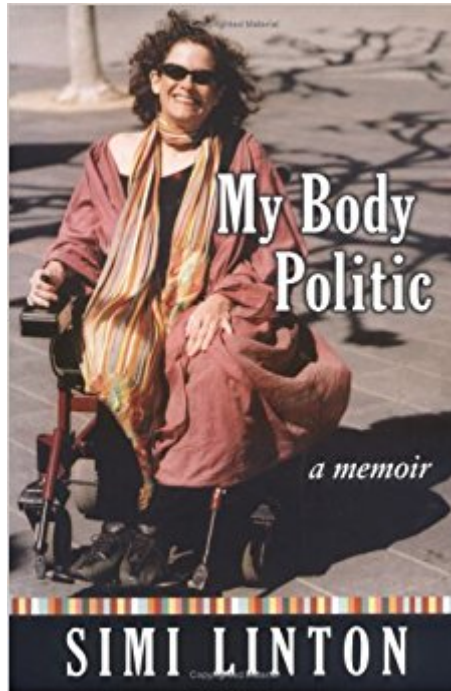




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My Body Politic: A Memoir



Synopsis

"I read *My Body Politic* with admiration, sometimes for the pain that all but wept on the page, again for sheer exuberant friendships, for self-discovery, political imagination, and pluck. . . . Wonderful! In a dark time, a gift of hope."-Daniel Berrigan, S.J."The struggles, joys, and political awakening of a firecracker of a narrator. . . . Linton has succeeded in creating a life both rich and enviable. With her crackle, irreverence, and intelligence, it's clear that the author would never be willing to settle. . . . Wholly enjoyable."-Kirkus Reviews"Linton is a passionate guide to a world many outsiders, and even insiders, find difficult to navigate. . . . In this volume, she recounts her personal odyssey, from flower child . . . to disability-rights/human rights activist."-Publishers Weekly"Witty, original, and political without being politically correct, introducing us to a cast of funny, brave, remarkable characters (including the professional dancer with one leg) who have changed the way that 'walkies' understand disability. By the time Linton tells you about the first time she was dancing in her wheelchair, you will feel like dancing, too."---Carol Tavris, author of *Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion*"This astonishing book has perfect pitch. It is filled with wit and passion. Linton shows us how she learned to 'absorb disability,' and to pilot a new and interesting body. With verve and wonder, she discovers her body's pleasures, hungers, surprises, hurts, strengths, limits, and uses."-Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, author of *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*"An extraordinarily readable account of life in the fast lane... a brilliant autobiography and a great read."-Sander L. Gilman, author of *Fat Boys: A Slim Book*While hitchhiking from Boston to Washington, D.C., in 1971 to protest the war in Vietnam, Simi Linton was involved in a car accident that paralyzed her legs and took the lives of her young husband and her best friend. Her memoir begins with her struggle to regain physical and emotional strength and to resume her life in the world. Then Linton takes us on the road she traveled (with stops in Berkeley, Paris, Havana) and back to her home in Manhattan, as she learns what it means to be a disabled person in America. Linton eventually completed a Ph.D., remarried, and began teaching at Hunter College. Along the way she became deeply committed to the disability rights movement and to the people she joined forces with. The stories in *My Body Politic* are populated with richly drawn portraits of Linton's disabled comrades, people of conviction and lusty exuberance who dance, play-and organize--with passion and commitment. *My Body Politic* begins in the midst of the turmoil over Vietnam and concludes with a meditation on the U.S. involvement in the current war in Iraq and the war's wounded veterans. While a memoir of the author's gradual political awakening, *My Body Politic* is filled with adventure, celebration, and rock and roll-Salvador Dali, James Brown, and Jimi Hendrix all make cameo appearances. Linton weaves a tale that shows disability to be an ordinary

part of the twists and turns of life and, simultaneously, a unique vantage point on the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Linton (Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity) is a passionate guide to a world many outsiders, and even insiders, find difficult to navigate: the world of the differently-abled. In this volume, she recounts her personal odyssey, from flower child "walkie" in 1971 to disability-rights/human rights advocate in 2005. A car accident en route to a Vietnam War protest took the lives of Linton's husband and her best friend, and left Linton in a wheelchair. In the '70s, this meant almost a year in hospitals and rehab facilities before being released to cope with Manhattan before the Americans with Disabilities Act—no cut-throughs on street curbs, unusable public transportation, rarely accessible bathrooms in public buildings and inaccessible rooms in most schools and workplaces. Linton managed, as other disabled have, but it wasn't until she went to the West Coast and discovered the growing disability rights community that she began to see her situation in a political light. Disabled people networked to discover their commonalities, then went on to demand the right to speak for their own needs. Their perspectives—on sexuality, assisted suicide, urban design, social theory—offer such valuable insight on the human condition, all our lives are enriched by incorporating their perspectives. (Jan.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"A kind of road book with a 1960s counterculture sensibility throughout.... My Body Politic combines

the private with the political, at once a history of Linton's body and a reflection on the state of disability in the United States." - Tobin Siebers, University of Michigan"

It's a book! What else can I say!

Funny, challenging, joyous, essential.

Amazing, informational book about the disability rights movement. Definitely on my top 10 favorite books.

