

# Policing Compassion: Begging, Law and Power in Public Spaces

Joe Hermer

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## Policing Compassion: Begging, Law and Power in Public **Spaces**

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In this book, criminologist Joe Hermer examines how the regulation of begging - underpinned by the social character of charity, contract, money, and work - plays a central role in organizing how we feel responsible for one another in late capitalist society. Based on the historical insight that modern begging law has had at its core a concern with the compassionate impulses of the public, the author develops the concept of the gift encounter to understand begging as a profound social phenomenon that is intricately tied to the exercise of political power. Drawing on a range of eclectic empirical sources, Hermer examines how criminal begging is governed through specialized police operations and diverted giving programs, as well as the way in which official and legitimate begging, such as charity collections, Big Issue selling, and busking are ordered as vital aspects of the gift encounter landscape which the public negotiates. He explores how the control of begging and squeegee work is central to a current preoccupation with policing disorder, and reviews the current constitutional state of anti-begging laws in Britain, Canada, and the US.



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