

Book Title: No Matter How Loud I Shout: A Year in the Life of Juvenile Court

Author: Edward Humes

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In this book, Humes describes his experiences and observations of the Los Angeles juvenile justice system. He discusses the frustrations faced by overworked district attorneys, public defenders, probation officers, and judges as they struggle on a daily basis in the pathetically understaffed and mismanaged court system. During the year that Humes studies the Los Angeles juvenile justice system, he spends time in a writing class attended by juveniles who are awaiting disposition of their cases. He provides a first-hand account of the true thoughts and feelings of several juveniles as they share their life stories and poems in class. The reader is left hoping that something will be done to improve the Los Angeles juvenile court system, and to help juveniles who find themselves caught in this chaotic system.

Vivid and often graphic details of crimes committed by juveniles are described in this book. Humes follows youth through the juvenile justice system and shares their experiences throughout the novel. He also shares the experiences of Judge Roosevelt Dorn, as he agonizes over how to deal with each juvenile case that crosses his desk. Some of the most controversial cases occur when a decision must be made to determine if a minor remains in the juvenile system or is referred to the adult court system. I found it interesting that Judge Dorn's decisions are both criticized and praised throughout the book.

Humes describes a system that consistently fails to help those children who need it most. It becomes increasingly clear throughout the book that the juvenile justice system is extremely ineffective in dealing with a vast majority of the cases. Early intervention is suggested as an answer to many of the problems faced by the entire juvenile court system. The book effectively describes the overwhelming number of cases and problems in the juvenile justice system and gives tremendous credit to those who labor endlessly to help children and their families.

Some success stories are included, which were a welcome change of pace for me. I enjoyed reading the autobiographical stories and poems written by some of these juveniles, as well as the first-hand accounts of what life has been like for them and how they see their future. It is the helplessness and hopelessness of these children that caused me to view the system with anger and compassion simultaneously. It is clear throughout the novel that the Los Angeles juvenile justice system desperately needs to be reformed and changed.