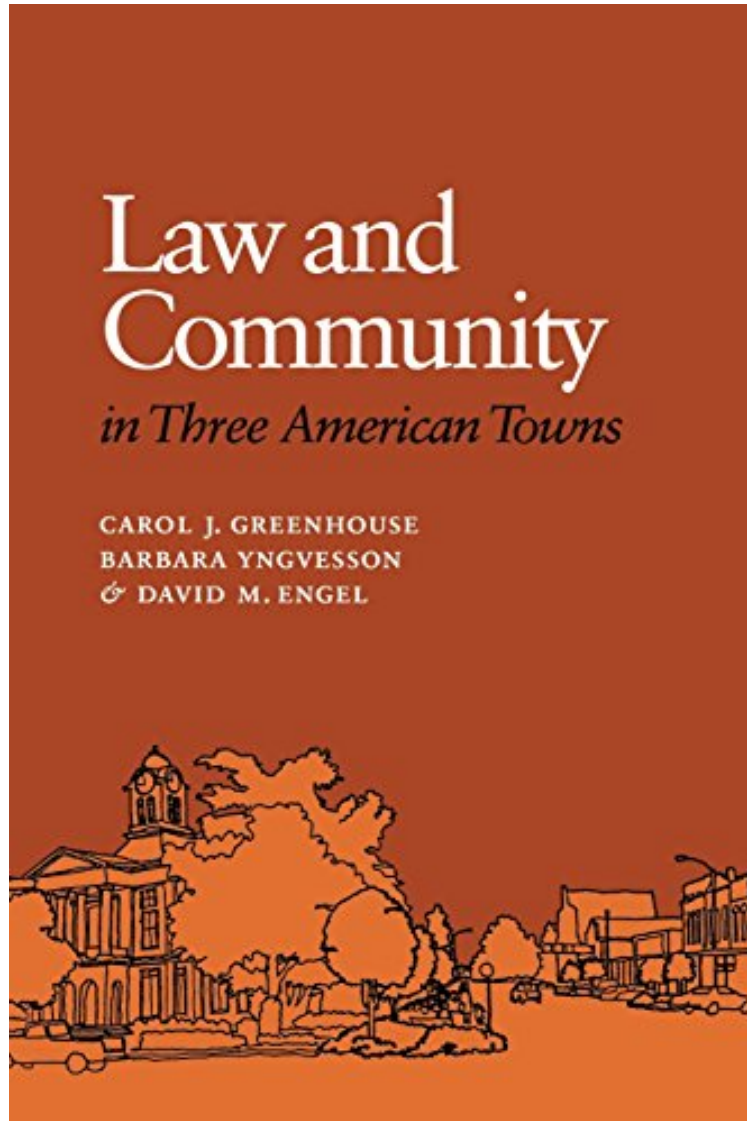


(Download pdf ebook) Law and Community in Three American Towns

Law and Community in Three American Towns

Carol J. Greenhouse, Barbara Yngvesson, David M. Engel
*ePub | *DOC | audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF*



 Download

 Read Online

#731759 in Books Cornell University Press 1994-05-26 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.00 x .55 x 6.00l, .0 #File Name: 0801481694240 pages | File size: 56.Mb

Carol J. Greenhouse, Barbara Yngvesson, David M. Engel : Law and Community in Three American Towns before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Law and Community in Three American Towns:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Very interestingBy Dwight ShruteThis was a very interesting piece. The author shines light on things that you've always wondered about but could never really figure out. Good read.6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Insiders use Anti-Legalism against OutsidersBy ChairmanLuedtkeDespite its rather incoherent, overlapping and chaotic organization, as a book thrown together from

