

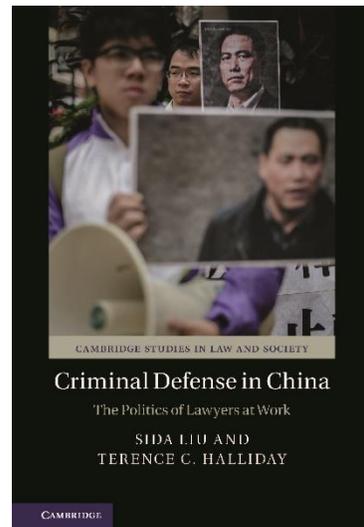
Contact: Jenny Montagne
E-mail: jmontagne@abfn.org
Phone: 312.988.6546
Fax: 312.988.6579
Online: americanbarfoundation.org
Facebook: [American Bar Foundation](https://www.facebook.com/AmericanBarFoundation)
Twitter: [@ABFResearch](https://twitter.com/ABFResearch)

NEW BOOK BY ABF RESEARCHERS UNVEILS STRUGGLES FOR BASIC LEGAL FREEDOMS IN CHINA

CRIMINAL DEFENSE LAWYERS ARE IN VANGUARD OF RIGHTS PROTECTIONS

CHICAGO, Dec. 12, 2016 – A newly released book by two [American Bar Foundation](http://AmericanBarFoundation.org) (ABF) scholars reveals the work and politics of criminal defense lawyers in their fight for basic legal freedoms in the People's Republic of China.

“[Criminal Defense in China: The Politics of Lawyers at Work](#)” is the first comprehensive social science study of the everyday work and political mobilization of criminal defense lawyers in China’s criminal justice system. It is co-authored by [Terence C. Halliday](#), research professor at the ABF, and [Sida Liu](#), faculty fellow at the ABF and [assistant professor of sociology](#) at the [University of Toronto](#). Liu and Halliday’s interdisciplinary research documents the emergence of politically mobilized lawyers and human rights activism under China’s authoritarian state.



Their research draws from 329 interviews with criminal defense lawyers and rights activists conducted between 2005 and 2015, as well as analysis of news media and social media exchanges, to reveal the intersection of legal practice and politics in China.

The authors identify clusters of criminal defense lawyers, including progressive elites and grassroots practitioners, who mobilize to protect basic legal freedoms. By tracking the rise of political liberalism and human rights activism among these politically embedded or marginalized lawyers, they serve to place it within the wider framework of similar lawyer movements in Taiwan, Korea, Europe and the Americas, and provide a cultural and historical context for the rise of lawyer activism in China.

“Professor Liu and Halliday’s new book on Chinese criminal defense lawyers is precisely the type of deeply empirical and rigorously interdisciplinary research that sets the American Bar Foundation apart,” said ABF Director [Ajay K. Mehrotra](#). “It will surely be required reading for

anyone interested in understanding how the legal profession can mobilize and sustain political and human rights.”

[Jerome A. Cohen](#), a professor of law at [New York University School of Law](#) and expert on East Asian law, said of the book, “this brilliant, insightful and balanced book is a fascinating window into the sense of injustice that is increasingly gnawing at the vitals of contemporary China.”

The book is a product of more than a decade of ongoing research. Liu is a sociologist of law who has written extensively on Chinese law and socio-legal theory, especially the legal profession in China. Halliday is a world-renowned sociologist with a focus on global law-making, professions, and international law reforms.

Halliday has been a vocal advocate for increasing protections for Chinese criminal defense lawyers and human rights activists following a government crackdown on the legal community under Chinese President Xi Jinping. Criminal defense lawyers and legal staff have been targeted by the Chinese police and state security apparatus and many lawyers have been interrogated and forcibly detained. In a January 2016 [open letter](#) to President Xi, coauthored by Halliday and published in [The Guardian](#), renowned jurists from around the world denounced the Chinese government’s crackdown on members of the Chinese legal community and demanded adherence to universal legal standards.

For more information on “Criminal Defense in China,” or on Liu and Halliday’s research, please visit the [ABF website](#).

About the American Bar Foundation

The [American Bar Foundation](#) (ABF) is the nation’s leading research institute for the empirical study of law. An independent, nonprofit organization for more than 60 years, the ABF’s mission is to serve the legal profession, the public, and the academy through empirical research, publications, and programs that advance justice and the understanding of law and its impact on society. The ABF’s primary funding is provided by the [American Bar Endowment](#) and [The Fellows of The American Bar Foundation](#).

###

The American Bar Foundation is an independent 501(c)(3) organization. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in publications or presentations are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the American Bar Foundation, nor the policy positions of the [American Bar Association](#) or its affiliates.