



Radical: A Portrait of Saul Alinsky

Nicholas von Hoffman

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From Left to Right, one man has influenced them all: Saul Alinsky. *Radical* is a personal portrait of this controversial mastermind of popular movements, a man who is often called the American Machiavelli.

The tactics and strategy of Alinsky, who died in 1972, have been studied by people as diverse as Barack Obama, Cesar Chavez, Hillary Clinton, Dick Armey, the Tea Partiers, and activists and organizers of every persuasion. Thousands of organizations around the country owe their inspiration and origins to Alinsky—who is to community organizing what Freud is to psychoanalysis.

As told by his friend and protégé Nicholas von Hoffman, whom Alinsky dubbed “in all the world my favorite, drinking, talking, and thinking companion,” *Radical* is an intimate look at the man who made a career of arming the powerless and enraging the powerful. From Alinsky’s smuggling guinea pigs into the Joliet state penitentiary to the famous Buffalo fart-in, von Hoffman’s book reveals the humor as well as the ideals and anger that drove Alinsky to become a major figure in a democratic tradition dating back to Tom Paine.

Many of the stories about politicians, bishops, gangsters, millionaires, and labor leaders, which Alinsky did not want made public in his lifetime, are told here for the first time in *Radical*. Von Hoffman captures Alinsky’s brilliant critique of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s organizational tactics and where and why they succeeded or failed. It was a career that began in the politics and violence of the Great Depression and worked its way through the Communist threat, the racial struggles, and the Vietnam War protests of the second half of the twentieth century.

The first book to explain why so many have co-opted Alinsky’s ideas, and the first to explain why so many contemporary politicians misunderstand his message, *Radical* will become essential reading for anyone interested in American politics, past and present.

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