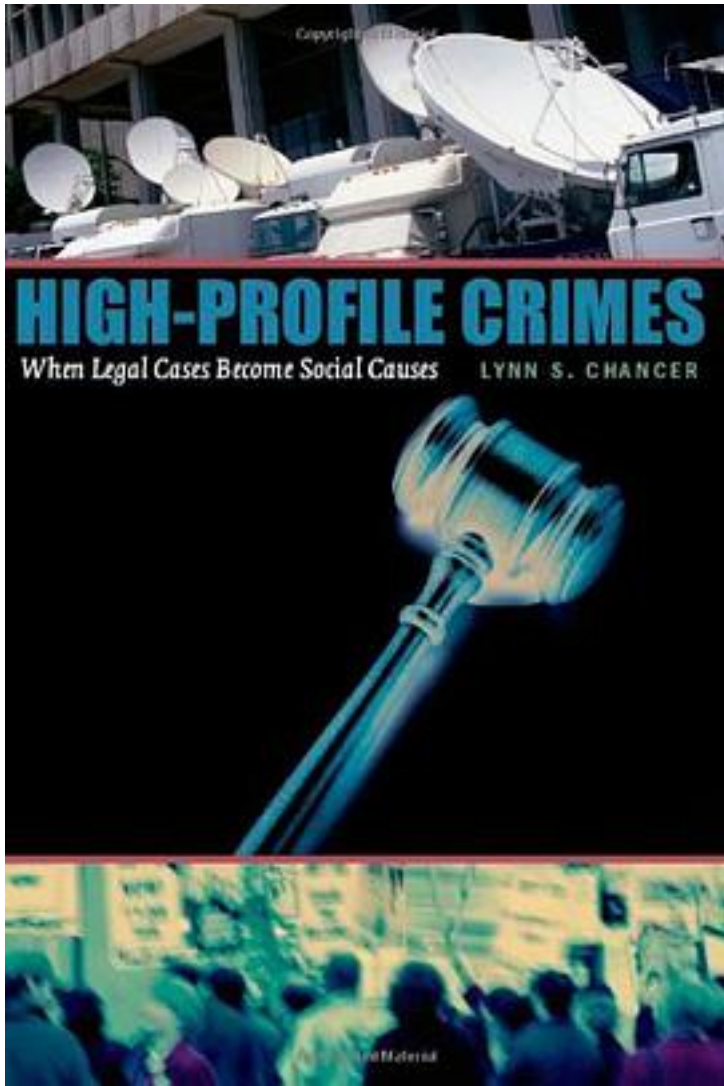


High-profile Crimes



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Rodney King. The Central Park jogger. Bensonhurst. William Kennedy Smith. O. J. Simpson. These are more than crimes and criminals, more than court cases. They are cultural events that, for better or worse, gave concrete expression to latent social conflicts in American society. In *High-Profile Crimes*, Lynn S. Chancer explores how these cases became conflated with larger social causes on a collective level and how this phenomenon has affected the law, the media, and social movements. An astute and incisive chronicle of some of the most polarizing cases of the 1980s and 1990s, *High-Profile Crimes* shows that their landmark status results from the overlapping interaction of diverse participants. The merging of legal cases and social causes, Chancer argues, has wrought ambivalent effects on both social movements and the law. On the one hand, high-profile crimes offer important opportunities for emotional expression and raise awareness of social issues. But on the other hand, social problems cannot be resolved through the either/or determinations that are the goals of the legal system, creating frustration for those who look to the outcome of these cases for social progress. Guilt or innocence through the lens of the media leads to either defeat or victory for a social cause - a confounding situation that made the O. J. Simpson case, for example, unable to resolve the issues of domestic violence and police racism that it had come to symbolize. Based on nearly two hundred interviews, Chancer's discussions of the infamous Central Park jogger and Bensonhurst cases - as well as the rape trials of William Kennedy Smith and Mike Tyson, the assault cases of Rodney King and Reginald Denny, and, finally, the O. J. Simpson murder trial - provide a convincing, multidimensional, and innovative analysis of the most charged public dramas of the last two decades.

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