

**Infinite Hope: How Wrongful Conviction, Solitary Confinement, and 12 Years on Death Row Failed to Kill My Soul**

**by Anthony Graves**

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*Reviewed by 377259d*

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**I**nfinite Hope: How Wrongful Conviction, Solitary Confinement, and 12 Years on Death Row Failed to Kill My Soul is the tragic autobiographical account of Anthony Graves, an innocent man, convicted of a monstrous crime and his plight through the American criminal justice system. His personal harrowing tale exposed the systemic frailties of said system in a most poignant way. Once exonerated, he ultimately compiled his story in *Infinite Hope*.

On or about 3:00am on 18 August 1992 in Somerville, Texas, six people – five of which were under the age of 16 – were brutally murdered and incinerated. A shocking and unconscionable crime for any community, it demanded justice and ultimate accountability for the perpetrator(s) responsible. Within days, the badly burned father of a four-year-old victim was arrested, interrogated, and immediately identified Graves as an accomplice. Summarily arrested, Graves’ 18-year, 2-month, 4-day legal odyssey/personal hell began.

Throughout his book, Graves succinctly outlined the idiosyncratic aspects of the American criminal justice system (Miranda Rights; Grand Jury System; Evidence Disclosure Motions; Jury Impanelling, Habeas Corpus Writs, etc.) and how they related to his particular case, circumstances, and eventual conviction. Chronologically and comprehensively, he skillfully guides the reader through the procedural due process of the American criminal justice system and how it specifically impacted his case far better than any civics primer or introduction to American criminal law textbook ever could. This alone made it a must read for anyone interested in the true operation of the American criminal justice system.

Even more deftly, though, he paints a guarded picture of the life and conditions in prison as an imprisoned person on death-row. However, his narration seemed to be a rather sanitized cinema-verité version and attempt geared to a particular sympathetic audience. Curiously minimized from his storytelling was the depiction of endemic prison violence. For instance, consider this glib example: “I witnessed a lot of bad things in there. Stabbings, suicide, men going totally insane, a few killings” (p. 119), and the only violent incident mentioned (an actual shocking homicide detailed on page 133) entailed barely two paragraphs. As well, most notably, the

acute racist/gang/religious division/dynamics of everyday prison living amongst his fellow prisoners was conspicuously and completely non-existent in his account, other than his equally terse statement “death row necessitated alliances” (p. 132). Perhaps this glaring omission and selective memory represents Graves’ personal method of coping, but it is an obvious oversight that was odd given his otherwise accurate and moving first-hand depiction of life as a prisoner.

Finally, and fortunately, for Graves, “justice” prevailed. The conservative Texas Fifth Circuit Appellate Court overturned his conviction based on “egregious prosecutorial misconduct” and ordered a new trial. Undaunted, for approximately four years (during which he remained in solitary confinement), the state prosecutors delayed the eventual adjudication of his case with yet more questionable legal wrangling and maneuvering. Ultimately freed, Graves graciously established a foundation to help prisoners who were wrongfully convicted or “over-sentenced”. As he so concisely concludes in his epilogue, “my experience as a wrongfully convicted man has given me a perspective and insight few people will ever have about our criminal justice system and its need for reform” (p 189). “No doubt, this was true and his book, *Infinite Hope*, thoroughly deserves to be heartily recommended and read for those aforementioned reasons. Moreover, his advocacy for those individuals is truly admirable and adequately detailed.

While this is one man’s account, it is important to note that, according to the National Registry of Exonerations (2022), 3,176 prisoners in the United States of America have been exonerated of serious crimes since 1989. They estimate that this equates to 27,200 years of lost time.

## REFERENCE

National Registry of Exonerations (2022) Irvine: Newkirk Center for Science & Society – University of California Irvine | Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Law School | East Lansing: Michigan State University College of Law. Retrieved from: <https://www.law.umich.edu/special/exoneration/Pages/about.aspx>

## ABOUT THE REVIEWER

377259d is currently imprisoned.