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Book Review

How *NOT* to Be a Federal Criminal: A Review of Mike Chase’s *How to Become a Federal Criminal* and the Case for Inclusion of His Illustrated Handbook in American Law Schools

Zachary Stendig*

How to Become a Federal Criminal: An Illustrated Handbook for the Aspiring Offender is an exhaustive, informative, and humorous review of the many, many federal crimes for which Americans could potentially face federal prosecution.¹ The book also represents Mike Chase’s transition from Twitter to hardcover and from criminal defense attorney to author—not to mention Chase’s illustrations, which hilariously provide the reader with step-by-step guides on how certain crimes are committed.² Importantly, Chase includes the following warning after his introduction: “The crimes

* Assistant U.S. Attorney, U.S. Department of Justice. Many thanks to Professor Samantha Prince for her guidance, encouragement, and unassailable advice, to my indefatigable teaching assistants Alexa Potts, Heather Townsend, Daniel Levengood, and Timothy Gernand, to my book review editor Natalie Alexander for her thoughtful feedback, and to all my students at Dickinson Law.

1. MIKE CHASE, *HOW TO BECOME A FEDERAL CRIMINAL: AN ILLUSTRATED HANDBOOK FOR THE ASPIRING OFFENDER* (2019).

2. *Id.* at “About the Author.”

discussed in this book are real. If you haven't caught on yet, this handbook is a work of humor and not legal advice. Don't do anything discussed in this book. Just stay home with the lights off and unplug your phone."³ However, *How to Become a Federal Criminal* represents an accessible avenue for lovers of the law, social media, and illustration alike to learn about lesser-known and downright obscure criminal conduct and deserves a place in the various law school classrooms that are dedicated to the study of federal criminal law.⁴ Indeed, Chase's use of diagrams, figures, and popular slang makes this handbook even more appealing to younger generations,⁵ and, while Chase's title suggests the book is for "the aspiring offender,"⁶ the text also provides an effective introduction to federal criminal law to those interested in learning about practicing in criminal law. This comes at a time when criminal practitioners, particularly public defenders, are needed more than ever,⁷ and one of the nation's top law schools has apparently conceded that "most students will not plan a career in criminal law."⁸ Rather than accept the lack of aspiring criminal law practitioners, law schools should incorporate Chase's handbook into their syllabi as a valuable teach-

3. *Id.* at 12.

4. Many law schools teach classes on the topic of Federal Criminal Law. See, e.g., *Criminal Law*, UNIV. OF NOTRE DAME, <https://bit.ly/3AGY9Js> [<https://perma.cc/CXD6-VQVA>] (last visited Aug. 14, 2022); *330 Federal Criminal Law*, DUKE L., <https://bit.ly/3uCn3WX> [<https://perma.cc/57PN-Y6KL>] (last visited Aug. 14, 2022); *Criminal Law at Columbia*, COLUM. L. SCH., <https://bit.ly/3RqthTm> [<https://perma.cc/6Z5W-4RAL>] (last visited Aug. 14, 2022); *Criminal Law Courses*, YALE L. SCH., <https://bit.ly/3Ishf7Q> [<https://perma.cc/W8TM-P4JV>] (last visited Aug. 14, 2022); *Course Offerings*, PENN ST. DICK. L., <https://bit.ly/3nXzyby> [<https://perma.cc/KAB7-W7RK>] (last visited Aug. 14, 2022).

5. See Kelli Anderson, *Students Are Reading Slower and Comprehending Less. Here's What to Do About It.*, ED SURGE (Sept. 24, 2019), <https://bit.ly/3yvoVBN> [<https://perma.cc/TAR8-EAT4>] ("Why are kids struggling to read more today than 50 years ago? It's a fraught question, and the culprits are probably many, from poverty in some cases, to hours spent scrolling through social media, to kids having less unstructured time to read for pleasure."); see also Leah M. Christensen, *Legal Reading and Success in Law School: An Empirical Study*, 30 SEATTLE L. REV. 603 (2007).

6. CHASE, *supra* note 1, at title page.

7. See Gillian Flaccus, *Pandemic Pushes Oregon's Public Defender System to the Brink*, AP NEWS (May 10, 2022), <https://bit.ly/3yUJjh2> [<https://perma.cc/6EEV-JHXQ>] ("Oregon sends out a weekly list of unrepresented defendants to private attorneys begging for help.").

