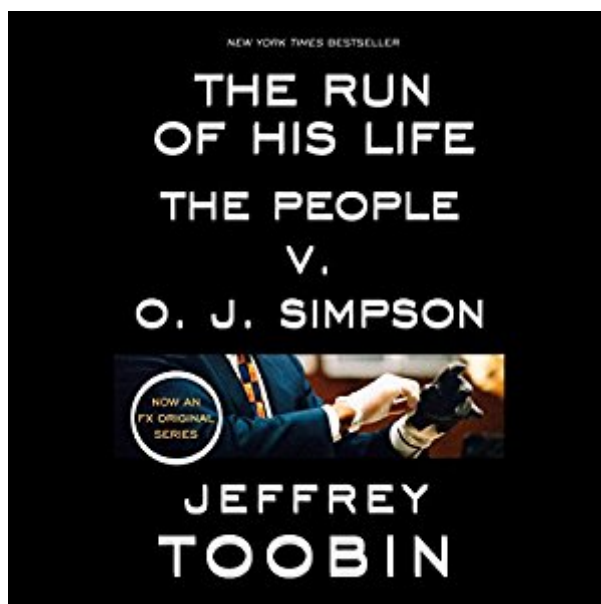


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The Run Of His Life: The People V. O.J. Simpson



Synopsis

This New York Times best seller was the inspiration for the first season of American Crime Story on FX, starring Cuba Gooding, Jr.; John Travolta; David Schwimmer; and Connie Britton. The definitive account of the O. J. Simpson trial, *The Run of His Life* is a prodigious feat of reporting that could have been written only by the foremost legal journalist of our time. First published less than a year after the infamous verdict, Jeffrey Toobin's nonfiction masterpiece tells the whole story, from the murders of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman to the ruthless gamesmanship behind the scenes of "the trial of the century". Rich in character, as propulsive as a legal thriller, this enduring narrative continues to shock and fascinate with its candid depiction of the human drama that upended American life. Please note: This audiobook is a recording of the original 1996 edition of *The Run of His Life*. It does not include an Afterword added to the 2013 reissued edition.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 18 hours and 46 minutes

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Customer Reviews

The dust jacket for *The Run of His Life* is pure black on one side and pure white on the other. From the outset of the bizarre, ever-televised story, O.J. Simpson's defense lawyers sought to exploit race, and of course they succeeded beyond their wildest dreams through a combination of amazing luck and sheer audacity. The purpose of this book is clearly not to change any minds about the substantial issues of the case itself, about which everyone seems to be intractable. Even though Toobin is one of the more objective (though not uninvolved) observers of the case and his point of view rings more true than that of the participants, the stereotypical white reader will agree with most of what's in this book, and the stereotypical black reader will find many faults. The main value of this

book is as a fascinating picture of the machinations behind the public events and of the personalities involved, and as an integrated narrative of the essentials of the story. It was utterly engaging to this reader, who followed the trial fairly closely, but it would be of great interest to anyone looking for first-rate coverage of the ultimate modern American fiasco. It's simply an amazing story, not just about a murder case, of course, and not just about race, but also about celebrity (Simpson's, the lawyers, the witnesses, etc.) and the ramifications of race for the central celebrity, who once said in an interview, "I'm not black, I'm O.J." Johnny Cochran may be right that race affects everything in America, but for O.J. Simpson, his celebrity and wealth had an overriding impact on everything in his life, a life which even before the murders was evidently a hollow and tawdry one. Even if Simpson had been unequivocally proven innocent, his image would have still suffered from the revelations of a life filled with sycophants, ever-seedier commercial endorsements, and of course spousal battery and abuse. Toobin provides some very fascinating background on all the major players, including the LAPD, and he makes a totally convincing case that far from there being a conspiracy against Simpson, there was incredible favoritism afforded him by police, especially in the domestic violence complaints against him and even in the murder case. But even this white reader found himself often wondering what Toobin's sources were for many seemingly inobservable events. His list of sources at the back of the book doesn't name any interview subjects, and only on rare occasions does he attribute anything specifically in the narrative itself. For example, in the description of events leading to the infamous glove demonstration, he writes: "Clark thought about saying something, risking the humiliation of her colleague by saying, 'No! Stop!' But she kept her seat." Did Marcia Clark, a lead prosecutor, tell him this herself? (And is she likely to be telling the truth?) He doesn't say. Given the huge axes being ground by all the parties (and even those not directly involved), one wonders about many such accounts in this book. Another example is the description of a jailhouse meeting between Simpson and three of his lawyers, F. Lee Bailey, Robert Kardashian and Skip Taft, on the night before the verdict, in which dialog is quoted which makes it clear that Simpson had already learned of the verdict via the L.A. Sheriff's department grapevine. (The Sheriff's department guarded Simpson and was also in charge of the sequestered jury.) Even though the account is plausible and there isn't any clear reason for anyone to lie, Toobin was obviously not present and the integrity of the parties is in doubt. The main revelation to this reader was the degree to which a fair trial was impossible given the incredible attention to it and the pressure this exerted on all parties, especially the jury. Toobin readily refutes claims by jurors that race didn't play a role in their decision. He quotes from Johnny Cochran's closing argument: "Your verdict goes far beyond the doors of this courtroom. That's not to put any

pressure on you, just to let you know what is really happening out there." Toobin writes: "It was, one supposes, just a sort of courtesy to warn the jurors what their lives might be like if they happened to vote to convict this man." Given the incredibly polarized public reactions to the verdict, this is a very crucial point -- picture prosecutor Christopher Darden being spat on by black brothers and sisters outside the courtroom. In such a situation, one cannot expect from ordinary people a reasoned decision based solely on the evidence, especially given the room for doubt (if not "reasonable doubt") in this case. In the words of juror Carrie Bess just after the jury was excused after the reading of the verdict: "We've got to protect our own."

