

A Radical Line: From the Labor Movement to the Weather Underground

By Thai Jones

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In this elegant family history, journalist Thai Jones traces the past century of American radical politics through the extraordinary exploits of his own family. Born in the late 1970s to fugitive leaders of the Weather Underground and grandson of Communists, spiritual pacifists, and civil rights agitators, Jones grew up an heir to an American tradition of resistance. Yet rather than partake of it, he took it upon himself to document it. The result is a book of extraordinary reporting and narrative.

The dramatic saga of "A Radical Line" begins in 1913, when Jones's maternal grandmother was born, and ends in 1981, when a score of heavily armed government agents from the Joint Anti-Terrorism Task Force stormed into four-year-old Thai's home and took his parents away in handcuffs. In between, Jones takes us on a journey from the turn-of-the-century western frontier to the tenements of melting-pot Brooklyn, through the Great Depression, the era of McCarthyism, and the Age of Aquarius.

Jones's paternal grandfather, Albert Jones, committed himself to pacifism during the 1930s and refused to fight in World War II. The author's maternal grandfather, Arthur Stein, was a member of the Communist Party during the 1950s and refused to collaborate with the House Un-American Activities Committee. His maternal grandmother, Annie Stein, worked closely with civil rights legends Mary Church Terrell and Ella Baker to desegregate institutions in Washington, D.C., and New York City.

His father, Jeff Jones, joined the violent Weathermen and led hundreds of screaming hippies through the streets of Chicago to clash with police during the Days of Rage in 1969. Then Jeff Jones disappeared and spent the next eleven years eluding the FBI's massive manhunt. Thai Jones spent the first years of his life on the run with his parents.

Beyond the politics, this is the story of a family whose lives were filled with love honored and betrayed, tragic deaths, painful blunders, narrow escapes, and hope-filled births. There is the drama of a pacifist father who must reconcile with a bomb-throwing son and a Communist mother whose daughter refuses to accept

the lessons she has learned in a life as an organizer. There are parents and children who can never meet or, when they do, must use the ruses and subterfuge of criminals to steal a hug and a hello.

Beautifully written and sweeping in its scope, "A Radical Line" is nothing less than a history of the twentieth century and of one American family who lived to shake it up.

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Download and Read Free Online **A Radical Line: From the Labor Movement to the Weather Underground** By **Thai Jones**

Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Former *New York Newsday* reporter Jones was only four years old when the FBI burst into his family's Bronx apartment to arrest his parents: members of the violent, left-wing Weather Underground, they had spent the 1970s hiding from federal authorities. In fact, Jones recounts in his debut book, they had fallen in love while staying at the same safe house in the Catskills. Eleanor had become radicalized in 1968 while a law student at Columbia University; Jeff helped Dr. Timothy Leary, the LSD guru, escape from prison. Their radical roots went deep, as this engaging family history reveals. Both of Jones's maternal grandparents were Communist Party members; his grandfather pled the Fifth Amendment when House Committee on Un-American Activities grilled him in the 1950s. Jones's paternal grandfather had spent WWII in an army work camp as a conscientious objector. Jones effectively elucidates the personal dramas, often drawing on FBI files for background info. In giving his parents' story such completeness, however, he offers little hint of how fully their values were passed on to his own generation, giving the book's ending a somewhat abrupt feel. Strictly speaking, Jones's parents were in league with terrorists, but he infuses their politics with a crucial humanity that makes their path a little more understandable, perhaps even sympathetic.

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From [Booklist](#)

Jones, a journalist, spent the early years of his life living under an alias while his parents were fugitives from the FBI, sought for their involvement in the Weather Underground. In this absorbing memoir of his radical family heritage, Jones offers a look at nearly a century of progressive political movements in the U.S. He traces grandparents on both sides who participated in May Day demonstrations, joined early labor unions and the Communist Party, and lived lives of constant government surveillance, truncated personal aspirations, and eventual disillusionment. Continuing the radical tradition, his parents progressed from antiwar demonstrations and campus protests to the Days of Rage and the Weather Underground. Tracing his family's political idealism--and a family life filled with the usual joys and tragedies--Jones provides a thoughtful and compelling portrait of radical politics as lived by one family and as experienced by the nation as a whole.

This is part family memoir and part historical record of the metamorphosis of radical movements in America.

Vanessa Bush

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Review

Marge Piercy Thai Jones relates the lives of two families without much money or success in the usual sense but in which men and women tried to live by their political and ethical ideas no matter what the cost. Jones treats it all with sympathy and a sly irony. He has an exciting story to tell, and he tells it well.

William Ayers Distinguished Professor of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago, and author of "Fugitive Days: A Memoir" "A Radical Line" is provocative, funny, heartbreaking, and touching in turn. Thai Jones combines a journalist's nose, an ethnographer's endurance, and a novelist's hand as he brings to life an array of memorable characters, each making his or her twisty way through the tempest of their times. The result is a finely crafted and expertly calibrated memoir of real literary merit that echoes down the decades as a fitting homage to those who lived their lives against the grain.

Dan T. Carter author of "Scottsboro" and "The Politics of Rage" "The Personal Is Political," wrote a feminist writer in 1969; Thai Jones's beautifully rendered account of his radical family's history helps us understand

the complex meaning of that oft-quoted phrase. Alternately painful and inspiring, this is a story that will help a new generation understand why memories of the 1960s still divide Americans.

Gloria Emerson author of "Loving Graham Greene" A wonderfully readable, often harrowing, story of the Americans in two families who felt compelled to defy their government and how and why they did so. In a time of war and vile deception, this is a most powerful, timely story. I loved this book.

Naomi Foner Gyllenhaal Academy Award-nominated screenwriter of "Running On Empty" The real "Running On Empty." A look back across three generations of a committed family. Full of love and drama and patriotism in the best sense of the word. You need to read this book.

Kirkus Reviews (starred review) One of the best forays into the "Days of Rage" -- event, prequel, and sequel -- to have appeared in years.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Randell Easley:

The experience that you get from A Radical Line: From the Labor Movement to the Weather Underground may be the more deep you rooting the information that hide in the words the more you get enthusiastic about reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to know but A Radical Line: From the Labor Movement to the Weather Underground giving you joy feeling of reading. The writer conveys their point in a number of way that can be understood through anyone who read the item because the author of this reserve is well-known enough. This specific book also makes your personal vocabulary increase well. That makes it easy to understand then can go along with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We advise you for having that A Radical Line: From the Labor Movement to the Weather Underground instantly.

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Gerard Armstrong:

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