



Conviction

Julia Dahl

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New York City 1992: a year after riots exploded between black and Jewish neighbors in Brooklyn, a black family is brutally murdered in their Crown Heights home. A teenager is quickly convicted, and the justice system moves on.

Twenty-two years later, journalist Rebekah Roberts gets a letter: I didn't do it. Frustrated with her work at the city's sleaziest tabloid, Rebekah starts to dig. But witnesses are missing, memories faded, and almost no one wants to talk about that grim, violent time in New York City—not even Saul Katz, a former NYPD cop and her source in Brooklyn's insular Hasidic community.

So she goes it alone. And as she gets closer to the truth of that night, Rebekah finds herself in the path of a killer with two decades of secrets to protect.

From the author of the Edgar-nominated *Invisible City* comes another timely thriller that illuminates society's darkest corners. Told in part through the eyes of a jittery eyewitness and the massacre's sole survivor, Julia Dahl's *Conviction* examines the power—and cost—of community, loyalty, and denial.

Conviction Details

Date : Published March 28th 2017 by Minotaur Books (first published March 1st 2017)

ISBN : 9781250083692

Author : Julia Dahl

Format : Hardcover 312 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Thriller, Mystery Thriller, Crime, Suspense

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From Reader Review Conviction for online ebook

Elizabeth Higginbotham says

Conviction (Rebekah Roberts, #3) by Julia Dahl is filled with twists and turns. I liked the first two books, which captured a dysfunctional family and how a daughter can repair a relationship with a mother who abandoned her as a child. Rebekah also captures the difficulties of beginning a career as a journalist, when you have to work hard as a stringer and get papers to publish your work. She has much of her own baggage, but the novels also address problems in the industry.

This third book looks at an important issue, the mass incarceration of young Black men, even those convicted as teenagers. Rebekah does a good story on a grant. She also connects with a woman who is following up on the deaths of different people. Amanda has many people writing to her who claim to be wrongfully convicted and Rebekah follows up on a case. DeShawn is not guilty, but most of his life he has been in prison, deprived of family and support. We see the larger context of the problem. The crime in 1992, the murder of a family, is also rooted in the racial tensions of Brooklyn; between Jewish people, still suffering from the holocaust, and the expanding Black community. There are many dimensions, with people reaching out to “protect” something, while a serial killer profits and is able to continue with his crimes. The intersections are important and the complexity of individuals. These were high crime days for Brooklyn, so the context is important and people talk about the contrast between 1992 and 2014.

Rebekah has to confront how the evidence she uncovers about the murders involves the Jewish community. A witness lied and is now ready to tell her story off the record, since she does not trust the system enough to not pay for her own error. Rebekah sees the involvement of a friend, and now boyfriend of her mother, who covered up evidence from the crime. The complexities of the circumstances turn dark and ends with many secrets unaddressed. Yet, we do get progress as someone comes out of prison, someone is still in hiding, but the initial killer is stopped. You can see how you have to see and address evil or mental illness early in the process, since you can face the consequences later.

I look forward to seeing how Rebekah develops with new projects via Amanda. There is much to tell about crime when you have the time and are not rushing for deadlines and dealing with the politics of the newspapers.

Craig Sisterson says

I'd heard good things about Dahl's mystery writing, but this was the first of her Rebekah Roberts books I tried. I was not disappointed; it's a really good read, full of intriguing situations, an engaging heroine and plenty of interesting supporting characters, and a textured sense of New York City.

Interestingly, it also touches on a topic that was part of one of my favourite crime reads of last year: miscarriages of justice predicated on false confessions. This isn't just a plot twist used by fiction writers, but a troubling real-life issue (see the award-winning IN DARK PLACES). Dahl deals with it extremely well, weaving it into her tale, approaching things from a variety of angles and perspectives so that readers get a good insight into how it can happen and the effects on everyone involved.

But that's just one fine part of a very fine novel.

