

# The Last Mouthpiece

## The Man Who Dared to Defend the Mob

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### From the Prologue

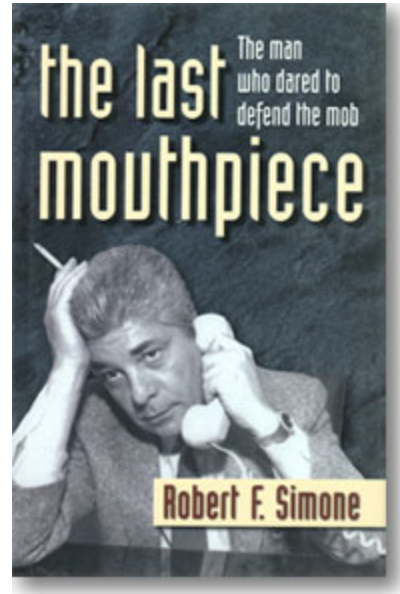
I was a criminal lawyer for over 35 years. The question most often asked of me is this—"How can you represent someone you know to be guilty?" The simple answer—the presumption of innocence owed every criminal defendant and the proposition that no one is guilty until and unless a jury, or in some cases a judge, says so after a fair trial.

Every defendant has a right to competent counsel who has a sworn duty to zealously defend, rather than prejudge, his or her own client. Many dedicated criminal defense lawyers have paid an expensive price for protecting the constitutional rights of their clients.

Many times they are deemed by the public to be as undesirable and unpopular as their clients.

A lawyer who represents an alleged drug dealer is called a "drug lawyer." One who represents an accused murderer is often referred to as "that greedy lawyer willing to accept blood money."

If you represent someone whose name ends with a vowel, you are more than likely going to be labeled a "mob lawyer." That tag has followed me around for years like some dime store perfume. I have paid a hefty price for my long-ago decision to take on the causes of the most undesirable and unpopular among us. I have not only represented but also in many cases befriended men and women with rap sheets, alleged dangerous propensities, and associates in deep shadow. This is especially the case when you consider that several of the clients you will meet here were



reputed members and associates of the powerful Philadelphia La Cosa Nostra.

Allegedly, reputedly, purportedly.

You will hear these words often from me. Not because I am trafficking in rumors and innuendo here but because I've always viewed hearsay with great suspicion, always taken my clients' confidences seriously, and I will take them to my grave. I will not pretend that my clients were all altar boys or in the cement business, that every allegation made by the prosecution was fabricated.

You will read a lot about Nicodemo Scarfo, reputed to have been the boss of the Philadelphia-South Jersey La Cosa Nostra family, and how our association over the years played out in court and for a time on every front page. Like the thousands of jurors I've addressed in my time, I leave it to you to make your own decisions. Not just as to the guilt or innocence of clients ranging from the glamorous Lillian Reis to the infamous Scarfo, but whether yours truly at some point crossed some irreversible line.