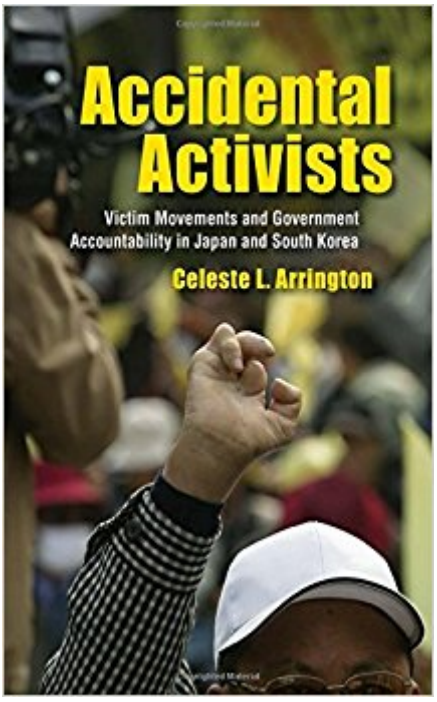
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Accidental Activists: Victim Movements And Government Accountability In Japan And South Korea (Studies Of The Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University)



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Synopsis

Government wrongdoing or negligence harms people worldwide, but not all victims are equally effective at obtaining redress. In Accidental Activists, Celeste L. Arrington examines the interactive dynamics of the politics of redress to understand why not. Relatively powerless groups like redress claimants depend on support from political elites, active groups in society, the media, experts, lawyers, and the interested public to capture democratic policymakers' attention and sway their decisions. Focusing on when and how such third-party support matters, Arrington finds that elite allies may raise awareness about the victimsÃ¢â ¬â„¢ cause or sponsor special legislation, but their activities also tend to deter the mobilization of fellow claimants and public sympathy. By contrast, claimants who gain elite allies only after the difficult and potentially risky process of mobilizing societal support tend to achieve more redress, which can include official inquiries, apologies, compensation, and structural reforms.Arrington draws on her extensive fieldwork to illustrate these dynamics through comparisons of the parallel Japanese and South Korean movements of victims of harsh leprosy control policies, blood products tainted by hepatitis C, and North Korean abductions. Her book thereby highlights how citizens in Northeast AsiaÃ¢â ¬â ¢a region grappling with how to address JapanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s past wrongsÃ¢â ¬â ¢are leveraging similar processes to hold their own governments accountable for more recent harms. Accidental Activists also reveals the growing power of litigation to promote policy change and greater accountability from decision makers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"In this innovative study of victim redress movements, Celeste L. Arrington skillfully pairs cases in South Korea and Japan to investigate what explains differences in outcomesÃ¢â ¬â ¢why some movements get more redress than others. To her credit, Arrington is never satisfied with the easy answers, and as a result her compelling analysis deserves wide attention. Scholars of South Korean and Japanese politics, social movements, and civil society will want to take note of this book."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Robert J. Pekkanen, University of Washington"Accidental Activists is a fascinating study of the growing prominence of rights litigation in East Asia, a region long thought to be inhospitable toward rights-claiming and lawsuits. But it is more than that. Arrington shows that while movements can use litigation to right tragic wrongs, gaining allies in government too early can reduce activists' reliance on the contentious power of litigation, limiting their ability to extract concessions. This is a landmark book, carefully crafted and richly researched."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Charles Epp, University of Kansas, author of Making Rights Real: Activists, Bureaucrats and the Creation of the Legalistic State"Combining rich theoretical insight with careful empirical investigation, this remarkable book offers an original and compelling perspective on the comparative law and politics of victim redress. Celeste L. Arrington skillfully reveals the different paths and plights of three different groups fighting for compensation in Japan and KoreaÃ¢â ¬â ¢Hansen's disease victims, individuals contaminated by hepatitis C through blood products, and abducteesÃ¢â ¬â ¢and explains why the outcomes of these movements varied so dramatically. This book holds important lessons for lawyers and policymakers, offers new insights to scholars of comparative politics, law and society, and Asian studies, and provides both a template for action and a cautionary tale for victims and activists."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Eric A. Feldman, University of Pennsylvania Law School, author of The Ritual of Rights in Japan: Law, Society, and Health Policy

Celeste L. Arrington is Korea Foundation Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at The George Washington University.

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