



Be Thou A Man: A Poetic Tribute to Saul Alinsky

Olivia Diamond

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This biography written in formal verse tells the story of Saul Alinsky's life and work as a criminologist, social activist and community organizer--a legacy that Barack Obama drew from in his own work in Chicago. The long narrative poem corrects the misconceptions surrounding Alinsky's name, which some political figures have tried to associate with the far left, socialists and communists. The truth is Alinsky was none of these, and more accurately espoused a grass-roots, democratic process to problem-solving. In the forward, Diamond explains how she came to write her poetic biography after she was associated negatively with Alinsky because of her own views, the insinuation being that because she has her roots in Chicago, that somehow she was contaminated by Alinsky's radicalism. Consequently, she read everything she could about the man and learned he was no more a radical than the Founding Fathers. In Alinsky's vocabulary "radical" is not a derogatory term, but one he proudly adopted. Alinsky did not belong to any political party. The poem is divided into the seven decades of the twentieth century in which Alinsky lived. In the final section, "Missive from the Underworld," Saul Alinsky speaks from hell to the people living today and comments on current American conditions.

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