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**Fashioning Revolutionary Women in Cold War America:
Women and Violence in the Black Panther Party, Weather Underground, and Radical
Feminist Organizations, 1966-1981**

A Dissertation Presented

by

Choonib Lee

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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This dissertation examines the interrelated relationship of women, violence, and feminism in those groups who either advocated or were associated with violent revolt in the late 1960s and 1970s, especially women in the Black Panther Party (BPP) and Weather Underground (WU). It addresses an important issue that has been overlooked in previous histories of second-wave feminism: the meaning of liberation for women involved with violent activism during the Vietnam War era. In general terms, women's entanglements with violent activism have been viewed by feminists, as well as by many historians, as macho, and thus at odds with feminism, which is largely characterized as appealing to white, middle-class, anti-patriarchal, and mostly pacifistic women. In the dominant narratives about second wave women's movements that have been written to date, women are usually seen as victims, rather than initiators of violence; however, radical women, especially women in the BPP and WU, fashioned more aggressive self-

presentations, holding shotguns at protests and planting bombs in governmental buildings as symbolic and violent anti-war actions.

I argue that women in the revolutionary movements of the late 1960s and 1970s such as the BPP and WU experimented with their own version of women's liberation, and their commitment and contributions to women's liberation need more recognition in historical accounts of second-wave feminism. Influenced by images of women in combat, especially North Vietnamese guerrilla women, these middle-class, educated young women—white women and women of color—attempted to overcome the stereotypes of race and gender as inferior and passive, and reinforced their empowerment through their distinctive attire, demonstrations and work in clandestine movements. This dissertation uncovers the BPP and WU's evolution in terms of their views towards women's movements, and how they embraced the struggles for liberation through the intersection of race, gender, class, and sexuality. Their theories and beliefs led to a different approach to women's liberation than many radical and lesbian feminist groups, which became more woman-centered and pacifistic in women's debates on resistant violence as political tactics. This study of revolutionary women and their intertwinement with violence will furnish new perspectives on the multiracial and transnational nature of late 20th century feminism.

Dedicated to my parents, Soyoung Lee and Yibi Kang

Table of Contents

Preface.....	xi
Introduction: Radical and Militant Women Become Revolutionaries	1
Historical Context of the Sixties	10
Historiographical Review	19
Methodologies.....	31
Chapter Overviews.....	39
Chapter 1: Becoming Political Subjects for Women’s Liberation in the 1960s.....	44
Historical Tradition of Radical and Militant Women	46
The Emergence of the Women’s Liberation Movement.....	53
Fashioning Revolutionary Women	72
State Surveillance and Domestic Subversives	79
Chapter 2: Black Revolutionary Mothers and the Third World	86
Becoming Black Revolutionary Women in the Black Panther Party	86
Black Panthers and Women’s Liberation	109
Black Panther Women and the Third World.....	123
Black Panther Women and Global Women’s Liberation	134
Chapter 3: Weatherwomen, Violence and Feminism.....	142
You Don’t Need a <i>Weatherman</i> to Know Which Way the Wind Blows.....	143
Weatherwomen in Leadership Roles	153
Weatherwomen and Revolutionary Chic	157

The Weatherman and Women’s Liberation	162
From Women’s Militias to Women’s Brigade.....	166
Women’s Brigade of the Weather Underground	170
Chapter 4: The Myth of the Bra Burners and Feminists in Armed Resistance	182
1968 Miss America Pageant Protest and the Burning of Bras.....	183
Violence in the Women’s Liberation Movement.....	197
FBI’s Infiltration into the Women’s Liberation Movement	206
Feminist Fugitives.....	212
Fashioning Lesbian Feminists.....	217
Epilogue: 1960s Revolutionary Women: Then and Now	228
More than Fashion	232
Illustrations	237
Bibliography	263
Appendix: Timeline	298

List of Illustrations

1. Rosie the Riveter	237
2. Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow.....	238
3. “New American Woman,” of 1967 in <i>New Left Notes</i>	239
4. Kathleen Neal Cleaver in 1968.....	240
5. “Pigs” drawing by Emory Douglas in <i>The Black Panther</i>	241
6. Madame Nguyen Thi Binh.....	242
7. Drawing of Black Panthers by Emory Douglas in <i>The Black Panther</i>	243
8. Afro-American Center in Algiers, Algeria.....	244
9. Inside of the Afro-American Center.....	245
10. Painting of a Black Panther woman by Emory Douglas.....	246
11. A Vietnamese woman holding a rifle and baby.....	247
12. A Black Panther mother with a rifle slung over her shoulder and holding her child..	248
13. Kathleen and Eldridge Cleaver with their son in Algeria.....	249
14. Kathleen and Eldridge Cleaver at the Pan-African Cultural Festival, Algiers.....	250
15. Kathleen Cleaver with Kim Sung Ae.....	251
16. U.S. Peoples' Anti-Imperialist Delegation.....	252
17. Women’s Militia of the Weatherman at “Days of Rage”	253
18. Cathy Wilkerson.....	254
19. FBI’s mug shot of Bernardine Dohrn.....	255
20. SDS national convention in Chicago.....	256
21. Richard Avedon’s photograph of Bernardine Dohrn	257

22. Cartoons of women's liberation in <i>New Left Notes</i>	258
23. Motor City Nine.....	259
24. Miss America Protest in Atlantic City, New Jersey.....	260
25. Joan E. Biren's lesbian photograph.....	261
26. Joan E. Biren's photo of herself in Dyke, Virginia.....	262

List of Abbreviations

BPP	Black Panther Party
BLA	Black Liberation Army
COINTELPRO	Counterintelligence Program (FBI)
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
CWLU	Chicago Women's Liberation Union
DOB	Daughter of Bilitis
HEW	Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
IYI	Intercommunal Youth Institute
LCFO	Lowndes County Freedom Organization
NAWSA	National American Woman Suffrage Association
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NCNP	National Conference for New Politics
NWP	National Woman's Party
NOW	National Organization for women
NYRW	New York Radical Women
M19CO	May 19th Communist Organization
PFOC	Prairie Fire Organizing Committee
PLP	Progressive Labor Party
RPCN	Revolutionary Peoples' Communication Network
SCUM	Society for Cutting up Men
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society

SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
TWWA	Third World Women's Alliance
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WITCH	Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell
WLM	Women's Liberation Movement
WPP	Women's Peace Party
WSP	Women Strike for Peace
WU	Weather Underground
WUO	Weather Underground Organization
Yippie	Youth International Party

Preface

It seems to me that some people are wondering why, as a Korean woman, I became interested in this particular topic of women's liberation and violence in 1960s America. Looking back my childhood, I clearly remember that I used to come home in tears after the school due to the conflicts and street fights between national armies and college students. Avoiding tear gas and learning how to deal with it filled my school life; however, I never fully understood what caused the violent scene. I used to watch news with my parents talking to me the student protestors were bad and making troubles, obstructing the development of the country. What I had learned from my parents and mass media was resistance to the authority was wrong; however, as soon as I entered my college in the mid-1990s, my seniors who were supposedly the protestors demonized the South Korean government that especially were manipulated by the US and its foreign policy. After long dictatorship and military government, there were massive student movements in 1980s Korea, mainly focusing on democracy and the reunification of North and South Korea. Therefore, the student culture was anti-American in contrast to the great influences of the U.S. Of one particular case I recall, I had a cool shoulder bag designed like American national flag and my seniors gave me a harsh lesson why I should never wear something such an imperialist fashion. Now I know that that was such a dogmatic idea but it was ingrained in my memory that a dress code displays my identity, political ideas and action. In the big gap between the older and younger generation on the social movement, I became curious of the political actions, which would create dramatic changes, and frequently appear very violent in history.