8. *Criminal Law and Procedure*, GEO. L., <https://bit.ly/3ynbLXy> [<https://perma.cc/M75U-WFL2>] (last visited Aug. 14, 2022) ("Although most students will not plan a career in criminal law, this subject is at the very core of democratic government and a free society.").

ing tool⁹ to inspire more students to pursue careers in criminal law as interest in criminal practice wanes to dangerous lows.¹⁰

As mentioned on the book cover, which lists Chase's Twitter handle, @CrimeADay, and in the "About the Author" section, Chase runs a Twitter account dedicated to legal humor.¹¹ With more than 171,000 followers, Chase's Twitter account utilizes social media in an attempt to count the total number of federal crimes.¹² The account explains in its Twitter bio, "In 1982, DOJ attempted to count the total number of federal crimes. The WSJ said[,] 'Since then, no one has tried anything nearly as extensive.' Until @CrimeADay."¹³ While not even a Twitter-verified account,¹⁴ these 171,000 followers might seem significant, but not when compared to other Twitter accounts of "legal" thinkers. To be sure, a certain aspiring lawyer, Kim Kardashian, who has documented her quest to become a member of the California Bar, boasts over 73.3 million

9. At least one reviewer of *How to Become a Federal Criminal*, Patrick Parsons, a member of the Georgia State University College of Law faculty, has used the handbook in his class. *Patrick Parsons*, GA. ST. UNIV., <https://bit.ly/3B2kwtc> [<https://perma.cc/PB65-2GXA>] (last visited Aug. 14, 2022). As Parsons explains in his review, he believes this book is a "valuable . . . teaching tool." Patrick Parsons, *Guest Post: Book Review and/or Love Letter to How to Become a Federal Criminal: An Illustrated Handbook for the Aspiring Offender*, RIPS L. LIBR. BLOG (Oct. 30, 2019), <https://bit.ly/3c6VTkB> [<https://perma.cc/Y4LR-3SJB>]. While this review also advocates for the use of Chase's handbook as a valuable teaching aid, it further advocates that by doing so, declining interest in careers in criminal practice will subside and students will be inspired to pursue careers as criminal practitioners.

10. For example, the University of Florida Levin College of Law offers a class on "Complex Federal Criminal Investigation." *Complex Federal Criminal Investigation*, UNIV. OF FLA. L., <https://bit.ly/3nPJyUn> [<https://perma.cc/4269-59G9>] (last visited Aug. 14, 2022). However, the syllabus for that class for the Spring of 2020 did not include Chase's text in the course readings (or any textbook for that matter, but rather focused on the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure). Daniel C. Irick, *Complex Federal Criminal Investigation*, UNIV. OF FLA. L., <https://bit.ly/3uA6RWc> [<https://perma.cc/Q8Z8-KLYQ>] (last visited Aug. 14, 2022). This is not a criticism of the syllabus, which appears exhaustive and engaging to this career criminal practitioner, but rather an observation that it would benefit from the inclusion of Chase's handbook.

11. CHASE, *supra* note 1, at book cover, interior book jacket, and "About the Author" sections.

12. See A Crime a Day (@CrimeADay), TWITTER, <https://bit.ly/3c5FooD> [<https://perma.cc/HJC3-MUJU>] (last visited Aug. 14, 2022).

13. *Id.* The @CrimeADay account page indicates that it joined Twitter in July 2014. *Id.*

14. According to Twitter's "Help Center," a verified account contains a "blue Verified badge on Twitter [that] lets people know that an account of public interest is authentic. To receive the blue badge, your account must be *authentic, notable, and active.*" See *About Verified Accounts*, TWITTER, <https://bit.ly/2sHWYrQ> [<https://perma.cc/7NQE-KRA9>] (last visited Aug. 14, 2022).

followers.¹⁵ So, perhaps it was a savvy move by Chase, who runs the @CrimeADay account and wrote the book, to transition from social media to the written word to further his quest to catalogue all of the existing federal crimes.

