



Illusion of Justice: Inside Making a Murderer and America's Broken System

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Interweaving his account of the Steven Avery trial at the heart of *Making a Murderer* with other high profile cases from his criminal defense career, attorney Jerome F. Buting explains the flaws in America's criminal justice system and lays out a provocative, persuasive blue-print for reform.

Over his career, Jerome F. Buting has spent hundreds of hours in courtrooms representing defendants in criminal trials. When he agreed to join Dean Strang as co-counsel for the defense in *Steven A. Avery vs. State of Wisconsin*, he knew a tough fight lay ahead. But, as he reveals in *Illusion of Justice*, no-one could have predicted just how tough and twisted that fight would be—or that it would become the center of the documentary *Making a Murderer*, which made Steven Avery and Brendan Dassey household names and thrust Buting into the spotlight.

Buting's powerful, riveting boots-on-the-ground narrative of Avery's and Dassey's cases becomes a springboard to examine the shaky integrity of law enforcement and justice in the United States, which Buting has witnessed firsthand for more than 35 years. From his early career as a public defender to his success overturning wrongful convictions working with the Innocence Project, his story provides a compelling expert view into the high-stakes arena of criminal defense law; the difficulties of forensic science; and a horrifying reality of biased interrogations, coerced or false confessions, faulty eyewitness testimony, official misconduct, and more.

Combining narrative reportage with critical commentary and personal reflection, Buting explores his professional and personal motivations, career-defining cases—including his shocking fifteen-year-long fight to clear the name of another man wrongly accused and convicted of murder—and what must happen if our broken system is to be saved. Taking a place beside *Just Mercy* and *The New Jim Crow*, *Illusion of Justice* is a tour-de-force from a relentless and eloquent advocate for justice who is determined to fulfill his professional responsibility and, in the face of overwhelming odds, make America's judicial system work as it is designed to do.

Illusion of Justice: Inside Making a Murderer and America's Broken System Details

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From Reader Review Illusion of Justice: Inside Making a Murderer and America's Broken System for online ebook

Mickey says

Written by one of the two defense lawyers in the Steven Avery murder trial chronicled in the Netflix's documentary "Making a Murderer", this book is an interesting hybrid of several genres: personal memoir, professional critique, and a behind-the-scenes account of the trial. In my opinion, this book is successful and fascinating in each of its parts.

Up front, I should probably admit that Buting was not my favorite half of that team. This is not a knock at Buting, who is obviously a very intelligent and capable lawyer. However, Strang has an almost otherworldly blend of eloquence and high-mindedness that would make anyone else in a side-by-side comparison seem lackluster. It's like asking a donkey to compete for attention with a unicorn. In the documentary, Buting's reactions are more common and easily shared: suspicion at the FBI's involvement, gamesmanship at the discovery of a potentially damning piece of evidence, and a jaded, cynical view of the police and the prosecution. Buting's world-view is extremely realistic and practical. On the other hand, Strang's refusal to believe that anyone acted out of malice or personal gain requires such flexible and nimble mental gymnastics that I'd love to hear exactly how such a conclusion was reached. It's either willfully naïve or inspired. Strang's position that the miscarriage of justice was caused by an arrogance in people (which he softens into a "lack of humility") was revelatory. I have a feeling that a book by Strang might be life-changing. It might impart such wisdom that I suddenly find myself living on a beet farm commune in Ohio and answering to the name "Earth Mother", totally blissed out. Or maybe going to law school and having a steady diet of grilled cheese sandwiches. I really don't know what effect such a book might have, but I have no doubt there would be one.

This natural tendency to compare the two men ignores the fact that their relationship was largely symbiotic. I think without Buting's more temporal contributions, Strang's views might be too ethereal to carry a documentary without a narrator. In that way, they complemented each other; We get the dirt from Jerry and the mountaintop view from Dean. It's the yin and the yang—the sour and the sweet. So while it is difficult for me to be wholly satisfied with this book when it feels like it's missing half of the combo, it's a rare occasion to appreciate the Buting without the Strang.

I always think a memoir is successful when the personality of the subject comes through clearly, and this book really captures the essence of the man. His descriptions tend to be earthy, stark, and in your face. For instance, when discussing a different case where an eyewitness was hypnotized, Buting describes this practice as "*tantamount to sneezing into a test tube*". (pg 84). He describes Brendan Dassey's plight in this way: "*The state turned over this teenage boy as if he were a kebab on a barbecue, and even charged him with first-degree intentional homicide, all in order to get his uncle*" (pg 183). Buting is a take-no-prisoners professional brawler who reveals in the book that he almost came to blows with the villainous Ken Kratz during deliberations and that he apologized to the jury in closing arguments for the way he browbeat the state's forensic witness. He's the darker Batman to Strang's squeaky-clean Superman; both superheroes, maybe, but there's a huge difference in their approach. If you want to see the bad guys get banged up, Buting's your guy. If you want a meditation on justice and truth, choose door #2.