Dahl was shortlisted for an Edgar for the first in this series, *INVISIBLE CITY*, and I can see why. Her writing flows and has a few wee extra touches that elevate it from among the masses. There's a sense of rich authenticity to the New York settings, including sides of New York of which regular *Law & Order* or *Sex in the City* watchers may not be aware. Big questions of race, ethnicity, social justice, power and politics are threaded in. This is intelligent, thought-provoking crime writing.

Journalist Rebekah Roberts is grafting away as a contributor to a New York tabloid that's both devoured and sneered at by locals. She dreams of bigger things, doing more important things. There are parts of her job she hates, and others she loves. After writing an in-depth criminal justice feature for another publication, she gets an opportunity to look into an old case that arose soon after violent clashes between the black and Jewish populations of Brooklyn, many years ago.

A man convicted of killing his adopted family is proclaiming his innocence. Even those close to him from years ago believe he did it. But something snags at Rebekah, who decides to dig deeper. But sticking your nose into old, 'solved' cases is something almost no-one appreciates. And this particular case could put Rebekah at odds with her own family and long-time friends.

CONVICTION is full of conflict, both between characters and within them. Dahl adroitly juggles ideas with nuance and depth. Things are not black and white, right or wrong. There's a humanity bubbling throughout the tale, a flawed, good-intentions-mistake-ridden realness. Good people do bad things. Bad people may not be as bad as you presumed. 'Certainty' sometimes trumps justice.

An excellent read.

Alicia says

<http://wordnerdy.blogspot.com/2017/01...>

Amazon says this is the final book in Dahl's Rebekah Roberts series, but I really hope that's not the case. Ostensibly a mystery series, these books are really much more about the Jewish community in Brooklyn--and here, how things were with the black community after the Crown Heights riots in the early 90s--and about reporter Rebekah herself, along with her family and professional troubles. I mean, the mystery here barely exists, but I still want to know what issues Rebekah will sleuth out next! If you are into more literary mysteries, this is definitely a series you should be checking out. A-

A review copy was provided by the publisher. This book will be released on January 10th.

Adam Sternbergh says

This book is great. It offers all the pleasures you hope for from an urban crime novel, with more than a few extra pleasures you might not be expecting but will certainly enjoy. Rebekah Roberts is about as fun a

character to hang out with as you're likely to find, and this novel spans time periods, neighborhoods, and communities to give you an excellent sense of the gritty texture New York city, both in the past and now. A brave, smart, tough, engrossing read. I really enjoyed it.

Ana says

Something about these books just hits the spot for me. Flawed characters who carry with them the trauma of what has occurred in the previous books and a good sense of place. If you are looking for characters who make all the right choices, keep looking, but if you want a good mystery that keeps you turning pages, this is the book for you.

Liz Barnsley says

Conviction is a really excellent addition to this beautifully written series featuring Journalist Rebekah Roberts – a character who is highly engaging and easy to get behind.

In this story she is looking into the conviction of a young man for the murder of his adopted family – but DeShawn insists he is innocent and as Rebekah digs into the past she discovers this one might hit closer to home than is comfortable for her.

Conviction is an intriguing and thought provoking crime drama, using both past and present Julia Dahl weaves a tale of assumption, corruption and confrontation, with a fascinatingly clever mystery element and her usual terrific characters coming into play. It is utterly compelling and a real page turner, with a beautifully emotive resolution and some relevant social commentary.

Descriptively speaking Julia Dahl's novels are rich and immersive, the settings are vivid and authentic and the storytelling is wonderfully emotive on many levels. I'm a fan of this series and would highly recommend it to anyone.

Raven says

A new-to-me author, despite Conviction being the third of Julia Dahl's books to feature spirited and tenacious reporter Rebekah Roberts. Grappling with the weighty issues of race, religion, and justice this proved to be a markedly different, and thought provoking read...

