

If I Did It

The Goldman Family, O.J. Simpson (2007)

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Reviewed by Olivera Baumgartner-Jackson for Reader Views (11/07)

When I first heard about O.J. Simpson's planned book, I was utterly confused. Why would anybody want to confess to a crime that he was acquitted of? Why would O.J. go to all that trouble to earn money, since he so diligently avoided paying the judgments levied against him in the civil court? What in the world could possibly be his motive?

Then I heard about the Goldmans fighting to take control of the rights to the book. A book that by now was being described as a hypothetical "how I could have committed those murders" and not a confession... a book that was dropped by HarperCollins, the publishers who originally announced its publication... a book that created a humongous controversy... Should it be published? If so, why? What purpose would it serve?

The original manuscript, ghostwritten by Pablo F. Fenjves, is preceded by two extraordinary sections. In the first one, the Goldman family talks about their loss and about their fight for justice. Having read that, I can see why they wanted the book published, and I find no fault with that. The next section was written by Mr. Fenjves, who was hired to ghostwrite O.J.'s story. It is a most intriguing account of collaboration between himself and O.J. as well as an insight into O.J.'s personality. To me, it would be worth reading this book just for the first two sections alone.

Then there is the main attraction, the "is it a confession or is it just fiction?," the original manuscript approved by O.J. Simpson. I am not an attorney, so I will not pass my judgment on whether O.J. is guilty of this crime or not. But I do not have to be a shrink to read between the lines of his story. He has never done anything wrong. He has never – not once! – hit Nicole. He tried everything and then some, but Nicole was way out of control and abusive. Hmmm, makes one wonder... Granted, I was not there, but this account reads like smoke and mirrors – and carnival mirrors at that. The crowning glory of this account is probably "The Night in Question," a chapter on how O.J. could have "perhaps maybe possibly theoretically and if so, why" done it. Before you read this chapter, you might want to re-read Mr. Fenjves' Prologue; just to refresh your memory. Describing this chapter as chilling is truly putting it mildly. Equally as powerful is chapter 7, "The Interrogation," containing actual transcript of a 32-minute initial interview conducted by two police officers. One has to ask oneself exactly what was O.J. trying to achieve by including it in the book. O.J.'s convenient lapses of memory and the ambiguous answers did not exactly endear him to me.

The final two sections, an Afterword by Dominick Dunne and Resources, round up this book nicely. Dominick Dunne, an investigative journalist and writer, whose daughter was murdered in 1982, fully endorses the Goldmans' actions and explains his reasons why. The Resources list nine organizations that provide support for traumatized and victimized persons, with concise descriptions of those organizations and contact information for all of them.

Having read the book, I am still confused as to why O.J. would have wanted this published. I certainly do not think it portrays him in a positive light. O.J., clearly very much in love with himself, would probably disagree with me though...

Overall I found "If I Did It" insightful, if immensely sad. I hope it provides some measure of comfort and hopefully a closure to the Goldmans, who will be donating a portion of the proceeds to the Ron Goldman Foundation for Justice. As for myself, I am happy that I am not a celebrity, nor married to one.