

## Black Box: The Memoir That Sparked Japan's #MeToo Movement

**Shiori Ito**

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Japanese journalist Shiori Ito's efforts to reform Japan's antiquated rape laws and give victims a voice are credited with sparking Japan's controversial #MeToo movement; her memoir *Black Box* begins with the rape that almost destroyed her.

In 2015, following her university studies, Ito returned to Japan, eager to begin her career. During an internship at Reuters, she covered dangerous international situations; in her home country, which was supposed to be safe, she was violated and left to struggle with the aftermath alone and unsupported.

Ito narrates as though she's still in shock, telling how her rapist, a well-connected Japanese reporter, invited her to dinner to discuss advancing her career. He drugged her; over her protests, he dragged her to his hotel room and raped her as she lay unconscious. Witnesses and hotel videos supported Ito's claim that she had been in no condition for consensual sex, but Japan's 110-year-old rape laws invalidate the evidence of those not present. Her case fell into the "black box" category, making prosecution impossible, even though forensic evidence confirmed the perpetrator's identity.

Ito describes how patriarchal societies favor silence over open discussions of sex crimes. In Japan, she says, victims are often ignorant of how and where to get help as a result. Confused, afraid, and ashamed, they are subjected to investigations so traumatic and ineffectual that some give up and endure, while others resort to suicide.

Despite the global spread of the #MeToo movement, Ito reports hearing a lawyer say, "In Japan, it's dangerous even to whisper 'Me Too.'" Her memoir *Black Box* is unforgettable as it exposes how patriarchal cultures and codes of silence deprive rape victims of justice.

KRISTINE MORRIS (July / August 2021)

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