

The #MeToo Movement in Japan: An Assessment of Long-Term Significance

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Abstract : Over seven years have passed since the #MeToo movement first became prominent in Japan. Opinions vary on the degree of success of the movement along with its offshoot campaigns. This chapter suggests that a range of historical factors help to account for the relative lack of success of #MeToo in Japan, but that the gains achieved should also be highlighted. Our interviews with a range of activists provide insights into the nature of #MeToo in Japan and how it should be contextualized in the contemporary landscape of feminist movements here. In spite of the gains that have been made, it remains clear that levels of abuse and of non-reporting remain worryingly high and calls for well-resourced campaigns for 'Awareness, Prevention, and Response' are as timely as ever. Surprisingly, a case of sexual abuse involving boys and young men who were the victims of the sexual predator and entertainment mogul, Johnny Kitagawa, may be the clearest sign of change in Japanese society regarding victims of sexual abuse. In the post-#MeToo era, it was possible for these victims to come forward and attain some measure of justice. It was also possible for members of the public to strongly condemn the failures of the mass media journalists who ignored the evidence of sexual abuse for many years. Nevertheless, the case itself does not constitute reliable evidence that conditions have changed significantly for all victims of abuse or that media outlets will live up to their promises about reporting abuse.

Keywords : #MeToo, significance, Japan, prevention, response

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