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# The Wrong Man: A True Story of Innocence on Death Row

*Michael Mello*

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**The Wrong Man: A True Story of Innocence on Death Row** Michael Mello
Law/Current Events

The frightening in-the-trenches story of an attorney's fight to save his client from the death penalty.

In 1976, "Crazy Joe" Spaziano, a member of a widely feared motorcycle gang, was sentenced to death for the murder of Laura Lynn Harberts, whose body was found in a trash dump near Spaziano's trailer. Nine years after his conviction by a Florida jury, a set of audiotapes was discovered in which police hypnotized and coached the primary witness against Spaziano, a witness who later recanted his testimony. Despite this exculpatory evidence, Spaziano's case continued to move steadily toward the electric chair.

The Wrong Man is the dramatic story of Michael Mello's twenty-year-long fight to save Spaziano from being executed for crimes he didn't commit. In a gripping personal account Mello, a well-known author, activist, and legal commentator, describes the in and outs of this case and the extremes to which he was driven by it. In his desperation to halt this miscarriage of justice, Mello broke ethical and procedural rules, faced possible contempt charges and disbarment proceedings, and gave up hope of ever practicing law in Florida again. Among his unconventional measures was to involve the Miami Herald, which eventually published an investigative piece exposing the fundamental unfairness of Spaziano's sentence, an article that was instrumental in turning the tide of public opinion and bringing the case to the attention of the national media.

More than an account of a single, notorious death penalty case, The Wrong Man is an indictment of capital punishment and the criminal justice system-a fascinating first-person narrative about death penalty legal work and a detailed account of how the justice system often fails to deliver justice. Ultimately Mello offers compelling proof of the following sad reality: wrongful convictions can easily occur, and innocent people are sentenced to death and executed in America.

Michael Mello is the author of The United States of America vs. Theodore Kaczynski (1999), Dead Wrong (1997), and Against the Death Penalty (1996). Currently a professor of law at the Vermont Law School, he has worked on several high-profile cases, including those of Ted Bundy, Theodore Kaczynski, and Elizabeth Morgan.

Mike Farrell is a celebrated actor and president of California Death Penalty Focus.

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**Jonathan Gomes:**

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**David Eaton:**

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