



# The Blame Business: The Uses and Misuses of Accountability

*Stephen Fineman*

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Blame infuses society in myriad ways. At its worst it sours and destabilizes relationships: it divides lovers, co-workers, communities and nations. It breeds rancour and the desire for revenge. In the hands of skilled propagandists blame is a potent tool for persecution;

in the hands of the media it is a vehicle for creating victims and social unease. Yet blame, appropriately placed and managed, safeguards moral order and legal culpability. Blame is thus a curious construction, destructive on the one hand, necessary on the other.

The Blame Business is a fascinating journey through the landscape of blame, focusing on its roots and enduring manifestations, from ancient witch-hunts to today's scapegoating and stigmatization, and from righteous anger to blame cultures. In an era of increasing unease about governance in public and private enterprises, Stephen Fineman delves behind the scenes of organizations infected with blame and profiles the people who try to hold them to account. With a critical eye he examines the vexed issue of public accountability as politicians and corporate leaders play their 'blame games'.

This book raises the challenging question of how we might mitigate the corrosive effects of blame. What are the limits of remorse and forgiveness? What role is there for state apologies for historical wrongdoings? Is restorative justice the answer? This absorbing book deepens our understanding of blame and how it shapes all of our lives.

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