

Academy for Justice Newsletter / Final Write Up
In Conversation w/ Professor Beety's release of *Manifesting Justice*
Mceldowney

Working on *Manifesting Justice* was first and foremost an absolute honor. It is always special to engage with professors' work outside of an academic setting. It was particularly special to engage with Professor Beety's work after taking her Wrongful Convictions seminar in the Fall of 2021. She is so passionate about the work that she does and I am so happy to have played a role—albeit a small role—in the crafting of *Manifesting Justice*. Through editing the text and through researching content, I had the privilege of learning about the work Professor Beety did as a young lawyer. The book centers around a woman, Leigh Stubbs, a woman who was wrongly convicted of a crime she did not commit. Stubbs' sexual orientation played a role in her wrongful conviction. The book tells this story alongside the broader story of the broken criminal justice system including the conviction of marginalized peoples and how those differences played into their convictions. I am so grateful for the time that this book allowed me to spend with work the concepts surrounding *Manifesting Justice* as well as examine my own privilege and role in the legal system as a young lawyer.

Researching for this book, and working with Valena on this book gave me an even better perspective on the incredible lawyer, scholar, and human she is. It also gave me time to focus on substantive material that I really enjoy reading and writing about. The concept and role of gender and sexuality in the criminal justice system has always been fascinating to me. Through working on this book, I came to more closely understand that 'liberty and justice for all' might actually mean "liberty and justice for those who are the right race, gender, sexual orientation..."

Manifesting Justice brought me moments akin to Marilyn Frye's *The Politics of Reality* in its investigations of gender and how gender and sexuality work within the scope of the criminal

justice. The role of gender and sexuality in the legal system still subjects women, particularly women of color and queer women, to barriers in accessing equal justice whether they are victims, alleged offenders, witnesses, or prisoners.

Working on this project provided not only an opportunity to engage with legal research and writing in an more public engage with interesting and essential criminal justice. One of the important aspects of this project was learning to consider how little the criminal justice system has changed when it comes to the way that it treats marginalized people—especially women. Particularly, the role of prosecutors is closely examined in the book. Professor Beety’s previous role as a federal prosecutor crafts an undeniable ethos that provides a valuable insight into the role of prosecutors and their potential detrimental effect should they choose to overcharge, charge people who are factually innocent, or pressure accused people into taking bad plea deals. Criminal justice reform and innocence work needs to happen at all levels and on both sides of the aisle. When prosecutors capitalize on the pain and suffering of those who have been wrongly convicted, society as a whole loses. Working on *Manifesting Justice* during my 3L year made me closely examine my own role as a young lawyer entering the legal profession. After working on this project I found myself questioning my responsibility within the current landscape of the criminal justice system: *What is my role in this flawed system? How can I benefit or motivate change within the system armed with the knowledge that I have?*

Manifesting Justice is an absolute treasure. It manages to both explain the state of the current criminal justice system as well as craft a compelling narrative. Though the United State’s criminal justice system may be a long way from true reform, reading books such as this will certainly impact the way that people see the failures of the system.

