

Shocking the Conscience: A Reporter's Account of the Civil Rights Movement

Simeon Booker and Carol McCabe Booker

University Press of Mississippi
 Hardcover \$30.00 (352pp)
 978-1-61703-787-0

No magazine covered the bloody and turbulent events of the civil rights movement more faithfully than *Jet*. Years before the brutal treatment of blacks was acknowledged in the white mainstream press, *Jet*, according to comedian and activist Dick Gregory, “shocked the conscience of the nation and world.” And no one more than Simeon “the man from *Jet*” Booker covered so compellingly the 1955 Emmet Till murder, the 1961 Freedom Riders journey in Alabama, and the 1965 Bloody Sunday showdown in Selma, Alabama. The author’s you-are-there narratives transport the reader back to these chilling events.

Booker was the first black staff reporter for the *Washington Post*, a position he quit after two years because of ongoing racism. In 1956, he became *Jet*’s Washington bureau chief, a position he held until 2007. For more than a half-century, Booker’s influential “Ticker Tape USA” column was as eagerly read by presidents as by ordinary people for its timely and authoritative commentary. Booker, who will turn ninety-four in 2013, here shares his story and that of such civil rights luminaries as John and Robert Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Martin Luther King Jr., and, in what is the most compelling feature of this superb memoir, the tales of ordinary citizens, including Dr. T. R. M. Howard, Mamie Till, and martyrs Jimmy Lee and James Reeb, who lived and died for the cause of equal rights.

The author more than once found his own life in jeopardy as a black reporter in the South, where death was only a Klan or police bullet away. During the Till trial, Booker’s life was saved from an infuriated sheriff by a fellow reporter’s fast thinking. When he rode with the Freedom Riders, his Trailways bus was mobbed by racist thugs who severely beat the riders and almost mauled Booker. During his

years with *Jet*, Booker covered ten presidents, including Eisenhower, who viewed black rights merely as a special interest; Kennedy, who inspired black citizens to believe in the cause of civil rights; and Nixon, who, although he promoted desegregation, never earned the trust of African Americans.

Booker concludes that the fight for equality is far from over and charges the current generation to continue the struggle. For all general readers as well as civil rights scholars, Booker’s remembrance provides a personal touch that enriches existing accounts of movement history and makes it essential reading in its own right. (April) KARL HELICHER

• LAW

Fighting for Their Lives: Inside the Experience of Capital Defense Attorneys

Susannah Sheffer

Vanderbilt University Press
 Softcover \$27.95 (210pp)
 978-0-8265-1911-5

In this revealing analysis of the legal profession, researcher Susannah Sheffer interviews long-time capital defense attorneys with the goal of answering this question: How does it feel to know that your job is to save a person’s life?

Sheffer has written about and worked on death penalty-related issues for fifteen years. Here, she presents an informative and compelling description of the responsibility and personal anguish attorneys of death row clients feel about their role in the death penalty process. *Fighting for Their Lives: Inside the Experience of Capital Defense Attorneys* offers a glimpse into a part of the judicial process that is not only rarely discussed in the culture—as it usually occurs through a series of documents, filed with and responded to by the court in writing rather than in dramatic courtroom settings—but, as the interviews

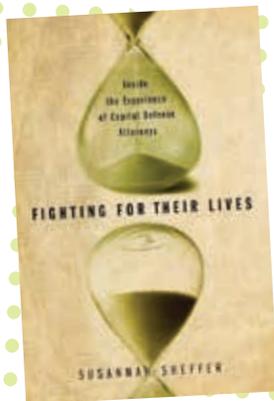
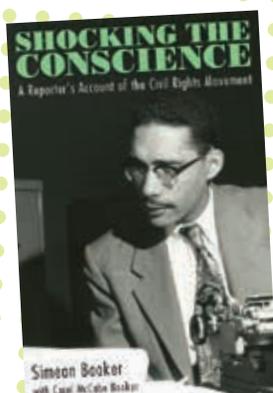
disclose, also remains undiscussed even among colleagues.

The information gathered from interviews with twenty attorneys—six women and fourteen men who have practiced between eight and thirty-two years—explains in detail how capital defense attorneys internalize their work. Sheffer explores the range of often conflicting emotions that capital defense attorneys experience, from exhilaration over the high-stakes nature of the work to tremendous stress about the responsibility they bear. Through her well-written and clear descriptions, even readers who are not familiar with the legal process will fully grasp the magnitude and impact of the attorneys’ responsibilities.

Throughout the account, Sheffer allows the attorneys to convey their feelings in their own words and to explain what motivated them to enter this type of legal work, how it has affected them personally, and why they continue, despite the many challenges. She highlights the similarities in their responses, and discovers that the attorneys share a common motivation, primarily social justice. One of the most thought-provoking quotes is from Benjamin (Sheffer promised the participants confidentiality and they are identified only by pseudonyms), who describes an experience with a particular client, but one that is also typical: “We sentenced him to death ... Then we took twenty years to make him into someone whose life was worth saving, and then we killed him. That’s the system.”

