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English 102

### Reflection Chapters 11-16 and Postscript

Reading Chapters 11-16, showed how unfair the criminal justice system is. Throughout these chapters we are able to see people being wrongly convicted for life imprisonment and/or death sentence. These people were usually poor, or of African American descent, which is very stereotypical. Two of the stories that really made me think about our system are the stories of Walter McMillan and Marsha Colby.

The story of Walter McMillan really interested me because I thought it was so unfair that they charged him for a murder he didn't commit. He was a man who had an affair with a white woman, and he was targeted as a murderer. The upsetting part was that they had no concrete evidence, but Bryan was persistent and was able to figure out in chapter 11 that "people will be a lot more accepting of Mr. McMillan's innocence if they know who really committed the crime" (pg. 216). It was evident that some people were happy a murderer was found for this case, but others knew that McMillan was innocent, as they were with him the day of the murder.

Bryan was a caring personality in this book, who tried to really bring justice to the life of Walter. When in the midst of trial and development of the case, he knew he needed to be quick and precise. He states "everyday makes a difference when you're locked down on death row, and you've been wrongly convicted" (pg. 218). I cannot imagine how horrendous it was for this person on death row, for a murder he did not commit. The nights where he had to smell the burn of flesh must have been a nightmare.

Luckily, Bryan presented good facts to the court ruling and he was able to get a new trial for Walter. It was pretty easy to go through the trial, and the judge was already informed of the information of Walter's case. It was a great relief to have a new trial, as it worked to get out of death row and prison. The last thing I will bring up in regards to Walter's case was when Bryan was at trial he mentioned "I thought about how certain it was that hundreds, maybe thousands of other people were just as innocent as Walter but would never get the help they need" (pg. 224-225). This was so upsetting to read, yet true. I know there are so many people in today's day in age that have been wrongly convicted, and are not able to afford a lawyer. Luckily, Walter was able to have a lawyer represent him.

Reading through the case of Marsha Colbey was also upsetting. Marsha had given birth to a stillborn baby, and had a history of intaking drugs. She was convicted by a forensic pathologist who did not diagnose the death of the baby properly. I was in awe to read that Kathleen Entisce, the forensic pathologist, was just able to say she killed her baby without having evidence. I did not understand how it was so easy to convict someone without evidence, even knowing that "Enstice had a history of prematurely and incorrectly declaring deaths to be homicides without adequate supporting evidence" (pg.230-231). It was a relief to know that Martha was able to be freed from this unfair conviction. It seemed as if they wanted to stuff the women's prison system with more women, as Bridget Lee was also convicted by the pathologist when she too lost her stillborn baby. Another upsetting thing to read was how overcrowded the Tutwiller Prison for Women, and how common sexual assault was. The juxtaposition presented was an interesting one, this prison was named "after a woman promoted the education of prisoners and championed humane conditions of confinement, Tutwiller has become an overcrowded, dangerous nightmare for the women trapped there" (pg. 235). Even when it was presented that prisoners were getting pregnant by the correctional officers, and they were being DNA tested, there was not much done which is strange. When evidence was presented, not

much is done. However, when there is no evidence presented then they were more likely to convict someone.

The postscript mentioned how Anthony Hamilton was convicted for 30 years, and he too was innocent. The saddest and most common thing to read is that people usually have to deal with the smell of burnt flesh while in solitary confinement. Solitary confinement is already cruel, I can't possibly imagine having to smell burnt flesh while there. It must be extremely difficult to be convicted without having a reason to be. Reading these chapters I was really just stunned by the way these people were separated from their families for no reason. It was disheartening to learn about their stories.