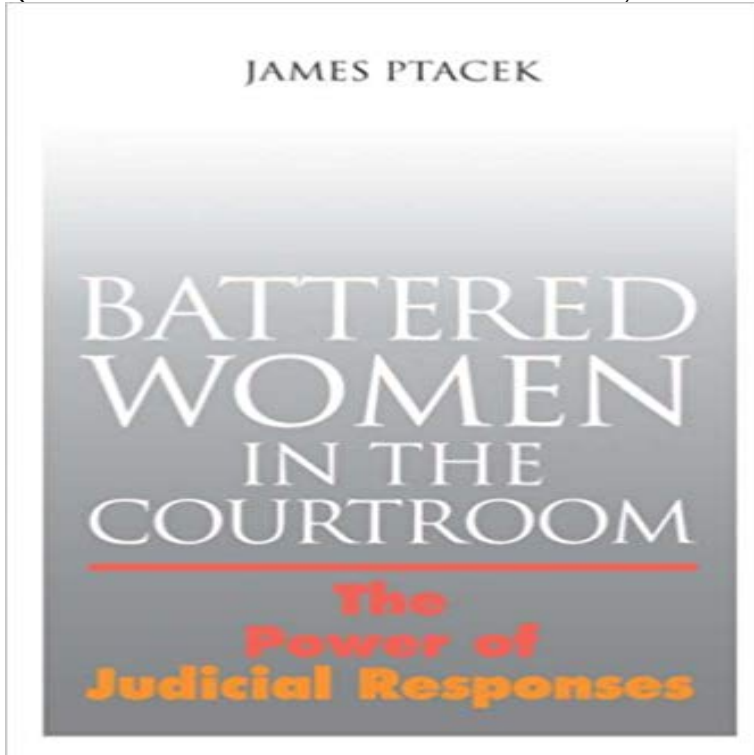


Battered Women In The Courtroom: The Power of Judicial Responses (Northeastern Series on Gender, Crime, and Law)



Recent laws have given women much-needed rights in seeking protection from abusive men, but judges still hold the authority to issue restraining orders or send batterers to jail. While most studies on state intervention for victims have focused on the role of police, *Battered Women in the Courtroom* looks at the lives of abused women. This investigation of women, violence, and the courts centers on encounters between women and judges in restraining order hearings in Massachusetts, one of the first states to offer new civil and criminal options to victims of abusive behavior. It also examines the feminist political movements that gave rise to current state laws and considers the effects of mens violence on womens daily lives. James Ptacek questions whether judges still respond to abused women with indifference or impatience, as they have in the past, or whether they now treat battering as a serious crime. He looks at the types of violence that women report to the courts, analyzes how judges exercise their authority in restraining order hearings, examines how they perceive their role in negotiations with women, and studies their impact on womens efforts to escape the social entrapment of violence. The author also considers class and racial dimensions of the issue by drawing on cases from both white and African American communities. Ptacek exposes many of the myths and dilemmas about the abuse of women while addressing the political, institutional, and socio-psychological aspects of womens experiences with the courts. He offers crucial insights into the power of judges to encourage or discourage women from claiming their rights under the law.

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