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Book Reviews: Popular Books Section

(Page 6d - Review by Ndubuisi Eke, Africa)

OTHER REVIEWS IN THIS ISSUE
[Technical Books Section] Pages: |1| 2| 3| 4| 5| 6| 7| 8| 9| 10| 11| 12| 13| 14| 15| 16| 17| 18| 19| 20|
[Popular Books Section] Pages: |1| 2| 3| 4| 5| 6|
[Books on CD/Audio Tapes] Pages: |1|
[Software/Multimedia] Pages: |1|
[Online Courses] Pages: |1|
REVIEWS IN THE PREVIOUS ISSUE | NEXT ISSUE

FEATURED BOOK

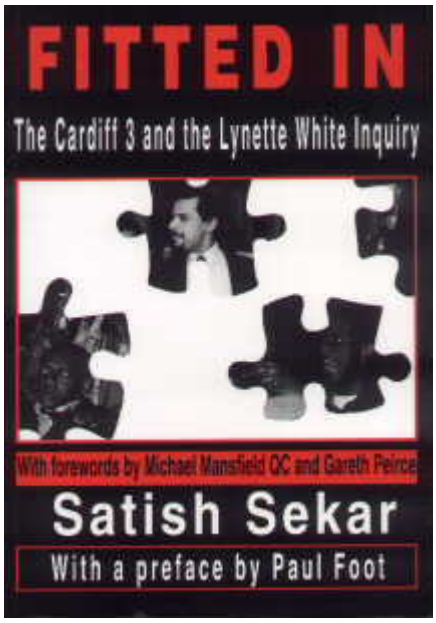


DEDICATED AND COMMITTED RESEARCH

[Further developments in Lynette White Enquiry]

Fitted in: The Cardiff 3 and The Lynette White Inquiry *by* Satish Sekar (co-editors: Andy Soutter and Michele Bailey)
The fitted In Project, c/o Satish Sekar, 8 Ridding Lane, Greenford, Middlesex, UB6 0JY, UK: 294 Pages: Publication Date - 1997, ISBN 0 - 9527325 - 0 - 5. Price: £10.99

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The author of the book, Satish Sekar, was 34 years old when he wrote the book. He was then a freelance journalist specializing in legal issues.

The book is a detailed account of a common crime and the ignoble role of the Police to concoct evidence to convict innocent individuals. A young white female prostitute was murdered in a friend's room where she occasionally entertained her guests. The crime occurred in the Butetown district of Cardiff on February 14 1988. Two men yet unidentified but named X and Y, white men, had circumstantial evidence against them based initially on Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) studies. The Police discontinued the lead on these because they could be excluded by DNA evidence. As the author rightly stated, 'DNA profiling can only hope to eliminate a suspect with any degree of certainty; in the case of a match it can only deal in probability'. So could 5 other men who in addition, had no fingerprint evidence and who had good alibi be excluded by DNA evidence. The police chose to ignore these findings, concocted evidence against them and prosecuted them. This, in spite of illegal tactics at interrogation especially with regards to Steve Miller who was not mentally capable to give evidence. Midway, the trial was shifted to another city ostensibly to create room for another murder trial involving a witness who was not mobile and required the better facilities in the Cardiff Court. Shifting the trial from Cardiff, a black community to Swansea a white neighborhood was unfair to the blacks accused of murdering a white girl. Probation officers subsequently asserted that the Cardiff Five received neither a fair trial, nor a jury of their peers, the right to which is one of the basic tenets of British law. The juries were presented with contradicting evidence from witnesses and detainees. Safeguards in the rule of evidence were ignored.

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...As the author rightly stated, 'DNA profiling can only hope to eliminate a suspect with any degree of certainty; in the case of a match it can only deal in probability'. So could 5 other men who in addition, had no fingerprint evidence and who had good alibi be excluded by DNA evidence...
Nearly 5 months into the trial and just before summing up, the judge Mr. Justice McNeill suddenly died of heart attack. A retrial was set up in spite of glaring contradictions from the evidence of the Crown witnesses. The new trial judge was Mr. Justice Leonard. Miller's defence counsel Roger Frisby QC fought to destroy his client's self-incriminating evidence but failed to play Miller's entire 7th interview tape and consequently failed to secure freedom for his client. Three of these men