I see the similar, if not the same, violent conflicts in 1960s America. As a revolutionary year, 1968, as Immanuel Wallerstein states, marked "demonstrations, disorder, and violence";

however, there was one big difference of American Sixties from Korean Eighties. In 1980s South Korea, women's liberation as a massive and powerful movement was absent and women's active and leading roles in violent activism were absent as well. I wondered how women could work and act for such a change so far from their society valued. How were they so powerful to get away from their traditional role and think so differently from their parents? What did they change and how is the change so pervasive in U.S culture and society? The more I looked into the Women's Liberation Movement in U.S., the more women I found did not support for women's independent actions but running into violent and clandestine movements. When I realized the women, relatively visible and militant at the beginning to be disappeared in the history of women's movements, I became fascinated to more research on activist women who were in the limbo between feminist and larger social movements.

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Introduction

Radical and Militant Women Become Revolutionaries

In the spring of 2014, I participated in a historical conference called “A Revolutionary Moment: Women’s Liberation in the late 1960s and early 1970s,” held at Boston University in Massachusetts. The conference was an exciting academic event that provided me with a chance to rethink the history of women’s liberation. Many activists and scholars, both young and old, gathered for the conference. It proposed to capture the nature of the women’s movement as revolutionary, not only by revisiting the past of feminist movements but also by attempting to review historical accounts and embrace the militant women who had been left out of them. In her keynote speech, historian Sara M. Evans revised the history of the women’s movement in the 1960s and 1970s as not solely white and middle-class, but rather as a revolutionary movement, where radical and militant women initiated extreme multiracial and intersectional approaches to women’s liberation in terms of gender, race, and class.¹ Her revision is crucial in that she includes more women of color in her concept of women’s liberation. However, Evans’s revisionary history centers still on radical feminists, missing the opportunity to include those women who were revolutionaries working in armed struggle in the late 1960s and 1970s. With the exception of the panel that I organized, entitled, “Revolutionary Women in the Underground and Beyond,” there was not a single section at the conference that

¹ Sara M. Evans, “Clearing Away the Myths to See the Revolution,” keynote address on March 29, 2014. For Evans’s article based on the keynote, see Sara M. Evans, “Women’s Liberation: Seeing the Revolution Clearly,” *Feminist Studies* 41, no. 1 (2015), 139.

included militant women who were involved in violent actions. In my panel, most of the audience members welcomed the discussion of the militant women, and particularly showed interest in the talk given on Black Panther women, specifically on Ericka Huggins; however, the talk I gave, on the women in the Weather Underground seemed to elicit concern about whether or not Weatherwomen should be considered in the history of women's liberation.

There is still a serious dialogue among the participants of the women's liberation movements regarding their memories and histories, which require a careful and complicated interpretation by scholars and historians. Of a notable case, during the panel titled, "Women's Liberation is Based on Sex not Gender," which was organized by the radical feminist group Redstockings, an audience member named Barbara Love asked radical feminist Carol Hanisch about the Redstockings's position on lesbianism.² Love was assiduous in questioning whether or not the Redstockings, especially Hanisch, have changed their position on lesbians as distracting attention from the women's movements. As an initiator of the 1968 Miss America pageant protest and member of New York Radical Women and Redstockings, Hanisch very carefully but firmly responded that she has not changed her mind, and that she maintains her belief that lesbians were taking women's issues away from the front line. Her response elicited deep sighs, groans, and anger from obviously disappointed audience members. Love later told me she was shocked, even heart broken, by Hanisch's response. This event in 2014 revealed that

² <http://www.bu.edu/wgs/2014/05/29/how-to-defang-a-movement-replacing-the-political-with-the-personal> (accessed June 25, 2015). Barbara Love was a member of the Radicalesbians and organizer of the Lavender Menace zap action at the Second Congress to Unite Women in New York City in May 1970. She also co-wrote *Sappho was a Right-On Woman: A Liberated View of Lesbianism*—one of the first books about lesbianism and its relationship to women's liberation. Victoria Hesford, *Feeling Women's Liberation* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 82.

many women who were revolutionary activists and radical feminists in the late 1960s have strong memories of past conflicts and debates, and perpetuate the animosity between the various groups still today.

On a more personal level, the conference appeared to be a reunion for feminists who were active in the 1960s and 1970s, celebrating their history, contributions, and achievements. However, the histories recalled seemed limited to those of only the white middle-class radical feminists who were present. My personal conversations with individual feminists at the conference surprised me even more regarding their memories and continued disputes with militant revolutionaries like lesbian feminists and the Weatherwomen in particular. Participants were extraordinarily hostile on the topic of the Weatherwomen in clear contrast to their admiration of Black Panther women. For example, an early Chicago women's liberationist identified the Weatherwomen's sexual promiscuity as the source of their power and leadership in the 'men's movement,' saying "everyone knew that." She continued with stories about dropouts who, having been expelled from their schools and with nowhere to go, went to the Weatherman, where she insisted the male members manipulated them. Another feminist from Seattle believed the Weathermen raped and sexually abused the Weatherwomen, but the women could not escape from them. One younger woman from Boston elaborated more specifically on this point with the story that Diana Oughton, one of the victims of the explosion in Greenwich Village in 1970 where a nail bomb accidentally blew up and killed three members of the Weatherman, had planned to escape from the group, particularly from her boyfriend in the Weatherman, Bill Ayers, right before the explosion but was unable to get out before tragedy struck. Most of the members I met at the conference had stories like this—

anecdotal and hearsay—which revealed a still strongly held feeling of suspicion and even hatred of the Weatherwomen, or the Weatherman in general, whether or not their hatred was based on facts.

This frank antagonism towards Weatherwomen sparks the question of who should represent women’s liberation in historical accounts: how many stories have remained untold as a result of these types of tensions and how has the history of feminism been constructed? By embracing women who were in the vanguard of revolutionary movements in relation to the women’s liberation movement, I explore how these women understood “women’s liberation,” and why they should be counted among feminists and women’s liberationists in 1960s and 1970s America. I focus on the activism and self-fashioning of revolutionary women in three groups: the Black Panther Party (BPP), the Weather Underground (WU), and the radical feminists. Unlike the BPP and WU, radical feminists were not a single organization but composed of multiple groups of feminists. The BPP and WU were two groups that were famous for their militancy and use of violent resistance, either symbolic or actual, during the Sixties. The radical feminists on the other hand—including lesbian feminists—were more ambivalent about violence, and were involved in mainly pacifistic activism, with a few exceptions of militant feminists who advocated armed struggle for anti-racism, anti-imperialism, and anti-patriarchy.

The dissertation examines how the self-presentation of women in the BPP and WU as revolutionaries problematized the way in which they worked for liberation movements in the era known as the “second-wave” of feminism, rather than on how these women participated in the BPP and WU. I challenge the history of the hegemonic concept of “second-wave” feminism as a solely white and middle-class women’s anti-

patriarchal, and mostly pacifistic movement.³ Women's participation in the armed struggles against racist and imperialist violence, particularly in the BPP and Black Liberation Army (BLA) and in Weatherman and the WU, has been marginalized in many historical accounts of the late 1960s and early 1970s women's liberation movements. In general terms, women's entanglements in armed resistance have been viewed as macho and consequently at odds with the feminism. In the dominant narratives that have emerged of second-wave women's movements, violence is discounted because women are usually seen as victims of violence; however, I argue that revolutionary women, especially Black Panther women and Weatherwomen, in turn, utilized the threat and sometimes implementation of violence as an instrumental force of women's liberation in the late 1960s and 1970s.

