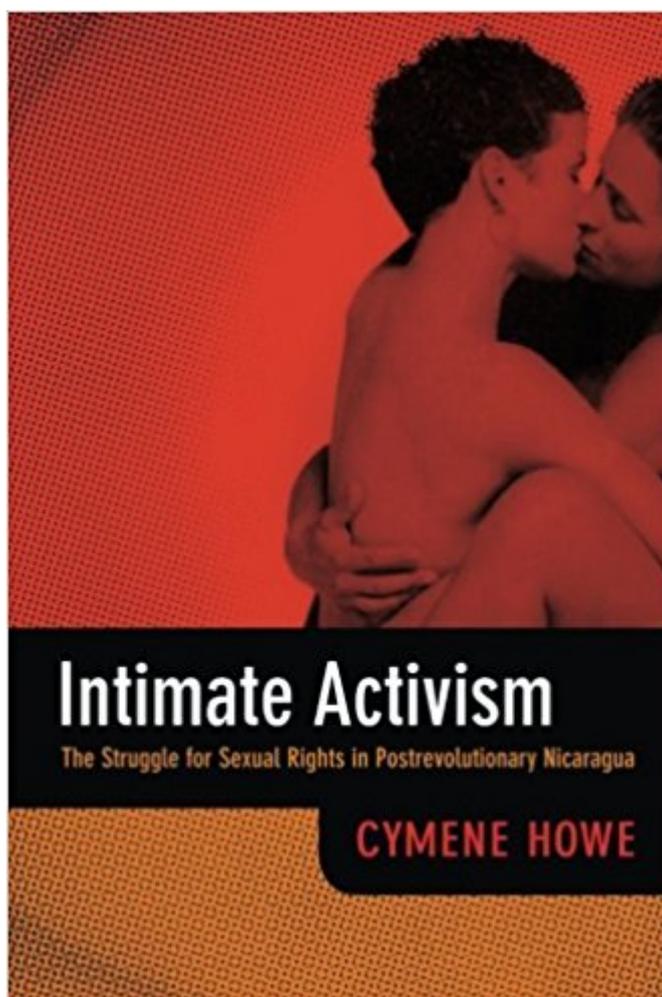


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# Intimate Activism: The Struggle For Sexual Rights In Postrevolutionary Nicaragua



## Synopsis

*Intimate Activism* tells the story of Nicaraguan sexual-rights activists who helped to overturn the most repressive antisodomy law in the Americas. The law was passed shortly after the Sandinistas lost power in 1990 and, to the surprise of many, was repealed in 2007. In this vivid ethnography, Cymene Howe analyzes how local activists balanced global discourses regarding human rights and identity politics with the contingencies of daily life in Nicaragua. Though they were initially spurred by the antisodomy measure, activists sought to change not only the law but also culture. Howe emphasizes the different levels of intervention where activism occurs, from mass-media outlets and public protests to meetings of clandestine consciousness-raising groups. She follows the travails of queer characters in a hugely successful telenovela, traces the ideological tensions within the struggle for sexual rights, and conveys the voices of those engaged in "becoming" lesbianas and homosexuales in contemporary Nicaragua.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"*Intimate Activism* is an excellent ethnography of gender- and sexual-rights activism in postrevolutionary Nicaragua. Cymene Howe deftly folds the rich stories and description into a lively and sharp analysis. She has crafted an important work that provides new and productive ways of thinking about liberalism, activism, and global cultural flows." —Martin F. Manalansan IV, author of *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora* Cymene Howe's richly textured ethnography offers nuanced insight into the workings of lesbian and gay activism in postrevolutionary Nicaragua, showing how both the contours of Nicaraguan history and the shadow cast by U.S. movements

shape local efforts to create visibility and pride. This evocative work sets a standard for understanding the transnational foundations of activism in the global South that should resonate in the field for years to come." "Ellen Lewin, coeditor of *Out in Theory: The Emergence of Lesbian and Gay Anthropology*" "An eloquent ethnography of sexual rights advocacy in Nicaragua in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries." (Patrick Staib *Journal of Anthropological Research*)

Of particular interest is Howe's reporting on three lesbian discussion groups, one hosted by a European-backed nongovernmental organization, another facilitated by local grass-roots activists, and a third convened in a rural setting. Throughout, Howe keenly observes "intimate pedagogies": small face-to-face meetings that address deeply personal aspects of people's lives. (Richard Feinberg *Foreign Affairs*)

Howe aptly describes *Intimate Activism* as an ethnography of activism, yet it is much more. Her work contributes to the decolonial project that is called for if we are to take both indigenous, or local, and global knowledge seriously...Written clearly and concisely, it will be of wide interest and will make a welcome addition to courses in cultural anthropology, Latin American studies, and gender and sexuality studies. (Florence E. Babb *Women's Review of Books*)

*Intimate Activism* will be an interesting read for researchers and graduate and undergraduate students working on same-sex sexualities, social movements and gender and sexual politics in Latin America, and its emphasis on lesbian identities and organizing is particularly welcome, since it is still a little explored area in those fields of study. (Camilo Antillán *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*)

"Cymene Howe's engaging, theoretically sophisticated, and well-written book is an ethnography of would-be social engineers (most of them Nicaraguan) trying to increase tolerance for sexual diversity in Nicaragua." (Stephen O. Murray *American Anthropologist* 2015-06-01)

Cymene Howe has made an important contribution to the literature on sexuality, culture, and politics in Latin America in general and in Nicaragua in particular. As an ethnography that paints pictures of a range of sexuality rights work during an important period of time, Cymene Howe's *Intimate Activism* is quite successful. Her vivid images and nuanced analysis of the tensions inherent in trying to globalize, "normalize," and simultaneously respect local sexual practices make this an excellent book for scholars or for courses on Latin American gender, sexuality, or culture. (Karen Kampwirth *Journal of the History of Sexuality*)

Howe importantly situates herself in her field as a queer and engaged ethnographer, highlighting the similarities between activism and anthropological research as collaborative, participatory efforts. Aside from this, her highly descriptive book provides a number of significant suggestions to scholars of activism, from the complexities of a politics of visibility to the intricacies of rights politics, claims-making, and subject-shaping. (Irene Peano *Journal of the*

Royal Anthropological Institute)

Cymene Howe is Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Core Faculty in the Center for the Study of Women, Gender, and Sexuality at Rice University. She is coeditor, with Gilbert Herdt, of *21st Century Sexualities: Contemporary Issues in Health, Education, and Rights*.

'Twas great

Howe's ethnographical study on sexual rights activists in Managua, Nicaragua offers a valuable glimpse into the complex and interwoven politics of Lesbian and Gay activists "struggling" against an anti-sodomy law proposed by Nicaragua's post-revolutionary government. It should be noted that the scope of this monograph is limited to a particular group of "working class" (Upper-Middle, white-mestizo, urban) Nicaraguans, and is limited in its intersectional perspectives.

Dr. Cymene Howe reveals the minute details many ethnographies tend to overlook. While the book faces the notions of gender and sexuality headstrong, it also manages to truly give a sense of the struggle for movement in developing countries. Culture within the phases of society versus the distinction of class and authority are prominent throughout the book. If someone were to ask me what anthropology is, I'd simply hand them this book without any hesitation. As a student, "Intimate Activism," once again awoke my passion for anthropology. "Intimate Activism," is a story about a revolution and the best part is that it's a firsthand reality you get to experience as you read. Warning: It is very hard to put this book down once you start reading! Enjoy!

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