



# The Wrong Men: America's Epidemic of Wrongful Death Row Convictions

*Stanley Cohen*

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In January 2000, Illinois Governor George H. Ryan declared a moratorium on state executions. Three years later, Ryan commuted all Illinois death sentences to life imprisonment, saying, “Our capital system is haunted by the demon of error, error in determining guilt, and error in determining who among the guilty deserves to die.” This book chronicles over one hundred cases where journalism students, grassroots organizations, families, and pro bono lawyers—armed with DNA evidence and other instruments of justice—have defeated that demon. Cohen reveals how eyewitness error, jailhouse snitch testimony, racism, junk science, prosecutorial misconduct, and incompetent counsel have often populated America’s death row with the wrong men. Readers embark on journeys with men who were arrested, convicted, sentenced to death, dragged through the appeals system, and finally set free based on their actual innocence. Some languished for decades in our death houses. Notable cases of wrongful imprisonment outside of death row are also profiled. Although these stories end with vindication, there are those that have ended with unjustified execution. The Wrong Men is sure to fuel controversy over a justice system that has delivered the ultimate punishment 820 times since 1976, though it cannot guarantee accurate convictions.

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