

# Justice For William

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THE STORY OF WENDY CROMPTON:  
MOTHER OF A MURDERED SON

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The Story of Wendy Crompton: Mother of a Murdered Son  
Helen P Simpson

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With a Foreword by Terry Waite CBE

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**Helen P Simpson**  
**Wendy Crompton**

November 2006

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## About those involved: A Note

**Wendy Crompton's** son William and his girlfriend Fiona were killed in an horrendous attack by another young man on 2 May 1996 when William was just 18 years old. Her experience of what followed is set out in this book which tells of Wendy's long, hard fight to achieve justice for William and how, as a secondary victim of crime she was treated in ways that ranged from insensitivity to prejudice and lack of respect. She now campaigns for and helps other people who have been affected by homicide, including to challenge those aspects of the criminal justice system that fail people like her - by sitting on steering groups and committees, giving presentations and lobbying for improvements. She also carries out a good deal of other voluntary work. She has three other children, Marc (26), Christopher (24) and Wendy-Lou (23) - all of whom feature in this book.

**Helen P Simpson** the author of *Justice For William* is a community safety officer with Kirklees Safer Communities (a partnership between Kirklees Metropolitan Council, West Yorkshire Police Service, the National Probation Service, Victim Support and others) and is involved in the development and implementation of crime reduction strategies to lessen crime, disorder and the fear of crime. She first met Wendy Crompton, shortly after starting work with the Reducing Burglary Initiative (part of Victim Support) based at Huddersfield Police Station. They soon became firm friends and co-campaigners for better treatment of victims of homicide and serious crime. Helen has three children, Emily (30), Steve (28) and Andrew (23). Helen and Wendy share similar tastes in music, drama, art and literature - despite a sporting schism, Wendy being a fan of Huddersfield Giants Rugby League Club and Helen of Huddersfield Town Football Club (neither having yet succeeded in converting the other from rugby league to association football or vice-versa).

**Terry Waite CBE** is a leading British humanitarian and author. He is best known for his work as a hostage negotiator having been famously held hostage himself after travelling to Lebanon as an envoy for the Church of England to try and secure the release of four hostages including the journalist John McCarthy. After he arrived in Lebanon's capital, Beirut, in January 1987 intending to negotiate with the Islamic Jihad and agreed to meet the captors subject to his 'safe conduct', the group broke trust and took Waite hostage. Waite's survival in solitary confinement for more than four years until November 1991 has become legend. He is co-founder of YCare (a development agency linked to the YMCA movement), founder of Hostage UK (an organization aiming to give support to the families of hostages), a patron of the Romany Society, visiting fellow at Magdalen College, is involved with various charities including Emmaus for the homeless and was the Archbishop of Canterbury's Assistant for Anglican Communion Affairs during the primacy of Dr Robert Runcie. He has written three books, including *Taken on Trust*, about his years of incarceration in the Lebanon.

## Foreword Terry Waite CBE

For many years now I have attempted to find an alternative to the word 'victim'. 'Injured party'; 'wounded'; 'casualty'; 'sufferer'; 'survivor', all describe a part of the experience but as yet I have not been able to find a suitable English word to adequately describe the experience of being a victim. At a recent conference in Holland I raised the issue and was told that the Dutch also struggle with this question. The Dutch word actually means 'sacrificial victim' and thus is even stronger than the English.

Not everyone who falls prey to profound misfortune wishes to be described as a victim and those who undergo the experience react in a variety of ways. Some time ago I sat with a mother whose son had been taken prisoner and beheaded. She said that that few people could understand how she, as a mother, felt at that time but, remarkably, she went on to say that her grief was no different than that of a mother who had lost her children as a result of the warfare that had led to her son's death. That compassionate old lady was able to quickly link her dreadful experience of grief and loss with that of others far away. As she did so her agony was turned into compassion and she was well on the way to being healed.

Not everyone can move so quickly and some cannot move at all. I have known other mothers who have lost a child sink into deep despair and self pity. The understandable anger they experienced has turned into bitterness and their lives have been virtually totally destroyed in the process.

Without question we live in a world where there is considerable suffering and suffering is no respecter of persons. Certainly from the time of Job onwards men and women have wrestled with the question as to why the innocent should suffer and there is nothing that I know of that answers that question completely. We are obliged to accept the fact that suffering is part and parcel of life as we know it and as human beings we all have an obligation to attempt to alleviate it. However we cannot eliminate it completely. What we can say with some confidence is that in many cases, if not in most, suffering need not destroy totally. As so many men and women have demonstrated across the ages it is possible to turn suffering around and allow it to be the ground from which a new creativity emerges. Suffering will always be difficult to experience and men and women pass through it in different ways and at their own pace. The range of emotions experienced by the victims of suffering varies in degree. Some experience

anger that virtually blinds them or at best distorts their perceptions regarding the behaviour and motives of others. Some feel totally empty and simply wish for death.

The immediate victim is of course not the only one affected by suffering. The professional police officer, prison officer, lawyer, Victim Support worker - all of whom face suffering on a daily basis - have to find their own way of coping with the burden. I recollect a good friend of mine who in his professional life had to deal with an unusual number of criminal sex cases telling me that he needed support to cope with the burden that was put on him each week. He had enough insight to get help when he needed it. There are others who cope by putting up a shield between themselves and the victim and thus may appear brusque and uncaring. Some of the elaborate procedures enacted in the courtrooms of our land have developed partly to protect those who work there on a daily basis. Of course the procedures need to be kept constantly under review, just as any counsellor will need to be aided and supported to reflect not only on his or her own behaviour in relation to other people but also the effect that this work is having on them personally and on various aspects of their own lives.

Helen P Simpson's account of 'The Story of Wendy Crompton' graphically illustrates the points I have made above and many more besides. It is frank, at times horrifying and pulls no punches. Some may think some of the comments made about certain individuals who feature in the story to be somewhat harsh or the recorded behaviour of some officials seemingly casual or uncaring. In reading the book one needs to keep clearly in mind that Wendy in particular is speaking out of her own experience and that this is how she perceived events at the time. Similarly with Helen's comments as she delves deeper into how those events affected Wendy and her family. The issue is not whether the perception was 'right' or 'wrong' The point is that this was their perception at the time and this gives their comments validity.

I confess that I did not find the book comfortable reading and almost put it to one side after the first couple of chapters. I'm glad that I continued with it as it taught me to be even more understanding in relating to those who suffer. Both Wendy and Helen have made a valuable contribution to my understanding of the problems faced by the victims of crime and those who work with them. They are living proof of what I said earlier. Suffering need not destroy. Their book is a testimony to that fact.

**Dedication**

*To William, with love.*