According to the jacket, “Chase’s work has made him the go-to commentator on our country’s countless weird, esoteric, and, some would argue, unnecessary federal crimes.”¹⁶ As *How to Become a Federal Criminal* makes clear, Chase is undoubtedly among those who would argue that many of the crimes catalogued in his book are unnecessary.¹⁷ Chase uses an introduction, 8 chapters dedicated to certain areas of codified federal criminal conduct, and more than 80 diagrams and illustrations to demonstrate to his readers just how excessively certain conduct is criminalized in the United States.¹⁸

The introduction to Chase’s book is a succinctly written explanation of four steps of how an individual can find themselves convicted of a federal crime.¹⁹ First, Chase explains how to read criminal statutes.²⁰ In so doing, he introduces the reader to the United States Code, the Code of Federal Regulations, and even provides citations to those statutes and explains the significance of the title, source, and section.²¹ Chase further explains that identifying federal criminal laws is not as simple as reading the United States Code or the Code of Federal Regulations, because Congress delegated certain federal agencies the authority to create regulations that, if violated, constitute criminal conduct.²² Through an example of mailing dead bees, Chase also describes the interplay

15. See Kim Kardashian (@KimKardashian), TWITTER, <https://bit.ly/3ABveGz> [<https://perma.cc/5CNU-98PP>] (last visited Aug. 14, 2022). Some of the Tweets from this account include Ms. Kardashian, an aspiring lawyer, seeking support for a pardon from the Governor of Oklahoma. Kim Kardashian (@KimKardashian), TWITTER (Oct. 16, 2019, 6:11 PM), <https://bit.ly/3zrJXDj> [<https://perma.cc/S5YY-YV4P>] (“Yesterday Oklahoma death-row prisoner #Julius-Jones asked the Pardon & Parole Board for clemency. Please help by asking the Board and @GovStitt to give careful and thoughtful consideration to his petition.”). Ms. Kardashian also uses Twitter to discuss her own legal studies and quest to pass the California bar exam. Kim Kardashian (@KimKardashian), TWITTER (Dec. 13, 2021, 9:08 AM), <https://bit.ly/3IQPwxR> [<https://perma.cc/Y88W-WPPT>] (“OMFGGGG I PASSED THE BABY BAR EXAM!!!!”).

16. CHASE, *supra* note 1, at back interior book jacket.

17. *Id.* at 5 (explaining that the handbook “focuses on some of the more unexpected and seemingly bizarre things that the government can quite literally ‘make a federal case out of’”).

18. See generally *id.*

19. *Id.* at 1–11.

20. *Id.* at 5–8.

21. *Id.* at 6.

22. *Id.*

between the United States Code, the Code of Federal Regulations, and a regulation created by the Secretary of Agriculture.²³

In the second part of the informative introduction, *How to Become a Federal Criminal* introduces the reader to how certain federal crimes are committed.²⁴ Chase introduces the reader to *mens rea*, *actus reus*, and the concept of strict liability crime.²⁵ To underscore this brief discussion, the author employs a diagram of a violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1705—destruction of a federal mailbox.²⁶ The diagram displays, in three parts, an individual using a baseball bat to strike a mailbox, hitting it clear off of a post, and causing it to soar into the air.²⁷

“Step Three: Getting Charged” constitutes Chase’s introduction for the reader to the concept of prosecutorial discretion.²⁸ He explains why prosecutors prioritize certain crimes over others (including many of the crimes the book is devoted to explaining).²⁹ Nevertheless, Chase highlights the notion that, despite prosecutorial discretion and the prioritization of the prosecution of drug offenses, gun offenses, and immigration crime, offenders may be charged with many of the relatively unknown offenses the author describes in subsequent chapters.³⁰

Finally, with the fourth step of Chase’s introduction, *How to Become a Federal Criminal* explains the burden of proof in criminal cases—the proof beyond a reasonable doubt standard—that the Government must overcome to prove an offender’s guilt.³¹ Next, Chase emphasizes the high conviction rates for those charged with federal crimes and presents the reader with the function of the grand jury.³² In that context, Chase first introduces his reader to the ability of the Government to gather evidence against suspected offenders by the use of investigative tools, including subpoenas.³³

While Chase’s introduction weaves in particularly humorous examples of criminalized conduct, including “bringing a theatrical

23. *Id.* at 7–8 (providing the example that 7 U.S.C. § 282 and several provisions of the Code of Federal Regulations criminalize violations of “any regulation issued by the [S]ecretary of [A]griculture governing the importation of honeybees”).

24. *Id.* at 8–9.

25. *Id.*

26. CHASE, *supra* note 1, at 8.

27. *Id.*

28. *Id.* at 9–10.

29. *Id.*

30. *Id.*

31. *Id.* at 10–11.