3 originally independent case studies, and despite the over-reliance of the three authors on pedantic anthropological jargon, "Law and Community" succeeds as a scholarly work because it penetrates rather deeply into a fascinating area of legal studies: legalism and anti-legalism in the relationship between law and traditional American society. Most people know that America is an anti-legalistic society, with an abundance of lawyer jokes and "tort tale" horror stories (usually myths) such as the lady that spilled McDonald's coffee on herself and supposedly won millions. But very few people know the conservative political agenda that lies at the root of such anti-legalism. "Law and Community" succeeds as political science because it reveals the political (class, racial, etc.) motives behind the anti-legalism of "insiders" in 3 American towns who deride outsiders (poor, working class, non-religious) folks as being "sue-happy" and "out for a quick buck". In short, America vilifies these individuals, who sue companies for negligence, because the pro-business social fabric of our towns is built on a foundation of rugged, self-reliant individualism that says not to blame anybody else for your problems. However, this traditional brand of individualism can be contrasted with another type of individualism, equally as "American" in origin, that says that disadvantaged people have certain "rights", including a "right" to assert these rights in a fair court of law. But in the 3 towns in this book, outsiders who assert these rights against small businesspeople are ostracized from the community and rarely given a fair hearing within the supposedly impartial legal system itself. However, when the towns' insiders wish to take their problems to court, to defend their contracts, leases, etc., we see a double standard in operation. Insiders use law successfully, when it suits their interests, and then vilify others that wish to use law against them. The book does a great job of revealing this political cleavage, through detailed case studies, interviews and ethnographic research. As mentioned above, my two biggest critiques are the poor organization of the book (almost a third of it is either overlap or fluff) and the tendency of the 3 authors, like many anthropologists, to cloak their otherwise interesting references into a postmodern fog of Foucault references and fancy cultural studies terms that will only turn off the undergraduate reader and give them a headache. But if you can handle these two problems, this book makes great material for a course in law, anthropology, political science, sociology, or any combination thereof.

Many commentators on the contemporary United States believe that current rates of litigation are a sign of decay in the nation's social fabric. *Law and Community in Three American Towns* explores how ordinary people in three towns located in New England, the Midwest, and the South view the law, courts, litigants, and social order. Carol J. Greenhouse, Barbara Yngvesson, and David M. Engel analyze attitudes toward law and law users as a way of commenting on major American myths and ongoing changes in American society. They show that residents of "Riverside," Sander County, and Hopewell interpret litigation as a sign of social decline, but they also value law as a symbol of their local way of life. The book focuses on this ambivalence and relates it to the deeply-felt tensions express between community and rights as rival bases of society. The authors, two anthropologists and a lawyer, each with an understanding of a particular region, were surprised to discover that such different locales produced parallel findings. They undertook a comparative project to find out why ambivalence toward the law and law use should be such a common refrain. The answer, they believe, turns out to be less a matter of local traditions than of the ways that people perceive the patterns of their lives as being vulnerable to external forces of change.

From Library Journal Many commentators on the contemporary United States believe that current rates of litigation are a sign of decay in the nation's social fabric. This book explores how ordinary people in three towns view the law, courts, litigants, and sense of social order. The authors are concerned about how symbolic distinctions between "insiders" and "outsiders" emerge out of local cultural patterns. One striking finding is that the sense of community in the three towns is a reaction to modern notions of pluralism. In a brief introduction, the authors, two anthropologists and a lawyer, present a useful guide to the field of "legal anthropology," which developed only in this century. The authors note that, while their examination of life in American towns is not really unique, theirs is the first to focus entirely on the role of law and legal institutions. Although based on three originally independent studies, this book developed into a unified text with useful findings. Recommended to both scholars and interested lay readers. Jerry E. Stephens, U.S. Court of Appeals Lib., Oklahoma City Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. "As established scholars in the field of law-and-society, these three authors have studied the interrelation between law and community in three locales in New England, the Midwest, and the South. Using interviews and case studies, they explore the links between the cultural ideas of individualism and community. Their more specific focus is on the role of law and of the courts in the cultural framework of their selected communities. A principal conclusion is that 'community' is 'a term that expresses a modern retrenchment against new forms of pluralism in the United States.' The text is clearly written and contains useful and up-to-date bibliography." Choice (March 1995) About the Author Carol Greenhouse is the Arthur W. Marks professor and department Chair of Anthropology at Princeton University.