Buting is more action-oriented, sometimes to the point of pugnaciousness. While on the task force which resulted from the first wrongful conviction, Buting's combativeness and impatience at the other members' reluctance to act explodes into a frustrated rant: "*No one had a serious reason to oppose it [making*

compliance to the task force's findings mandatory], but the collective sentiment was that we ought to kick it down the road and leave it for some future panel to deal with". (pg 133). This is the beauty of his contribution. Perhaps it lacks an elegance, but there's a vitality and doggedness that can be just as pleasing.

It was interesting to hear of his life and his other cases. He's a dynamic person with an interesting job. Also, he isn't so pompous that he won't occasionally poke fun at himself.

I credit the documentary (and this book) for getting me to question several assumptions that I had about American justice. I think there is a widely-held assumption that forensic matches are unassailable proof (with as much weight as eyewitness testimony used to have). Another assumption is that defense lawyers are unethical while prosecutors are selfless servants of the people. There was also the chilling revelation that a police force can rely on public apathy to continually act contrary to their official statements with no threat of repercussions. I hope that the success and interest in this case will help bring the public to a better understanding of the legal system. I think that both Strang and Buting are doing good work by using their new-found celebrity to raise awareness about problems in the justice system, and this book is a solid contribution to this goal.

Paul says

This is an excellent and well-written account of how hard it is for poor people to get justice in the United States. It also shows the rough local justice of small towns--in this case, Manitowoc, Wisconsin, how criminal trials become simply a competition in which side can tell the better story instead of finding the ultimate truth of what happened. The defendant in this case was railroaded by the cops, the courts, the journalists, and public opinion into being found guilty of a crime he didn't commit. The prosecution tried their case in the media long before the actual trial started. They didn't disclose documents or critical information that showed the defendant's utter lack of guilt.

When a trial for a first assault case finds the defendant not guilty, the prosecutors seem to find another crime to pin on him--neither of which he was remotely in the area of the commission of the crime. It's a very disheartening look at how difficult it is for poor people to get justice. A Netflix documentary was evidently made about the case, which caused a lot of viewers to become justifiably outraged at the railroading job. The author is the defendant's attorney, a brilliant man who describes things accurately and with minimal judgment. The unjust imprisonment of the defendant (which actually morphs into two defendants in the second trial) is heartbreaking. The cynicism of the police and the prosecutors is shameful.

This is a very absorbing book.

Nina says

Once you start reading this book, you won't be able to put it down!

Very informative and eye opening, I highly recommend it for everyone who is interested in knowing more about our Justice system in general, not just the Avery case.

I personally have gotten 4 different copies to share with friends because I was very impressed by this book! So worth it, one of the best books I have read in a long time.

Fremom3 says

I've never understood how someone can be a defense attorney, but I think I get it now. I was very impressed by both Buting and Dean Strang while watching MAKING A MURDERER on Netflix. I remember turning to my daughter, a probation officer, and saying "That guy (Steven Avery) has some great lawyers." Buting proves that he is not only a great lawyer, but a fine, compassionate person, as well...and a great writer! I highly recommend this book to any reader who enjoyed MAKING A MURDERER, to lawyers and law students, and to people with jobs in or ties to law enforcement...and anyone else who enjoys a good nonfiction read. Always at the center of Buting's mind seems to be humanity...how he, and we, can make the world a better place. A wonderful man and a thoughtful and thought-provoking book.

Amy says

What I was hoping Kratz would present in his book Avery, Buting presented from the defense POV in Illusion of Justice. Buting did a brilliant job of balancing information from his background, thoughts on our justice system, other cases, and the Steven Avery case. I especially appreciated how he introduced law and how it functions and its application in the courtroom. This book was extremely well-written, provided a new perspective, and offered fair insight into where the law performs as intended and where it falls short. Very well done.