were convicted and sentenced to life in jail. One of them, Steve Miller the 'Pineapple-Head' a black man was both a boyfriend and a pimp to the murder victim. The other two, Yasmin Abdullahi and Tony Paris both black men had solid alibi, which the prosecution misguided the jury to believe were destroyed. The most ludicrous aspect was convicting Tony Paris on the evidence of one Ian Massey, a convicted armed robber who Miller only met in the cell while awaiting trial. Two brothers Ronie and John Actie were discharged. The author in a display of committed journalism, employing an extraordinary knowledge of forensic science, doggedly followed and studied the evidence in the case. He then, again against the run of officialdom, was able to force the relevant authorities to review the case. Leave to appeal was sought. At the initial trial, Miller suffered bad representation by his counsel Geraint Richards who shamefully failed to protect him from police bullying. The counsel's presence at the interviews was indeed a disservice to the client. Miller was initially denied leave to appeal but Abullahi and Tony Paris were allowed. The Crown Prosecution Service failed in its duties by disregarding the criteria of evidence and prosecuting suspects on contradictory evidence from unreliable witnesses and in spite of unlawful interrogatory tactics by the Police. The author's efforts were crowned with success as the innocent Cardiff 3 were acquitted. The miscarriage of justice has not completely been 'carried' as the unlawful methods used by the police to concoct evidence against the innocent have not been purged. Incidentally police tactics to convict someone at every crime regardless of contrary evidence is probably rampant. The author recounts the case of the Darvel brothers in which the South Wales Police 'either by accident or design' destroyed the photograph and negative of a bloodstained handprint that belonged to the real murderer and did not belong to either of the Darvel brothers. As the reviewer was going through this book, there was a similar case reported in the USA TODAY of December 20-22, 2002 page 2A. In this 5 men (boys at the time of the alleged offence) were acquitted 13 years after the crime they did not commit having served the time.

...Not satisfied with the freedom gained by the Cardiff 3 at the appeal, the author by dint of committed industry involving the local MP of the murder victim, Lynette White, was able to secure an inquiry into the death to find the real culprits. This inquiry began on St Valentine's Day in 1988...

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The narrative in the book is divided into three parts. Part 1 has five chapters. Part 2 has four chapters and part 3 has four chapters. These deal with the investigations, trial and retrial, convictions of three of the five accused and the subsequent appeal and acquittal of the Cardiff 3. A chapter titled Conclusion reports the commencement of the new inquiry into the death of Lynette White including a rehash of previously articulated relevant evidence. Two Appendices detailing technical forensic evidence and correspondences on the quest for renewed inquiry follow. An epilogue written by a retired Police chief Constable John Alderson who is a qualified barrister discusses the legal and prosecution issues raised in this case.

Being a rather lengthy text involving technical jargon and many characters, the author does well to add sections explaining abbreviations in the text, the list and role of the key characters in the book and finally, a chronology summarizing the events in the book.

The narrative would have been exciting fiction if the sordid events mainly by the police were not real. The question is: 'what is the incentive for the police to concoct evidence to convict innocents'?

Do they get promoted on the basis of convictions they secure for offences? The case is, by the author's assertion, the longest murder trial in British legal history with obvious cost implications and is ranked among the worst travesties of justice in the British legal history. The role of the police in this and other cases is a cause for concern. The police lacked commitment by concocting evidence in the pursuit to secure justice. They displayed a conflict of interest in this case as exemplified in their involvement with Ian Massey. Finally they exhibited shameful racial profiling when they selectively ignored or applied DNA evidence to prosecute or otherwise.

...The author's handling of the forensic genetic evidence was erudite and is as good as if done by a specialist. This is the reward of a dedicated and committed research. This reinforces the recommendation of this book...

The book is interesting reading but could have been written in a lesser volume. There were many repetitions. For example, in the Conclusion section, there is a rather lengthy repetition of previous accounts. Without these repetitions the volume would have been significantly less.

Regarding the need for justice the author quotes Daniel Defoe 1661-1731: 'I hear much of people's calling out to punish the guilty, but very few are concerned to clear the innocent'

The author's handling of the forensic genetic evidence was erudite and is as good as if done by a specialist. This is the reward of a dedicated and committed research. This reinforces the recommendation of this book.

This book sheds light on life in decaying inner cities where the youths have found themselves desperate and have resorted to sex, drugs and crime. In the past few years the democracies of the world have been focusing attention to the inner city peculiarities. Unfortunately no such salutary attention is evident in the developing world. Another tribute to the author is the moral depicted by his dogged quest for justice for others. An apt quotation in this book from Pastor Martin Niemoller (Victim of the Nazis) is worth repeating here.

First they came for the Jews

And I did not speak out

Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for the Communists

And I did not speak out

Because I was not a communist.

Then they came for the trade unionists

And I did not speak out

Because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for me

And there was no one left

To speak for me.

Go ahead and read this book. You would thank me I recommended such a beauty to you.



-Ndubuisi Eke
Dr. Eke works as the Head, Department of Surgery in the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria and holds the rank of Senior Lecturer. He has reviewed several publications for a number of reputed journals. He can be contacted at ndubuisi_eke@hotmail.com

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There have been many Developments in the Lynette White Inquiry, since Sekar wrote his book. Readers wanting to read about them may want to click here.

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