

**Poverty is not just a lack of money
or education;
it is racial discrimination,
it is cultural difference,
it is a state of mind.
Most of all, it is a position of
non-participation,
the symptoms of which are apathy,
fear,
lack of organization and involvement,
divisiveness,
resentment.
It is self-denigration.**

**The poor see the law and lawyers
as oppressors.
They come in contact with lawyers
when they are being sued,
when they have been arrested,
or when their children are in trouble.
The poor see the law as benefitting
those with money
and with power.
The poor have little faith that the
agents of the law
—the judges, police, lawyers—
will protect them,
the poor.
The poor see laws meant
for their benefit ignored
and unenforced.**

**Most of us see a different world—
Lawyers are officers of the court;
the judges (who sit on courts)
uphold the law.
The policemen enforce the law.
The law is meant to be a
protector of the weak
and of the common good.
Society cannot exist without laws
and without the enforcers of these laws
including lawyers.**



Rural California: Hope Amidst Poverty

California Rural Legal Assistance . . .

**The poor whom we have represented
have seen that the law can be a friend;
that the law can be a vehicle
for protecting the rights
of the poor;
that the laws meant for the
protection of the poor
can be enforced;
that the powerful, too,
can be accountable.**

**These insights can be the beginning
of hope among the poor
that the law and lawyers
will serve man
irrespective of station or wealth.**

**Cruz Reynoso
Director
California Rural Legal Assistance**