In Rebekah we have a confident, young woman eager to prove herself and progress in her career, and what Dahl captures so well is her flexible, but not always completely unquestioning pursuit of information as a reporter. Instead of Rebekah just being depicted as a cold hearted, unfeeling reporter who will stop at nothing for a story, Dahl introduces in her moments of conflicted interest, and the sometimes very personal conflict that will arise from her investigation. Although we do see Rebekah adopt some little underhanded tricks of the trade to wheedle out the necessary information from people, there is a charm to her as a person that deflects us from condemning her methods on these occasions. Admittedly, she sees her current investigation as a chance to improve her career prospects, but as she delves deeper into what becomes a personal crusade for her to save a man from execution, she endears herself to us even more by making some difficult decisions on the information she must expose. Despite the ramifications for those closest to her, and with the potential

to destabilize a recently rekindled relationship with her estranged mother, Rebekah's navigation of this case kept me enthralled throughout, and I appreciated those small moments of vulnerability balanced with the clear sighted determination that Dahl weaves into her character.

As a depiction of the inherent racial conflicts that have plagued American society, I found this quite an even handed portrayal. Obviously, by exploring the differences between the Jewish and African American communities in New York in 1992 and 2014, Dahl provides a balanced assessment of both changes to, and the continuation of, the underlying resentments between the community of people she focuses on. As a black man convicted of multiple murder with little evidence and a coerced confession, sadly his story is all too familiar in the biased justice system and racial profiling so beloved in the American legal system. Equally, Dahl does not shy away from apportioning blame to the original investigating officers, and the whiff of corruption that pervaded this case from the beginning. I also found the focus on Jewish culture throughout the book extremely enlightening, and liked the no punches pulled attitude of the author to expose the best and worst of people's behaviour no matter their ethnicity or creed throughout the story. The balance of morality and tenacity in Rebekah's character to both reveal the tensions, yet applaud the instances of co-operation, between the two communities is firmly echoed by Dahl's even handed and largely balanced authorial voice.

I enjoyed *Conviction* very much, and despite the necessary signposts in the book relating to the back story of Rebekah's previous investigations, and the troubled relationship with her mother, I will definitely catch up with the first two books in the series at some point, having enjoyed the playing out of the story, and Dahl's interesting dissemination of the issues of race, religion and justice. Recommended.

Sherry says

2.5 stars

Conviction wasn't as immediately gripping to me as the previous books by Dahl, so it took me a bit of time to work my way through what turned out to be an okay read.

Rebekah is looking for a story to sink her journalistic teeth into, something beyond the simple pieces assigned by her tabloid paper. A new acquaintance invites her to investigate a possible case of wrongful conviction to determine whether or not a black teenager had been railroaded into confessing to the murder of his foster parents and foster sister back in the summer of 1992, a time of great tension between Hasidic Jews and the black residents of the Crown Heights neighborhood. As Rebekah investigates, evidence comes to light that suggests that the convicted man is in fact innocent, and she becomes determined to uncover the truth to right a wrong.

One of the main things that I liked in the earlier books about Rebekah was the way her investigative reporting gave the reader a window into the life of the Hasidim. In this book, though, the focus shifts away from the Hasidic community somewhat, even though it is still related to her investigation. I think that was one of the reasons I didn't find this novel as compelling as the first two books. It actually might have worked better for me if there wasn't a connection to the Hasidim at all this time, if that world wasn't going to be the main focus.

The other thing that lessened my enjoyment of the story was that much of it is told from the perspective of someone other than Rebekah. A fairly large part of the book consists of flashbacks to Saul's experiences investigating the murder in 1992, and part of the story follows the killer and his experiences. I didn't care about those sections of the book nearly as much as I did Rebekah's attempts to investigate what happened.

Dahl did manage to surprise me in a few places, though, enough to keep me reading through the end of the novel to find out what happened next. The final chapters of the book set up a new path for Rebekah, as she is hired to write stories about other possible cases of wrongful conviction. I'm curious where the author is going to be taking Rebekah from this point, so I'll definitely be checking out the next book in the series.

In my opinion, this isn't Dahl's best book, but if readers who liked the first two should give it a try, especially since it does set up Rebekah's future adventures.

An ARC of this novel was provided by the publisher through NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Ash says

I feel like Rebekah is Nancy Drew all grown up, and i have really enjoyed the mysteries so far. In Conviction in particular, the mystery was interesting, it was well paced, and the characters were fully fleshed out. I'm looking forward to the next book in the series.

Viva says

I got this book as an advanced reader's copy.