Sheffer’s insightful book will be of interest to all capital defense attorneys and others working in the judicial system, as well as to those who work on death penalty issues in other contexts, including politicians, journalists, and advocates. It will further appeal to readers working in high-pressure jobs and facing the same conflicting feelings about their own professions.

By so thoroughly depicting the mindset of a capital defense attorney, while still acknowledging opposing views, Sheffer presents a highly persuasive argument against the death penalty. *Fighting for Their Lives* serves to inform and also encourage readers to consider the effect the death penalty has on all involved in the process, as well as society at large. (March) MARIA SIANO

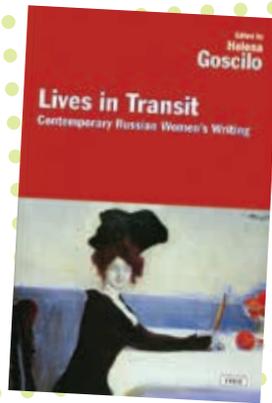
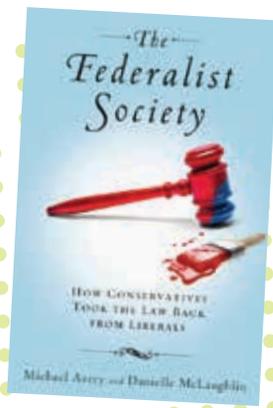


The Federalist Society: How Conservatives Took the Law Back from Liberals

Michael Avery and Danielle McLaughlin

Vanderbilt University Press
 Hardcover \$35.00 (304pp)
 978-0-8265-1877-4

The Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies was founded in the early 1980s by politically conservative law students who



considered mainstream legal thought in America too liberal. Though it started as a student organization hosting symposia at law schools, the society has since grown into a multimillion-dollar organization with tens of thousands of members and hundreds of chapters around the country. The organization became so influential in conservative circles that every federal judge appointed by Presidents George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush came pre-approved by the Federalist Society, and most—including four current Supreme Court justices—were members.

In *The Federalist Society: How Conservatives Took the Law Back from Liberals*, Michael Avery and Danielle McLaughlin describe how the Federalist Society groomed an entire generation of lawyers and judges to advocate a specific worldview, and how that worldview has impacted several areas of law. From getting elected to Congress to writing massive numbers of amicus briefs, Federalist Society members have ensured that their views are present throughout the lawmaking process and established a new norm of conservative-driven legal decisions. The authors' sober analysis looks at numerous cases and uses both anecdotal examples and data trends to show how Federalist Society members and supporters have consistently steered jurisprudence to the right.

The book focuses on some of the main areas of law in which society members have wielded significant influence, from cases involving eminent domain and the definition of private property to cases covering discrimination and civil rights. Avery and McLaughlin demonstrate how Federalist Society members chip away at laws with which they disagree, using incremental measures to create legal precedents on the way to challenging the laws themselves. Most interestingly, their anecdotes track the careers of important Federalist Society members, such as Supreme Court justices Samuel Alito and Antonin Scalia, as well as the society's ongoing relationship with organizations like the Christian Coalition.

The judiciary is often the least-covered branch of the federal government, despite lifetime appointments that give judges decades of influence. Much of what *The Federalist Society* covers will be familiar to readers who closely follow law or politics, but even those readers will find value in its straightforward mix of history, case studies, and legal arguments. For others, it serves as an introduction to a long-term story that has slowly and quietly—but dramatically—changed the American legal system. (April) JEFF FLEISCHER

• LITERARY COLLECTIONS

Lives in Transit: Contemporary Russian Women's Writing

Helena Goscilo (editor)
 Ardis Publishers, Inc.
 Softcover \$25.00 (421pp)
 978-1-4683-0155-7

Helena Goscilo, Chair and Professor in the Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Literatures at Ohio State University, has edited a remarkably satiating, intelligent anthology featuring short stories by twenty-three of Russia's eminent and emerging women fiction writers as well as selections from six poets, several of whom are translated into English for the first time. Through stories that were mostly penned during the 1980s, *Lives in Transit* examines challenges wrought by household concerns, love, sexuality, and other traditionally "feminine" topics in settings that range from apartments in Leningrad and Moscow to a rural abortion clinic. Male and female narrators with divergent backgrounds and varying degrees of ingenuity, aplomb, and resilience confront modernity and its sometimes harsh conditions—including violence and poverty—with occasional encounters with quiet heroism.

In "Sergusha," by Alla Kalinina, and "Vera Perova," by Nadezhda Kozhevnikova,

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