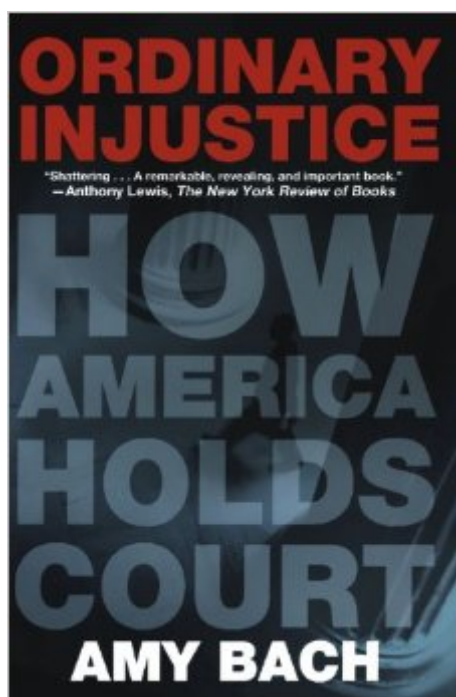


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Ordinary Injustice: How America Holds Court



Synopsis

"A groundbreaking book . . . revealing the systemic, everyday problems in our courts that must be addressed if justice is truly to be served." •Doris Kearns GoodwinAttorney and journalist Amy Bach spent eight years investigating the widespread courtroom failures that each day upend lives across America. What she found was an assembly-line approach to justice: a system that rewards mediocre advocacy, bypasses due process, and shortchanges both defendants and victims to keep the court calendar moving. Here is the public defender who pleads most of his clients guilty with scant knowledge about their circumstances; the judge who sets outrageous bail for negligible crimes; the prosecutor who habitually declines to pursue significant cases; the court that works together to achieve a wrongful conviction. Going beyond the usual explanations of bad apples and meager funding, Ordinary Injustice reveals a clubby legal culture of compromise, and shows the tragic consequences that result when communities mistake the rules that lawyers play by for the rule of law. It is time, Bach argues, to institute a new method of checks and balances that will make injustice visible •the first and necessary step to reform.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Attorney and journalist Amy Bach spent eight years investigating injustice in our court systems. I'm not talking about the individual instances of injustice that we've all read about in the past - false confessions, dirty cops, or the wrongful conviction of the innocent. Instead of merely focusing on individuals, Bach investigated the systematic lapses in our court system and shows the reader how

justice can fail throughout the entire legal process. As she notes in her introduction: This book examines how state criminal trial courts regularly permit basic failures of legal process, such as the mishandling of a statutory allegation. Ordinary injustice results when a community of legal professionals becomes so accustomed to a pattern of lapses that they can no longer see their role in them. There are times when an alarming miscarriage of justice does come to light and exposes the complacency within the system, but in such instances the public often blames a single player, be it a judge, a prosecutor, or a defense attorney. The point of departure for each chapter in this book is the story of one individual who has found himself condemned in this way. What these examples show, however, is that pinning the problem on any one bad apple fails to indict the tree from which it fell. While it is convenient to isolate misconduct, targeting an individual only obscures what is truly going on from the scrutiny change requires. This system involves too many players to hold one accountable for the routine injustice happening in courtrooms across America. The book is divided into four sections. The first deals with Robert E.

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