

Syracuse University
College of Law
Legal Writer's Toolkit

Exposure

The next, and last, book in the 2020 alternative reading list is “Exposure: Poisoned Water, Corporate Greed, and One Lawyer’s Twenty-Year Battle Against DuPont” by Robert Bilott (with Tom Shroder). The book, published by Atria Books, an imprint of Simon and Schuster, is in its first edition.

Robert Bilott is a partner at the Cincinnati law firm of Taft, Stettinius & Hollister, LLP, a firm that is not usually associated with plaintiff’s representation. Because of a family connection, however, he took a case involving alleged exposure to toxic substances and things took off from there. This book is written from one side of what is always a two-sided business (and the sub-title of the book leaves you in no doubt of the author’s position), but given that caveat it gives you a rare, perhaps unique, glimpse into complex civil litigation and the high-stakes, high-rewards world the lawyers who work in that field live in. Even if you don’t want to practice in this world, either before or after you read this book, the view you get of how some lawyers live and work is invaluable to a new lawyer such as yourself.

This book was selected by Professor Paula Johnson. Professor Johnson’s bio on the College of Law’s website tells us that “Paula C. Johnson is professor of law at Syracuse University College of Law. She earned her B.A. from the University of Maryland, College Park; J.D. from Temple University School of Law; and her LL.M. from Georgetown University Law Center.

Professor Johnson and Professor Janis McDonald (emerita), co-founded and direct the Cold Case Justice Initiative (CCJI) at Syracuse University College of Law, which investigates racially-motivated murders committed during the civil rights era and in contemporary times. Professor Johnson has held several distinguished teaching posts, including the Haywood Burns Chair in Civil Rights at CUNY Law School (2005-2006), the Sparks Chair at the University of Alabama School of Law (2008), and the Syracuse University College of Law Bond, Schoeneck and King Distinguished Professorship (2004-2006). She also has taught at law schools at the University of Arizona, University of Baltimore, and Northern Illinois University.

In addition to CCJI-related courses, her teaching areas include criminal law, criminal procedure, race and law, voting rights, professional responsibility, and a seminar on women in the criminal justice system. Her scholarship and activism focus on matters of race, gender, sexuality, criminal law, international human rights, diversity and access to higher education. Her writings include

“Beyond Displacement: Gentrification of Racialized Spaces as Violence—Harlem, New York and New Orleans, Louisiana,” in *Accumulating Insecurity: Violence and Dispossession in the Making of Everyday Life* (Feldman, Geisler & Menon, eds., Univ. Georgia Press 2011); *Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States* (Univ. Calif. Press 2010); and *Inner Lives: Voices of African American Women in Prison* (NYU Press, 2003).

She is a member of the Democratizing Knowledge Collective at Syracuse University, an interdisciplinary collective that works to create just and inclusive spaces at the university and that values knowledge within and beyond the academy. From 2002-2003, she served as co-president of the Society of American Law Teachers (SALT), a national organization of approximately 900 law professors. At Syracuse University, Professor Johnson serves on a broad range of College of Law and University committees, including Curriculum (chair), Promotion and Tenure, Committee on Inclusion Initiatives, and International Programs. She is faculty advisor to the Black Law Students Association and OUTLAW (LGBTQ organization). She advises law students’ research, and serves on committees for joint degree students at SU College of Law and other schools/colleges, and serves on committees for doctoral and master’s degree candidates at Syracuse University.

Her honors and awards include the Syracuse University College of Law Award recognizing the Cold Case Justice Initiative on CCJI’s Tenth Anniversary (2018); Syracuse University Black Law Students Association Outstanding Advisor Award (2018); the Syracuse University Office of Program Development, Office of Multicultural Affairs, and Black History Month Committee’s Trailblazer Award (February 2016); Central New York ACLU Ralph E. Kharas Distinguished Service Award in Civil Liberties (2015); Emmett Till Legacy Foundation Woman of Courage Award in Honor of Mamie Till Mobley (2015); National Civil Rights Social Justice Award (Philadelphia, MS 2014); Syracuse University Chancellor’s Citation for Excellence; and the Unsung Heroine Award from the Syracuse University Martin Luther King, Jr. Awards Committee.”

A list of focus questions designed to help you get the most out of “Exposure” is available as a separate document.

Thank you for your interest in this alternative reading list. I hope you have read some, or even all, the books in the series, and I hope you found them as interesting, helpful, and thought-provoking as I did. Please join me in thanking the faculty members who selected each of the seven books in this series. They, the rest of the faculty, and I, all look forward to seeing you in Syracuse at the College of Law soon. Welcome to Syracuse and to the practice of law!