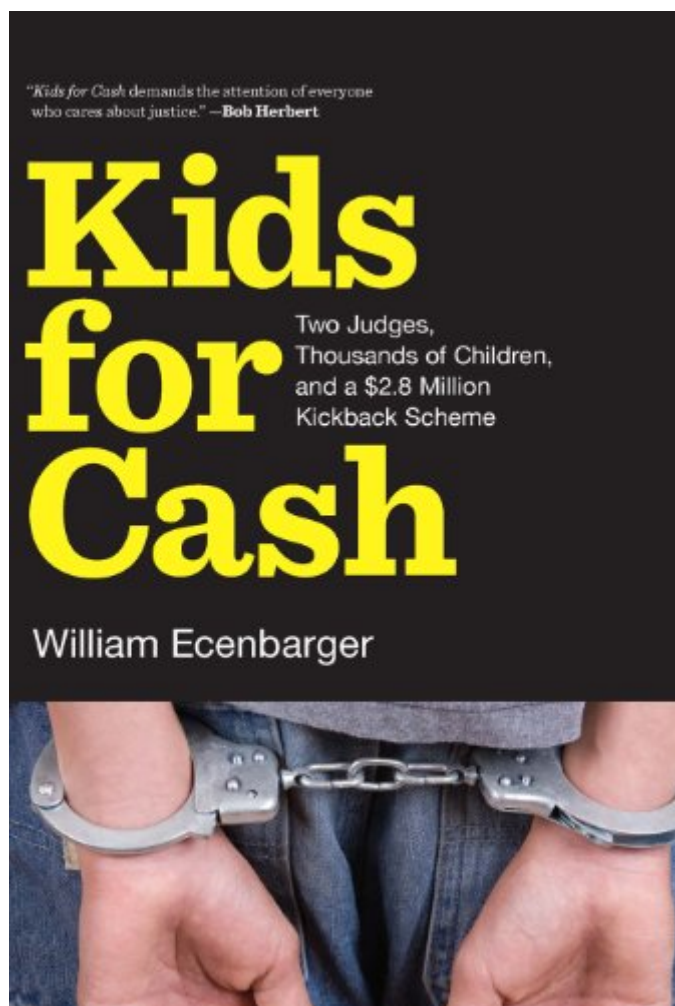


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# Kids For Cash: Two Judges, Thousands Of Children, And A \$2.6 Million Kickback Scheme



## Synopsis

When thirteen-year-old Matthew appeared in front of Judge Mark Ciavarella for throwing a piece of steak at his mother's boyfriend, he was sentenced to seven weeks at PA Child Care, a private, for-profit juvenile detention center in northeastern Pennsylvania. Angelia was fourteen when she and a friend scrawled "Vote for Michael Jackson" on five stop signs. Charged with vandalism and defacing public property, Angelia was sent by Ciavarella to PA Child Care without her epilepsy medication and suffered a grand mal seizure her second night. Fifteen-year-old Charlie, arrested for unknowingly purchasing a stolen motorbike, was convicted of a felony and sent to PA Child Care for six weeks. Matthew, Angelia, and Charlie are just three children among the thousands who appeared in Ciavarella's courtroom between 2003 and 2008 and were sent away—often with no attorney present and after only cursory hearings—to a detention facility in which, it later came to light, Ciavarella had a personal financial stake. As *Kids for Cash* reveals, this miscarriage of justice underscores a multitude of problems with our juvenile justice system, which too often criminalizes standard adolescent behavior, treats adolescents more harshly than if they were adults, and denies them their most fundamental constitutional rights. William Ecenbarger, a Pulitzer Prize and George Polk Award-winning investigative journalist who covered the case for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, now gives us the first book-length account of this shocking story. In the tradition of true-crime legal thrillers from *The Executioner's Song* to *A Civil Action*, Ecenbarger exposes a deeply corrupt and broken system that ruined the lives of many children and ultimately led to the judge's conviction on charges of racketeering, fraud, tax violations, money laundering, extortion, and bribery. Fastidiously researched and utterly propulsive, *Kids for Cash* takes us deep inside a profoundly flawed legal system, revealing the twisted and haunting realities of America's juvenile justice system.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Outstanding and eye-opening! I believe that this book should be read by every lawyer, forensic expert and government judicial worker in this country. The cunning, self-servicing, nepotistic and Machiavellian denominator to the crimes committed by these Judges is unbelievable. I must commend the work of Judge John Cleland and his committee for its study of and recommendations for dealing with this problem in Luzerne County and the Commonwealth in general. It is a shame that some of the committee's proposals were not heeded by the State Supreme Court. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is in some ways responsible for these Judge's transgressions. It has allowed illicit behavior among its politicians and government workers to breed. I can only hope that Pennsylvania's Attorney General (Kathleen Kane who sincerely seems to be trying) and the Judicial Ethics Board will start getting its principles and citizen commitment foundation in order. Over the years, I have referred questionable behavior to Commonwealth officials involving lawyer misconduct, bank president credentialing distortions (CPAs that are not CPAs), school superintendents protecting pedophile friends and subordinates, cocaine rings fed by lawyers and other professionals, school principals lying about children moved into foster care from foreign countries for sexual perpetration, massive drug movements by reputable people into and through Erie PA (authorities were given names, license plate numbers, times, color and year of the vehicle) as well as other dubious acts, but nothing has ever been done. Recently I learned that a Supreme Court Justice in Pittsburgh helped herself and her family to public monies and that members of the Attorney General's staff and two Supreme Court justices received and distributed not one, but 234 pornographic emails, evidently some on court computers. A final note: Was it not Churchill

