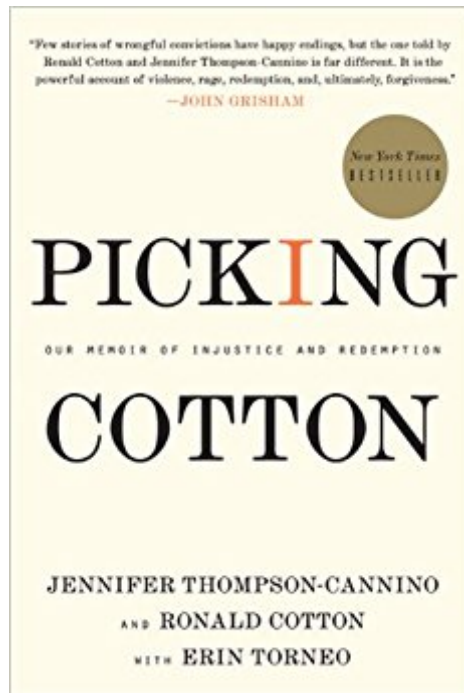




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# Picking Cotton: Our Memoir Of Injustice And Redemption



## Synopsis

The New York Times best selling true story of an unlikely friendship forged between a woman and the man she incorrectly identified as her rapist and sent to prison for 11 years. Jennifer Thompson was raped at knifepoint by a man who broke into her apartment while she slept. She was able to escape, and eventually positively identified Ronald Cotton as her attacker. Ronald insisted that she was mistaken-- but Jennifer's positive identification was the compelling evidence that put him behind bars. After eleven years, Ronald was allowed to take a DNA test that proved his innocence. He was released, after serving more than a decade in prison for a crime he never committed. Two years later, Jennifer and Ronald met face to face-- and forged an unlikely friendship that changed both of their lives. With Picking Cotton, Jennifer and Ronald tell in their own words the harrowing details of their tragedy, and challenge our ideas of memory and judgment while demonstrating the profound nature of human grace and the healing power of forgiveness.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Few stories of wrongful convictions have happy endings, but the one told by Ronald Cotton and Jennifer Thompson-Cannino is far different. It is the powerful account of violence, rage, redemption, and, ultimately, forgiveness.” —John Grisham  
“The story of Jennifer Thompson-Cannino and Ronald Cotton, as told in first-person voices in this gripping, well-written book, is exceptional.” —St. Petersburg Times  
“Even the most cynical reader will be impressed with Cotton’s resilience and grace.” —The

Washington Post “Picking Cotton is the nonfiction title you must not overlook this year. It is as compelling as any fiction, yet the truth at its core will move you to tears.

The Louisville Courier-Journal “Picking Cotton is ultimately an uplifting story of hope.

The Charlotte Observer “Few stories of wrongful convictions have happy endings, but the one told by Ronald Cotton and Jennifer Cannino is far different. It is the powerful account of violence, rage, redemption, and, ultimately, forgiveness.

John Grisham “This book will break your heart and lift it up again...a touching and beautiful example of the power of faith and forgiveness. Its message of hope should reverberate far beyond the halls of justice.

Sr. Helen Prejean, csj, author of *Dead Man Walking* “What happened in this book will change what you think of the criminal justice system in this country, and challenge you to help fix it. Each of them tells an extraordinary story about crime, punishment and exoneration, but it’s their shared spiritual journey toward reconciliation and forgiveness that is even more compelling and profound.

Barry C. Scheck, Co-Founder and Co-Director of The Innocence Project “Few people have done more to put a human face on issues involving wrongful convictions than Jennifer Thompson-Cannino and Ronald Cotton. Yet through their shared pain, they have been able to forge a friendship that most of us search our lives for.

Janet Reno, Former U.S. Attorney General “[A] remarkable testament...powerful...A MUST read.

Studs Terkel

JENNIFER THOMPSON-CANNINO lives in North Carolina with her family. RONALD COTTON also lives with his wife and daughter North Carolina. ERIN TORNEO is a Los Angeles-based writer. She was a 2007 New York Foundation for the Arts Nonfiction Fellow. The authors received the 2008 Soros Justice Media Fellowship for this title.