32. *Id.*

33. *Id.* at 11.

chicken—or any performing poultry—back from Mexico without an up-to-date health certificate,”³⁴ it is an educational tool for laypeople and law students alike because it outlines and succinctly explains important aspects of federal legislation, doctrinal criminal law, and federal criminal procedure.³⁵ In fact, Chase accomplishes this feat in just 11 pages and 3 diagrams.³⁶ This is a far cry from many of the criminal law textbooks that use individual case excerpts to introduce law students to these concepts through mundane caselaw.³⁷ From there, the handbook transitions to the eight chapters which each delve into certain areas of federally criminalized conduct.³⁸

The first of Chase’s eight chapters is dedicated to offenses involving the mail.³⁹ Chase starts by explaining just how serious violations of the United States mail can be, reaching back to the late 18th century when Congress authorized the use of the death penalty for those guilty of stealing mail.⁴⁰ In his discussion of mail-related federal crimes, Chase uses some of the millennial lingo and topics that undoubtedly attracted many of his legions of followers on Twitter. When explaining certain crimes related to the mail, Chase talks about the historical significance of the mail generally, writing, “People actually sent important things to one another, like love letters, which was basically sexting but slower.”⁴¹ He continues to appeal to the social media generation by writing, simply, that “federal mail crimes have also served as a buzzkill in lots of other ways” beyond the draconian death penalty that mail thieves once faced.⁴²

Perhaps the most fascinating discussion in the mail crimes chapter comes with Chase’s summary of the 2015 charges against a

34. *Id.*

35. *See id.* at 1–11.

36. CHASE, *supra* note 1, at 1–11.

37. For example, the now-defunct Savannah Law School offered a course entitled “Federal Criminal Law” that utilized, as a required text, *Defining Federal Crimes* by Richman, Stith, and Stuntz. *First Assignments - Fall Semester 2016, SAVANNAH L. SCH.*, <https://bit.ly/3zx58n8> [<https://perma.cc/CX2G-4JXJ>] (last visited Aug. 14, 2022). *Defining Federal Crimes* is a casebook (as opposed to Chase’s handbook titular designation). *See Defining Federal Crimes, Second Edition*, ASPEN PUBL’G, <https://bit.ly/3cJ7pmw> [<https://perma.cc/MNQ9-GJWM>] (last visited Aug. 14, 2022).

38. *See generally* CHASE, *supra* note 1.

39. *Id.* at 13–48.

40. *Id.* at 14 (“In the late 1700s, Congress even made the death penalty available for anyone caught stealing mail.”).

41. *Id.*

42. *Id.*

man named Doug Hughes.⁴³ Hughes had flown a gyrocopter bearing a U.S. Postal Service logo to the area near the Capitol building in Washington, D.C.⁴⁴ The kicker here, though, was that the gyrocopter did not in fact carry any U.S. mail (as Chase explains, Hughes ultimately resolved the case by pleading guilty to another count charged in the same gyrocopter indictment).⁴⁵ The chapter continues by discussing the perils of mailing concealable guns and contains one of Chase's funniest illustrations: that of locations on an individual's person where firearms might be concealed.⁴⁶ It is in this diagram, just 28 pages into *How to Become a Federal Criminal*, that the text first references a "wedgie"—another prime example of Chase's excellent sense of humor.⁴⁷ From there, Chapter One touches on dentures, rodeo clowns, drug paraphernalia in the form of mini spoons, and scorpions.⁴⁸ It is the quickly changing subject matter—all in the context of federal offenses involving the mail—that makes this particular chapter so easy to read and consistently funny while still achieving a decidedly didactic function.

How to Become a Federal Criminal's second chapter is devoted to federal crimes involving animals.⁴⁹ Among the many animals discussed are flamingos, falcons, polar bears, geese, manatees, pigs, llamas, burros, and bald eagles.⁵⁰ The criminalized conduct discussed in Chapter Two ranges from the Marine Mammal Protection Act to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Animal Health Protection Act, the Swine Health Protection Act, and the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act.⁵¹ However, perhaps the most memorable examination of a crime in this chapter is Chase's analysis of the Swine Health Protection Act, which "prohibits feeding garbage to a pig, unless the garbage has been cooked by a garbage cooker who holds a garbage-cooking permit."⁵² As though the discovery that such a law exists was not shocking enough to ham and bacon enthusiasts, Chase's three-part illustrated figure lays out the elements of a violation of this law. As the author succinctly puts it, "get garbage . . . don't cook it . . . feed it to a pig."⁵³ Chase also

43. *Id.* at 23–25, 304 n.6 (citing Indictment, United States v. Hughes, No. 1:15-cr-00063-CKK (D.D.C. May 20, 2015)).

