



# Reasonable Doubt: The Fashion Writer, Cape Cod, and the Trial of Chris McCowen

*Peter Manso*

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In January 2002, forty-six-year-old Christa Worthington was found stabbed to death in the kitchen of her Truro, Cape Cod, cottage, her curly-haired toddler clutching her body. A former Vassar girl and scion of a prominent local family, Christa had abandoned a glamorous career as a fashion writer for a simpler life on the Cape, where she had an affair with a married fisherman and had his child. After her murder, evidence pointed toward several local men who had known her.

Yet in 2005, investigators arrested Christopher McCowen, a thirty-four-year-old African-American garbage collector with an IQ of 76. The local headlines screamed, “Black Trash Hauler Ruins Beautiful White Family” and “Black Murderer Apprehended in Fashion Writer Slaying,” while the sole evidence against McCowen was a DNA match showing that he’d had sex with Worthington prior to her murder. There were no fingerprints, no witnesses, and although the state medical examiner acknowledged there was no evidence of rape, the defendant was convicted after a five-week trial replete with conflicting testimony, accusations of crime scene contamination, and police misconduct—and was condemned to three lifetime sentences in prison with no parole.

Rarely has a homicide trial been refracted so clearly through the prism of those who engineered it, and in *Reasonable Doubt*, bestselling author and biographer Peter Manso is determined to rectify what has become one of the most grossly unjust verdicts in modern trial history. In his riveting new book he bares the anatomy of a horrific murder—as well as the political corruption and racism that appear to be endemic in one of America’s most privileged playgrounds, Cape Cod.

Exhaustively researched and vividly accessible, *Reasonable Doubt* is a no-holds-barred account of not only Christa Worthington’s murder but also of a botched investigation and a trial that was rife with bias. Manso dug deep into the case, and the results were explosive. The Cape DA indicted the author, threatening him with fifty years in prison.

The trial and conviction of Christopher McCowen for rape and murder should worry American citizens, and should prompt us to truly examine the lip service we pay to the presumption of innocence . . . and to reasonable doubt. With this explosive and challenging book Manso does just that.

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