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In 1993 Chuck Panici, former mayor of Chicago Heights, IL together with former Chicago Heights commissioners John Gliottoni and Louise Marshall were found guilty of racketeering and bribery charges in the Federal District Court of Northern Illinois. It marked a strange end to a 16 year tenure known for a huge transformation in this small city's fortunes. Their successful administration had achieved major improvements but their end came about when City Hall was hit by RICO accusations of extortion, kickbacks, shakedowns and ties to organized crime. Behind it all was a cartoonish cast of felons and mafia wannabes who concocted a story that resulted in an indictment and a media circus trial that led to 17 years imprisonment in Federal penitentiaries for the three former city officials. Throughout the trial was prosecutorial and judicial misconduct worthy of the Keystone Kops and treachery on the part of those absolved of their crimes through plea bargains, immunity and agreements not to prosecute that meant turning on and unjustly turning in innocent public servants whose meagre government salaries did not permit them to pay attention full time to the goings on in city government where corrupt felons were thriving and extorting city contractors and suppliers with gusto. Chuck Panici, the former mayor, never testified at his own trial. It was a decision he immediately regretted. As a result, nearly twenty-five years after his conviction, he decided to set the record straight and thus tell his story. But what befell Mayor Panici and bothers him at present is that a similar process is playing out on a national stage in which President Donald Trump is being prosecuted in the court of public opinion over phony claims of collusion with the Russians. Nevertheless, his arch enemy in the 2016 elections was allowed to skate away, scot free from any prosecution for her misdeeds with the help of a feckless FBI Director, James Comey, who was criticized roundly on both the right and the left. Convicted While Innocent is proof that our justice system and nation are beset with serious flaws that tend to exonerate the guilty and punish the innocent.

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