44. *Id.*

45. *Id.*

46. *Id.* at 27–29.

47. *Id.* at 28.

48. CHASE, *supra* note 1, at 29–48.

49. *Id.* at 49–74.

50. *Id.*

51. *Id.*

52. *Id.* at 66 (citing Swine Health Protection Act, 7 U.S.C. § 3803).

53. *Id.* at 67.

cogently observes that “if you’re the kind of person whose friends habitually feed uncooked garbage to pigs, it’s time to get new friends.”⁵⁴ Everyone can agree that this is excellent legal advice for all, whether it is consumed by law students in an academic setting or children in kindergarten. On a more serious note, this particular chapter is likely to connect with not only aspiring criminal practitioners but also those interested in environmental law and the protection of endangered species.

Chapter Three examines certain federal crimes involving money.⁵⁵ In another example of how *How to Become a Federal Criminal* may appeal to law students who are interested in topics other than criminal law, one crime discussed in the third chapter is 18 U.S.C. § 336, which criminalizes writing a check for less than one dollar.⁵⁶ This particular statute implicates the Uniform Commercial Code and the concept of Commercial Paper—topics typically reserved for far different law school classes, like Contracts and Secured Transactions.⁵⁷ Going one step further, Chase also observes that § 336 “has garnered attention because of its potential applicability to cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin.”⁵⁸ The emergence of cryptocurrency and its popularity among Twitter users⁵⁹ and young people make this discussion even more relevant and accessible for Chase’s readers. Following his analysis of a potential future U.S. Supreme Court decision involving the Stamps Payment Act and § 336, Chase opines that extending “the prohibition on issuing circulating obligations designed to compete with U.S. currency” to cryptocurrency “wouldn’t be the worst thing,” particularly “if that’s what it takes to get people to shut up about Bitcoin already.”⁶⁰ While this is a clear example of Chase’s levity, this particular discussion could translate to stimulating classroom colloquy about the potential applicability of particular criminal statutes to emerging financial markets such as Bitcoin. To be sure, the discussion of cryptocurrency is both topical and yet another reason that *How to*

54. *Id.* at 66.

55. *Id.* at 75–91.

56. *Id.* at 87–89.

57. *See, e.g.*, U.C.C. § 3 (AM. L. INST. & UNIF. L. COMM’N 2022).

58. CHASE, *supra* note 1, at 89.

59. *See, e.g.*, Sean Moore, *Crypto Users Take to Twitter to Lament the Ongoing Market Downturn*, COINTELEGRAPH (June 13, 2022), <https://bit.ly/3NWrMcK> [<https://perma.cc/32H6-TU7W>].

60. CHASE, *supra* note 1, at 89 (“[I]t does not seem likely’ that a non-physical currency would be covered by the Stamps Payment Act. But . . . someone may just need to be charged, convicted, and have their case heard by the Supreme Court before we can know if it’s a crime for sure.”).

Become a Federal Criminal would be well-suited for inclusion on law school syllabi.

The fourth chapter of Chase's handbook looks at federal crimes involving food.⁶¹ Chase begins by introducing the reader to the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, codified in the United States Code under 21 U.S.C. § 331.⁶² Chase then depicts certain foods implicated by the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act via a parody illustration of the food pyramid⁶³ entitled "[t]he Food Crime Pyramid."⁶⁴ The diagram includes citations to various criminal offenses including "Margarine and Butter Crimes . . . Fruit and Vegetable Crimes . . . Meat, Egg, and Dairy Crimes . . . and Bread and Pasta Crimes."⁶⁵ And, if the pig-eating-garbage discussion from Chapter Two was not enough for bacon/ham/chorizo lovers, Chase references 9 C.F.R. § 317.8(b)(5)(ii), pursuant to which "[b]acon sellers can be criminally charged for selling shingle-packed bacon if consumers can't see at least 70 percent of a 'representative slice' through that little window in the package."⁶⁶

Another useful and practical dialogue follows in Chapter Four as the reader learns about the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the two chief federal agencies charged with regulating food.⁶⁷ Mention of these agencies is an important reminder to the reader that federal criminal laws are sometimes enforced by agencies other than the more well-known investigative agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Chase also uses a diagram to demonstrate the seemingly arbitrary jurisdictional assignments of the USDA and the FDA.⁶⁸ For example, the FDA has jurisdiction over shell eggs, whereas the USDA has jurisdiction over liquid eggs.⁶⁹ The dairy discussion does not end there, however, as *How to Become a Federal Criminal* later examines, among other cuisines, federal cheese law.⁷⁰ And, of course, Chase pivots back to meat and again references pigs in a particularly hard-

61. *Id.* at 93–141.