Giulia says

I really admired Jerry Buting's work ethic and the values he stands up for before reading his book. After reading it, I see I was not wrong with my beliefs about him and not only him, but his wife. I think the book is a very well thought out and interesting read about the underdog's uphill battle in the U.S. court systems. I am heartbroken so many innocent people have had to spend an awful lot of time in jail for crimes they did not commit. The cards are really stacked against poor people. What I learned the most from Jerry's book is that certain prosecutors are quite disgusting and quite plainly they are evil. What John Norsetter (prosecutor-Madison, Dane County WI) did to Ralph Armstrong is incredibly heinous.. Just as despicable as Ken Kratz putting an innocent and developmentally disable kid behind bars.. Ken-you cannot say that Steven Avery acted alone in murdering Teresa Halbach in one trial and then try Brendan Dassey in another trial as being part of the murder and rape of this innocent young woman. How you got away with that is equal parts astounding and disgusting.

Jerry, thank you for the work you do--and this is coming from someone who has always believed the law would never do anything dishonest and that the police were never devious. Both you and Dean Strang are examples of what is right in the state of Wisconsin. Keep up the good work--from a reader originally from Kenosha, WI>

Lynn Kilb says

This is not a book about Steven Avery. Fans of the Netflix series Making a Murderer will not be

disappointed - Buting covers the most vital aspects of the trial, complete with some breaking news - but the real triumph of this book is that it humanizes a career that is very easy to demonize. Being a criminal defense attorney will not make you popular and it will not make you rich, but Buting makes a compelling case for why someone as bright and talented as he is would choose to defend those charged with the most heinous crimes. In fact, by the time you reach the final page of *Illusion of Justice*, you will be convinced that not only must you be brilliant and talented to be a criminal defense attorney, you must also be a saint not to become frustrated by a sometimes clunky system full of complacent, sometimes downright crooked players. But even after 30-some years and life-altering experiences outside the courtroom, Buting is able to summon unbridled passion about the law, and commendable optimism about the future of the justice system.

Stephanie Borders says

Like everyone else in this county, I watched *Making a Murderer*. Brian and I were really into it and binge watched it over the course of two weekends. We had some very heated debates about it, because although I think the documentary really sheds a lot of light on the defense's case, I have a lot of trouble accepting the idea of a conspiracy theory. It just blows my mind to imagine that type of collusion within a sheriff's office.

Because of my strict disbelief in the idea of a conspiracy theory, I automatically thought Steven Avery was guilty. And although Brendan Dassey's confession didn't sit well with me, I also believed he was guilty.

Sometime after I watched *MAM*, I read Ken Kratz's book. Now, I don't like Kratz anymore than the next person, but I was curious to see what he had to say about the case. Not much of the book sticks out for me, as it's been awhile since I read it, however a compelling piece of evidence that he mentioned, and has been talking about incessantly since *MAM* aired, was that the documentary left out the discovery of Avery's "sweat DNA" under the hood of Teresa Halbach's Rav4. That seemed pretty critical to me, because ok I get planting blood, but how would you plant someone's sweat under the hood? Which leads me to Jerry's book . . .

I listened to this one on audio. I wouldn't recommend it if you are like me, which is easily distracted. I felt like I missed some tidbits because I listened as I was driving/cleaning/baking, what have you. I think I knew enough about the case to where it didn't effect me, but if you have been living under a rock and somehow didn't see *MAM*, then audio may not be the best format. It's a lot to take in.

We start of hearing about Jerry's upbringing. Details of his life that to me were pretty fascinating, but I'm really into memoirs so that extra background piece laid some groundwork and also just gave that personal aspect. He also discusses what led him to being a criminal defense attorney, and we hear about some of his other cases. The big one he talks about is Ralph Armstrong, which is important because Armstrong was accused and convicted of the murder and rape of a female in the 1980s. He was only exonerated by DNA evidence AFTER Steven Avery's trial. So it goes to show that Steven Avery was not an anomaly as far as his initial wrongful conviction. It happens much more often than we would like to think.

Buting also goes into Avery's wrongful conviction as well, for the rape of Penny Bernstein. Buting had nothing to do with that case, so you're likely not going to learn anything from that section that you didn't know from *MAM*. We then move on to Avery being charged with the rape and murder of Teresa Halbach. It was interesting to hear the background story as to how Strang and Buting ended up on the case, how they divided the labor, and what every day like looked like for them during the six weeks of the trial. I could obviously go on and on, but I just want to make a few key points as to how Buting changed my perspective

on the entire case.

I had an epiphany as I started reading this book, and honestly, being an assistant to a criminal defense attorney myself, I am a bit ashamed to admit it took me so long to get here. And it is this: Steven Avery's guilt or innocence is not the question here, but rather did Steven Avery and Brendon Dassey receive a fair trial? More importantly, is the evidence there to find them guilty beyond a reasonable doubt? And I wholeheartedly believe the answer is no.

