but in this case there wasn't even a good faith reason to think a rape or an assault might have been committed...at any point! What's wrong with us?

I will add props to the writers of being very even handed; I don't know if they personally are liberal or conservative or religious or not. They very correctly pointed out that the truth is (supposed to be) above partisan politics, and that there were people at all points of the spectrum who were wrong and a few who actually got it right. That kind of honesty and neutrality is rare in any context, but especially one as charged as this one.

Paul says

Over the top rhetoric and repeatedly telling - not showing - the reader who are the good guys and the bad guys is not a strong method of making an argument. From what I can tell, the facts of the case speak for themselves, but rather than telling the story and letting the reader draw the (ineluctable) conclusion that an appalling injustice occurred, the author bangs on his drum so loudly and clumsily that the book became unreadable. I put it down after 100 pages.

Karen says

Interesting read. I wanted to read it because we lived there and Kevin went to school there at Duke. It was a neat read for me since I knew the places mentioned as well as some of the people. Interesting book for anyone. Every person in our country should be innocent until proven guilty, but as this book points out, this is not true for many cases around the country. The Duke Lacrosse team was already convicted prior to any trial in the newspaper, television, and within the Duke community.

Kristy says

This is by far the best book I've read all year. It's intense and rather daunting, but it will grab the reader and make you think. It's thought-provoking, and I admit, made me just angry. It's a shape to see what a hold the EXTREME liberal left in seems to have on colleges across America. The left holds to the claim that they believe in the innocent, but this book sheds light on how in the case of the alleged Duke assault, they were willing to point the finger because of politically correctness. Kudos to the authors for what must have been a painstakingly effort of research. Americans across the country should be outraged that incidents like this occur throughout the nation everyday. I recommend this book for those willing to take an upclose look at thier personal views and see how prejudices can affect the judicial system. I admit, it took me longer than normal to read, since it was non-fiction, but well-worth the read.

Nancy Marsanico says

A true story of a justice system gone wrong. The matter was poorly handled by the Durham community and Duke University.

The entire team was "thrown under the bus". I'm sure their lives will never be the same. It was satisfying that the young men were not found guilty of the horrible crime they were supposed to have committed.

Bill Pruitt says

This book has some very good information and a detailed timeline of the events surrounding the Duke rape case. The main crux of the argument is to avoid the rush to judgment that occurred by the media and the prosecutor and police. However, the authors undercut their moral high-ground by engaging in behavior they criticize from others. The authors chastise the media for painting the lacrosse players as wholly "bad" and the alleged victim as wholly "good"- a very valid critique. But the authors do the same thing presenting the lacrosse players as practically perfect in every way and anything negative is dismissed or downplayed as "boys being boys" and the alleged victim as a crazy, drug-addled prostitute. The authors merely flip who is "good" and "bad" in the story and engage in the same tactics they chastise others for.

The ideal that all of this occurred because of political correctness is also very tenuous. A better argument might be that people follow authority uncritically. When a prosecutor says he has evidence of a crime we accept it because we expect these individuals to be trustworthy. That trust was abused in this case but not necessarily because of political correctness but due to a very bad actor(s).

The final chapters on feminism and higher education are merely diatribes by the authors and add nothing to the narrative.

Stephanie Harris says

I have to confess I never finished this. The facts are compelling, and it have always believed that Mr. Nifong committed prosecutorial misconduct and that regardless of what occurred, the likelihood of conviction was infinitesimal given the facts. I'm a prosecutor, and I was outraged by the prosecution. I also think the

university bowed to political pressure rather than act responsibly. Which is not to say these boys didn't behave abhorrently, or that the lacrosse culture wasn't disgusting. In short, no one involved comes out looking good. The facts are fascinating, if extremely disturbing. My problem with this particular book, and the reason I didn't finish it, is that it uses the case to paint all feminists and liberals as evil and hypocritical. I'm no extremist, but I quit at the point where I couldn't escape the feeling that the authors were former white frat boys who are still pissed off that the world won't totally bend to their will anymore.

Ronnie Cramer says

It's hard to argue with John Grisham's assessment of this book: 'Brutally honest, unflinching, exhaustively researched, and compulsively readable, Until Proven Innocent excoriates those who led the stampede—the prosecutor, the cops, the media—but it also exposes the cowardice of Duke's administration and faculty.'

Perhaps the most depressing fact presented is this one, the next to last sentence in the book: 'The extremist professors and biased journalists who joined the mob in the Duke lacrosse rape fraud have suffered no consequences.'