62. *Id.* at 94.

63. The food pyramid has many prior monikers. See generally *Food Pyramid (Nutrition)*, WIKIPEDIA, <https://bit.ly/3ItMwHx> [<https://perma.cc/LJV3-LQBG>] (July 11, 2022).

64. CHASE, *supra* note 1, at 96.

65. *Id.*

66. *Id.* at 95.

67. *Id.* at 99.

68. *Id.* at 100.

69. *Id.*

70. *Id.* at 122–26.

to-stomach description of 9 C.F.R. § 311.20, which “requires all pig carcasses with a *pronounced* sexual odor to be discarded.”⁷¹ Teaching of this material in law school offers a potentially exciting opportunity to appeal to those students interested in food law⁷² and criminal law (and certainly, aspiring vegans). Of course, everyone who consumes food would likely be interested in some of the federal criminal statutes discussed and depicted in this chapter.

How to Become a Federal Criminal’s Chapter Five is dedicated to a survey of federal criminal statutes involving alcohol.⁷³ Predictably, this chapter includes a fulsome discussion of prohibition and bootlegging of alcohol.⁷⁴ The chapter’s high point comes, however, in a discussion of certain locations where “federal drunkenness”—something many law students may be familiar with from their undergraduate years—can lead to criminal penalties.⁷⁵ This includes the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC), the U.S. Mint, the U.S. Post Offices, the National Arboretum, and the National Archives⁷⁶ (this segues naturally to Chapter Six, which examines certain criminal offenses related to federal property).⁷⁷ On a more serious note, excess alcohol consumption has proved problematic for law students and lawyers alike,⁷⁸ and teaching from this chapter in law schools would provide an opportunity to confront these issues head-on. Indeed, a historical examination of prohibition might also inform changing attitudes toward alcohol in the United States.⁷⁹

Chapter Six, which is about crimes committed on federal property, is divided into several parts, discussing National Parks, Federal

71. *Id.* at 133.

72. Food law classes are taught at several law schools in the United States. See, for example, “Food Law and Policy,” which is taught at Harvard Law School, and “Food Law,” which is taught at Lewis and Clark Law School, among others. *Food Law and Policy*, HARV. L. SCH., <https://bit.ly/3ABxuxx> [<https://perma.cc/8SGH-7CVN>] (last visited Aug. 14, 2022); *Food Law*, LEWIS & CLARK L. SCH., <https://bit.ly/3AVOj6P> [<https://perma.cc/48EX-SNCD>] (last visited Aug. 14, 2022).

73. CHASE, *supra* note 1, at 143–67.

74. *Id.* at 143–59.

75. *Id.* at 167.

76. *Id.* at 166–67. Chase’s diagram entitled “Federal Drunkenness” is particularly funny.

77. *Id.* at 169–225.

78. See Staci Zaretsky, *The Struggle: Law Students Suffer from High Rates of Depression and Binge Drinking*, ABOVE THE L. (May 12, 2016, 2:46 PM), <https://bit.ly/3zicD1a> [<https://perma.cc/4YJT-86F8>] (citing *In Focus: The Mental Health of Law Students*, NAT’L L. J. (May 9, 2016, 12:00 AM), <https://bit.ly/3PasG6E> [<https://perma.cc/QA2T-ZZAP>]).

79. As Chase eloquently explains, “[t]his chapter discusses America’s tumultuous love affair with alcohol, the messy breakup in the early 1900s, and the sweet, sweet reconciliation of the 1930s.” CHASE, *supra* note 1, at 143.

Buildings and the U.S. Capital, and National Forests.⁸⁰ One particularly topical discussion in this chapter pertains to protest jackets (the articles of clothing worn by protesters).⁸¹ Chase cites the U.S. Supreme Court's 1971 decision in *Cohen v. California*⁸² involving a jacket that said, "Fuck the Draft"⁸³ and the 2012 District of D.C. decision in *Scott v. United States*,⁸⁴ involving a jacket that read, "Occupy Everywhere."⁸⁵ While protest jackets certainly represent a very specific subset of protest jurisprudence, in the face of Supreme Court decisions at the conclusion of the 2022 term,⁸⁶ Chase has identified a particularly important area of federal criminal law. Chase also identifies 40 U.S.C. § 6134 regarding using abusive language and the use of "a harangue."⁸⁷ This discussion, which might not have seemed as topical in 2019 when *How to Become a Federal Criminal* was initially published, will undoubtedly affect law students and the general public as public opinion on the Supreme Court becomes more and more polarized.⁸⁸ This topic is undeniably important to robust discussion of the role of the country's highest court in U.S. law schools, especially in the context of protests.⁸⁹ Even for those students who do not ultimately pursue careers as criminal practitioners, it is imperative that law schools equip stu-

80. *Id.* at 169–225.

