

Vesna Nikolić-Ristanović: Od žrtve do pobednika: Viktimologija kao teorija, praksa i aktivizam

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(From a victim to the winner – victimology as theory, practice and activism)

The book *'From a victim to the winner – victimology as theory, practice and activism'* by Vesna Nikolić Ristanović is an original manuscript written in the Serbian language. The book provides a comprehensive overview of important and relevant topics in the developing field of victimology as a scientific discipline, victim assistance policies, practice and victimological activism.

The book is organised in ten chapters: victimology as a science on victims; victim rights movement; victimological research (measurement and documentation of victimisation); phenomenon and typology of victims; forms of victimisation; victimisation risk and victimogenic factors, theoretical explanations and prevention of victimisation; victimisation consequences, recovery from victimisation and victims' needs; legal status of victims and victims' rights, and from a victim to the winner - challenges and possible future directions of victimological theory, practice and activism.

In the first chapter, the author describes the onset and development of victimology globally and its development in Serbia, presents the leading schools or directions in victimology (positivist, radical, critical, macro, micro, theoretical, applied, humanist, positive), development of victimology in the countries of the Former Yugoslavia, its subject, relationship with other scientific disciplines and questions whether victimology is or could be an independent scientific discipline. She also emphasises a movement towards general victimology, which goes far beyond victims of crime. Besides, the author discusses the goals and tasks of victimology.

The second chapter presents victim rights movement globally and more specifically, in Serbia, emphasising the development of initiatives for the improvement of victim's position and adds an evaluation of such activities, from the state institutions and NGO perspectives.

The third chapter consists of an introduction to victimological research, victimisation surveys and recording victimisation. This chapter is an excellent guide to empirical research and the meaning of victimological studies and data collected, be it a general or specific victimisation survey, official data on victims of the criminal justice system or qualitative data.

Comprehending victims and their victimisation are essential and a gist of the fourth chapter. Victims can be direct, indirect, victims of primary, secondary or tertiary victimisation. Victims can be divided into two groups – individual and collective. A division of real, ideal, guilty and legitimate victims are discussed as well as a position of a victim, survivor, and the winner are, in addition to new typologies of victims, the author emphasises victimisation of women.

The fifth chapter deals with primary, re-victimisation, one-time, multiple and continuous victimisation. The most crucial section of this chapter is devoted to secondary victimisation. Prevention of secondary victimisation requires awareness-raising and specific training of criminal justice professionals.

Victimisation risk is a core issue in victimological studies presented in chapter six. It includes personality, societal, situational predispositions influencing victimisation. The author also adds an essential view of the victimisation of legal persons and the influence of victimogenic predispositions on the occurrence of a criminal offence. Victim's behaviour and a relationship between the victim and perpetrator also play a vital role in victimological studies.

Theoretical explanations and prevention of victimisation are leading topics of the seventh chapter. They use an analogy from criminological perspectives focusing on the leading ideas of victimisation prevention.

Consequences of victimisation, physical, economic, social and practical, psychological and psychosocial deserved detailed attention of the author in the eighth chapter. These perspectives are very important for a debate in the following chapter on the recovery of victims. This chapter also deals with a psychological recovery of victims after their victimisation. The author explains phases of recovery forgiveness, post-traumatic growth. She also suggests using yoga in the process of victims' recovery emphasising its philosophical and spiritual components. Moreover, consideration of victims' needs in dealing with victims also plays a vital role in victims' position recognition, by helping and supporting victims in an emotional, professional manner. Providing victims with proper in-

formation, proper support provision, and protection are also of great importance. Supportive social networks, specialised organisations, and especially NGOs, are crucial in providing with support to improve the quality of life of a victim.

In chapter nine, the author writes about the legal history of the position (understanding) and victims' rights focusing on the international and Serbian legislation. Evaluation of state of the art in victim protection in Serbia is discussed.

The last chapter of this monograph is an intellectual peak in which the author sets challenges and possible directions for the development of victimological theory and activism. This chapter adds to ideas for future research, as well as the development of the civil society organisations victims support. Vesna NR also follows the leading ideas of contemporary victimology. She believes in victimology of the winner, requiring significant social changes in understanding, dealing and supporting victims (of crime).

The book is a pearl in victimological literature in the Balkan countries. The author presents past and contemporary perspectives on victims, victimisation and victimology. The book reflects her experience as a scientist, professional and activist. Her description and discussion on the victim protection practice, the role of NGOs and her highly set goals is professional, compassionate support deserve praise. The book also reflects the author's ability to convey important messages to any reader. Victims deserve more attention as the prevailing legal responses to crime and criminals often forget victims and use them instrumentally to prove guilt to the offenders, not to mention the media abuse of victims. The author's effort goes far beyond that, as she is a compelling, civilised and academically rigorous manner presents, discusses and emphasises complex situations in which a victim can find her or himself. Moreover, group and collective victimisation require large-scale healing, changes in culture and attitude towards specific victims generally.

In my opinion, this book, with the multi-disciplinary flavour, will undoubtedly serve as a useful and relevant reference text for students of criminology, victimology, law, criminal justice, social work, and psychology. However, its greatest strength lies in its accessibility, in terms of organisation of chapters, easy readability, for a large number of practitioners

working in the field of victim empowerment and support services, both in the government as well as the non-governmental sector. I fully agree with the implication of the author's final thoughts in the manuscript that based on inspirational stories of victims who became winners could serve more attention. Studying victim - winners' life stories, their coping strategies, reinforced by supportive networks (be they formal or informal) – should be socially recognised and help change the social status of the victimised.

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