

## The Poor on Trial in the Philippine Justice System

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*KEYWORD(S):* COUNSEL DE OFFICIO, LEGAL AID

The Article posits that majority of those convicted of committing crimes belong to the lower class. These people cannot readily access the services of private lawyers because of the high cost of professional fees. These poor people end up procuring the services of counsel *de officio*. However, the Article argues that there is doubt as to the effectiveness of these counsels as can be shown by certain studies.

The Article also discusses the role of lawyers in society. It argues that the legal profession seems unable to perform its major social mission. Legal practice has become an instrument to advance the cause of the paying client. It also recognizes the role of law schools in turning out high-minded lawyers. It is also said that lawyer-client relationship is often times problematic especially when it comes to pauper-clients. Poor litigants hesitate to initiate interaction with their lawyers. The reason mostly is that these litigants are ashamed to approach their lawyers since they do not give any fees to them. This lack of communication adversely affects the administration of justice.

Some recommendations of the Article include the improvement of the public attorney's office, the extension of legal aid by private practitioners, greater awareness of legal ethics and a system of continuing education.