81. *Id.* at 213–15.

82. *Cohen v. California*, 403 U.S. 15 (1971). Puzzlingly, though the case caption is cited in one of Chase's diagrams, this decision is not cited in his Notes section at the end of the handbook.

83. *Id.* at 16.

84. *Scott v. United States*, 952 F. Supp. 2d 13 (D.D.C. 2013). This case citation is also not included in the Notes section of Chase's handbook despite its inclusion in the diagram.

85. *Id.* at 15.

86. See, e.g., Ellie Silverman, *Abortion Rights Advocates Blockade Intersections near Supreme Court*, WASH. POST, <https://wapo.st/3O0RPzA> [<https://perma.cc/46X9-SDRV>] (June 13, 2022, 4:56 PM). Additionally, opponents of a potential overturning of *Roe v. Wade* have also used the U.S. mail to further their protestations (federal crimes involving the U.S. mail are discussed by Chase in significant depth in Chapter 1, as explained above). See Anders Anglesey, *Roe v. Wade Protesters Are Mailing Coat Hangers to the Supreme Court*, NEWSWEEK (May 5, 2022, 12:08 PM), <https://bit.ly/3Iz6XTM> [<https://perma.cc/S98W-QUUP>].

87. CHASE, *supra* note 1, at 213. As Chase explains, "40 U.S.C. § 6134 . . . makes it a crime to 'make a harangue or oration, or utter loud, threatening, or abusive language in the Supreme Court Building or grounds.'" *Id.*

88. See generally Jon C. Rogowski & Andrew R. Stone, *How Political Contestation over Judicial Nominations Polarizes Americans' Attitudes Toward the Supreme Court*, 51 BRIT. J. POL. SCI. 1251 (2019); Neal Devins & Lawrence Baum, *Split Definitive: How Party Polarization Turned the Supreme Court into a Partisan Court*, 2016 SUP. CT. REV. 301 (2016).

89. See *Demonstrators Converge Outside Supreme Court After Dobbs Decision*, SCOTUSBLOG (June 24, 2022, 6:33 PM), <https://bit.ly/3IvupB6> [<https://perma.cc/66NT-BHUU>].

dents with an understanding of their First Amendment rights. In that context, use of this book can also help prevent protesting law students⁹⁰ from incurring criminal liability. On a lighter note, Chapter Six includes many humorous anecdotes including potential criminal liability for bringing stilettos over three inches to the United States Capitol.⁹¹

The penultimate chapter, Seven, is devoted to a review of certain federal criminal laws on the high seas.⁹² Somewhat inevitably, Chase finds himself in a discussion of pirates, specifically the law prohibiting correspondence with pirates.⁹³ Chase once again references sexting, this time using double entendre in a comical diagram of a pirate receiving a text message that states, “Send booty pics.”⁹⁴ Chase’s analysis of pirate correspondence centers around the case of *United States v. Howard*⁹⁵ from 1818, which ultimately led to the conclusion that correspondence with suspected pirates must be made for the purpose of furthering the pirates’ cause.⁹⁶ While Chase concedes that since the decision in *Howard*, essentially nothing new has happened, Chase again uses his sense of humor to explain, in his own words, the elements of the crime of corresponding with a pirate.⁹⁷ In so doing, Chase makes reference to Johnny Depp,⁹⁸ probably having no indication that, some three years after *How to Become a Federal Criminal* was published, Depp would be featured in a civil trial that captivated the attention of the nation.⁹⁹ In any event, Chase’s discussion of relatively unknown maritime crimes is engaging and insightful.

90. 2022 has seen significant protests from law students at Yale and UC Hastings who opposed guest speakers. See, e.g., Josh Moody, *Law Students Shout Down Controversial Speakers*, INSIDE HIGHER ED (Mar. 23, 2022), <https://bit.ly/3b3m0Zo> [<https://perma.cc/HM9H-ENTU>].

