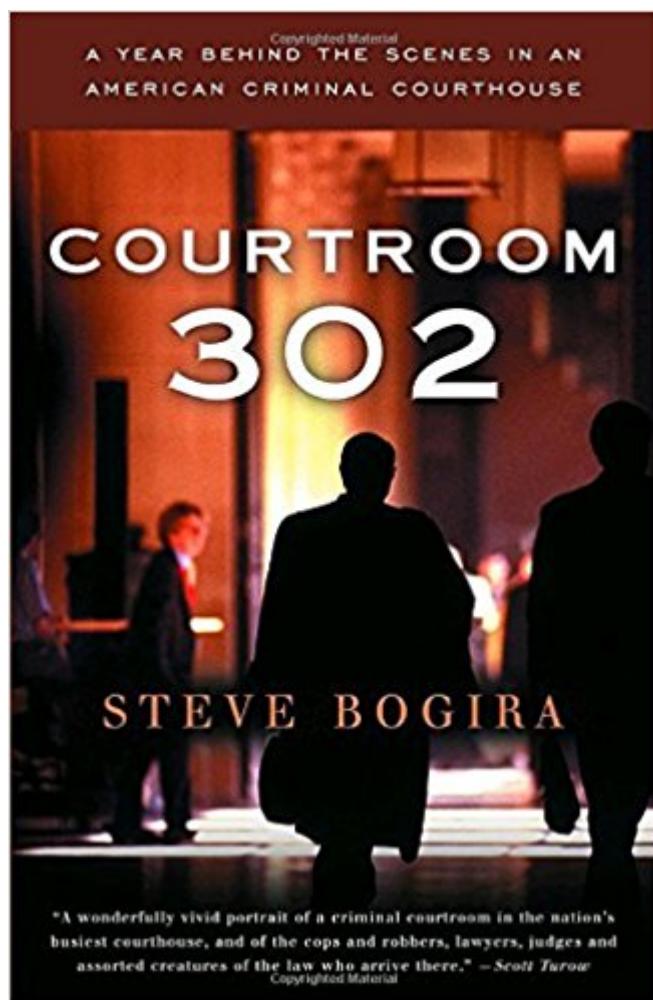


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Courtroom 302: A Year Behind The Scenes In An American Criminal Courthouse



Synopsis

Courtroom 302 is the fascinating story of one year in Chicago's Cook County Criminal Courthouse, the busiest felony courthouse in the country. Here we see the system through the eyes of the men and women who experience it, not only in the courtroom but in the lockup, the jury room, the judge's chambers, the spectators' gallery. From the daily grind of the court to the highest-profile case of the year, Steve Bogira's masterful investigation raises fundamental issues of race, civil rights, and justice in America.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Chicago-based journalist Bogira's first book is an outstanding journey inside the American criminal justice system that nicely complements last year's *Blue Blood*, Edward Conlon's inside look at the life of a big-city cop. Like that instant classic, this book—centered on the Cook County Criminal Courthouse, "the biggest and busiest felony courthouse in the nation"—punctures the popular myths engendered by TV shows like *Law and Order* to provide a balanced view of the realities of the day-to-day, assembly-line grind that marks so much of the process from arrest to final disposition. The author's ability to gain the trust of so many different participants in the grim drama—judges, public defenders, prosecutors, court officers, prison guards and many defendants—is remarkable, and he often comes close to presenting a more complete picture of the truth of a particular crime than emerge in court in the or in the few cases that actually go to trial. Despite this access, Bogira does not gild the people he describes;

even Judge Daniel Locallo, the book's central figure—whose courtroom witnesses racial violence, pathetic thievery, the abused and the mentally incompetent, and who, on balance emerges positively—is portrayed warts and all. The brilliance of Bogira's insights will lead many to hope that he will follow this debut with proposals to cure the many ills he has diagnosed.

