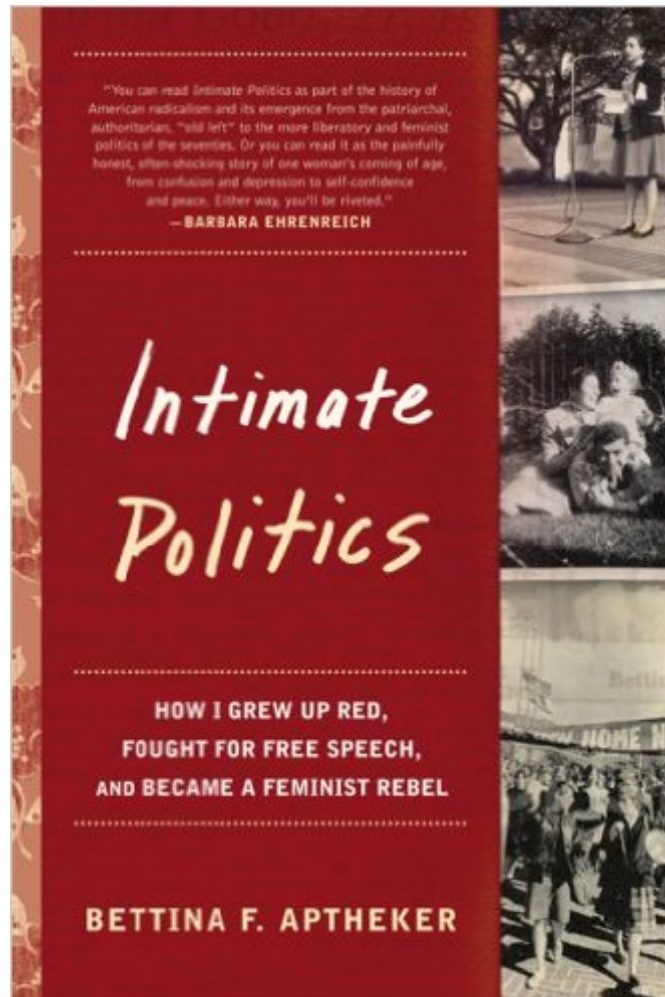


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Intimate Politics: How I Grew Up Red, Fought For Free Speech, And Became A Feminist Rebel



Synopsis

At eight years old, Bettina Aptheker watched her family's politics play out in countless living rooms across the country when her father, historian and U.S. Communist Party leader Herbert Aptheker, testified on television in front of the House on Un-American Activities Committee in 1953. Born into one of the most influential U.S. Communist families whose friends included W. E. B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Bettina lived her parents' politics witnessing first-hand one of the most dramatic upheavals in American history. She also lived with a terrible secret: incest at the hands of her famous father and a frightening and lonely life lived inside a home wrought with family tensions. A gripping and beautifully rendered memoir, *Intimate Politics* is at its core the story of one woman's struggle to still the demons of her personal world while becoming a controversial public figure herself. This is the story of childhood sexual abuse, abortion, sexual violence, activism, and the triumph over one's past. It's about FBI harassment and persecution, Jewish heritage, and lesbian identity. It is, finally, about the courage to speak one's truth despite the consequences and to break the sacred silence of family secrets.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"*Intimate Politics*" is certainly a very readable, involving, and refreshingly honest autobiography. And it is a good way to absorb much of the 1960s and 1970s political history. But once one is finally (around page 450 in a 600 page book) convinced that "intimate" doesn't refer to connecting one's personal experience to its political counterpart, but rather to a kind of eastern inwardness that chiefly displaces such politics, the last quarter of the book seems no more than predictable

biographical reportage. The reader does, however, earlier sense this inward trajectory away from social reality because it seems that whenever Aptheker acknowledges some deep form of oppression (the real strength of the book) in her life, she makes only a minimal effort to express this as a social pattern, or to connect it to the lives of countless other women, or to any representative resistance movement. Thus the book seems to opt for the private over the public, which one hardly expects in such an adult telling of a political life. Self-direction may be elusive in "Intimate Politics" because power and its workings seem hidden from focus. Patriarchy, a central theme to Aptheker's life, seems only addressed from a kind of side glance, as if anything more would be too endangering. It's almost as if her own experience of male sexual violence can be expressed, but cannot be examined too closely or resisted too openly. This lack of critical edge then extends to other issues that certainly deserve to be probed in a critical account.

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