91. CHASE, *supra* note 1, at 211 (explaining that stilettos refer not to high heels but to certain types of knives and weapons with blades).

92. *Id.* at 227–58.

93. *Id.* at 228–35.

94. *Id.* at 231 (Fig. 7-1).

95. *United States v. Howard*, 26 F. Cas. 390 (C.C.D. Pa. 1818) (No. 15,404); CHASE, *supra* note 1, at 309 n.1.

96. *Howard*, 26 F. Cas. at 392–94.

97. CHASE, *supra* note 1, at 234–35.

98. *Id.* at 235.

99. See Neal Rothschild & Sara Fischer, *America More Interested in Depp-Heard Trial than Abortion*, AXIOS (May 17, 2022), <https://bit.ly/3P44ovg> [<https://perma.cc/CR58-HWM9>] (“The defamation trial between actors and former spouses Johnny Depp and Amber Heard has quickly amassed more online attention than some of the country’s biggest and most pressing news stories, including the leaked Supreme Court decision and Russia’s war in Ukraine.”).

Finally, Chapter Eight functions as a catchall chapter of ways to become a federal criminal “in other ways.”¹⁰⁰ One of the first ways Chase addresses these crimes is with an extensive look at the perils of applying jock itch cream and other substances to one’s eyes, or more specifically, the failure to inform users not to engage in such behavior.¹⁰¹ From there, the author examines lasers, matches, lighters, dynamite, and other potentially explosive ways to violate federal criminal laws.¹⁰² One of the most interesting discussions, though, involves the federal criminal law prohibiting the sale of human organs. Here, Chase describes the penalties associated with violations of the National Organ Transplant Act.¹⁰³

Following the catchall chapter, Chase’s acknowledgements offer certain remarks which underscore the utility of *How to Become a Federal Criminal* to the study of law.¹⁰⁴ Specifically, Chase reflects, “it’s been an honor to be a touch of comic relief amidst all those who are fighting for a more equitable justice system.”¹⁰⁵ To be sure, this handbook offers fuel for those engaged in that fight and underscores the utility of this handbook and its potential importance in the legal academy.

How to Become a Federal Criminal has a place in law schools and should be taught in classes pertaining to Federal Criminal Law. Chase has masterfully surveyed federal criminal statutes to present the law in an accessible way through illustrations, parody, and hilarity. The book is funny, readable, and genuinely informative, especially for those drawn to @CrimeADay and social media related to the study of law (other than those who follow Kim Kardashian for other, non-law-related reasons). It includes a useful and concise introduction to how federal criminal laws are applied and tackles important issues, including prosecutorial discretion and the potential ramifications of such a large breadth of criminalized conduct. This is of particular relevance now, as law students are showing less interest in working in criminal law as prosecutors or public defend-

100. CHASE, *supra* note 1, at 259–99.

101. *Id.* at 265–67. As Chase explains, he includes a “list of things the government wants you to keep out of your eyes so badly that it’s willing to put someone in prison if they don’t tell you not to.” *Id.* at 265.

102. *Id.* at 267–283.

103. *Id.* at 283–286. The National Organ Transplant Act’s implementing regulations were last amended in 2020. *See* Removing Financial Disincentives to Living Organ Donation, 85 Fed. Reg. 59,438 (Sept. 22, 2020) (to be codified at 42 C.F.R. pt. 121).

104. CHASE, *supra* note 1, at 301–02.

105. *Id.* at 301.

ers.¹⁰⁶ *How to Become a Federal Criminal* is precisely the exciting text that might spur interest in careers in criminal law and ignite passion among law students. This is especially true in the context of many of the crimes discussed in the handbook, which may apply to such disciplines as food law, contract law, and the emerging law surrounding cryptocurrency. At bottom, *How to Become a Federal Criminal* is best used not to create a new contingency of criminals as the title jokingly suggests but, to the contrary, to help educate law students about the expansive scope of federal criminal laws in an exciting and informative way that would undoubtedly spur interest in careers in criminal practice.

106. See Jack Karp, *Are Law Schools Helping Students Who Want to Help Others?*, LAW360 (Mar. 31, 2019, 8:02 PM), <https://bit.ly/3yE4Uci> [<https://perma.cc/X8X6-QWH8>] (“[T]he number of students choosing public interest law has remained stagnant for years, coming in at only 7.2 percent in 2017. Such roles include working at nonprofits providing legal services to the poor, as prosecutors or public defenders . . .”).