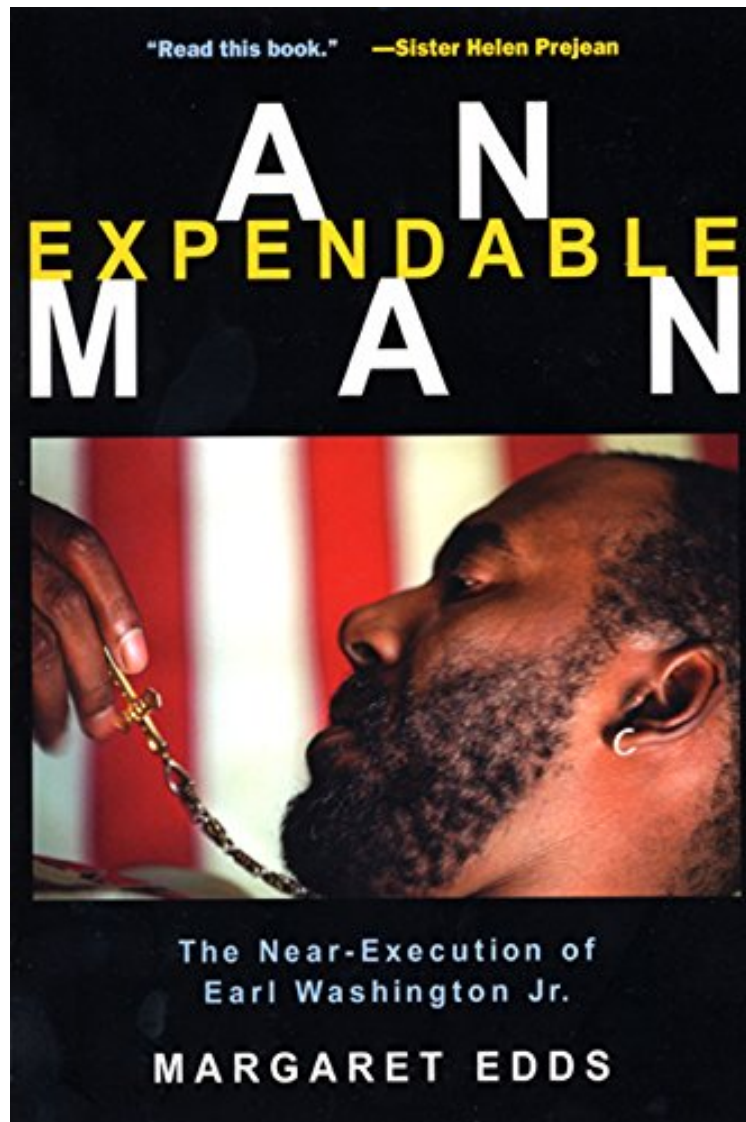


(Free pdf) An Expendable Man: The Near-Execution of Earl Washington, Jr.

## An Expendable Man: The Near-Execution of Earl Washington, Jr.

*Margaret Edds*

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**Margaret Edds : An Expendable Man: The Near-Execution of Earl Washington, Jr.** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised An Expendable Man: The Near-Execution of Earl Washington, Jr.:

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Superb ReportingBy David C N SwansonMargaret Edds does a superb job of telling the story of how an innocent man, Earl Washington, was put on Virginia's death row and ended up spending 18 years in prison. I know she does a superb job because some years ago, when Washington had still not

