



# To Punish and Protect: A DA's Fight Against a System That Coddles Criminals

*Jeanine Pirro, Catherine Whitney*

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*"The office of the district attorney is a battleground, where the fight between good and evil unfolds each day. We see the ugliest side of life, the pain that people go through for no reason. They didn't do anything. They didn't ask for it. Yet here they are, living their personal nightmares. We cannot take away their pain, or turn back time to undo the damage, but we can be the avengers. We can seek justice on their behalf."*

So begins this riveting account by Westchester County District Attorney, Jeanine Pirro, as she takes us inside the violent world of modern crime fighting. Before Pirro was elected DA in 1993, the job was always considered a man's domain, demanding a macho toughness. Pirro can be as tough as any man, and yet she adds an important new dimension to the role. She believes that being tough on crime means much more than just filling the jails. She goes beyond her role to punish criminals, to be a passionate advocate for the victims of crime.

In *To Punish and Protect*, Pirro brings readers face to face with the gruesome realities of her daily battles, and tells the true, heartbreaking stories of the victims - the slaughter of a young woman and her two children by a jealous, enraged boyfriend; a teenage girl forced to assume wifely duties after her father murdered her stepmother; a nine-year-old boy chained to a radiator in a dark room and nearly starved to death, as the rest of the family went about its business; a gentle, hardworking man shot fatally in a dispute over a parking place, because he was black; an eighty-year-old woman, savagely beaten by her son and left for two days on the cold floor of her apartment; a beautiful woman whose wealth and privilege could not prevent her murder at the hands of a violent husband; and a group of young girls lured into a sexual nightmare by a cunning predator posing as a trustworthy youth counselor.

Pirro presents hard truths about the ways in which parents, communities, and the justice system share complicity in fostering an environment of danger to our children. She describes the dark world of Internet pedophiles and hate mongers, who are allowed to hide behind First Amendment protections to gain access to kids in their own bedrooms. She offers a harsh judgment on parents who fail to address the deadly consequences of teen drinking, and even host keg parties in their homes, while alcohol continues to take young lives and destroy families.

Pirro delivers a bold indictment of the criminal justice system, and asks whether we as a nation are truly committed to justice. Increasingly, she warns, our laws, attitudes, and behaviors seem to be veering away from what we say is our moral core as a nation. We say that we exalt good and punish evil, yet we do the opposite. We turn criminals into celebrities, and view victims with suspicion. If we're going to make our communities safer and our society less violent, we need to do more than just pay lip service to our ideals. *To Punish and Protect* challenges us to have the will and the courage to wage war on the predators roaming our streets, and to avenge their victims.

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