

KIRKUS

REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

RETALIATION

Joy, Amy Block
CreateSpace (208 pp.)
\$13.95 paperback
ISBN: 978-1482651331; July 12, 2013

BOOK REVIEW

As Block Joy (*Whistleblower*, 2010) documents in her second book, university colleagues messed with the wrong professor when they sought to destroy her career after she reported their financial fraud.

Block Joy tells an alarming tale of faculty and administrators embezzling funds from a government-sponsored food stamp education program that the author ran at the University of California, Davis. By the time she discovered the fraud, those responsible had drained institutional coffers of \$160,000 of government funding. After reporting the fraud, which led to an embezzler's sentencing in federal court to a year of prison for theft of government property, Block Joy tried to refocus on running her program. Thinking that the university would be pleased with her actions, Block Joy reports that, instead, she was met with vicious (and inept) schemes to ruin her professional credibility and, at one point, to cause her bodily harm. Fortunately, those involved ran afoul of the professor's meticulous record-keeping, keen memory for detail and willingness to fight back—qualities that helped her win a financial settlement against the institution after a lengthy internal investigation. Readers will find her corresponding moral victory a satisfying conclusion to this tale of professional corruption. The book often reads like a thriller; extremely short paragraphs contribute to the rapid-fire pacing, although overuse of this technique can be distracting. The author also wisely sustains suspense by waiting to reveal who will finally be implicated in the scandal, adding to the story's tension. Occasionally, the book contains too much minutiae, giving the impression that the author is re-litigating her case in the court of public opinion. A *dramatis personae* would also have helped readers follow who held which academic position, alleviating the need for the writer to repeatedly explain identities and professional roles.

Despite these minor flaws, the book effectively and excitingly recounts real-life fallout from whistleblowing on the job; Block Joy's ultimate moral and legal triumph serves as both inspiration and warning about workplace retaliation.