I read this book recently after becoming aware of some of the major problems with the U.S. criminal legal system, including the problem of eyewitness misidentification. It is really a remarkable story that I am doing my best to get into the hands and heads of as many people as possible who do not understand the problem of eyewitness "contamination" by flawed police lineup and photo ID procedures. The book is also very well written by both authors. I hated Jennifer Thompson-Cannino during the first part of the book for what she did to Ronald Cotton, but by the end of the book I understood that she did not intentionally misidentify Mr. Cotton. Memory is malleable. Her memory of her attacker was "contaminated" by faulty police line up and photo ID procedures in the immediate aftermath of her being raped. It was "contaminated," in that it was molded by faulty police

line up and photo ID procedures, to be Ronald Cotton. This could happen to anyone. I commend Thompson-Cannino for dedicating her life to helping other people understand this problem of eyewitness misidentification, for admitting she was wrong, and for forgiving herself for her mistake. I commend Ronald Cotton for his perseverance and his ability to forgive Thompson-Cannino, as well as the others who didn't believe him and contributed to putting him in prison for a crime he didn't commit. I repeatedly said to myself as I was reading his portions of the book, "I can't believe this man. What an incredible human being. I can't believe he could forgive all those people who wronged him so terribly." Read this book and send it to all your friends!

This is an excellent read that will both captivate and educate you. I confess, I saw the authors speak at a seminar before I read the book so I knew what was coming, but it still held my complete attention. The book also challenged my thoughts about witness identification. It's so easy for our brains to get confused, especially during times of high stress, like when our lives are being threatened. Confusion is understandable and generally forgiveable, but it is unacceptable when it leads to the conviction of the wrong guy! Buy this book. Read it. Digest it. It goes quickly, but it will forever change how you view the identification of a suspect.

I read this book as a recommendation in a class on Criminal Justice. It's a story of how one person mistakenly fingers the wrong man as her assailant and he spends eleven years in prison. Even when she confronts her attacker in court several years after Cotton's conviction, Jennifer does not recognize Poole as the actual assailant. It is proof that our memories are not what we think they are. Neither people were saints, but neither deserved what happened to them. It is an emotional and graphic account of injustice. I didn't think it was edited as well as it could have been and jumped from one point of view to the next. If it weren't recommended reading, I doubt I would have read it.

Good presentation of the errors of the human mind. I had to read this for a college course. A relatively easy to read story. Great quality product.

This book was chosen was a current event topic by my church book club. It tells the story - rape is life changing. As is the injustice of incarcerating the innocent accused victim. As our world advances on the unfair treatment of so many groups of humans - I walk away with the thought that knowledge of how the "other" side sees the picture -- is a major step in finding solutions to problems and thus bringing action to bring justice and more love of those living around us.

Since using Kindle on my iPad I have continued my bad habit of buying more books than I ever get around to reading. Stuck on planes this week, I chose this one to read and could not put it down, finishing it over 2 days. I rarely do that with a book. This is a book that should be required reading in every criminal law class in law school and for every new Assistant D.A. Humility is something lacking much in this world and most of us have said at some point when reading about some heinous crime and the person convicted that "he deserves what he gets" or, on the reverse side of the coin, condemned a jury that acquits after a long trial. With our 30 minute news cycle it is so easy to judge others after hearing a short single story. This is a simple lack of humility - the simple fact is we are in no position to judge guilt or innocence in a particular crime; we hear neither the evidence the jury heard and we certainly have no knowledge of the mounds of evidence that they are often never allowed to hear. Reading this book should give everyone the humility to understand that we live in a broken world, with man-made systems that, even when we do our best, continue to have inherent flaws and that are influenced by the inborn prejudices of many involved, more often these days in ways very subtle and hard to recognize. I have seen some comments on this book (not on ) that criticize and demonize the prosecutors in such cases. It is interesting when I read such comments, because their authors were guilty of the same very human offense as the prosecutors in this and other cases, judging someone without having the humility to step and realize what they do not know. Walking in another person's shoes is, in fact, not easy. This book makes it possible to walk in the shoes of all the victims in this case - both Mr. Cotton and Ms. Thompson and all the persons effected by this case.

I entitled this review a "A Wake Up Call" because it helps the reader to see and feel the different sides of two people who experienced an awful life changing event! I recommend this book to every one. It is so easy to think you know what people are thinking, and probably, you do not even have a clue. It is about justice or lack thereof, also about the power of forgiveness, and about the need to really reach out to other people!

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