

“Innocent Until Interrogated—The True Story of the Buddhist Temple Massacre and the Tucson Four”

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Author’s Note

The Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office is a subdivision charged with providing law enforcement in Arizona’s most populous county. While the MCSO’s employees, constituents, and stakeholders regard it as an entity unto itself, the men and women who patrol the county roads, maintain order, and do their best to investigate crimes are only human. Most of those officers serve admirably and rarely succumb to the tunnel vision that leads to false confessions like the ones chronicled in this book. But the good work of many does not compensate for the psychological root canals administered by a few. By narrowing its focus to only one investigative technique—coercive interrogation—the MCSO task force allowed misplaced belief in guilt by interrogation to drive the rest of its investigation.

This book is an excerpted and condensed narrative of what happened. The full truth lies in the interrogation transcripts, police reports, trial testimony, pretrial depositions, exhibits, and sworn affidavits. To make sense of that mountain of documentation, I eliminated redundancy, translated legal jargon, and tried to clarify the narrative. While all the stated facts are true, the opinions and legal interpretations in this book are strictly my own.

Decreased reliance on coercive custodial interrogation would return the high ground to hard-working police officers in the fight against real crime while allowing prosecutors to focus on real criminals. Judges would no longer have to cringe when hearing coercive confessions read aloud in open court. Insurance companies could reduce premiums for public agencies in their losing battle against false-arrest suits. The Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination would be meaningful in the police station as well as in court. However, even if all of that were accomplished, it is likely that little would change in the minds of the public. Most of us would continue to assume that only guilty people confess, and to think of ourselves as too smart and too strong to be tricked into confessing to a crime we did not commit. This book ought to remind us that coercive custodial interrogation too often snares the innocent and allows the guilty to go free.

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