



Involuntary Heroes: Hurricane Katrina's Impact on Civil Liberties

Mitchell F. Crusto

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We are taught that the Constitution guarantees us certain civil liberties, such as the freedoms of religion and assembly and the right to bear arms. We are not taught that none of these rights are absolute and that the government can regulate these rights. We are also not taught that the government has the power to infringe on people's civil liberties, subject to varying levels of judicial review. The protection of civil liberties is especially important when there is an emergency or crisis, raising the question of whether or not we need an emergency constitution. While this question has been raised when there is a national disaster, it is also a significant issue when there is a regional or state-based emergency, such as the one that resulted from Hurricane Katrina.

Following an increasing number of emergencies throughout the country, including Hurricane Sandy, the Ferguson, Missouri, unrest, and the Ebola outbreak, there is a need to assess whether our civil liberties are protected in these circumstances. On the tenth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, this book explores how state emergency laws impact constitutional civil liberties by examining the experiences of Hurricane Katrina's "involuntary heroes," those whose civil liberties were infringed upon by the government and who ultimately received little to no redress in the judicial system for their suffering. It is essential reading for constitutional scholars and for members of the general public who truly want to understand constitutional rights within the context of this historic crisis.

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