



# **The Bulger Mystique: The mobster and the politician, portraits of power (Spotlight on James "Whitey" Bulger Book 1)**

*Christine Chinlund, Kevin Cullen, Dick Lehr, Gerard O'Neill*

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Not since John Dillinger or Al Capone has a gangster captivated more imaginations, inspired more books and films, or attracted more law enforcement attention, than Whitey Bulger.

Bulger is not your garden-variety hood. His story exposed the very essence of power and corruption, institutional and personal. He had law enforcement agencies, not to mention law enforcement agents, at each other's throats. He got the FBI to eliminate his competition, and look the other way as expanded his criminal empire, and eliminated rivals.

At the same time, his brother William, the president of the Massachusetts senate, one of the three most powerful politicians in the state, ruled his perch with an autocratic attitude that some politicians likened, perhaps unfairly, to his gangster brother. Whitey, they said, ruled with a gun; Billy ruled with a gavel.

In 1988, Globe editors commissioned the newspaper's investigative unit, The Spotlight Team, to tease out something that had been filtering around the streets of Boston for years: that Whitey Bulger, the most powerful and feared gangster in Boston, had avoided arrest and prosecution because he was an FBI informant. The resulting series, "The Bulger Mystique," explored for the first time how Whitey and his politician brother had emerged from the same Southie housing project to rise to the top of their very different professions. And it delivered the coup de grace: Whitey was working for the FBI, specifically for FBI agent John Connolly, an open and admitted admirer of Billy Bulger who grew up in that same housing project.

The series, especially that revelation, caused a scandal. But it was only the beginning. "The Bulger Mystique" now reads as the first act of a fascinating drama that is told in additional Globe Spotlight reports – see "Whitey's Fall" and "Whitey and the FBI" – and culminated in Whitey Bulger's capture in June 2011, when FBI agents arrested the 81-year-old in Santa Monica, an entire continent away from where he made his bones and his fortune.

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