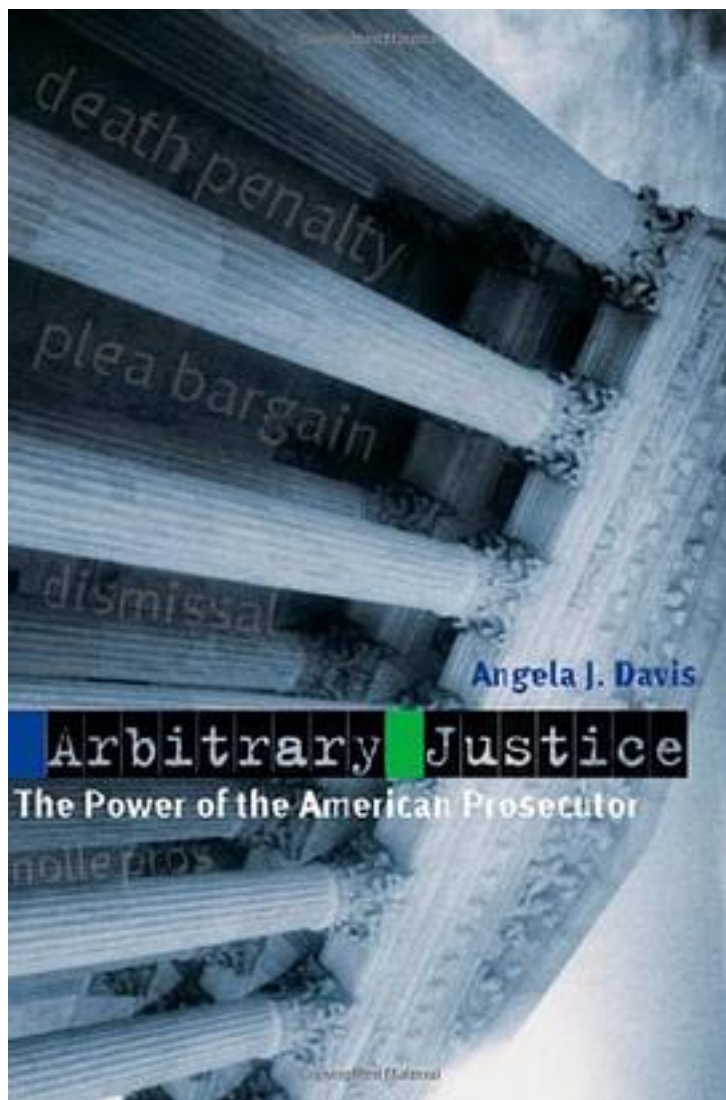


Arbitrary Justice



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Inscribed on the walls of the United States Department of Justice are the lofty words: "The United States wins its point whenever justice is done its citizens in the courts." Yet what happens when prosecutors, the most powerful officials in the criminal justice system, seek convictions instead of justice? Why are cases involving educated, well-to-do victims often prosecuted more vigorously than those involving poor, uneducated victims? Why do wealthy defendants frequently enjoy more lenient plea bargains than the disadvantaged? In this timely work, Angela J. Davis examines the expanding power of prosecutors, from mandatory minimum sentencing laws that enhance prosecutorial control over the outcome of cases to the increasing politicization of the office. Drawing on her dozen years of experience as a public defender, Davis demonstrates how the everyday, legal exercise of prosecutorial discretion is responsible for tremendous inequities in criminal justice. Davis uses powerful stories of individuals caught in the system to illustrate how the day-to-day practices and decisions of well-meaning prosecutors produce unfair and unequal treatment of both defendants and victims, often along race and class lines. These disparities are particularly evident in prosecutors' charging and plea-bargaining decisions and in their muddy relationships with victims. Prosecutors not only hold vast power, Davis argues, but they are also under-regulated and lack accountability. The current standards of practice for prosecutors are unenforceable, while the mechanisms that purport to hold prosecutors accountable are weak and ineffectual. Not only does lack of oversight result in injustices, it may even foster a climate tolerant of unfair practices and in some cases, misconduct. Offering a sensible agenda for comprehensive review and reform, Arbitrary Justice challenges the legal community and concerned citizens to pursue and enact meaningful standards of conduct and effective methods of accountability to help prosecutors serve their communities and the interests of justice.

作者介绍:

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