



Bill and Hillary: The Politics of the Personal

William H. Chafe

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In *Bill and Hillary: The Politics of the Personal*, the distinguished historian William H. Chafe boldly argues that the trajectory of the Clintons' political lives can be understood only through the prism of their personal relationship. Each experienced a difficult childhood. Bill had an abusive stepfather, and his mother was in denial about the family's pathology. He believed that his success as a public servant would redeem the family. Hillary grew up with an autocratic father and a self-sacrificing mother whose most important lesson for her daughter was the necessity of family togetherness. As an adolescent, Hillary's encounter with her youth minister helped set her moral compass on issues of race and social justice.

From the day they first met at Yale Law School, Bill and Hillary were inseparable, even though their relationship was inherently volatile. The personal dynamic between them would go on to determine their political fates. Hillary was instrumental in Bill's triumphs as Arkansas's governor and saved his presidential candidacy in 1992 by standing with him during the Gennifer Flowers sex scandal. He responded by delegating to her powers that no other First Lady had ever exercised. Always tempestuous, their relationship had as many lows as it did highs, from near divorce to stunning electoral and political successes.

Chafe's many insights—into subjects such as health care, Kenneth Starr, welfare reform, and the extent to which the Lewinsky scandal finally freed Hillary to become a politician in her own right and return to the consensus reformer she had been in college and law school—add texture and depth to our understanding of the Clintons' experience together. The latest book from one of our preeminent historians, *Bill and Hillary* is the definitive account of the Clintons' relationship and its far-reaching impact on American political life.

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