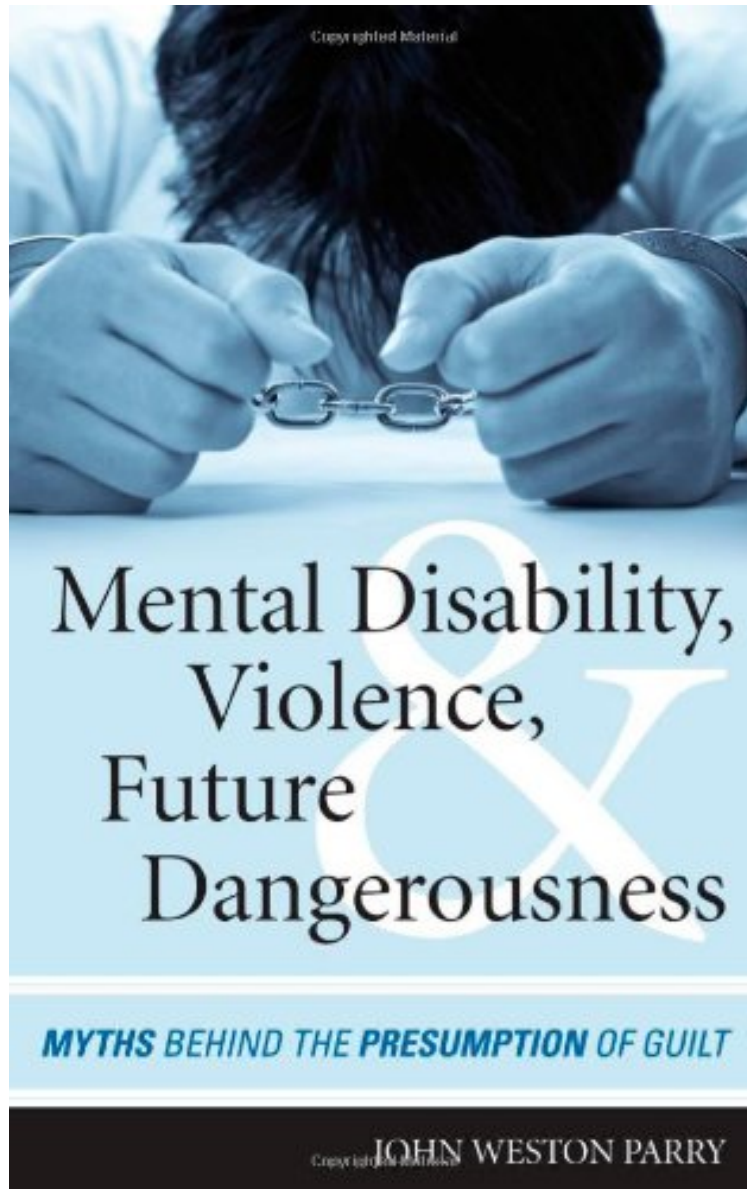


Mental Disability, Violence, and Future Dangerousness: Myths Behind the Presumption of Guilt

John Weston Parry

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Disability, Violence, and Future Dangerousness: Myths Behind the Presumption of Guilt:

When horrific acts of violence take place, events such as massacres in Boston, Newtown, CT, and Aurora, CO, people want answers. Who would commit such a thoughtless act of violence? What in their backgrounds could make them so inhumane, cruel, and evil? Often, people assume immediately that the perpetrator must have a mental disorder, and in some cases that does prove to be the case. But the assumption that most people with mental disorders are violent, prone to act out, and a threat to others and themselves, is clearly erroneous. *Mental Disability, Violence, and Future Dangerousness* thoroughly documents and explains how and why persons with mental disabilities who are perceived to be a future danger to others, the community, or themselves have become the most stigmatized, abused, and mistreated group in America, and what should be done to correct the resulting injustices. Each year state and federal governments incarcerate, deny treatment to, and otherwise deprive hundreds of thousands of Americans with mental disabilities of their fundamental rights, liberties, and freedoms including on occasion their lives based on unreliable and misleading predictions that they are likely to be dangerous in the future. Yet, due to an exaggerated fear of violence in our society, almost no one seems concerned about these injustices, which exclusively affect Americans who have been impaired by mental disorders and the lack of treatment, especially after they have been abused as children or injured in combat. Instead, we appear to be oblivious to these injustices or comfortable in allowing them to become worse. Here, John Weston Parry carefully delineates the mishandling of persons with mental disabilities by the criminal and civil justice systems, and illustrates the ways in which we can identify and remedy those injustices.

Parry argues that US state and federal governments incarcerate, deny treatment to, and otherwise deprive hundreds of thousands of Americans with mental disabilities of their fundamental rights based on unreliable and misleading predictions that they are likely to be dangerous in the future. He decries the lack of attention to the situation and proposes ways in which these injustices can be identified and remedied. (Law Social Inquiry) Individuals with severe mental illness are greatly over-represented in the U.S. criminal justice system, and the need for policymakers to address this growing problem is paramount. In *Mental Disability, Violence and Future Dangerousness: Myths Behind the Presumption of Guilt*, Parry provides a multidisciplinary analysis of the laws and mental health policies that affect individuals with mental illness. As one of the foremost authorities on mental disability law, Parry provides comprehensive coverage of the relevant laws and social science research, and he offers his characteristically insightful and detailed analysis. This book will surely prove indispensable to legal professionals, mental health practitioners, and policymakers, and it should serve as a blueprint for change. (David DeMatteo, JD, PhD, director, JD/PhD Program in Law Psychology, associate professor of Psychology Law, Drexel University) This is an elegant, tightly-reasoned, provocative re-examination of the misleading ways that predictions of future dangerousness and biased expert testimony have poisoned the criminal justice system. It exposes the reasons that undermine the fundamental fairness of what our system should be. It is the most important book to tackle these issues in years. (Michael L. Perlin, New York Law School) *Mental Disability, Violence and Future Dangerousness: Myths Behind the Presumption of Guilt* is a passionate and articulate indictment of how America cares for its citizens who have serious mental disorders. John Weston Parry meticulously chronicles the serial debacles produced by decades of fear-driven mental health policy-making. Some will disagree with the boldness of Parry's remedial proposals, but all will benefit from engaging in the crucial conversations that this important book will unleash. (John Monahan, Shannon Distinguished Professor of Law, Psychology, and Psychiatry, University of Virginia) John Parry's new book is an ambitious and successful effort to integrate civil and criminal mental disability law. His review of the cases decided over the last four decades offers a valuable perspective on the case law, and is thoroughly grounded with a sensitivity to the realities of life for individuals who have (or are said to have) mental disabilities. (James W. Ellis, Distinguished University Professor and Professor of Law, University of New Mexico) About the Author John Weston Parry is the former Director of the American Bar Associations Commission on Mental and Physical Disability Law (1982-2012) and Editor/Editor-in-Chief of the *Mental and Physical Disability Law Reporter* (1979-2011). Since 1977 he has published numerous books and articles on mental disability law and the rights of persons with mental disabilities. In 1987, he received the Manfred Guttmacher Award from the American Psychiatric Association and the American Academy of Psychiatry and Law.