Brendan Dassey is an easy one. There are two important aspects to his case. One is that he did not have proper counsel. He was failed by his defense team, it's as pure and simple as that. Secondly, his confession should have been thrown out. This is a topic that has recently been in national news, as his case reached the US Supreme Court.

As for Steven Avery, there is so much I could go into. The "sweat DNA" is something I mentioned above, and is one reason that I no longer trust what Kratz has to say about this case, and that is because "sweat DNA" is not a thing. If Kratz wanted to be completely transparent, he would be very clear that the DNA found under the hood of Halbach's car is NOT from blood. Testing has proven that. That does not automatically make it "sweat DNA." There are plenty of places regular DNA could come from. If we want to go back to the conspiracy theory idea, it would be pretty easy to take Avery's DNA from somewhere in his home (Buting mentioned a toothbrush as a possibility I believe), not to mention the idea of contamination is a very real possibility.

I feel like I could write an entire book on this case myself at this point, so I will just say that obviously, I think all sides have their own agenda. I do find Dean Strang and Jerry Buting to be a million times more credible than Ken Kratz, but it's difficult to see this case from a completely non biased view.

Kathleen Kirchner says

Okay let's be honest, I would have read this if it was a list of things Buting had eaten during the trial, such is my making a murderer love. But it's actually a really well written book that covers other cases and issues aside from Avery's. Highly recommend.

Nancy Regan says

Just in case you hoped that Steven Avery was a unique target of excess prosecutorial zeal in Wisconsin, consider the case of Ralph Armstrong, another client of attorney Jerry Buting. Buting offers a masterful analysis of both cases in this first-rate study of American justice in the 21st century. And he offers ways we can address the flaws: vote; embrace jury service; be a discerning consumer of media; promote statutes that bar the interrogation of young people without counsel; abandon interrogation techniques that produce false confessions; demand that crime lab results be replicable by others and demand that indigent defense be adequately funded.

Bryana Baker says

Most everyone has at least heard about Making A Murderer, and I'm sure a vast majority have watched the documentary as well. If you are anything like me, this story/case probably both fascinated and disgusted you at the same time for many reasons. Whether you are of the belief that Steven Avery is guilty or innocent, I have found that most can agree on one thing - His defense attorneys, Jerry Buting and Dean Strang, were pretty great. So, naturally, when I found out that Jerry Buting wrote a book involving this case, I had to get my hands on it.

At first glance I thought this book was going to primarily focus on the Avery/Dassey stories and all the messy little details that come along with them, which is what initially drove me to buy it. However, I soon came to realize that this book had much more to offer. While there is absolutely no shortage of information regarding the Avery/Dassey cases, there were so many other shocking aspects. From his other cases that he discusses, to the facts and statistics he goes over regarding crime in general, even to his battle with cancer, I had a hard time putting this book down once I got going.

Jerry Buting really does a great job of shining a light on a side of the justice system that most people don't get to see, or don't want to see, and it was quite eye opening.

Being a big fan of true crime, it was nice to see a different take on a story like this that was not afraid to discuss flaws in the system itself and also tastefully addressed the many other issues in the criminal justice world in general that far too many people fall victim to.

I am giving this book 5 stars because I was hooked from the beginning and it never lost me. It will be a book that sticks with me in many aspects, for a long time.

Christy says

Well shit. I was 100% sure Steven Avery was guilty before I read this. Now? I'm going with 60%. This book was so well written and really informative not just about Steven Avery but other cases, and most importantly the innocence project. Our judicial system really needs to be fixed. If you didn't know that idk what to tell you other than pay attention.

Facts I learned that I found pretty screwed up. Federal laws punished the use of crack cocaine at one hundred times the severity of powder cocaine. Crack cocaine being the form that black and Latino communities used were penalized more than whites.

Half the drug possessions in the United States are for marijuana possession. Blacks and whites use pot at the same rate. Yet a black person was 3.37 times more likely to be arrested for it.

Of the 445 men executed for rape 405 were black. As of 2012 the innocence project reckoning, approximately 70% of people exonerated by DNA testing in the United States are minorities.

That's all on page 42. Can I just say if I ever get arrested to please call this man to defend me?

He is just a genuinely likeable guy. As for Steven Avery? I just don't know now. After all I've read from both sides I almost feel as though there is reasonable doubt. If that were the case then he should have been found not guilty. Right? Yet I'm still questioning the carpet cleaning, the letters he wrote, etc. why all that? Why the deep cleaning? I just don't know what to think.

Is it possible an innocent man is in jail yet again for a crime he didn't commit? Yes. It seems to happen a lot.

But, is he innocent? I still have no clue and doubt I ever will 100% believe in his innocence. His nephew? Well that's a whole different story.