I use the term "second-wave" only to distinguish feminist movements in the 1960s and 1970s from the "first-wave," which was led by women's suffragists in the late 19th and early 20th century and focused mainly on the right to vote. The "first wave" was peopled by upper- and middle-class white women, and lasted from the Seneca Falls convention in 1848 to the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. The "first-wave" was a "Woman's Rights" movement because the suffragists considered women as a single group, exclusively white and middle-class. The "second-wave"—a term initiated by Frances Power Cobbe and Martha Weinman Lear—also became centered on white

³ Sociologist Becky Thompson uses the term "hegemonic feminism" from Chela Sandoval and distinguishes this hegemonic feminism from liberal, radical, socialist, and cultural feminism. See Becky Thompson, "Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 340-341. The article is reprinted in *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism*, ed., Nancy A. Hewitt (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2010). Also see Wini Breines, *The Trouble between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in Feminist Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

middle-class women and generally excluded women of color and the issues like race and class that revolutionary women like Black Panther and Weatherwomen tended to prioritize over gender.⁴

Second-wave feminism largely focused on sexism and patriarchy as the fundamental, universal oppression for women, and disregarded class, race, and sexuality in analyses. However, the term “women’s liberation” reflects the importance of more revolutionary women who linked their activism to Third World liberation in various cases. Radical feminists, who started their activism for liberating women from oppressions, chose the term “women’s liberation” deliberately to distinguish themselves from the “first-wave” feminists.⁵ Sara Evans also notes that the term “women’s liberation” came from Third World “anti-colonial liberation struggles” and the “rhetoric of the Bolshevik and Chinese Revolutions.”⁶ By focusing on this aspect of feminism’s history, I want to recover the contributions of the 1960s women’s liberation movement as a multiracial, international, and even transnational effort.

By the mid-1970s, according to Evans, “women’s liberation” as a movement label disappeared and gave a way to specific groups who defined themselves as “radical

⁴ For the separate waves narrative, see Nancy A. Hewitt, ed., *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S.*

⁵ For the term, see Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 53. For insightful definitions of “women’s liberation” and “second-wave,” see Hesford, *Feeling Women's Liberation*, 1-2 and 269n. Also see Marianne Dekoven, *Utopia limited: the sixties and the emergence of the postmodern* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 253-254.

⁶ Sara M. Evans, “Women’s Liberation: Seeing the Revolution Clearly,” *Feminist Studies* 41, no. 1 (2015): 146n13.

feminists,” “socialist feminists,” “lesbian feminists,” and so on.⁷ However, there were also women during and after the mid-1970s who advanced feminist ideas and theories, who but did not fall into any of these camps. Women in revolutionary movements like the BPP, WU, and some feminist groups maintained their radical activism and further developed their thoughts on women’s liberation parallel to their experience in those movements. Exploring women’s liberation for women these movements expands and broadens the boundaries and categories of women’s liberation in the late 1960s and 1970s. I explore these questions: why those revolutionary women have been overlooked in the histories of “second-wave” feminism; what the meaning of liberation was for the women who were involved with violent activism during the Vietnam War era; and how violence constructed these women’s political subjectivities.

This dissertation defines revolutionaries as militant, anti-racist, and anti-imperialist activists who primarily worked to create a revolution, and who were largely influenced by women in Third World liberation movements, like Vietcong women in the Vietnam War, and were thus more likely to engage in armed struggle like using firearms. The revolutionary women in the BPP and WU will be compared with “radical feminists,” who, while they had revolutionary goals, tended to pursue them through nonviolent and pacifistic actions, although there were some important exceptions. More so than the BPP and WU, radical feminists became major influences on second-wave feminism; their

⁷ Evans, “Women’s Liberation: Seeing the Revolution Clearly,” 140. According to Evans, when the expectations for revolution that seemed possible and imminent in the late 1960s and early 1970s were no longer sustainable after the mid-1970s, “women’s liberation” also disappeared from the public sight.

work influenced cultural feminists who more deliberately advocated women's pacifistic activism as feminine in nature in the mid- to late 1970s.⁸

As the central theme of this dissertation, it is important to define *violence* as it applies to the activism of women involved in revolutionary groups.⁹ German-American philosopher Herbert Marcuse classifies the violence of revolutionaries of the 1960s as being “the right of resistance, namely civil disobedience.”¹⁰ In Marcuse's definition, the “violence of resistance” engaged in by revolutionaries was “violence for liberation” and “violence for the defense of life,” against “institutionalized violence,” which was exclusively and legally warranted violence, such as violence carried out by law enforcement organizations like the FBI.¹¹ The structured and institutionalized violence made the “potentially liberating violence” illegal. Many revolutionaries who thought of armed struggle as an inevitable method to overthrow the system of repressive violence went underground and became clandestine activists. In analyzing women and violence in the BPP, WU, and feminist groups, I follow Marcuse's concept of violent resistance as the fundamental and larger category of violence, which was meant to liberate people from state oppression and repressive violence.

⁸ For the transition from radical to cultural feminism, see Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, 243-245. Although Echols indicates the transition of the feminist movement from radical to cultural feminism in 1973, Jane Gerhard reconsiders the time from the mid- to late 1970s. Jane Gerhard, *Desiring Revolution: Second-Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of American Sexual Thought, 1920-1982* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 182.

⁹ In the classical social science definition, violence is a “behavior designed to inflict physical injury on people or damage to property.” Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Robert Gurr, eds., *The History of Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (F. A. Praeger, 1969), xxxii. Sociologist Charles Tilly determines that violence is normal and that collective violence has flowed regularly out of the central political processes of Western countries. Tilly, “Collective Violence in European Perspective,” *ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰ Herbert Marcuse, “The Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition,” in *The New Left and the 1960s: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, ed., Douglas Kellner (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 62.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Many scholars have recently engaged in defining resistant violence in 1960s social movements, especially in Black Liberation movements. They provide detailed concepts of armed resistance and self-defense that I apply to diverse cases of activism by revolutionary women. As historian Rhonda Y. Williams acknowledges, armed resistance for black people was rooted in their “protective response”—what most scholars refer to as self-defense.¹² The revolutionaries of the 1960s and 1970s worked for anti-racist and anti-imperialist causes and advocated such armed actions as responses to repressive violence. Scholar-activist Akinyele Omowale Umoja further defines armed resistance as an “individual and collective use of force for protection, protest, or other goals of insurgent political action and in defense of human rights,” including “armed self-defense, retaliatory violence, spontaneous rebellion, guerilla warfare, armed vigilance/enforcement, and armed struggle.”¹³ I use Umoja’s detailed and extensive definition of violent resistance in the following chapters to describe radical women. Resistant violence, armed struggle, self-defense, and other forms of violent political actions were “gendered,” as historian Emilye J. Crosby correctly demonstrates.¹⁴ Radical women’s armed resistance was used as a form of political expression.

This dissertation shows three case studies of women and violence in the BPP, WU, and radical feminist organizations, as distinct groups and also in relation to each other. For each case, I consider three types of violence: physical/actual, symbolic, and

¹² Rhonda Y. Williams, *Concrete Demands: The Search for Black Power in the 20th Century* (New York and London: Routledge, 2015), 29.

¹³ Akinyele Omowale Umoja, *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2013), 7-8.

