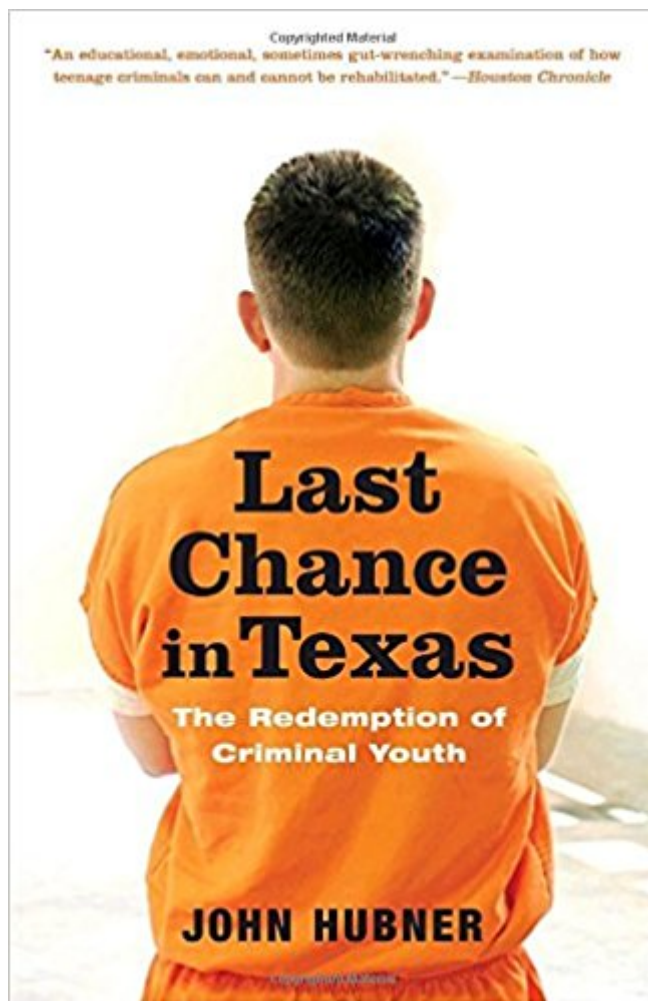


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Last Chance In Texas: The Redemption Of Criminal Youth



Synopsis

A powerful, bracing and deeply spiritual look at intensely, troubled youth, *Last Chance in Texas* gives a stirring account of the way one remarkable prison rehabilitates its inmates. While reporting on the juvenile court system, journalist John Hubner kept hearing about a facility in Texas that ran the most aggressive and one of the most successful treatment programs for violent young offenders in America. How was it possible, he wondered, that a state like Texas, famed for its hardcore attitude toward crime and punishment, could be leading the way in the rehabilitation of violent and troubled youth? Now Hubner shares the surprising answers he found over months of unprecedented access to the Giddings State School, home to “the worst of the worst”: four hundred teenage lawbreakers convicted of crimes ranging from aggravated assault to murder. Hubner follows two of these youths—a boy and a girl—through harrowing group therapy sessions in which they, along with their fellow inmates, recount their crimes and the abuse they suffered as children. The key moment comes when the young offenders reenact these soul-shattering moments with other group members in cathartic outpourings of suffering and anger that lead, incredibly, to genuine remorse and the beginnings of true empathy . . . the first steps on the long road to redemption. Cutting through the political platitudes surrounding the controversial issue of juvenile justice, Hubner lays bare the complex ties between abuse and violence. By turns wrenching and uplifting, *Last Chance in Texas* tells a profoundly moving story about the children who grow up to inflict on others the violence that they themselves have suffered. It is a story of horror and heartbreak, yet ultimately full of hope. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. It's hardly surprising that Texas, with its reputation for being big, brash and tough, would run one of the country's most aggressive programs for criminal youth. Teenagers who commit violent crimes are confined to a secure campus, but the Texas Youth Commission also provides them with an opportunity to reclaim their future. In this important book, Hubner, an editor for the San Jose Mercury News, expertly examines the big picture: the spike in juvenile crime from 1984 to 1994, and the legislative initiatives that led to the creation of the TYC. It's his ability to tie those facts to the reality of daily life at the Giddings State School through the eyes of the students, therapists, teachers and athletic coaches that gives this book its power. Hubner focuses on Elena and Ronnie, two young offenders at Giddings, as they are forced to confront and make sense of their pasts, re-enacting the most traumatic scenes of their childhoods and their crimes. Like Elena and Ronnie, nearly all the students at Giddings come from chaotic, abusive families. Hubner underscores the TYC's success in contrast to national recidivism rates for youthful offenders, which hover between 50% and 60%; a 2004 study reported that only 10% of graduates of the school's Capital Offenders group have been rearrested for a violent crime after three years on parole. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Adult/High School — A thought-provoking documentary about the Capital Offenders Group treatment program at Texas's Giddings State School. The institution houses nearly 400 of the most violent juvenile offenders in a program designed to alter the life trajectory of its residents. Writing from his position as an observer, Hubner sketches a rich tableau of daily observations, describing the rigorous, disciplined regimen wherein boys and girls engage separately in resocialization sessions painstakingly choreographed by teams of psychologists. Two students serve as primary case studies. Readers are immersed in the raw intensity of 16-hour days where participants in structured psychodramas form emotional connections, enabling them to identify, confront, and ultimately master destructive behavior patterns. Essential to the process is acknowledging accountability and internalizing a genuine sense of guilt and remorse for the hurt they caused their victims. The program's aggressive methods are considered somewhat controversial, and the author is careful to report this, but lower rates of recidivism are a compelling testimonial to its effectiveness. Readers will have a visceral appreciation of the offenders' hard-won gains, of the volatility and extreme emotions in the healing process, and of the risks of opening up to peers when isolation and rage have long been cultivated as defense mechanisms. The bottom line is that individuals who fail