In what may prove to be the definitive book on the trial of the century, New Yorker writer Jeffrey Toobin leaves no stone unturned to prove that O.J. Simpson was guilty of murdering his ex-wife Nicole Simpson and her friend, Ron Goldman. The premise of the book is simple. OJ was guilty - his lawyers knew it and the evidence, overwhelming. The case was the prosecution's to lose. Which they did, through their incompetence and sheer arrogance, he argues. Granted, the defense played the race card from the get go - Toobin himself was the first to flush out their strategy early on and make it public through his explosive article in the *The New Yorker*. Through vivid recounting of the murder trial and behind-the-scenes look at the lives and testimony of the main participants and witnesses, Toobin gives a far more vivid account than that found in other books, most notably Marcia Clark's "Without a Doubt," presenting a solid case for OJ's guilt in the last chapter. The amount of preparation that went into this book - with over 200 interviews - shows how meticulous Toobin was in his research. It's no accident that he was the first reporter to uncover the infamous Furman personnel files and bring them to the attention of the Defense (unbeknown to him, the lawyers had already found these.) Why not talk with the prosecution about these first? Unfortunately, Toobin does not hide his disdain for the prosecution - to the point that you wonder if they even granted him an interview. Almost all references to Marcia Clark are exceedingly negative - with regards to her appearance, arrogance, tardiness, aggressiveness towards witnesses, stubbornness ("she was going with her gut"), at times desperate attitude, even her way of speaking, always "ranting," "sputtering" and "snarling." Also exposed are her bout with an eating disorder and her estrangement from her parents, all tabloid fodder but for effects of this trial, are probably not that relevant - they're not even mentioned in her book, as in "it's none of your business." Christopher Darden, another prosecutor, fares no better as Toobin spares no chance in attacking and belittling him, comparing him time and time again to the older and wiser Johnnie Cochran Jr., defense lawyer for OJ Simpson. Darden is referred to as amateurish, impetuous, splay-footed, skinny,

shell-shocked, pouty, and at one point, emotionally and intellectually inferior to Cochran. Ouch. Judge Ito, central figure to the case, makes it through the book with surprisingly little criticism, regarded as placid, tolerant, if somewhat star-struck. Most decisions made by him are legally correct, although the author does concede that he lost control of the proceedings many a time, allowing the trial to run for far too long. In comparison, the author provides a wealth of information about the lives of all the defense lawyers, the good and the bad. Shapiro comes off as a likable, somewhat smarmy but breezy lawyer desperate to keep himself in the limelight and protect his reputation at all costs. Cochran is "pontifical" and clearly inspires awe, "eyes ablaze, full of blustering vitality," especially when at the end of the trial he surrounds himself with bodyguards. A telling account of lunchtime at the Criminal Courts building cafeteria, which was almost deserted on the last day of the trial, puts things in perspective, with Toobin and another reporter at one table, Shapiro sitting alone at another table, and Cochran and three other defense lawyers sitting at a third table surrounded by a circle of grim-faced bodyguards, their presence "merely ludicrous with only two reporters and a cashier to monitor for false moves." Although an excellent and meticulously researched book, it really needs to be read together with Clark's "Without a Doubt," to get a more balanced view of the case from the prosecutions' perspective and understand why many of the so-called errors (such as the composition of the jury and selection of witnesses who did and did not testify) actually had solid legal and strategic reasons behind them. In a way, Clark's book is a rebuttal of the book written by Toobin, who she referred to as "the kid from the New Yorker." They both agree Simpson was guilty. That the Defense did a lot of fancy footwork and some downright dirty tricks. But in the end, the reasons of why the jury acquitted are left for the reader to decide. Was it because they were clearly biased towards Simpson from the start, as Clarke believes, or was it because they feared reprisals to their loved ones if they convicted O.J. in a heavily charged atmosphere of racial tension in L.A., as Toobin alleges? Somewhere in between the two accounts probably lies the truth of what really happened.

Jeffrey Toobin has no doubt that O. J. Simpson killed his wife, Nicole, and her friend, Ron Goldman. Therefore, the driving question of the book is not "did he commit the crime?", the question is "why was he acquitted?". Toobin's thesis grows out of local Los Angeles history as well as national U. S. history. Los Angeles is a microcosm of the United States because it is a city, just as ours is a nation, divided along racial lines. Toobin's study makes it quite clear that what is at issue in this divide, more than opportunity, more than economics, more than political clout, is trust. Distrust runs deep between the races. In Los Angeles, this distrust defined the jury and shaped the jury's verdict.

Toobin explores how the defense formulated a strategy to exploit this racial divide and how the prosecution minimized or ignored how feelings and perceptions borne of racial identity would effect this trial. As the familiar story unfolds, Toobin details the prosecution's very strong case against Simpson. For the prosecution, the crime was in the details: hairs, fibers, blood drops, blood smears, gloves, footprints. But could this jury trust the gatherers and interpreters of this evidence? No. They didn't trust the police, criminalists, or lab technicians. They didn't trust Marcia Clark. They didn't trust a system of police and prosecution and the reason was historical racial mistreatment. Yes, Toobin examines the conflicts between attorneys. He examines the performance of Lance Ito. He evaluates the attorneys' performances on both sides. But what he does best is illuminate the insidious consequences of our country's long history of racial mistreatment. In this case, argues Toobin, a murderer walked free.

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