¹⁴ Emilye J. Crosby, “‘It wasn’t the Wild West’: Keeping Local Studies in Self-Defense Historiography,” in *Civil Rights History from the Ground up: Local Struggles, A National Movement* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2011), 214.

representational violence. Although all three groups engaged in all three categories of violence to some extent, each group's unique position and ideology led them to promote one type over the other two. Black Panther women represent the case of symbolic violence and self-defense, an act that would invoke the idea of violence without physically harming any person or property, for example, holding guns for their political campaigns. Weatherwomen, as the second case, also appeared holding sticks and wearing helmets at their demonstration in 1969, claiming to do so for their own self-defense. However, Weatherwomen represent actual and physical violence, causing physical harm to person or property, in the sense that they initiated bombings that resulted in the physical harm of people and property in order to actively overthrow the government that they thought of as racist and imperialist. The violence of the Weatherwomen was more retaliatory violence and guerilla warfare in Umoja's definition. Finally, I discuss feminists in the category of representational violence, the portrayal of an entity as violent by a third party, such as the media or the FBI. For example, the media called radical feminists in the 1968 anti-Miss America protest "bra-burners," labeling feminist actions as violent demonstrations like those of the BPP and WU. While law enforcement agencies like the FBI labeled these three groups of women as dangerous and threatening, the media simultaneously exaggerated the newsworthy aspect of violent women. Both enhanced the self-presentation of these women as revolutionaries who utilized theatrical and symbolic actions, violent images, style and rhetoric, and physical armed force.

Historical Context of the Sixties

After World War II, the apparent societal harmony of the United States in the 1950s was broken by its polarization into economic wealth and poverty, political

conflicts about racial equality, regional divisions over political disagreements, and emerging new social movements in the 1960s.¹⁵ The generation of baby boomers, now also known as the sixties generation, grew up in unprecedented affluence and enjoyed mass consumer culture, and they lacked the sense of insecurity and need for national isolation that was characteristic of their parents' and grandparents' generations, who suffered from the effects of wartime and the depression. Educated young women in the 1960s became fully aware of the injustices of poverty, racism, and the war in Vietnam in the promised democratic society of the United States. Civil Rights movements—especially in the South where white racist terrorism by groups like the Ku Klux Klan were rampant—politically motivated the public to get involved in social activism against racism in general and racist terror more specifically. Many northern college students went to the South to help African Americans register as voters. Experiences in these movements often led to political radicalization of young men and women, black and white together, throughout the 1960s.

Symbolized by the Montgomery bus boycott campaign in 1955 and the Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964, the major Civil Rights movements were purposely nonviolent, and their integrationist activism into white society received massive support from the public. The nonviolent and integrationist ideology of the movement's peaceful leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was relatively acceptable to both the public and media in its religious principles and focus on equality. Civil Rights activists also wanted to keep the ideal of pacifistic resistance against white racist violence to recruit supporters.

¹⁵ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

National Civil Rights organizations were the focus of most peaceful activism in the early 1960s, from the Civil Rights group, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, pronounced “snick”), to the New Left group, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).

Sociologist C. Wright Mills coined the term “New Left” in 1960 to define the New Leftist ideology, which moved away from the traditional “Old Left” focus on labor issues, toward more personalized issues such as opposing social alienation and authoritarianism. Both SNCC and SDS were typical of New Left groups in the U.S. and differed from older Civil Rights organizations including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Women were also active in nation-wide anti-racist movements. Like their foremothers—white-led women suffragists in the mid-nineteenth century who worked for abolition—many political women of the 1960s (both white women and women of color) worked in Civil Rights groups, fighting racial injustice. Liberation and equality for African Americans in U.S. society were major goals for women and men in the Civil Rights movements.

Both the New Left and anti-Vietnam War movements accelerated in militancy and violence across the country in the late 1960s. American involvement in Vietnam without clear justification during the mid-1960s became upsetting for many radicals. In 1968 the media disclosed more brutal attacks by America on Vietnamese civilians like the My Lai massacre.¹⁶ The imperialist war in Vietnam proved to many activists how

¹⁶ U.S. troops killed about 300 to 500 unarmed civilians in My Lai, a village in South Vietnam on March 16, 1968, causing much American opposition to the war.

racist, institutional, and structural violence had encroached upon affluent America both inside and out.

Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were viewed as victories for anti-racist movements, and nonviolent tactics were still a popular methods for protest in the mid-60s, urban uprisings such as the Watts riot in Los Angeles in 1965 signaled unfinished struggles against racial inequality and a brand new type of activism by Black Nationalists.¹⁷ Recurrent brutal oppression by white racist police stimulated strategies of self-defense and even violent and terroristic actions by extremist activists. Most of the African American population in the North, living in slum areas in big cities, suffered from a lack of educational and economic opportunities, which led to poverty and frequent criminal activity. Many young African Americans thought of the nonviolent tactics of the Civil Rights Movement as too passive and incapable of creating real change. Black Nationalists, especially African American Muslim activist Malcolm X, inspired African Americans to utilize militancy in order to protect themselves from the institutional violence of the federal and state governments. Malcolm X's radical and militant ideas about black pride received sudden and massive support from young radicals, as did his famous phrase, "by any means necessary."

Emilye J. Crosby rejects the binary frame between nonviolence and self-defense, and argues that the styles of activism promoted by Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X were not directly opposite strategies and ideologies. Armed self-defense was a tradition for African Americans in the South, especially in rural areas, and coexisted with

¹⁷ The Acts provided equal opportunity for education and public transportation in legal and political rights, however they did not help to end social and economic injustice. May, *Homeward Bound*, 10.

nonviolent movements.¹⁸ Robert F. Williams—leader of the NAACP and a symbolic figure of black armed self-defense—started his armed resistance after his experience with the KKK’s lynchings, like many African Americans who used self-defense to protect themselves after witnessing such racist violence.¹⁹

The international relationship of central and peripheral power after World War II and during the Cold War affected Civil Rights movements.²⁰ Young radicals’ reverence for the violence of resistance for accomplishing the political goals of revolution was based primarily on the post-colonialist ideas of writers such as Franz Fanon and Herbert Marcuse.²¹ Fanon justified armed struggle in the Third World, while his ideology provided a nearly perfect means of identification between student radicals and Third World revolutionaries. As Fanon states, “decolonization is always a violent event.” For Fanon, “violence was a cathartic act and freedom.”²² Black Nationalists like the Black

¹⁸ Emilye J. Crosby, “‘You Got a Right to Defend Yourself’: Self-Defense and the Claiborne County, Mississippi Civil Rights Movement,” *The International Journal of Africana Studies* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 134.

¹⁹ Rhonda Y. Williams, *Concrete Demands*, 66.

²⁰ After World War II, the world was, roughly speaking, rearranged into two major power blocks with the two super powers, the United States and Soviet Union: the “free world” and the Communist block. As many colonized countries achieved their independence, the often underdeveloped and socialist-influenced countries, primarily in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, composed the Third World. From the 1960s until the mid-1970s, political activism against the Vietnam War—the so-called “Hot War”—occupied American life; however, since it did not take place in domestic territories of the United States, the term Cold War seems appropriate to this topic of the dissertation.

²¹ Political theorist Hannah Arendt demonstrates that “new undeniable glorification of violence by the student movement has a curious peculiarity” in the 1960s. For the criticism on New Left violence, see Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1969), 19-20. Arendt argues that the New Left’s Marxist rhetoric of a revolution was not quite a Marxist position, but more like Mao Tse-tung’s assertion that “power grows out of the barrel of a gun.” For Arendt, Marxist violence was a necessary means to achieve the “dictatorship of the proletariat” after the revolution to overthrow the ruling class, take their property, and control the “process of production.” Arendt, *On Violence*, 11. In this case, the violence was secondary and temporary.

