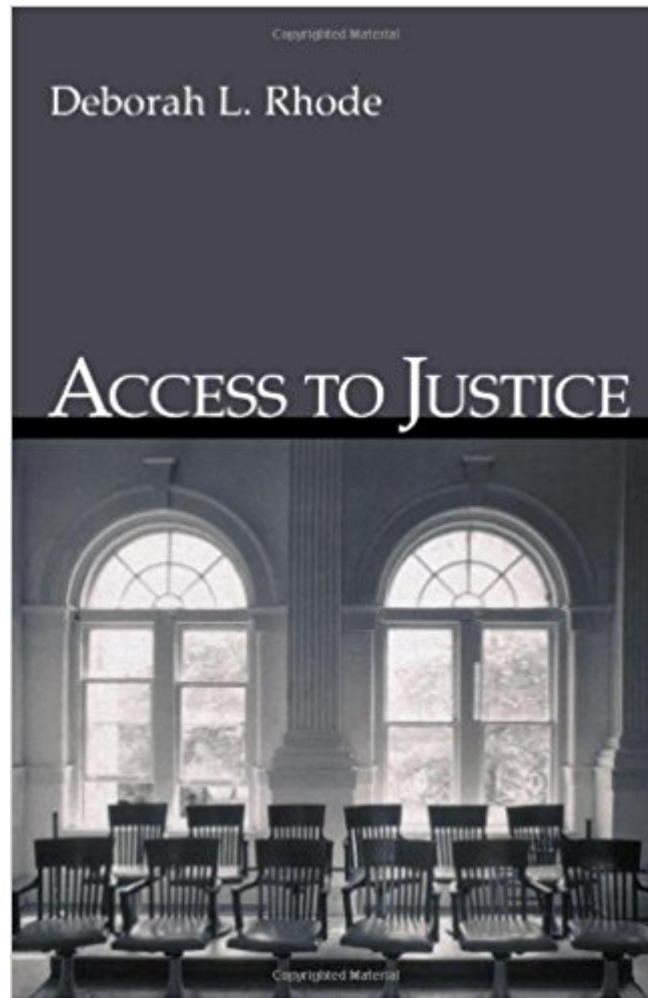




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Access To Justice



Synopsis

"Equal Justice Under Law" is one of America's most proudly proclaimed and widely violated legal principles. But it comes nowhere close to describing the legal system in practice. Millions of Americans lack any access to justice, let alone equal access. Worse, the increasing centrality of law in American life and its growing complexity has made access to legal assistance critical for all citizens. Yet according to most estimates about four-fifths of the legal needs of the poor, and two- to three-fifths of the needs of middle-income individuals remain unmet. This book reveals the inequities of legal assistance in America, from the lack of access to educational services and health benefits to gross injustices in the criminal defense system. It proposes a specific agenda for change, offering tangible reforms for coordinating comprehensive systems for the delivery of legal services, maximizing individual's opportunities to represent themselves, and making effective legal services more affordable for all Americans who need them.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Few Americans would complain that the U.S. lacks for lawyers. But a distinguished Stanford law professor sharply criticizes a legal system in which only the wealthy can afford essential services from the country's numerous attorneys. As legislators cut budgets for legal-aid providers and as prestigious law firms reduce their pro bono commitments to mere lip service, the poor find themselves represented by unqualified and negligent lawyers in criminal cases and by no one at all in civil courts and bureaucratic proceedings. Warning that the time has long passed for empty boasts of the unique fairness of American justice, Rhode summons policy makers, lawyers, and

ordinary citizens to join her in pressing for urgently needed reforms. Those reforms--here detailed--include the development of procedures for resolving disputes without lawyers or court hearings, the distribution of legal self-help materials, the expansion of pro bono services, and the adequate funding of legal-aid agencies. Not all readers will embrace Rhode's agenda for change, but her analysis of legal injustices will spark much-needed debate. Bryce Christensen

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"Rhode has written an important, thoughtful, and well-argued book."--Law and Politics Book Review

"What makes Ms. Rhode such an effective advocate is not the piercing nature of her salvos--which are lethal--but the abundance of support for her arguments. Access to Justice is thoroughly researched and finely written."--New York Law Journal

"Deborah Rhode has jolted a million lawyers with a wake-up call. She urges them to open the doors to the unmet need for justice by most of the people who cannot afford their services. A challenging book for anyone, not just lawyers and law students, who believes that justice can be done if we have the will to pursue it."--Ralph Nader, Consumer Advocate

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