



Title: **Such a Pretty Girl**
Subtitle: **A Story of Struggle, Empowerment, and Disability Pride**

Author: Nadina LaSpina

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Memoir by a disability rights activist wrestles with issues of pity, ableism, and sexuality

Such a Pretty Girl is Nadina La Spina's story—from her early years in her native Sicily, where still a baby she contracts polio, a fact that makes her the target of pity and messages of hopelessness; to her adolescence and youth in America, spent almost entirely in hospitals, where she is relentlessly operated on in the quest for a cure and made to feel that her body no longer belongs to her; to her rebellion and her activism in the disability rights movement.

LaSpina's personal growth parallels the movement's political development—coming together, organizing, and fighting against exclusion from public and social life, to the forging of a common identity, the blossoming of disability arts and culture, and the embracing of disability pride.

While unique, the author's journey is also one with which many disabled people can identify. It is the journey to find one's place in an ableist world—a world not made for disabled people, where disability is only seen in negative terms. LaSpina refutes all stereotypical narratives of disability. Through the telling of her life's story, without editorializing, she shows the harm that the overwhelming focus on pity and on a cure that remains elusive has done to disabled people. Her story exposes the disability prejudice ingrained in our sociopolitical system and denounces the oppressive standards of normalcy in a society that devalues those who are different and denies them basic rights.

Written as continuous narrative and in a subtle and intimate voice, *Such a Pretty Girl* is a memoir as captivating as a novel. It is one of the few disability memoirs to focus on activism, and one of the first by an immigrant.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Nadina LaSpina is a prominent activist in the disability rights movement who has been arrested countless times for civil disobedience. You can find her in the streets with Disabled In Action, ADAPT, The Disability Caucus, and other groups. After teaching Italian for many years, LaSpina created and taught courses in Disability Studies at The New School. She lives in New York City and will be the Grand Marshal for the 2019 Disability Pride Parade.

ADVANCE PRAISE

"From the first vivid chapter set in Sicily to her gutsy activism in the U.S., LaSpina's triumphant memoir of a richly lived life held me rapt."

—**Alix Kates Shulman**

"A memoir fueled by passion and grounded in history. Nadina LaSpina's beautifully written narrative reveals a conscientious citizen and an exuberant and vibrant woman. *Such a Pretty Girl* is ultimately a love story."

—**Simi Linton**, author *My Body Politic*

"A feminist, personal perspective on disability. One of the main themes is the author's developing ability to claim and enjoy her own beauty and sexuality."

—**Gillian Kendall**, coauthor, *How I Became a Human Being*

"'I was the luckiest woman in the world,' insists the author in this revelatory and deeply moving memoir that clearly shows how and why she came to feel that way."

—**Kirkus Starred Review**

"In this insightful memoir, disability activist LaSpina effortlessly shares how her personal experiences led to her activism, creating a compelling story that is both instructive and moving."

—**Booklist Starred Review**

ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

New Village Press is a nonprofit publisher best known for books that animate emerging movements in societal transformation, true stories about collaborative community building, and the creative roles that artists and scholars, citizens and planners can play in public life.