²² Frantz Fanon. *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), Kindle Edition. For the impact of Fanon on the SDS, see David Steigerwald, *The Sixties and the End of Modern America* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1995), 137; and Cathy Wilkerson, *Flying Close to the Sun: My Life and Times as a Weatherman* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2007), 131. For Marcuse’s position on violence in the New Left, see

Panthers embraced Fanon. Post-colonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha states that the founders of the Black Panther Party—Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale—read Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, published in 1961 and translated into English in 1963, and his faith in the dispossessed provided them with “foundational perspectives on neocolonialism and nationalism.”²³ White radicals were also attracted to Fanon’s theories of revolution, especially his claim that colonialism reduced its victims to psychological dependency, which could be broken only through violent revolution. Fanon directly opposed pacifism as a strategy for change and argued that violence and armed resistance had become a viable political tactic.

Marcuse also committed himself to the New Left, siding with the militants. He argued that violence emanating from the rebellion of the oppressed reduced injustice, cruelty, and war, while increasing freedom, equality, and justice. Marcuse especially thought that the New Left activists in the United States, as “explosive forces” in the “center of the highly developed world,” would help liberation movements in the Third World, which were not “strong enough to overthrow advanced capitalism.”²⁴

Supporting the concept of Fanon’s inevitably violent decolonization, and Marcuse’s idea of the demand for Third World liberation, radical and militant activists advanced their position on armed resistance to guerrilla warfare. Militant activists particularly adopted the foco theory, also known as focalism. French philosopher and

Douglas Kellner, ed., *Herbert Marcuse: The New Left and the 1960s* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 15. See also Angela Davis’s Preface “Marcuse’s Legacies,” *ibid.* Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence,” in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed., Peter Demetz (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 286-287.

²³ Homi K. Bhabha, forward to *The Wretched of the Earth*, xxviii.

²⁴ Herbert Marcuse, “The Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition,” in *The New Left and the 1960s*, 65-66.

theorist Régis Debray developed the theory inspired by revolutionary Ernesto “Che” Guevara during the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Foco means a small, focused group of revolutionaries without a mass mobilization. The Weathermen—successors to the extremists within SDS later referred to as the “Weather Underground,” and then the “Weather Underground Organization”—particularly embraced Debray’s foco theory of revolution and called themselves urban guerrillas. As Cathy Wilkerson of the SDS and WU recalled, “the political position at the time was that armed struggle was the leader. I mean it was a very strong Debrayist, even though people denied it vigorously, that anybody was Debrayist, there’s no question that the ultimate ideology of the Weather Underground Organization was Debrayist.”²⁵ The actions and theories of predictable armed struggle resonated with revolutionaries like the underground groups along with many revolutionary leaders of the time like Mao Zedong, Ho Chi Minh, and Fidel Castro.²⁶

Numerous men and women in both SNCC and SDS were radicalized through the groups’ transformations and the militancy in both movements, and continued their activism in the BPP and WU. Radical Civil Rights activists Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton founded the BPP—originally the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense—in Oakland, California on October 15, 1966. The Black Panthers became celebrated for their use of armed resistance as a means to end the unfair treatment of blacks, as opposed to the more nonviolent methods of Civil Rights activists like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

²⁵ The Reminiscences of Cathlyn Wilkerson (1985), p. 71, the Columbia Center for Oral History Collection (hereafter referenced as CCOHC).

²⁶ Régis Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution*; and George N. Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (South End Press, 1987), 36.

Along with the Oakland Panthers, SNCC chairman Stokely Carmichael (also known as Kwame Ture) encouraged Civil Rights activists to be stronger and more militant. The BPP was closely associated with SNCC, and the young Civil Rights activists reinforced Black Nationalist ideas in the concept of “Black Power.”²⁷ In the tradition of the New Negro movement of the 1920s (also known as the Harlem Renaissance), African Americans those within the movements recognized racial pride and self-determination, experimenting with new versions of Civil Rights, democracy, and citizenships through Pan-African perspectives.²⁸ The SDS, a national white New Left group, also splintered into competitive sects due to its ideological conflicts regarding the BPP and the Third World in 1969. One division of the Weathermen focused especially on violent anti-war protests for armed revolution against imperialist violence. The Weathermen gained control over SDS and continued their violent activism underground after 1970 as the Weather Underground.

Feminist organizations likewise rapidly mushroomed and proliferated across the country. From 1967, a handful of women started early “women’s liberation” groups, which published national newsletters, created networks of information, and fired up women’s liberation movements in Chicago, New York City, Washington D.C., and all over the country.²⁹ Even though many women like Betty Friedan and Pauli Murray

²⁷ For Carmichael’s speech on Black Power, see <http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/carmichael-black-power-speech-text> (accessed June 26, 2015).

²⁸ Peniel E. Joseph, “Dashikis and Democracy: Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Black Power Movement,” *The Journal of African America History* 88, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 186. For the term “Black Power,” see Joseph, “The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field,” *The Black Scholar* 31, no. 3-4 (September 2001): 755.

²⁹ According to Sara Evans, there was a radical black feminist group even earlier than the well-known women’s liberation groups in Chicago and New York. Evans, “Women’s Liberation,” 140.

worked for the National Organization for Women (NOW), a nation-wide, liberal feminist group, slightly younger women like Kate Millett boosted radical feminist movements. These radical feminists focused on gender and a rhetoric of women's liberation, different from the focus of the revolutionary women in the BPP and WU. The promotion of armed resistance and militancy by the BPP and WU, along with increasing issues of sexism within the movements, were chief reasons for female activists to build their independent feminist movement.

The women in the BPP, WU, and radical/cultural feminists were distinct from each other in terms of their style of self-fashioning, their motives and experiences with armed resistance and self-defense, and also their ideologies and the tactics of their activism. However, they were associated under the strong influence of postcolonial activism that was occurring both within the United States and overseas in the Third World. This dissertation examines that connection. Anti-war protests and demonstrations, in which many activist women were engaged, raged during the late 1960s all over the United States, as the United States intervened in Third World as part of Cold War policies.³⁰ The women in the different groups learned from each other. From the Black Power and women's liberation movements, they learned how to pose questions and raise issues for racial and gender justice, and how to fight for them. Women in combat in Third World liberation struggles served as role models for women in the BPP and WU, who were in turn highly admired by activist women in other nationalist movements and in women's liberation. These women offered militant role models at a time when more

³⁰ Kathleen Cleaver called it an "internal consequence" of the Vietnam War at MIT with Chomsky in 1997. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3siok2HxWag> (accessed June 26, 2015).

moderate types of social action seemed too weak to effect real change.

Historiographical Review

Adding an important new perspective to feminist history, this dissertation explores the role of armed resistance in women's activism for liberation and their construction of political agency as revolutionaries, which will provide an approach to re-frame "women's liberation" in terms of a more multiracial and transnational convergence of women's political activism around multiple movements.

This study encompasses diverse scholarships of the Sixties, the New Left, Civil Rights and Black Power, and the women's liberation movement. Studies of social movements in the 1960s and '70s have been primarily occupied by and based on autobiographical accounts of the now-established generation of former activists.³¹ Their rich and numerous living narratives provide extensive evidence of the history; however, their self-reflective histories have likewise been disconnected from each other, and focused frequently on the self-destructive results or success stories of their activism. In their memoirs, race, gender, class, and sexuality were separately considered, and the dynamic interactions between white women and women of color were rarely analyzed. Most of the women's violent involvements in the Sixties movements tend to be buried within the more pervasively positive, peaceful, and mainstream feminist movements.

