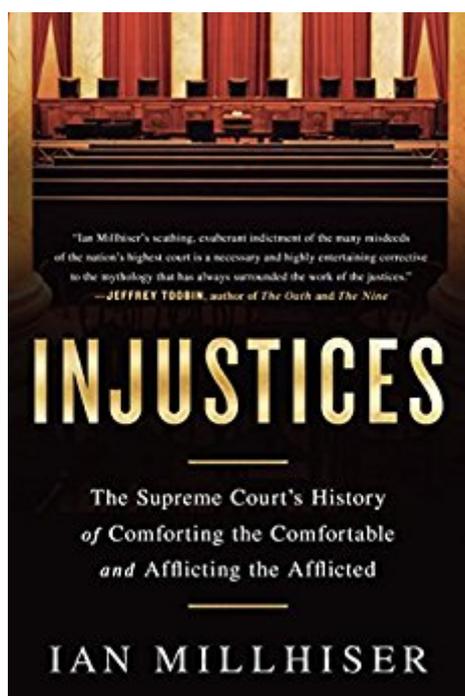


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# Injustices: The Supreme Court's History Of Comforting The Comfortable And Afflicting The Afflicted



## Synopsis

Now with a new epilogue. Few American institutions have inflicted greater suffering on ordinary people than the Supreme Court of the United States. Since its inception, the justices of the Supreme Court have shaped a nation where children toiled in coal mines, where Americans could be forced into camps because of their race, and where a woman could be sterilized against her will by state law. The Court was the midwife of Jim Crow, the right hand of union busters, and the dead hand of the Confederacy. Nor is the modern Court a vast improvement, with its incursions on voting rights and its willingness to place elections for sale. In this powerful indictment of a venerated institution, Ian Millhiser tells the history of the Supreme Court through the eyes of the everyday people who have suffered the most from it. America ratified three constitutional amendments to provide equal rights to freed slaves, but the justices spent thirty years largely dismantling these amendments. Then they spent the next forty years rewriting them into a shield for the wealthy and the powerful. In the Warren era and the few years following it, progressive justices restored the Constitution's promises of equality, free speech, and fair justice for the accused. But, Millhiser contends, that was an historic accident. Indeed, if it weren't for several unpredictable events, *Brown v. Board of Education* could have gone the other way. In *Injustices*, Millhiser argues that the Supreme Court has seized power for itself that rightfully belongs to the people's elected representatives, and has bent the arc of American history away from justice.

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## Customer Reviews

The author attempts to make the case that the Supreme Court has more often sided with business and money over the "people" and that many of their decision have violated the spirit, if not the language, of the Constitution. There are three sections to the book and cover a period from the late 1800s to the current. In section one, the author uses examples of the court handing down decisions that struck down child labor laws, wage laws, sanitation laws and upheld laws that allowed for racial discrimination to continue (through voting laws) and allowed the government to end strikes that the government thought were harmful. Prior to discussion the issues at hand, the author does a wonderful job of explaining just what the conditions were and what issues were at stake. In the second section the author covers the era from about the time Roosevelt was elected to the end of the Burger Court. Here, he argues that the court did, in fact, read the Constitution properly and handed down opinions that ended segregation, allowed criminals to be read their rights and a number of other issues that today seem inbedded in everyday life. The third section deals with the current court. It looks at decisions such as Citizens United and examines how it was decided that way it was. The author also makes the argument that the court has become polarized along ideological lines and that many current Justices follow political alliances rather than strict interpretation of the Constitution. I found the book to be very well written and much less dry than many books about the court. The author thought through his arguments and did a good job of laying out the case that the court favors the rich and powerful over the average citizen. It is up to the reader to decide whether he believes the authors arguments or not, but even if you don't believe his premise, it is still a great read full of fascinating information.

I saw this book on the new book shelf at the library and figured I'd browse through it while I had some downtime. I was immediately hooked. Hooked enough not only to check it out from the library but to take the time to leave a review. I figured the book would be incredibly academic but instead it's incredibly readable. Yes, it will challenge your thoughts on this lauded American institution. Yes, by the end of the book you'll be looking at instances of the Supreme Court in the news in an entirely

different way. And yes, it will make you start paying a hell of a lot more attention. You should read it if only for the conversations it starts. My husband picked up the book off the table and within 30 minutes of reading we were talking about it. Loudly. That's when I knew I had picked up a damn good piece of non fiction. Highly Recommended.

This book spells out, in maddening detail, the darker side of the Supreme Court. It focuses especially on three periods: post-Civil War, in which the Court essentially nullified the war and its constitutional results; the Lochner period, in which the Court handed the country over to Gilded Age big business; and the current period of Hobby Lobby and Citizens United. It's well worth reading the Lochner period, because the current court, some commenters tell us, is another Lochner period, although it has yet to invalidate child-labor or work-conditions law as it did a century ago. Yet. Still, we come to understand just how much harm their decisions can inflict on average Americans. He also says, convincingly, that *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the Warren Court generally, were to some extent the result of freak events, and long gone. All this is in clear prose, understandable to non-legal readers. As someone trained in the law, I can tell you that this book does ring true -- and even law-school graduates could learn a few things from his Lochner history. There's not much on the recent national-security cases as I would have liked, but still plenty here to understand how much harm this Court has done historically, and can do, in people's lives. Highest recommendation.

A riveting read, which rams home just how much America has changed, and simultaneously how little America has changed, over the last 150 years. The author deftly mixes in legal precedent and procedure with colourful stories of the judges, politicians and presidents who have shaped the USA's landscape of human rights and civil rights. You won't have a true understanding of segregation, discrimination and "state's rights" until you read this book.

Mr. Millhiser does a fantastic job of providing insight and history pertaining to the "esteemed" U.S. Supreme Court. History shows how many of the former and current justices are motivated and influenced by their own ideology, prejudices, and social settings. As Millhiser clearly points out, it is less about the law and more about fitting/shaping the law to meet the justices' preconceived notion, prejudice or ideology. This is not to say that all justices are bad, but it does show the fallibility in our thinking that the Court's opinions are supreme - far from it. As more controversial cases are being brought to the Court, it is required reading to know the history of the Court. Knowing the history will help us understand the failures of when it comes to meeting the needs of all citizens and just not the

rich, the powerful, and the dominant White male. Given that the Affordable Care Act ruling is upon, along with marriage equality, this book is required reading to understand the mistakes the U.S. Supreme Court made in taking on these two cases, as well as others in the past.

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