

BOOK CLUB KIT

AMANDA DuBOIS

"A compelling mystery/thriller with a social conscience."
—New York Times bestselling author **Robert Dugoni**

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UNSHACKLED

A CAMILLE DELANEY MYSTERY

AUTHOR INTERVIEW

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Do you remember the moment you thought of creating the Camille Delaney character? What were you doing? Why did you see a need for this type of character on the bookshelves?

I first wrote *The Complication* [the first book in the Camille Delaney Mystery series] over twenty years ago. I was a medical malpractice trial lawyer at the time, and I was so fed up with how the insurance companies jerked injured people around. I was outraged at how the legal system valued human lives. I had come from a nursing background, where every person has equal value. But in the legal system, a person's value lies in how much money they can make. So, for example, a bank president who died would have a higher value than a barista. I wanted to write something that would expose this inequity and educate people about how messed up our justice system is. I considered writing a magazine article or something similar, and then it hit me: Why not write fiction with a message? So, Camille Delaney was born, and her first case, the story in *The Complication*, is about a retired man who dies as a result of medical malpractice. It explores how unjust it is that his widow's compensation would be lower than if he had been a much younger wage earner. Next, I wrote *Deliver Them from Evil*, which is about a baby who dies because of malpractice and how wrong it is that the settlement offered was insultingly low because the baby was not a wage earner. As the insurance companies always say, "The family can just have another baby."

Camille's purpose is to educate readers as they accompany her through a twisting and turning story with a message.

Thanks to your background as a lawyer and former medical professional, you know a lot of "strange but true" cases and details. But what's one thing you learned when you were writing *Unshackled* that you didn't know before?

I write what I know. I was a nurse and now I'm a lawyer. I have argued cases in hundreds of courtrooms, and I am intimately familiar with what goes into a legal case. It's easy to write about it. I just close my eyes, and I'm back in the courthouse. And as a nurse, I've attended hundreds of deliveries and countless operations. So, I know all the details experienced by nurses. I think that's why I get such positive feedback about my descriptive writing. I write what I've lived. I should also mention that the opening scenes in the first two books were taken from actual cases I had. Of course, I had to add in a little fiction to kick off the stories, but the guts of the scenes are very true to life.

It's been a little bittersweet writing some of the book scenes. I haven't been in a delivery room or operating room for decades, but writing those scenes, I could feel the chill and the unique smell of the hospital. And the descriptions of the courtrooms brought back so many fond memories of advocating for clients who were faced with unimaginable adversity, whether in a hotly contested divorce or a medical malpractice case where a serious injury or even a death was at issue. And in *Unshackled*, I really just fictionalized the stories I heard over and over from my girlfriends who served time in prison.

What did I learn when writing *Unshackled* that I didn't know? It's always stunning to take in the reality of mothers in prison. According to The Sentencing Project, the number of incarcerated women increased by more than 585% between 1980 and 2022.

What do you hope people are feeling (or thinking) when they turn the last page of *Unshackled*?

I hope, from the bottom of my heart, that readers will close the book and say to themselves, "I had no idea." And then, "What can I do to help these moms and kids?" That's why, when I wrote the last page of *Unshackled*, I decided to start a foundation to help moms and kids impacted by the criminal legal system. This is a huge issue of public safety, not to mention the tragedy of taking a mother away from her children.

Readers can get involved, and help, through these resources:

- <https://www.ivywoolfturk.com/project-liberation>
- <https://www.fepps.org/>
- <https://www.theifproject.org/>

Sometimes it feels as though Seattle is another character in the book. You mention many Seattle landmarks and smaller outlying towns. What's your favorite Seattle-area destination?

Well, I've lived here almost all my life, so it's hard to pick a favorite. But you can't beat the magic of the San Juan Islands, and our place on Decatur Island is very special. Decatur is one of the San Juans that is not served by the public ferry system. We have no stores, no law enforcement, no trash pickup, no medical. It's pretty remote, and a very special community. And breathtakingly gorgeous. There's a poem by Rachel Lyman Field that describes my experience on Decatur Island. It starts like this: *If once you've slept on an island, you'll never be quite the same . . .*

What can readers expect next from the Camille Delaney book?

Camille Delaney has only touched the tip of the iceberg that is the prison system. You'll find her back there working for justice once again.

BOOK CLUB EXCLUSIVE

CAMILLE'S SMOOTHIE RECIPE

My husband makes the best smoothies . . . just ask my grandkids. This Camille-inspired recipe involves plain Greek yogurt, homemade Decatur Island elderberry syrup made by our friend Anna Smith, lots of frozen raspberries, and a handful of walnuts. I have strange aversion to anything sweet, so expect a pucker if you try this recipe!

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup plain Greek or whole milk yogurt (any brand, but Camille loves this local Seattle yogurt brand)
- Camille uses a splash of Decatur Island elderberry syrup, but you can use a splash of pomegranate juice.
- 1 package (10oz) of frozen, organic raspberries
- 1/4 cup chopped walnuts

DIRECTIONS:

1. Throw this all into a blender and add a little water or ice cubes if it's too thick.
2. This isn't a sweet-flavored smoothie, so get ready to pucker up!

**The healthy unsaturated fats in walnuts keep you feeling full for longer. (Source: <https://health.ucdavis.edu/blog/good-food/4-health-benefits-of-walnuts-and-how-much-you-should-eat/2024/02>)*

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

UNSHACKLED

1. This is a work of fiction but very much illustrates the challenges of women, especially pregnant women and mothers, in prison. What did you learn about women in prison that you didn't know before?
2. Did this book change the way you think of incarcerated mothers? What insight did you gain about why women end up in prison? What might be some better alternatives?
3. Why do you think Camille was compelled to take on Charli's case?
4. There's quite a big twist at the end of the story that unites Charli and Camille. Did you see that coming?
5. What do you think can be done to change the trajectory of increasingly incarcerating moms?
6. Discuss the consequences to society when we incarcerate mothers. What impact do their children have on public safety when they grow up with minimal contact with their mothers?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

AMANDA DuBOIS



Amanda DuBois worked as a labor and delivery nurse before becoming a lawyer. She has practiced in the areas of medical malpractice and family law. She founded the DuBois Levias Law Group in Seattle, Washington, where she is actively engaged in litigation, and Civil Survival, an organization that teaches advocacy skills to formerly incarcerated individuals. Amanda serves on several boards that support social justice and women's issues. Her most recent passion is funding her Full Circle Scholarship, which provides tuition assistance at her alma mater, Seattle University School of Law. This scholarship is specifically granted to students whose lives have been impacted by the criminal legal system. All the author's profits from your book purchase will be donated to the Full Circle Scholarship or to individuals or organizations that promote social justice issues. This is the third novel in the Camille Delaney Mystery series.