The omission of women's armed resistance is endemic to the way that US history after World War II is generally written. Historians have tended to apply exceptionalist, pacifistic views to American history, despite frequent occurrences of violence throughout

³¹ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1233-1234.

its history: the Revolution, the Indian wars, slavery, the Civil War, labor conflicts, and so on.³² The same tendency persists in mainstream women's history, which has tended uncritically to assume that feminism and violence are mutually exclusive. Resistant violence in class struggles and radical terrorism have been relegated to the margins of historical literature.³³ The consensus school during the post World War II years strengthened the exceptionalist narrative; however, the inclination to overlook armed resistance in historical accounts is a "relatively recent development" as historian Beverly Gage states.³⁴ Most scholars of the consensus school stress the harmony of American political life. The United States achieved "social change through peaceful parliamentary reform" and violent conflicts in political activism were the exceptions.³⁵ Scholars believing in American exceptionalism considered violence in America an alien concept and a European imitation.³⁶ In the extremely violent political atmosphere of the Sixties, a group of social scientists defined the late 1960s political violence as terrorism.³⁷ They remarked that this new element of "terrorism" was an "international mythology of

³² Howard Zinn, "Violence and Social Change in American History," in *Violence in America: A Historical and Contemporary Reader*, ed., Thomas Rose (New York: Random House, 1969), 70.

³³ Beverly Gage, "Why Violence Matters: Radicalism, Politics, and Class War in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 1, no. 1 (2006): 99-101.

³⁴ Gage, "Why Violence Matters," 101.

³⁵ Zinn, "Violence and Social Change in American History," 70.

³⁶ Gage, "Why Violence Matters," 102-103.

³⁷ Social scientists under the commission of the Lyndon Johnson administration researched violence in America in order to understand recent urban riots like those in Watts in 1965, and published *The Report to the National Commission on the Cause and Prevention of Violence* in 1969. In the report, Ted Robert Gurr analyzed violence and especially pointed out that the BPP and the WU were revolutionary terrorists, and the BPP were specifically "responsible for the new wave of black-on-white terrorism, for they preached virulent hatred of the 'pigs.'" See "Protest and Rebellion in the 1960s: The United States in World Perspective," in *Violence In America: Protest, Rebellion, Reform, Volume 2*, ed., Ted Robert Gurr (Sage Publications, 1989), 109. For the classic study on violence in America, see Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Robert Gurr, eds., *The History of Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (F. A. Praeger, 1969). This book has editions of 1979 and 1989.

revolutionary terrorism,” that originated from the postcolonialist and nationalist movements in Asia and Africa after World War II.³⁸ The revolutionary terrorism in America in the 1960s was considered imitative, drawn from foreign models. Neither the social scientists nor the consensus scholars recognized women’s armed struggle as a whole new phenomenon in the 1960s and 1970s. Women’s violent political activism was generally interpreted as man-guided craziness, something undesirable and inconceivable in women’s history.

The study of violent women has been relegated mostly to the field of cultural studies. For example, literary critic Josephine G. Hendin explores the relation of women to violence in actual crimes, films, and literature. She examines their motivations and the influence of the social realities of class, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. Hendin’s criticism of violence and women is remarkable as a way to relate women’s roles in militant activism and show the impact of women’s self-presentations on American media culture; however, she deals with mostly white militant women, like the Weather Underground, relating them to a ‘radical chic.’ Writer Laura Browder argues even more effectively that American women’s use of guns shaped their citizenship, their gender, and their American identities. Browder sees Black Panther women’s self-defensive violence as a means of personal and political liberation, linking them to the Prairie Madonna as the only previous example in history similar to the Panther women. Browder’s interpretation of African American revolutionaries and self-defense can provide a means of analyzing American

³⁸ J. Bowyer Bell and Ted Robert Gurr, “Terrorism and Revolution in America,” Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Robert Gurr, eds., *Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (Berkeley Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1979), 330.

women's violence in history. However, white and black women's violence should be differentiated according to their specific conditions.³⁹

In the history of the Sixties' movements militant women's stories have been largely eclipsed. Most studies of the relationship between the Women's Liberation Movement and the New Left focus on their separation and antagonism in the late 1960s instead of on their common ideas and actions. Most early studies have focused on memoirs of former activist men from groups like SDS who spoke for the political position of the Movement, and the group's rise and fall provided a very compelling narrative. SDS veterans such as Todd Gitlin and James Miller stress "centrifugal forces" in the late 1960s, and claim with almost complete unanimity that the Sixties ended with the tragic collapse of SDS in 1969-1970. Women's liberation is named as one of the main factors in the SDS collapse, because the Women's Liberation Movement emerged and separated from the New Left, and attained its popularity as SDS declined.⁴⁰ Due to the indisputable sexism present in male-dominated movements, many women who became feminists inevitably separated from the New Left and built the Women's Liberation Movement in the late 1960s. Militant women who kept their loyalty to anti-racist and anti-imperialist movements were disconnected from second-wave feminist movements, in

³⁹ Laura Browder, *Her Best Shot: Women and Guns in America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 77.

⁴⁰ Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (Bantam Book, 1987), 375-376; and James Miller, *"Democracy Is in the Streets": From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987). For the historiography, see Andrew Hunt, "Did the Sixties Happen?: Searching for New Directions," *Journal of Social History* 33 (1999): 147-161; David Faber, "New Wave Sixties Historiography," *Reviews in American History* 27, no. 2 (1999): 298-305; Rick Perlstein, "Who Owns the Sixties?: The Opening of a Scholarly Generation Gap," *Lingua Franca* 6 (1996): 30-37; and Alice Echols, "'We Gotta Get Out of This Place': Notes Toward a Re-Mapping of the Sixties," *Socialist Review* (1995): 9-33.

spite of the fact that all political women had worked together in the male-controlled movements during the 1960s.

Many scholars provide a familiar history of women's movements as emerging out of women's experiences in anti-racist activism, similar to how women's suffragists were subjected to sexism while practicing their political skills within the anti-slavery movement. In her groundbreaking oral history of the Women's Liberation Movement as it emerged from the New Left and the Civil Rights Movement,⁴¹ Sara M. Evans argues that although the Civil Rights Movement, and particularly the New Left, were male-dominant and sexist, they served as a training ground for future feminists. Within the groups, activist women gained political organization experience, and developed their skills for establishing women's movements. Most scholars have followed Evans's narrative regarding the origin of Women's Liberation. Alice Echols starts her more radical feminist-focused narratives where Evans leaves off in 1967.⁴² Although Echols provides a rich analysis of the differences between feminists and "politicos"—those who became more militant and were involved in many armed resistant activities—she is less interested in these women's transformations from pacifistic to militant.⁴³ Coming from participants or observers of the feminist movement, these studies dominating the history of 'second-wave' feminism overstate sexism and male-dominance in movements, and

⁴¹ Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

⁴² Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*.

⁴³ While Evans and Echols deal with the emergence of 'second-wave' feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, historian and journalist Ruth Rosen includes a broader spectrum of the movement and extends her analyses to the early 1980s with discussion of issues of culture, the arts, music, and politics. Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Penguin, 2000); and also see Flora Davis, *Moving the Mountain: The Women's Movement in America since 1960* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo, Singapore: Simon & Schuster, 1991).

exclude revolutionary sisters who were considered mainly anti-white or anti-feminist by most feminists.⁴⁴

Historians' marginalization of armed resistance by women was reinforced in prominent second-wave feminist narratives, which labeled all women as nonviolent pacifists or at least peace-promoters. The relationship between women and violence is normally categorized as victimization, through the narrative of violence *against* women. Many white feminist historians have established "hegemonic feminism" and consequently omitted militant women of color and anti-racist white women, as feminist sociologist Becky Thompson asserts.⁴⁵ In these hegemonic narratives of second-wave feminism, women of color and white women in anti-racist and anti-war movements were obscured behind the peace-promoting accounts of women's history. Feminist perspectives on women in militant groups like the BPP and WU are exclusively limited to the relationship between women and men. Radical feminists criticized revolutionary women as masculine and male-identified, or submissive to men. The critique resulted from the feminist idea that women were powerless victims of male sexism and heterosexual exploitation. These views made revolutionary women invisible in feminist history and diminished the significance of the roles of female members in the groups.