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Adult/High School-The grim reality of the urban criminal justice process hits readers with a wallop as they are welcomed as prisoners to Chicago's Cook County Criminal Courthouse, the biggest and busiest felony courthouse in the U.S. From the harsh and dehumanizing treatment of prisoners, they move to Courtroom 302, presided over by Judge Dan Locallo. Through the perspectives of the defendants and their families, the prosecutor and the defense attorney, guards, deputies, juries, and court personnel, Bogira provides an engrossing look at the human drama of the cases, including the racially motivated beating of a 13-year-old black boy by the white teenage son of a family believed to be Mafia-connected. The horrific injustice of the flawed system cries out from almost every page, even as honorable and intelligent, yet all too human court officers work diligently within it. The author provides the historical background and rationale for the plea bargaining, the unintended consequences of "drug courts" resulting in more arrests for criminals holding small amounts of drugs, and the pressures, political and administrative, that judges standing for retention election face. He reveals how these factors actually impact the accused, the victims, and their families. This is a riveting wake-up call for students who mistake the slick justice of television courtroom dramas for reality.-Jane S. Drabkin, Chinn Park Regional Library, Woodbridge, VA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I've known of the disparities and injustices into the black and brown communities from personal experience. I've worked in Law Enforcement 23+ years and I have 2 adult sons that have grown up in Chicago. I have the utmost respect and gratitude to the decent police officers that work so hard to keep our communities safe. I have nothing but disgust and disdain for those who lie, entrap, harass and manipulate "the system" stating the end always justifies the means. I do not quantify that belief. I'm thankful to Steve Bogira for an honest investigation and report on the goings on at 26th and Cal. Sadly, nothing has changed since this book debuted in 1998, except maybe, getting worse.A MUST READ!

Some may say this is dry, but in all honesty, I enjoyed this book a lot and this is coming from someone who was assigned to read this for a Criminology class. This book helped me gain an interest in law that I didn't know I had. I love how easily it seems to put together the personal stories of so many individuals that walk into the Courtroom 302. It discusses the before, during and after of several different perspectives in the courtroom such as authoritative figures (judge, deputy), attorneys, prosecutors, defendants, victims and their families and peers. It keeps me interested because even though the book may drown out with legal terms and concepts, the backstory behind every character in the book keeps me hooked. This book has a way of showing every figure in the courtroom in good and bad light. The author knows how to draw sympathies toward any character regardless of their acts or behaviors. I highly recommend this book if you want to learn about the criminal system and process without easily getting bored, and if you'd rather read a novel than a textbook. It's good practice for becoming familiar with jury and trial process. As for shipping and physical quality, it was perfect. No marks and in new condition and arrived when expected.

I heard so much about this book in my earlier days of practicing law. I wish I had read it sooner. My husband is from Chicago and I never really believed his stories until reading this book. I am a former prosecutor and I purchased this book to get a better idea for the setting of a story I am brainstorming that takes place in Chicago. I was spellbound. It reads like a thriller. I can't emphasize enough how much I enjoyed this book.

Terrific behind the scenes look at all that goes on inside (and outside) a criminal courtroom. The book covers all the major players - the police, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges and the various pressures, motivations, and agendas that drive them to do what they do as the system attempts to do justice. This is not a novel, but it's paced like one, blending quotes from the real life participants with anecdotes, statistics and behind the scenes info. The author does not push any particular agenda and allows the reader to draw her own conclusions about the system as it is and the way we all wish it would be. Though limited to one courtroom in one American city, Courtroom 302 serves as a good introduction to the machinations of the American criminal justice system. Those intrigued by the contents will no doubt pursue further information elsewhere.

The author invested his time into this project. He reveals, through research, interviews, and then narratives, the truth about our criminal justice system. In his clear writing style, we see this system's

struggles with large numbers of accused, some jaded justice players, disproportionate confinement issues, and the political context in which life-altering decisions are made. I recommend it to everyone interested in our courts, and especially students thinking about entering the criminal justice field. The book underscores the need for a merit-based, independent judiciary capable and willing to check the god-like power which our tough-on-crime legislators give prosecutors around this country..

This book very realistically (for the most part) tells the story of the day to day cases in Courtroom 302 of the Cook County Courthouse in Chicago, IL. Located at the famed 26th and California intersection on the southwest side, it is part of the largest jail site in the United States. He tells the history of the judge and both sides of the case, defense and prosecution. He also tracks the cases from start to finish and has a captivating writing style that will keep you turning the page. He is a bit biased from my experience with the cases that he is discussing, pulling out facts that make for a good book and amplifies them, while ignoring some facts of the situation. It is still a great read, however, and I would recommend it to anybody interested in Chicago, Cook County, CPD or the legal system in general.

I admit that I am both a lawyer and a law geek, but I was totally riveted by this book. People who get their understanding about how the criminal courts work from watching TV crime dramas should read this to get an idea of how courts really work.

Very interesting book.I read it for extra credit in my Criminal Justice class.It's kind of like a documentary but it reads like fiction and it's not boring at all if you're into it.

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