been pardoned but when things were looking hopeful, I researched this case and wrote a series of articles about it in the Culpeper News, the small-town paper in the town where Washington had been tried and convicted in January 1984. Edds is a professional reporter and writes like one, with very little commentary on the facts. As a result, the facts speak very powerfully for themselves. And what commentary Edds does offer I agree with. But I would quibble a bit. The main point she tries to make is that the errors made in this case were not unusual but a part of the system, that while a series of extremely lucky circumstances led to Washington's exoneration, there are likely many innocents who will never be freed. So far, I agree. But Edds also suggests that no one did anything really egregiously wrong, that everyone just did their job in a flawed system and the result was tragic. I beg to differ. Earl Washington was set up by the cruel and dishonest acts of the police and prosecutors. One of the policemen responsible for what happened in 1983 and 1984 is currently Sheriff of Culpeper, and Edds goes very easy on him. Read my articles and Edds' book and see what you think. Yes, we need to reform the system, but we also need to hold individuals responsible, and ultimately this book has that effect. A brilliant job of reporting!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A great commentary on the imperfect nature of the U.S. criminal justice system. By Curtis It's just a great book. Very detailed and fully explains one of the greatest tragedies to ever occur within the criminal justice system. It goes to show how imperfect men create imperfect systems that only have an illusion of 'beyond a reasonable doubt'. A must read for anyone.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Must reading. This is a cautionary tale of how ... By Todd Peppers Must reading. This is a cautionary tale of how the machinery of death put an innocent man in the death house, and how that innocent man was saved through the efforts of a small group of volunteers - including a death row inmate named Joe Giarratano, a death penalty activist named Marie Deans, and an extraordinary lawyer named Eric Freedman. This is not a story of how the system works; this is a story of how the system was prevented from carrying out an execution through the efforts of those outside the system.

How is it possible for an innocent man to come within nine days of execution? An Expendable Man answers that question through detailed analysis of the case of Earl Washington Jr., a mentally retarded, black farm hand who was convicted of the 1983 rape and murder of a 19-year-old mother of three in Culpeper, Virginia. He spent almost 18 years in Virginia prisons 9 1/2 of them on death row for a murder he did not commit. This book reveals the relative ease with which individuals who live at society's margins can be wrongfully convicted, and the extraordinary difficulty of correcting such a wrong once it occurs. Washington was eventually freed in February 2001 not because of the legal and judicial systems, but in spite of them. While DNA testing was central to his eventual pardon, such tests would never have occurred without an unusually talented and committed legal team and without a series of incidents that are best described as pure luck. Margaret Edds makes the chilling argument that some other expendable men almost certainly have been less fortunate than Washington. This, she writes, is the secret, shameful underbelly of America's retention of capital punishment. Such wrongful executions may not happen often, but anyone who doubts that innocent people have been executed in the United States should remember the remarkable series of events necessary to save Earl Washington Jr. from such a fate.

Careful documentation. Edge-of-the-seat human drama. An exploration of loopholes in judicial safeguards against wrongful executions. An Expendable Man contains all of these and more. -The Virginian-Pilot Best work of non-fiction about Virginia or by a Virginia author. -Manassas Journal Messenger The book is provocative for its vivid characterization and its study of the death penalty's inherent flaws. -Newport News Press Explores the dark side of the system of capital punishment. The book not only goes into great detail in recording Earl Washington, Jr.'s near-execution but also incorporates some history of the Virginia legal system. -Criminal Justice Somewhere between the personal narratives found in H. Bruce Franklin's collection Prison Writing in 20th-Century America, the critical work of Mumia Abu-Jamal, and the recent profusion of sociological studies of America's accelerated prison economy, An Expendable Man gives us a moving portrait of a broad-based struggle on behalf of one man, and implies ways in which the halls of justice might become more just. -Trial Error Edds's powerful telling of Washington's experience uses court documents, personal interviews, and a variety of other sources to illustrate the political and social circumstances surrounding this extraordinary case. This book invites the reader to think about how due process is carried out and implemented. An Expendable Man is a valuable study of not only the Virginia legal system, but also that of the United States. -Virginia Libraries An Expendable Man forcefully describes how a number of deeply committed people resurrected the hope of an innocent man. Edds's narrative painstakingly follows the sinuous protocols of due process in America. An Expendable Man gives us a moving portrait of a broad-based struggle on behalf of one man, and implies ways in which the halls of justice might become more just. -Rain Taxi About the Author As a reporter and now editorial writer for the Virginian-Pilot, the state's largest paper, Margaret Edds interviewed Earl Washington Jr. extensively and worked closely with his attorneys and all the principles of the case. She is the author of two critically acclaimed books on southern and African American issues, Free at Last and Claiming the Dream: The Victorious Campaign of Douglas Wilder of Virginia.