Regarding armed resistance as indicative of the misguided masculinity of the radical groups, many radical feminists in the late 1960s criticized women activists who did not primarily support and work for women's liberation for making feminism

⁴⁴ Sara Evans participated in the first women's liberation group in Chicago, Alice Echols was involved in a feminist group, and Rosen also participated in a feminist group in California. Feminist scholar Victoria Hesford provides excellent historiographical reviews on the books by those authors in terms of "knowledge production" of women's liberation. See Hesford, *Feeling Women's Liberation*, 8-12.

⁴⁵ Thompson, "Multiracial Feminism," 340-341.

secondary, and for using a “macho” style and male-identified violent actions. Although a few feminists publically supported the tactics of armed struggle, the majority of radical and cultural feminists disapproved of women’s violent actions for women’s liberation in the 1960s and 1970s. This tendency continued to obscure women in the BPP and WU in the history of women’s liberation movements. The response of feminists partly resulted from how female speakers and fighters in the militant groups took media attention away from feminist issues. What was hard for feminists to accept was that the violence of women challenged the notion of normal female nature as nonviolent, and the general idea that women were victims of violence. Like New York radical feminist Robin Morgan, most radical feminists thought of aggressive and violent actions as inherently masculine, and denounced those women like Weatherwomen who participated in male-dominated groups and engaged in their armed actions.

Amidst the scarcity of studies on armed resistance in the Sixties, there are a few recent historians who have given more attention to the issue, albeit without extensive inquiries into women’s ideas or sufficient feminist perspectives. Historian Jeremy Varon and activist, scholar Dan Berger bring the violence and militancy of political activism into the center of the Sixties story, focusing particularly on the Weather Underground.⁴⁶

In his comparative study of America’s Weathermen and Germany’s Red Army Faction,

⁴⁶ There has been, in general terms, a typical narrative of the “Good Sixties” that involves the nonviolent Civil Rights movements until the early 1960s, while the “Bad Sixties” encompasses militant and violent movements in the late 1960s. Most scholars praise the nonviolent era of the Civil Rights movement from the mid-1950s to mid-1960s and consider the BPP and WU an unfortunate consequence of the movements. Joe Street, “The Historiography of the Black Panther Party,” *Journal of American Studies* 44 (2010): 352; and Peniel E. Joseph, ed., *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006). For the WU, Jeremy Varon, *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (University of California Press, 2004); and Dan Berger, *Outlaws of America: The Weather Underground and The Politics of Solidarity* (AK Press, 2006). Also see Ron Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew: A History of the Weather Underground* (Verso, 1997).

Varon provides a negative view, arguing that the “actual guerrilla war” of the American New Left like the Weathermen and their utopian promise weakened the Sixties Movement and finally led to its dramatic failure.⁴⁷ Unlike Varon, however, Berger argues that the militancy of the Weathermen was a result of the state’s oppression and the Weathermen’s attempt to associate with black militants, especially the BPP.⁴⁸ Berger’s research and study on the WU provide the most extensive history of the group so far.⁴⁹ Berger extends his analysis to the Weathermen’s gender politics; however, he reproduces feminist criticism and self-critical Weatherwomen’s recollections of the group’s rigid sexism and lack of women’s liberation. Although Weatherman was notorious for its sexism and hostility to feminist movements in the late 1960s, it is crucial to take into account the actions of the women in the group, and to reconsider how their actions altered the group’s ideas and policies to introduce the idea of women’s liberation.

The historical accounts of the BPP have largely focused on the Black Panthers in the United States, particularly from the national headquarters in Oakland, even though the group was popular in the late 1960s and 1970s all over the country and even internationally. Historian Curtis J. Austin provides a remarkable study on the BPP in general, arguing that the group’s armed self-defense influenced its success as well as its collapse; however, women’s armed participation was not clearly differentiated in the history.⁵⁰ Despite these recent studies on the armed struggle of the Sixties, most scholars

⁴⁷ Varon, *Bringing the War Home*, 3.

⁴⁸ Berger, *Outlaws of America*, 7-10.

⁴⁹ This dissertation, particularly the part concerning the WU, is indebted to Dan Berger’s far-reaching and all-encompassing study of the group’s history.

⁵⁰ Curtis J. Austin, *Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006), 89; and Robin D.G. Kelley and Betsy Esch, “Black Like

decline to consider women activists who were involved with and played a role in those militant movements. The history of women in the BPP and WU is based on the fact that the male members dominated the groups, and that women were not equal to men within the groups, in contrast to the women's liberation movement, which questioned and tried to debunk the sexist presumption. As a result, histories have shown women in both the BPP and WU as insignificant and subordinate to male activists, differentiating them from feminists' more active and autonomous involvement in the women's movements.

For instance, political theorist Joy James criticizes current studies of women in the BPP as “helpmates” rather than leaders, and redefines Black Panther member Assata Shakur as one of the “few black female figures in the United States recognized as a leader in an organization that publicly advocated armed self-defense against racist violence.”⁵¹ James's point of view about women in the BPP as performing crucial roles in the group is very significant in order to locate black female activists in the Black Power era; however, she does not consider Assata Shakur as a female revolutionary who presented herself in armed self-defense like other female Black Panther members.

Up until the 1990s, studies on the BPP and WU focused on the groups' national leaders through their autobiographies—mostly those of male members like Newton, Seale, and Eldridge Cleaver of the BPP, with top-down perspectives.⁵² These empiricist,

Mao: Red China and Black Revolution,” *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society* 1, no. 4 (1999): 9.

⁵¹ Joy James, “Framing the Panther: Assta Shakur and Black Female Agency,” in *Want to Start a Revolution? Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, eds., Komozi Woodard and Dayo F. Gore (New York: NYU Press, 2009), 139-140.

⁵² There are also a few biographies and autobiographies of women in the BPP and WU. For Black Panther women, see Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992); and Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1987). It was not until 2007 that a Weatherperson published a memoir. See Wilkerson, *Flying Close to the Sun*; Mark Rudd, *Underground:*

man- and national leadership-centered narratives have limited the vision of the revolutionary groups as being male-dominated, masculine, and sexist movements that coexisted with women's liberation movements but could not work with them, a concept that needs to be corrected. Feminists who were involved in and associated with militant groups like the BPP and WU have been mostly left out of the history of the Women's Liberation Movement.⁵³ In the scholarship on the Weathermen, their gender politics is not considered, particularly their views on feminism and contributions to women's liberation. Recent histories of the Weathermen in general have also given less attention to women, and repeat the typical narratives of Weatherwomen as not feminists but violent oddities and victims of the male movement. One exception is Mona Cristina Rocha's dissertation, which argues for Weatherwomen's feminism as "militant feminism."⁵⁴

The most recent scholarship, however, pays more attention to Black Panther women, with new interpretations of the BPP and WU from a bottom-up, local, and

My Life with SDS and the Weathermen (New York: HarperCollins, 2009); Bill Ayers, *Fugitive Days: Memoirs of An Antiwar Activist* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009). For previous memoirs by Weatherwomen or writings on them, see Susan Stern. *With the Weathermen: The Personal Journal of a Revolutionary Woman* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1975); and Jane Alpert, *Growing Up Underground* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc, 1981). For more sources displaying contemporary views exclusively on women in the WU, see Thomas Powers, *Diana: the Making of a Terrorist* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971); Susan Braudy, *Family Circle: The Boudins and the Aristocracy of the Left* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003); John Castellucci, *The Big Dance: The Untold Story of Kathy Boudin and the Terrorist Family that Committed the Brink's Robbery Murders* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1986); and Ellen Frankfort, *Kathy Boudin and the Dance of Death* (New York: Stein and Day, 1983).