who said, "When the situation was manageable it was neglected, and now that it is thoroughly out of hand we apply too late the remedies which then might have effected a cure. There is nothing new in the story. It is as old as the sibylline books. It falls into that long, dismal catalogue of the fruitlessness of experience and the confirmed unteachability of mankind. Want of foresight, unwillingness to act when action would be simple and effective, lack of clear thinking, confusion of counsel until the emergency comes, until self-preservation strikes its jarring gong - these are the features which constitute the endless repetition of history. I refer the reader to "On the Front Lines of Pennsylvania Politics: 25 years of Keystone Reporting" by John Baer for more in-depth information on Pennsylvania and its regrettable illicit political history.

Some people are born without souls and raised in families where character, honor and caring just aren't part of their daily lives. They're predators in everything they do. If the cash reward is large enough, they just don't turn away from the pain they cause others, they will embrace it and make it laughable to get the golden ring. This book does a great job of proving that by exploring the main characters and my only wish is that the author would have explored a few supporting soulless beings a bit more. The ones who got away with it and their kin. This book explores a shameless world of high profile scum doing anything they can for money regardless of who gets hurt. It reveals the depths of the waters that some are willing to live in. Nothing is sacred as long as there's a big enough payday. The ones who stood by with blinders on can be explained by the behavior of citizens of Germany in WWII, but cannot be made acceptable. Many in those towns and around Pennsylvania should live in shame forever.

A good documentary of judicial corruption. The question remains - why the corrupt scheme was allowed to flourish for so long, why the disciplinary authorities of the state of Pennsylvania were deaf and blind to reported misconduct of these judges, up until the feds moved in and charged them - and not for selling kids for cash, but for accepting bribes only. I must mention that both judges were given absolute judicial immunity for malicious and corrupt acts when victims of misconduct sued - and that is exactly why absolute judicial immunity, an unconstitutional self-serving brainchild of the judiciary, should be legislatively abolished.

The author of "Kids for Cash", William Ecenbarger, has done a yeoman's effort here in sorting through heaps of corruption to illustrate a system gone completely awry. Anyone who thinks the

Kids for Cash scandal is about two corrupt judges will find they are mistaken. The Kids for Cash debacle is about an entire system which turned its back on kids, families, and justice. Yes -- two greedy judges took bribes in return for sentencing juveniles to jail -- so their friends could make a better profit, But took many, many people to turn a blind eye for this to happen. Did no one in the judges tip staff see the huge numbers of kids being penalized? No. Did the community express outrage when kids were jailed for things like posting negative Facebook statements against a principal? No. Did the Pennsylvania Judicial Board step in and investigate these judges when they were notified that said judges consorted with known mafia? No. Did the Pennsylvania Legislature subsequently open judges records -- as the Juvenile Justice committee overseeing an investigation of this -- requested? NO. NOTHING HAS CHANGED. This can and is happening in your community -- Kids are being put through the ringer every day in Family Court -- torn from the Fathers for any reason or no reason. Do you know how many? NO because judges have no accountability. Why didn't some of the parents in kids for cash ask for other judges? Answer -- they did -- but Pennsylvania effectively has NO RECUSAL. If you get a crummy judge -- you are stuck. If a crummy judge has a bad record, you will never know because Family and Juvenile court are secret -- protecting crummy judges. You must read this book -- it helps to clarify that only a corrupt system can protect corrupt judges for so long. By the way -- these two judges got busted by a diligent State Case worker adding up the numbers and valiantly fighting to get those numbers SEEN. Judges records should be OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

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