

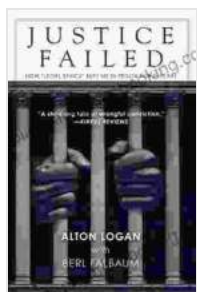
How Legal Ethics Barred My Freedom: A 26-Year Wrong



The Unjust Conviction

My name is Richard Phillips, and I spent 26 years in prison for a crime I did not commit. My wrongful conviction was a miscarriage of justice that

stemmed from a combination of prosecutorial misconduct and legal ethics that prevented me from fully defending myself.



Justice Failed: How "Legal Ethics" Kept Me in Prison for 26 Years by Irv Furman

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 1355 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 160 pages



In 1986, I was accused of murdering a woman named Sharon Jenkins. The prosecution's case against me was based primarily on the testimony of a jailhouse informant named Paul Howard. Howard claimed that I had confessed to him that I killed Jenkins.

At the time of my trial, I was represented by a court-appointed attorney named Richard DeFeo. DeFeo's ethical obligations as a lawyer prevented him from fully challenging Howard's credibility. Unbeknownst to me, DeFeo had a conflict of interest that compromised my defense.

DeFeo had previously represented Howard in another criminal case. The ethical rules governing attorneys prohibit lawyers from representing clients with conflicting interests. However, DeFeo failed to disclose his conflict of interest to me or the court.

The Conflict of Interest

Had I known about DeFeo's conflict of interest, I would have fired him and obtained a different attorney. A different attorney could have effectively challenged Howard's credibility based on his history of lying and fabricating information.

Unfortunately, DeFeo's failure to disclose his conflict of interest prevented me from fully exploring Howard's credibility. The jury convicted me based on Howard's unreliable testimony, and I was sentenced to life in prison.

The Road to Exoneration

For years, I fought to prove my innocence. I filed numerous appeals, but all my efforts were unsuccessful. I felt like justice had been denied, and I had no hope of ever regaining my freedom.

However, in 2012, everything changed. A new law was passed that allowed prisoners to challenge their convictions based on prosecutorial misconduct or ineffective assistance of counsel.

With the help of a new attorney, I filed a motion for a new trial. This time, the court allowed me to introduce evidence about DeFeo's conflict of interest. The court found that DeFeo's conflict of interest had prevented me from receiving a fair trial and granted me a new trial.

In 2014, I was retried and acquitted of the murder of Sharon Jenkins. After spending 26 years in prison for a crime I did not commit, I was finally free.

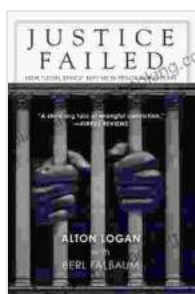
The Importance of Legal Ethics

My wrongful conviction is a sobering reminder of the importance of legal ethics. Legal ethics are the rules that govern the conduct of attorneys. These rules are designed to ensure that all defendants receive a fair trial and that justice is served.

In my case, my attorney's failure to adhere to legal ethics prevented me from fully defending myself. As a result, I spent 26 years in prison for a crime I did not commit.

It is essential that all attorneys uphold the highest ethical standards. Attorneys should always put their clients' interests first and avoid any conflicts of interest. Only by ensuring that all attorneys follow the ethical rules can we prevent miscarriages of justice like mine from happening again.

My story is a tragic example of how legal ethics can be used to deny justice. I urge everyone to become familiar with the ethical rules that govern attorneys. By understanding these rules, we can help ensure that everyone receives a fair trial and that justice is served.



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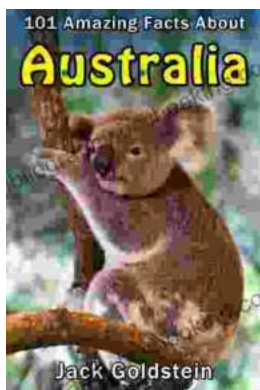
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