

Book Review

Title: *My Body Politic: A Memoir*

Author: Simi Linton.

Publisher: The University of Michigan Press, 2006

Cloth, ISBN: 0-472-11539-1, 246 pages

Cost: \$25.95 USD

Reviewer: Steven E. Brown

Linton, well known in disability studies circles as the author of the groundbreaking, *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity* (1998), takes the reader on a harrowing and redemptive journey through life as a young adult who acquired a spinal cord injury in the early 1970s, and as a disability scholar of the twenty-first century.

As Linton often explains this was not a simple journey. Aside from the tragedy of how she became injured, society itself was not nearly as friendly to individuals with disabilities forty years ago. Linton undergoes many transformations described within this memoir, yet maintains her outrage at what she perceives as injustice. When she is discovering disability studies, she explores a typical conversation:

“We would also talk about how ostracism is so often viewed as a natural, inevitable response to disability. It is said that disability makes nondisabled people anxious. Yet what is usually not discussed is whether those reactions really are inevitable. What situations allow those feelings to flourish? What is morally wrong with such ostracism, and what is undemocratic about such segregation? What can we do to change people’s response, or show them that it is unacceptable to act on such feelings? Can integrated communities, schools, and work environments alter such behavior?” (p. 119).

One of the most interesting parts of the book comes from Linton’s evolution to the use of a motorized wheelchair. As anyone who has gone from a manual wheelchair to a powered one knows, there are additional barriers to surmount. Linton discusses this from the perspective of interdependence and states:

“I don’t feel the need to thank the federal, state, or municipal governments as abstract entities for the accommodations provided to me and other disabled people, as I believe they are our due, but I do feel the need to acknowledge the bus drivers, shopkeepers, bathroom renovators, Braille sign makers, curb cutters, door wideners, TTY installers, lawmakers, policy setters, and all the other human actors who make these systems work” (pp. 183-84).

My Body Politic is another in the ever-growing list of excellent books written by advocates with disabilities that needs to be in all libraries and is a great resource for classes about the disability experience.