The author has taken a pretty simple plot line and written it into a fairly complex story line. She did it with a couple of different timelines and perspectives. I'm not a big fan of writing different timelines because it's pretty easy for the author and the reader to get things mixed up. When you have two timelines that don't cross paths, it's like reading two books a few chapters each at a time and it can get annoying but I'm happy to say that in this case Dahl did a pretty good job.

The story is of a modern day (2014) reporter looking into an old (circa 1992) wrongful conviction with the hopes of overturning it. Such a story can be written with only the modern timeline but Dahl chooses to let us see both. The two timelines are mixed with each other and it's only towards the end when you realize how they come together.

But the thing I liked most about this book were the characters and the setting. I thought Dahl did a good job of bringing the characters to life. There were quite a lot of different characters and she managed to make them all feel real. I felt highly sympathetic towards the benign characters. The protagonist (the reporter) was involved in a personal situation with her family and I usually don't like these side stories as they take away from the story line but in this case I felt for her. Even minor characters who only showed up for a single paragraph felt real so Dahl really did a good job here.

Apart from that I also thought Dahl did a good job of bringing the neighborhoods to life. The writing was also easy to read and follow; it was easy to keep reading and hard to stop reading.

I deducted a star for various things I didn't like but mostly because she let the cat out of the bag before the end. That killed the mystery for me. I wish that somehow she would manage to keep us in suspense some more and maybe mix up things some more. That was certainly possible because of all the things that were going on and the number of people who were involved.

But in the end I enjoyed this book and really liked it (4 stars as per GR guidelines). I would certainly read another one from this author.

Darcy says

This book sure wasn't what it seemed at the start. So many twists and turns, Rebekah learning things that I'm sure that she didn't want to and useless loss of life and all for what? A guy with no morals, one who thought he knew best. By the end, I did have hope that maybe a couple of brothers might find their way a happy life.

Laurel says

Julia Dahl's Rebekah Roberts' series is one I've had my eye on for a long time; in fact I own the first two in the series, but haven't yet read them. That didn't stop me from jumping at the chance to review *Conviction*, the most recent addition. Now I can't wait to start from the beginning.

A man imprisoned for murdering his foster family twenty-two years ago contacts New York Times stringer, Rebekah Roberts. He claims he is innocent and asks she look into his case. Backtrack to Crown Heights in July of 1992 when a little boy enters the Glorious Gospel Church covered in blood and in shock. His foster mother, father and sister are found dead and shortly thereafter his foster brother is arrested, eventually charged and convicted of the murders. This is the crime Rebekah Roberts is asked to investigate over two decades later. In doing so she uncovers some disconcerting family connections to the crime and after twenty years brings a killer back to tie up loose ends. The Crown Heights' riots and tensions between the Hasidic and black communities in the 1990s figure heavily in this novel and provide not only a context, but also a rather unknown part of history to this reader. Towards the conclusion of the book, Isaiah Grunwald asks himself, "Where did what was moral turn into what was immoral?" I think this could be asked of more than one character in Julia Dahls' novel.

While *Conviction* can be read as a standalone, I highly recommend starting from the beginning for context. This is a not-to-miss series.

Kelly says

What a great book! I read the first book in this series, *Invisible City*, a few years ago and was excited to read this book in the series with reporter Rebekah Roberts. I like Rebekah, and how she is persistent when working on a case, even if the people around her are not always supportive of her efforts. The book describes the area of Brooklyn that the story she is investigating takes place in so well that I feel like I can really picture it in my mind. It makes the story come alive for me. I really enjoyed this book.

I voluntarily reviewed an advanced reader copy of this book provided by Minotaur Books.

Alex says

The best book in a great series. Julia Dahl just keeps getting better.

SuperWendy says

Probably my favorite book in the trilogy because the mystery is so...contemporary? Ugly? Thought-provoking? I'm not sure what to say about it other than there's a lot of unpack here and I think a book club group could chew on this one for days. I hope the author hasn't completely abandoned the idea to continue on with the character, because she opens a new door for Rebekah and I think it could make for some really interesting stories down the road.