Book Riot Community says

If there was only one thing that people could agree on after watching *Making a Murderer*, it was that Steven Avery had a decent, kind defense team, comprised of two lawyers who really seemed to care. Now one of those lawyers has written a fascinating account of the case and his feelings on how the evidence was presented and how the state of Wisconsin failed to offer his client a fair trial. If you were transfixed by the show, you're going to want to read this book!

Backlist bump: *Actual Innocence: When Justice Goes Wrong and How to Make it Right* by Barry Scheck, Peter Neufeld, and Jim Dwyer

Tune in to our weekly podcast dedicated to all things new books, All The Books:
<http://bookriot.com/listen/shows/allt...>

Brianna says

This book is exceptional. If you have followed *Making a Murderer*, you will be happy to know that this is not a complete re-hash of all events. However, if you are both a MaM follower or someone who wants to learn about the injustice of Steven Avery (and Brendan Dassey for that matter) you will be equally as pleased to know that Buting takes you through a well written timeline of events that are crucial to Avery and Dassey's story.

Along the road, you learn about Buting, his life, how he came to be a defense attorney, his family, his faith, his cancer diagnosis (given to him on September 11th, 2001 nonetheless), and his dedication to the underdog. This book is simply inspiring. We come to know a man that is humble, eloquent, has found his purpose and is a true fighter of justice. This is not only about Avery, but the many black holes within our system. Buting discusses other cases he's worked that were also handled by prosecutors who seemingly just wanted a conviction, no matter how many red flags. What happened to Steven Avery and Brendan Dassey can, and does, happen everywhere.

Miss Marple says

Like many people out there, Jerome Buting was my favorite character in *Making a Murderer* (followed closely by his partner, Dean Strang). His passionate and well crafted defense, the easy way he explained even the most complex aspects of the scientific evidence and his witty, straightforward rhetoric in court were key elements to make that documentary successful.

I'm not just throwing praises at Buting for the heck of it. All those characteristics I've mentioned come through in this very interesting book, that explores not only the behind the scenes of the Avery trial, but also

other cases of his stellar career and why he believes the justice system is broken. As an avid reader of true crime stories, I'm usually on the side of the prosecution and the victims, but I have to admit that Buting makes several excellent points. Often we hear about the system protecting the rights of the accused over those of the victims, but reading this book, it's easy to understand why there can't be real justice if the process to convict someone isn't clean.

The author talks a lot about his own life, which I personally didn't mind because I'm interested in him as a person, but I'd understand why some readers who mostly care about *Making a Murderer* could be a bit put off. Buting reminisces about his starts in law, his marriage (with another lawyer who is his partner in a firm), his faith (he's a devout Catholic, as is Dean Strang, I learned), his kids and the cancer that almost cost his life. All these elements help to build him up as an every day man, but one with strong convictions and a rightly calibrated moral compass. So often defense lawyers come as sleazy and avid for publicity, but this man's career and consistent hard work shows he really cares about perfecting the justice system. He doesn't make excuses for guilty clients, just wants to make sure their process is adequate and the punishment fits the crime.

In terms of *Making a Murderer*, I was honestly expecting more revelations. Buting assumes that the reader has seen the series (why else would you be reading his book?), so he doesn't go too deep in many of the details of the trial seen on screen, although he sheds some light on what was going on behind it, particularly the work of the filmmakers, his and Strang's efforts and his intense dislike for prosecutor Ken Kratz, with clear examples on why he's less than ethical. Buting clearly believes in Avery's innocence, but he doesn't mention that until the last part of the book, when he's answering frequently asked question. In the chapters covering the trial, he doesn't focus that much in his client's alleged innocence but on why his arrest and trial was a miscarriage of justice. And he has a point. Even if you don't believe that the evidence against him was planted, there were many missteps and failures and that's why we are all left with such big doubts about the case.

At the end, he addresses some of the questions I had after watching *Making a Murderer* and hearing Kratz complaints about the incriminating bits that were edited from the documentary. Buting's answers are clear and convincing, and considering Kratz's behavior in this case and others, I'm inclined to believe that these bits are not what he portrayed them to be.

Buting devotes a good amount of time to another of his cases, that of Ralph Armstrong, who spent almost 30 years in jail for a horrible crime he didn't commit. This is a well chosen case because the miscarriage of justice is so shocking, and there were developments unfolding at the same time as Avery's trial.

Bottomline, I'd recommend this book to anyone who watched *Making a Murderer* and who is interested in the judicial aspects of true crime. It's a very informative book, told in an easy, fluid narrative.
