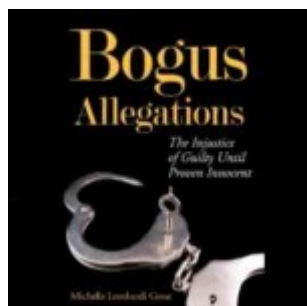


Book challenges innocent until proven guilty theory

By Kathryn Reed

A knock on the door. It's the police. Guns are drawn. You don't know why. Your husband is hauled off to jail and then charged with a crime he didn't commit.

This is the basic formula for TV shows throughout time. But this scenario is not from the imagination of some scriptwriter. It was the reality for a Boulder, Colo., couple.



Michelle Lombardi Gesse has written a first-person account of the harrowing experience she and her husband had with the criminal justice system in 2009. "Bogus Allegations: The Injustice of Guilty Until Proven Innocent" came out in 2012.

It's a definite page-turner.

The absurdity of why the district attorney thought he had a case is mind-boggling. This is illustrated through Gesse's memory and supported by court transcripts.

As Gesse often points out, ours is not a system of innocent until proven guilty, but really, guilty until proven innocent.

I suppose the book struck home knowing there is an elected official in South Lake Tahoe whose life has been turned upside down by the law, but no charges filed. That would in many ways seem worse than what the Boulder couple endured. They at least had resolution.

The expense of the trial had the Gesses selling items to pay their attorney. It cost them friends. It nearly cost them their marriage.

While Steven Gesse was found not guilty on all charges, the ordeal changed them.

“Bogus Allegations” is not the best-written book. It gets bogged down with repetitiveness and doesn’t always flow well. But the subject matter is compelling and in many ways terrifying because it points out how something like this could happen to anyone.