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From Reader Review Police State: How America's Cops Get Away With Murder for online ebook

Al Menaster says

Excellent stories about Spence's cases. Skip the intro and epilogue, just long rants.

Mitchell Kaufman says

A serious indictment, not just of the police, but the Justice system in general. It is a serious issue, and easy to convict an innocent person, as this compendium of Spence's cases illustrates. Read in conjunction with Sidney Powell's Licensed to Lie, one can easily see how the system is broken and bent in favor of the prosecution.

Psychonaut says

Not really at all what I was expecting from the title. I was hoping for a broader overview of the corruption in law enforcement and the legal system. Instead the book was a collection of cases the author was involved in as a defense attorney, many of which were several decades old and some of which are well known (ie. Ruby Ridge and Imelda Marcos). Often they contained the transcripts of entire opening and closing statements and sometimes much of the witness testimony and cross examination dialogue. Apparently Mr. Spence is well known in the legal world and he wasn't shy about saying so. That being said, once I readjusted my expectations, I enjoyed the book. It was never boring. And it did shed some light on the pervasive corruption in America's legal system.

Paquita Maria Sanchez says

It's not what it appears to be at first glance. This book is not so much a compendium of patrolman misconduct, but rather a collection of narrated real-life courtroom dramas won by the author, Gerry Spence, who (literally) has always won his criminal trials both as prosecutor and defense attorney because he's a bu-hadaaaaasss. Seriously, he's like a movie lawyer. He successfully defended Randy Weaver (Ruby Ridge) by pointing the finger at the FBI, Imelda Marcos by pointing the finger at the Reagan Administration, Geoffrey Fieger (Dr. Kevorkian's much-hated-by-the-Right attorney) by pointing the finger at the Bush Administration*, has sued and won millions from epically un-awesome power-players like McDonald's and the medical insurance industry, won over ten million from Kerr-McGee for Karen Silkwood's family in a civil suit after her death; I'm not kidding, he's like Grishamshit, but *real*.

*Not trying to express an opinion on guilt/innocence in those cases, just saying that's all very impressive on Spence's part.

Spence harbors a lot of animosity for the corruptions in our judicial system, and uses this collection of some of his better-known cases to highlight the disturbing frequency of false confessions, racial profiling, default

aggression of cops dangerously coupled with a license to kill, frame-upping by detectives based on an unfortunate scoreboard of wins mentality over the pursuit of indisputable truth in homicide units, subconscious bias and cronyism in some judges which is exacerbated by lifetime appointments, politically-motivated prosecutions, overcharging defendants (Obstruction of Justice is a favorite) in order to make them look in the eyes of the jury like they just *have* to be guilty of *something* to be facing so many counts, and on and on and on. He offers sound ideas for reform, many of which are being moved toward now that we are in the age of cellphones and youtube and social media and cops not having *such* an easy time just beating the shit out of people and shooting them. I mean, still mostly pretty easy, but now everybody's rightfully pissed off and paying attention.

He has been on the right side of these issues for a looooong time. I mean, he started a nonprofit to fight for poor people who fall victim to "corporate and government oppression." He has kept a ton of innocent people from being killed or incarcerated for life, has worked his fair share of pro bono cases. Basically, he's a boss. Highly recommended if you're interested in jury trials, procedurals, judicial corruption, and/or modern American history.

Jon says

Gerry Spence is a great trial lawyer -- but he makes contradictory statements and conclusions throughout the book while he is trying to argue for reforms to the criminal justice system. The book is hardly about the police -- but about the different aspects of the criminal justice system including police. All of the cases he highlights are extreme examples. He wrongly concludes in one chapter that because the judge previously belonged to the same church as the defendant and the plaintiffs that he somehow couldn't be fair. In one chapter he says that police and prosecutors violate the law in every case (NOT TRUE, the exact opposite is more true) and then in his conclusions he says that the police are all generally good, trying to do the right thing.....

The reforms he suggests in the final chapter are either already in place or coming (like body cameras) soon or hyper-inflated problems.

My biggest beef with the book is that someone reading this book without any knowledge of the criminal justice system would be left with the impression that we have a very broken and corrupt and incompetent criminal justice system. I've found the opposite to be true -- in all areas -- police, courts, prosecutors and defense attorneys I see flawed individuals trying to do their jobs and working effective checks against each other -- but as a whole the criminal justice system bends over backwards to protect the rights of the innocent and the guilty and is in my estimation the best in the world.

Rae says

An interesting collection of the author's cases, all of which have some element of police corruption. While I very much enjoyed Spence's writing and his court antics on behalf of his clients, I don't think he was particularly successful at proving his hyperbolical subtitle which states that America's cops get away with murder.

Petra X says

1. Ruby Ridge - exhaustive account of the appalling murders of Randy Weaver's young son, Sammy, and his dog and his wife, Vicki, and the baby in her arms by the FBI and USMS stemming from a fake sting by the ATF. Weaver was an end-time religious nutter and white supremacist. However, in the free world no one has the right to police another's thoughts, only their actions. He was defended by Spence and a team of lawyers all of whom worked pro bono. Although they won, no action was ever taken against the murderers being as they were government agents and Spence uses this case to further his argument that America is moving towards a police state.

2. Brandon Mayfield and the Madrid Bombings - linked by a faulty fingerprint identification to the Madrid bombings, Mayfield had his entire life and that of his family turned upside down with the FBI playing the 'Muslim' card to justify themselves. Spence exposed how female judges were getting removed from cases without reason among other corrupt devices of government, the worst being getting a ruling declaring some provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act unconstitutional which the government got overturned on appeal.

What the government did in each of the above cases was to offer compensation of a couple of million dollars (which come out of people's taxes) and then go away and carry on.

I thought this book was apposite given the current situation in the US and having read Ta-Nehisi Coates' incredibly moving *Between the World and Me*. I've loved some Gerry Spence books and hated others. I hope this falls into the first category.

It starts off with an overview of mostly white-cop shoots black person who is not a perpetrator of anything meaningful but a victim because the cop just wants to shoot black people and knows he can get away with it, that the police and judiciary will be behind him. The introduction mentions some of the recent (up to 2015) murders of African-Americans, but the first chapter is on the well-known Ruby Ridge attack and murders by the FBI for which Gerry Spence defended Randy Weaver whose wife, unborn child and 14 year old son were killed in the incident.

This might be a really good read.

Dave says

Review originally posted at Book of Bogan.

Police State is a slightly terrifying trip down memory lane through the eyes of one defence lawyer who represented a wide range of clients in their battles against a government, or authority which sought to use its power to overreach and crush the oppressed.

Gerry Spence uses a number of examples from his own case history to examine the different ways that people, and governments in positions of power are able to wield that power in an unequal battle for 'justice' in America. It is slightly terrifying as a reader to realise just how quickly one can go from being an ordinary

person on the street, to being in the spotlight, on trial for your life. In a country which proposes ideals like being the land of the free, and offering justice for all, it is apparent that not all are created equal.

Spence has a very engaging writing style, and has the humility to admit where he made mistakes, and a few of the case studies - although they are in the minority - he describes includes where justice did not appear to be served in the end.

Although this is a trip through many of the important cases of the last few decades, Police State ends in the present time, and offers a prescient look at how the justice system has evolved, or perhaps devolved in that time, and raises important questions about the future.

A thoroughly entertaining read, that is up there with any of the hot shot legal fiction authors, while still being authentic.
