

ANNA HUBERMAN MY TURN



EVAN AGOSTINI/AP PHOTO

TV personalities like Judge Judy Sheindlin erode the confidence and trust of the public in their judges, according to Anna Huberman.

## Judge Judy is bad for judiciary



I spent Constitution Day speaking to middle school students about the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Judicial Branch and about being a judge. I even brought my robe for them to see and touch.

They seemed honestly thrilled to meet and talk to a real judge. They were bright kids, knowledgeable and inquisitive.

But the one topic that came up in each one of the classes at some point was Judge Judy. The students were all interested to learn that the cases on the Judge Judy show are real cases, and some of them are actually culled from Arizona

small claims courts. But they were disappointed to learn that Judy, although once a real judge, does not have an actual court with jurisdiction and that the plaintiffs and defendants in her cases are paid to go to California to put their trials on TV and are encouraged to play up their confrontations.

Judge Judy is not part of the Judicial Branch and is not bound by the Rules of Judicial Conduct. She is only out to generate ratings.

Too often the only perception the public has of court is what they see on TV and Judge Judy offers a distorted reality that does a disservice to the actual judges who have to hear and decide cases in real life.

As a judge, I am keenly aware of how my decisions affect people's lives. And although I can't ignore the law, it gives me no pleasure to know people are hurting.

For Judge Judy, there is no right or wrong decision since the losing party doesn't have to pay and the producers pay both parties for participating. And she can berate, interrupt and raise her

voice to the litigants and get a laugh from the audience or higher ratings. I work hard to get opposing parties to talk to each other, to encourage them to settle cases if possible and to be civil. How many times might they come to court with a confrontational attitude because that is what they learned on TV?

When Judge Judy portrays herself as a courtroom judge on screen, she is influencing the perception the public has of the judiciary. As judges, we change that perception one case a time, treating the people who come before us with consideration and respect. Issuing thoughtful and well-reasoned decisions. But as busy as my court is, I can only reach a limited number of people; Judge Judy has millions of viewers.

It is important that the people have confidence and trust in their judges. No TV personality should erode that.

*Anna Huberman is Justice of the Peace at Country Meadows Justice Court, which serves west Phoenix and parts of Avondale, Litchfield Park, Glendale, El Mirage and Youngtown.*