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Book Review of A Second Chance for Justice: The Prosecutions of Gabe Watson for the Death of Tina Thomas

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A Second Chance for Justice: The Prosecutions of Gabe Watson for the Death of Tina Thomas. (2013) Asher Flynn and Kate Fitz-Gibbon, New Castle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 296 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1443842020.

The authors lucidly takes up Tina's murder case by dividing the book into three clear and precise chapters devoted to stages of nine long years of trial which throughout the reading of book raised reader's eyebrows in astonishment or sending to the world of dashed hopes. Right from the unfortunate day of fatal dive on 22 Oct 2003 in Queensland, Australia till 23 Feb 2012, and the day on which Gabe Watson got acquitted by Tommy Nail without going for Jury trial or letting defense present all of the remaining but vital evidence raises deep concern with regards to credibility in contemporary justice system. This book not only explored the word 'justice' as dependent variable on budget and attorney's skills of presentation but as we reach to the end it creates a vacuum in minds of the reader as to what's next in life of Gabe Watson and how could the family of Thomas live with the doubt seeing their daughter's killer walk free. This book is must to read to understand practical machinery of Justice System and how it is compromised in certain situations even if that takes:

- A series of lies from public prosecutor to Thomas Family (Brendan Campbell in Queensland, Australia).
- Hasty and Confusion regarding plea bargaining of Gabe Watson in Queensland trail.
- Tommy Nail's refusal of prosecution's vital circumstantial evidences.
- Gabe's Weird behavior was straightly considered irrelevant to the case (different statements, exhumation of Tina's body and burying in different place, not being with Tina during her last moments of resuscitation, throwing flowers from the grave of Tina which was placed by Tina's family etc.).
- Tommy Nail's refusal to let trail go in traditional way and acquit Gabe beforehand of Jury verdict.

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This book leaves the reader to ponder over after reading this book to see if justice has been done or not? Definitely the authors' unbiased narration and subsequently analyzing role of investigation and limitations in front of prosecution agency which significantly predetermines the procedure aimed at perceived outcome after trial and hence it sure cannot be called as 'Justice'. The question is; how a Justice system can deliver fair trial if its process is not backed by substantive and due process and the efficiency of courts are determined by cases solved and budget expenditure on yearly basis. These parameters of performance definitely end up many cases becoming scapegoat of Justice system's weakness.

The authors attempt in addressing fallacies of Criminal justice system through a sensitive murder case does hold a great degree of relevance in knowing hardheaded actuality about the meaning of 'process and outcome' of a trial providing so called 'justice' and hence it will be helpful if the authors' analysis of jury system and coronial inquest extrapolate in exploring similar tendencies in set up of adversarial as well as inquisitorial system that will guide readers to comprehend 'justice' from a global perspective. Another thing that came to notice during the readings is that Gabe Watson presumably seen to be guilty and this natural polarization may be due to lack of enough statements from Watson's family members or Public Supporters of Gabe Watson. But, whatever the underlying reasons may be the acquittal of Gabe, it just doesn't seem right and it is not in any personal interest. It would be highly justifiable if the outcome of this whole nine long years of trail in two different countries be well-grounded on only because of delayed justice, lack of funds to run trials in Australia and US rather than perceiving public's perception which sends a strong message beforehand justice being made. This ultimately weakens the credibility of justice system and certainly raises doubts about justice beyond CJS weaknesses into the characters of CJS representatives.

It would not be possible to modify the whole matter or the solution to reach neutrality by adding statements of Gabe's supporters but certainly a bit more rational in looking at the final verdict does hold some justification on grounds of uncertainty of 'what might have happened underwater on 22nd Oct 2003?' It is natural for public to react and undoubtedly the grief of Thomas family is beyond calibrations and so is the hard time for Watson's family and Gabe Watson which strikes readers harder with every turned page and this book certainly needs to be taken into consideration for justice system reformers.

The authors had commendably examined the Tina's murder case and they have valiantly demonstrated the severity of injustice being effectuated consecutively in two most potent Criminal Justice Systems of the world (i.e. Australia & US). This book is an eye opener for the readers of other nations by means of thought provocation into critical acknowledgment of their own indigenous justice system. This book will be useful for academics and students of law, criminology, sociology, psychology and a manual book for practitioners to rectify existing loopholes.