Great book. Great read for anyone & everyone

What scares you? Losing your sight? Losing your ability to move? Losing your mind? Let's face it: many of us are scared to death of becoming disabled. To be clear: Simi Linton's disability is physical, but in "My Body Politic," she shows that being blind does not require one to lose the ability to see. You don't have to lose the use of your legs to never venture out. You don't have to actually lose your mind to act as if you had. "My Body Politic" is more than an account of one person's struggle to overcome disability. Simi Linton writes a memoir that clues you in early that she is an individual who is not afraid to challenge authority. Whether she is talking about her country at war, or a friend being told his homosexuality is a disease, or curb cuts, the personal is political. I was reading a passage of the book on a pier in lower Manhattan close to the anniversary of 9/11. Nearby, I overheard a mother tell her son, who was about 10 years old, "That's where the World Trade Center used to be." She talked about the plane deliberately crashing into it and the fire, and the buildings collapsing to the ground. After the boy did a handstand and skipped off, I wondered what effect the mother's lesson had on him. In that moment I understood what Linton was saying throughout her book, "My Body Politic." The title says it all: a life active for change. One generation rarely understands, much less appreciates, what previous generations have endured and fought for so the present generation can enjoy the rights and privileges they do. One of the recurring points Linton makes is that many of the privileges enjoyed by the disabled today are not due to the largess of a caring public. Quite the contrary; they are the result of political leadership, and hard fought legislative and court battles. For example, it was President Kennedy who advocated for research into the prevention and treatment of intellectual disability, and for expanding Social Security benefits for the disabled in 1961. Twenty years later, the Rehabilitation Act, Section 504 (that went into effect in

1973) required colleges, or any organization, that receives Federal funding to make their programs and facilities accessible to students with disabilities. Public Law 94-142 (passed in 1975 and codified as IDEA -- the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) mandates a free and appropriate education for all children with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), passed in 1990, prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in employment, transportation, public accommodation, communications, and governmental activities. It is legislation enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the Dept. of Transportation (DOT), the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Dept. of Justice (DOJ). In 1999, the Supreme Court upheld provisions of the ADA, in *Olmstead*, affirming the right of individuals to live in their community, even requiring states to place individuals with mental disabilities in community settings rather than institutions. Linton notes that recent Supreme Court rulings narrowing the definition of "disability" have, in fact, watered down the effectiveness of the ADA. Today, budget cuts in virtually every state threaten the supports and services "enjoyed" by the disabled. Adaptive technology, for example, is expensive. Will homeowners pay an extra dollar a year in property taxes so that Judy can have her augmentative communication device-equipped wheelchair? Would the wealthy pay one half of one percent more in income tax for her? Too often, the answer is "no." Curb cuts are not universal; nor are accessible bathrooms. The next time you walk down a street, be conscious of whether or not a person in a wheelchair could actually navigate the sidewalk to get to the grocery store, the pharmacy, work. When you are in a restaurant, notice whether or not you have to walk down stairs to get to the bathroom and, once there, if the door is wide enough for a person in a wheelchair to get through. Then, once inside, would the person actually be able to maneuver into a stall and use the facilities? Too often, the answer to these questions is, "no." One of the unique aspects of *My Body Politic* is Linton's ability to share the fears and frustrations she has confronted every day since her accident, to describe her mundane tasks in such excruciating detail that she helps the reader better understand --and feel-- her story. People often comment that the disabled are "so brave" because they know they couldn't be. Of course, everyone knows themselves... until they are confronted with tragedy and find out differently. Linton overcomes her disability because she must; living her life active for change is a choice which we can all applaud.

I would advise the person and the family of the person with a spinal cord injury (SCI) to learn. When you become able to read, that is. I found that I could not read anything at first. Partly because of denial and partly because I was suddenly plunked down in an alien world, much like the world I had always lived in, just considerably taller. The simplest things I had done before my SCI became

incredibly difficult, if they were possible at all. My mind, body and emotions were in such shock that I could not read anything. The information which was given to me became impossible to understand. I didn't ever think that I would just get up and walk, although my dreams were (and still are) full of running, climbing and even flying. I was dealing with pain that cannot be described and I got remarkably little help with it. Until my constant pain was somewhat under control, I didn't plan, for the future or even for the next moment. The idea of having some kind of normal life was not even a consideration for me. Just breathing and existing; in an odd sort of way a kind of Zen "being in the moment," was all I could achieve. And it was NOT a form of enlightenment; on the contrary, it was an "indarkenment." So I might not recommend this book for the newly injured. It is possible that it would not make sense, even if the newly injured person were able to read. For someone who is past that first shock and confusion, though, this could be very helpful. It is clear in pointing out that there are as many different people with a SCI as there are people without one. Very clear and helpful in pointing out the main directions which are still available for people with a SCI. Get this book for someone you love, but don't push it. Just make sure it is available and, when the person is really ready, it will be there for them.

I am happy to recommend this book to anyone who wishes to gain insight into the daily, lifelong challenges faced by individuals with physical disabilities. It is a book which educates without slapping those of us without obvious disabilities in the face using the "you can't possibly understand how it is for me" method of "enlightenment." Instead it allows the reader to peer through a window into Ms. Linton's life, to develop an understanding of the many barriers and related challenges she and others with similar disabilities face related to what most people take for granted: traveling freely throughout one's environment, gaining an education, dancing, making love, making a life. The book educates by engaging the reader in the journey Ms. Linton has taken from her early days as an activist for peace to her later days as an advocate for equality.

Great memoir that not only tells how a young white woman claimed her disability, but it educates us to how society can be disabling. I require it for my graduate students preparing to be teachers. This book stands out as both a compelling story and a political statement.

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