to meet the programs standards are dispatched to serve their sentences in the state penitentiary, in some cases for 25 to 40 years, rather than receiving parole and a fresh start. A sensitively written study, with extensive endnotes. --Lynn Nutwell, Fairfax City Regional Library, VA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I was required to read this book for San Jose State University Justice Studies program and it was a great read. Extremely informative and provided insight to people who may not understand how different the juvenile justice system is and how it can lead directly into the criminal justice system if other options aren't used.

I read this book for a course on juvenile justice, and I found the author's style engaging and easy to read. The stories hit hard, and the book is simply a must-read for anyone interested in the justice system and rehabilitation - or for anyone looking for a serious, but optimistic, nonfiction book. Very good author telling the stories we need to hear.

Last Chance in Texas: The Redemption of Criminal Youth is a vital read for anyone interested in the field of youth corrections. Author John Hubner takes us on an unrestricted tour of the jewel of the Texas Youth Commission, Giddings State School. Giddings which holds 400 youth is a hybrid between the "boot camp" ideology and intensive therapeutic treatment. Their role play therapy of a client's history and crimes combined with a victim impact panel, demonstrates how the clients who pass the Capital Offenders group are measurably more successful when released. The big carrot for active participation in the program comes from large determinate sentences. A Special Services Committee made up of corrections professionals and clinicians at Giddings can release a client after a successful few years or send them to the Texas Penitentiary to complete what may be a 20 to 40 year sentence. If that isn't motivation for taking ownership of your actions I don't know what is.

This was a class for my Juvenile Justice class and it was actually a really interesting read and well written. It certainly is an eye opener to the world of Juvenile Delinquents and their treatment/process/stories.

I am amazed by the stories and the changes made by many of the juveniles in this book. It is sad to hear their stories of abuse and neglect that turn them down a path of crime. The group therapy

sessions are so powerful to read about. I really enjoyed this book and learned a lot.

I love love love love this book! I was assigned this reading for my juvenile justice class, and I am so glad I found it! It really is such a great book. The things they are doing for Texas Juvenile offenders is amazing. This book is written well and I will keep it for my collection. Highly recommended

Mr. Hubner has written an important book turning conventional psychological wisdom on its head. They work miracles at this specialized prison/school for adolescents who have committed the worst kinds of violent crimes. If reached early enough, this book documents how many of these children can be rehabilitated and go on to live productive lives (and those who can't). This is an important addition to criminology, youthful offenders, substance abuse and working with adolescents and should be required reading in all coursework in these fields. Not every 'psychopath' is a hopeless case. Please read it. Tim Woods, LCSW, Chemical Dependency Specialist for 35 years.

Amazing book. This is a must read. This changes how we view young offenders. And we must change our views because our perspectives were wrongfully set by the media. This opens our eyes to see how things are.

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