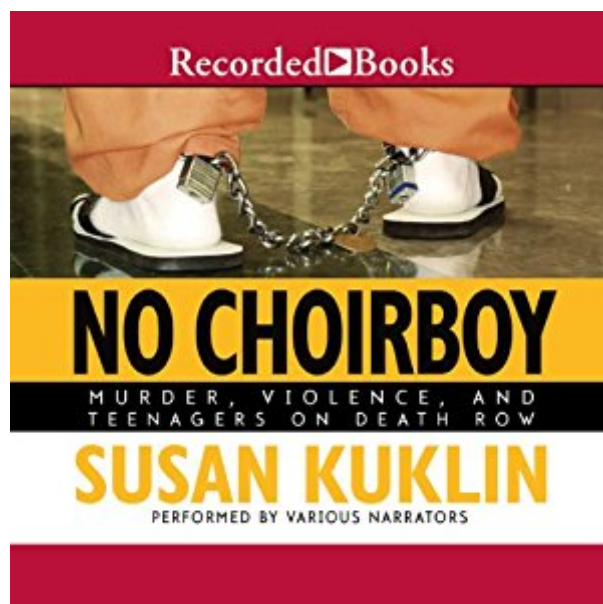


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# No Choirboy: Murder, Violence, And Teenagers On Death Row



## Synopsis

Imagine having everything taken away from you - permanently - with no hope of resuming a normal life. This is the case for many teenagers in America who are tried and convicted as adults for the crime of murder. Here Susan Kuklin takes you behind bars for frank interviews with a collection of young men who will spend the better part of their lives in jail. She lets them speak for themselves, providing the raw details of their incarceration and the anger, despair, and surprising hope they experience every day. Kuklin also provides an in-depth look at the American penal system, highlighting its many intricacies and inequities while focusing on capital cases involving juveniles. Chosen by School Library Journal and Kirkus Reviews as a Best Book, *No Choirboy* is an honest examination of a pervasive problem in America. A full cast of Recorded Books narrators captures each of these unique voices for a powerful audio experience.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 5 hours and 23 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Recorded Books

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Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

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Best Sellers Rank: #56 in Books > Teens > Social Issues > Violence #261 in Books > Teens > Education & Reference > Social Science > Politics & Government #319 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Nonfiction > Law

## Customer Reviews

The stories in *NO CHOIRBOY* came from the author's research and her interviews with young men on death row. This book (and the young men who tell their stories) pull no punches on what life is like behind bars. I wasn't sure what to make of the sympathetic tone. All of these young men got a raw deal from the system, but let's face it...they are accused (and convicted, although they may be appealing) of committing or helping commit murder, which is what landed them in the position they are in. The chapters are partitioned into fairly short and very readable sections, which will appeal to the intended audience of young adults. Photographs and drawings sprinkled throughout help

visualize these teens as more than "throw away" vicious killers. I liked the information at the end (glossary, further reading, web sites, notes and index.) The author has obviously taken care with her research, and I can see a number of ways this book might be used in an educational setting.

Death Row is a place where few men would dare to tread, yet children are headed there in larger numbers than we would dare contemplate. Murder and mayhem inflicted on people for very little reason by teens who are somehow lacking in reasoning faculties lands them in living nightmare facilities. Roy, age sixteen, admitted he was there when a friend was murdered, but he didn't pull the trigger. He tried to warn Kevin that the other boys had planned to kill him, but somehow the words never managed to sink in. The judge sentenced him to death. Instead of being raised by his mother, the inmates of death row would have to substitute for her. When they executed men, the others would "scream in protest." It unnerved him as they would "scream at the top of their lungs." Sixteen-year-old Roy Burgess was living in a war zone. And there were others. Mark Melvin was fourteen years old. His brother asked for his help, not to do a bit of yard work or help him fix a car, but rather something much more insidious. He wanted him to kill a man. When he shot the man he knew his life was over. "I knew I was going to prison . . . I kept thinking, I just killed a man. And I was just as guilty of killing the wife, too, 'cause I was there." Mark also knew he had been had and that he had serious mental issues. He would also soon encounter members of the Crips, the Disciples, the Bloods, El Rubens and fear. This book was extremely sobering page turner. The voices of these teenagers cry out from the pages of this book, not asking for forgiveness, but for the reader to listen to their hearts, not their spur of the moment actions from the past. Susan Kuklin's research and writing was superb. The intended audience for this book is the young adult, but should be required reading for every parent. In the back of the book there is a glossary, an index, notes, and additional recommended books and web sites. The several young men portrayed in this book may not be choirboys, but they were children when they were incarcerated.

Riveting! I read it in one day and couldn't wait to recommend it to my high school students. The author, and the prisoners themselves, allows readers to glimpse life on the other side of prison bars that many of us know little about. The stories are poignant, truthful, painful, and insightful. The material is somewhat biased against capital punishment, but it is written in such a manner that the reader is not easily persuaded, but compelled to see such young prisoners as human. The author did a superb job presenting the material and I am a better person for reading it and highly recommend this book!

I bought this for my 7th grade son who is not a big fan of reading. The stories are told in the words of the convicts, so the language can be intense. I strongly recommend that you read this along with your child and talk about what your child is reading. The book opened the door for us to have some really wonderful conversations.

This is a book that brings you face to face with the reality of the legal system, the oppression of poverty, and the realities of lives gone wrong. It puts humanity into inhuman acts and force the reader to see what society does to not only the victims but the offenders. Written with the voice of the condemned the book allows readers to see where bad choices lead you and how justice may not be as justified as it looks. Good for young adults who can't see or need to see the realities of consequences from a first person perspective.

Love this book, especially for teenagers. My students are eating it up right now in independent reading! I suggested it to one student, and then she loved it so much that she suggested it to some other students. Next thing you know they came by to see if I had any other copies to give out! I may need to buy some more!

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