

BEYOND CRIMINAL COURTS

INTRODUCTION

Criminal Courts 101

Understanding the general contours of what happens in criminal court cases illuminates the violence embedded in every stage of the process and in each of the discretionary decisions made by criminal court actors.



In this resource, we go through a typical path of a criminal court case—from arrest to first appearance, grand jury and/or preliminary hearing (click on words highlighted in green to see their definition), court appearances, plea bargain, trial, and sentencing. Not every case goes

through all of these steps (and they may have slightly different names depending on where you are), but understanding the general contours of what happens in criminal court cases illuminates the violence embedded in every stage of the process and in each of the discretionary decisions made by criminal court actors.

Here is how to use the resource:

- Terms highlighted in orange can be found in the glossary. If you click on them, the definition will pop up so you can read it and then get back to the main text.
 - You do not need to read this resource from start to finish and certainly not all of it at once! It is meant for you to visit different sections, depending on the information you are looking for.
 - This resource is meant to be educational, but it's not law school. It's also not intended as a know-your-rights guide for people being prosecuted. Luckily, plenty of other great resources [<https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/stopped-by-police>] for those needs exist and we provide links to some throughout.
 - While we hope organizers find this resource useful, this resource also does not explain in detail what community interventions are possible to shift power throughout a criminal case. Luckily we made another resource that does this! Check it out [here](#).
 - Our intention was to provide accurate but also generalized information about what happens during the path of a case—but things are different in every state and city. If you want to know more about how things actually play out in your local court room, you will need to do more research!
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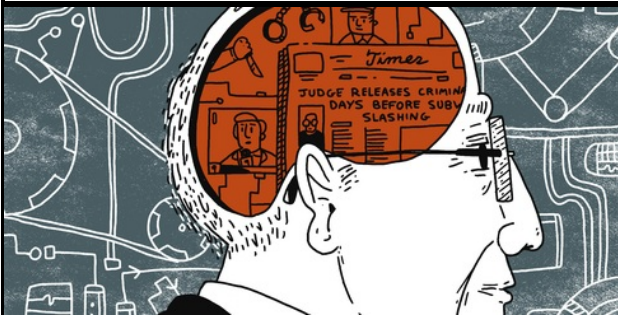
INTRODUCTION
BACKGROUND ON CRIMINAL COURTS



PATH OF THE CASE
ARREST



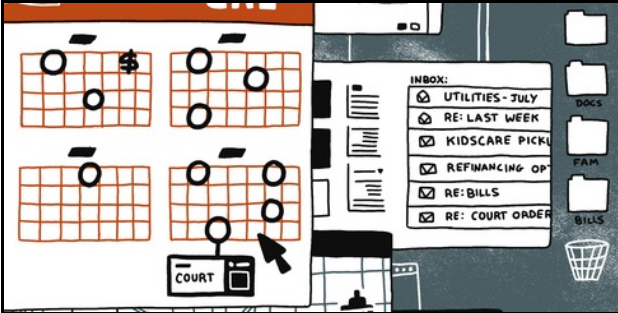
PATH OF THE CASE
CHARGING



PATH OF THE CASE
ARRAIGNMENT



PATH OF THE CASE
GRAND JURY / PRELIMINARY HEARING



PATH OF THE CASE
COURT APPEARANCES



PATH OF THE CASE
PLEA NEGOTIATIONS & BARGAIN



PATH OF THE CASE
TRIAL



PATH OF THE CASE
SENTENCING



CONCLUSION
NEXT STEPS

Source: <https://beyondcourts.org/en/story>

A project of Community Justice Exchange [<https://www.communityjusticeexchange.org/>] and Interrupting Criminalization [<https://www.interruptingcriminalization.com/>]
Built by Research Action Design [<https://rad.cat>]