Battling Pornography

Pornography catapulted to the forefront of the American women’s movement in the 1980s, singled out by some leading feminists as an agent of female oppression and celebrated by others as an essential ingredient of sexual liberation. In Battling Pornography, Carolyn Bronstein locates the origins of anti-pornography sentiment in the turbulent social and cultural history of the late 1960s and 1970s, including women’s mixed responses to the sexual revolution and the rise of radical feminism, and explains the gradual emergence of a controversial anti-pornography movement. Based on extensive original archival research, the book chronicles the history of three grassroots organizations and shows that activists first protested images of sexual violence against women in advertisements, Hollywood films, and other mainstream media. They emphasized public education and consumer action and demanded that corporations behave ethically toward women. Over time, feminist leaders made a strategic choice to reorient the movement to pornography to leverage the term’s considerable rhetorical and symbolic power. In so doing, they unwittingly attracted right-wing supporters who opposed sexual freedom and ignited a forceful feminist countermovement in defense of sexuality and free speech. Battling Pornography presents a fascinating account of the rise and fall of this significant American social movement and documents the contributions of influential activists on both sides of the pornography debate, including some of the best-known American feminists.

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Battling Pornography

*The American Feminist Anti-Pornography Movement, 1976–1986*

CAROLYN BRONSTEIN

_DePaul University_
For my parents
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