⁵³ Zwerman, "Mothering on the Lam"; Lindsey Churchill, "Exploring Feminism's Complex Relationship with Political Violence: An Analysis of the Weathermen, Radical Feminism and the New Left," *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal* 16 (2007): 28-43; Richard G. Braungart and Margaret M. Braungart, "From Protest to Terrorism: The Case of SDS and the Weathermen," in *Social Movements and Violence: Participation in Underground Organizations*, ed., Donatella della Porta (Greenwich, Connecticut and London, England: JAI Press, 1992), 45-78.

⁵⁴ Mona Cristina Rocha, "Militant Feminism and the Women of the Weather Underground Organization" (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2014). There are also very recent studies on Weatherwomen in relation to radical feminism, see Cyra B. Wyker, "Women in Wargasm: The Politics of Women's Liberation in the Weather Underground Organization" (master's thesis, University of South Florida, 2009); and Carla P. Bautista, "When Pipe Bombs and a 'Pretty Brunette' Collide: The Multiple Identities of Bernardine Dohrn" (BA, Haverford College, 2012).

cultural approach, and through feminist perspectives. Many accounts about Black Panther women provide remarkable studies that significantly reinterpret revolutionary women's roles in the groups. Scholars like Angela D. LeBlanc-Ernest, Tracye Ann Matthews, and Mary Phillips uncover how Black Panther women had feminist perspectives on their own movement, focusing on female leaders like Ericka Huggins and Elaine Brown.⁵⁵ The studies of iconographies and imageries of Black revolutionary women in the BPP, among them the excellent work by historian Robyn Spencer, are important to understand the Black Panthers' self-representation beyond their leadership and feminist statements that were not always clear and visible.⁵⁶ However in their attempt to discover women's feminist perspectives, some scholars remain blind to the women's relationships to armed resistance, ignoring the advocacy of Black Panther's self-defense and Weatherwomen's urban guerrilla warfare. Studies on revolutionary women mostly avoid discussion of their violent activism and instead stress women's leadership roles and their nonviolent programs, particularly for the BPP.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Tracye Ann Matthews, "'No One Ever Asks What a Man's Place in the Revolution Is': Gender and Sexual Politics in the Black Panther Party, 1966-1971," PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1998; Angela Darlean Brown, "Servants of the People: A History of Women in the Black Panther Party," BA., Harvard University, 1992; and Mary Phillips, "The Feminist Leadership of Ericka Huggins in the Black Panther Party," *Black Diaspora Review* 4, no. 1 (Winter 2014). For important anthologies on the BPP, see Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas, eds., *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and Their Legacy* (Routledge, 2001); Charles E. Jones, ed., *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2005); and Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams, eds., *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁵⁶ Linda Lumsden, "Good Mothers with Guns: Framing Black Womanhood in the *Black Panther*, 1968-1980," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 86, no. 4 (Winter 2009); Robyn Ceanne Spencer, "Engendering the Black Freedom Struggle: Revolutionary Black Womanhood and the Black Panther Party in the Bay Area, California," *Journal of Women's History* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2008); Komozi Woodard and Dayo F. Gore, eds., *Want to Start a Revolution? Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: NYU Press, 2009); and Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York and London: The New Press, 2007).

⁵⁷ Some scholars and historians provide accounts of armed resistance as essential to the ideologies and tactics of black liberation movements. Scholar-activist Peniel E. Joseph's "Black Power Studies"

Revolutionary women in the WU and BPP had a great influence on women's identities in U.S. history. The history of women in the Sixties' American radical movements must be analyzed with respect to the vogue for revolutionary violence to encompass the complexity of women's political subjectivity in the Sixties from a global viewpoint. In this dissertation, I argue that women in revolutionary movements such as the BPP and WU experimented with their own version of women's liberation, and their commitment and contributions to women's liberation require new perspectives in feminist scholarship. This challenges the omission of revolutionary women in the history of the Women's Liberation Movement, and particularly in the pervasive feminist discourse that labels Weatherwomen as anti-feminist and criticizes their lack of feminist advocacy. How historians view Weatherwomen and Panther women as a fixed identity in history neglects a significant process that changed and transformed the BPP and WU in relation to its women's movement, embracing struggles for liberation in race, gender, class, and many other categories of difference. The study of revolutionary women and their intertwinement with violence will contribute to women's history, revealing hidden yet multifarious women's activism beyond the predominant accounts.

conceptualizes the armed resistance of Black Power and the nonviolence of Civil Rights as not opposite sides of a binary but as intertwined types of activism for black liberation throughout history. Peniel E. Joseph, ed., *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights—Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 7-11. Starting with historian Timothy B. Tyson's biography of Robert F. Williams—a notorious advocate of armed self-defense, many scholars like Emilye J. Crosby have developed the scholarship on self-defense. Tyson, Timothy B., "Robert F. Williams, 'Black Power,' and the Roots of the African American Freedom Struggle," *Journal of American History* 85, no. 2 (September 1998): 540-570; and Timothy Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); and Crosby, "'It wasn't the Wild West': Keeping Local Studies in Self-Defense Historiography," in *Civil Rights History from the Ground up*. For the studies on women in the Black Power Movement, see Rhonda Y. Williams, "Black Women, Urban Politics, and Engendering Black Power," Kimberly Springer, "Black Feminists Respond to Black Power Masculinism," and Stephen Ward, "The Third World Women's Alliance: Black Feminist Radicalism and Black Power Politics," ed., *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights—Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

Methodologies

To historicize women's political agency as revolutionaries, this dissertation utilizes a cultural and feminist approach to social movements of the Sixties, not exclusively but *mutually*: it will explore how politically active women became revolutionary women through their own self-presentation and the representation of these women by the media and the FBI as an "event."⁵⁸ Feminist historian Tani Barlow examines the ontological claim in history through French philosopher Alain Badiou's "event" in which women's experiences are not singular or fixed but rather an interpretable category. Badiou attempts to reconcile a notion of the subject with ontology in reaction to deconstructivism.⁵⁹ The history of women in Barlow's work is not constructed by women's lineal and continuous experiences from the past for historical evidence; rather, Barlow sees history as discontinuous and cumulative. Barlow's concept of an event provides insights into how the specificity of white women and women of color as revolutionaries can be materialized as universal in the late 1960s: "The advent of woman is a world historical event in enlightened and revolutionary thought. The process

⁵⁸ Tani E. Barlow, "Event, Abyss, Excess: The Event of Women in Chinese Commercial Advertisement, 1910s-1930s," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 24, no. 2 (2013): 51-92; and *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004). Barlow adopts the term 'catachresis' from postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: "A concept-metaphor without an adequate referent is a catachresis." *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism*, 15. Spivak uses the term catachresis to represent a group, like women and proletariats, who have no true examples or references because there is no exact equivalence between concept and referent, as Barlow explains in terms of Chinese women *funü/nüxing*. Through her appropriation of Spivak's concept, Barlow calls historical evidence of women catachresis—generally a "particular misuse of a proper noun, where the term's referent is, theoretically or philosophically speaking, inadequate." Tani E. Barlow, "History and the Border," *Journal of Women's History* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 15-16. Barlow's concept of the historical catachresis can show how revolutionary women, particularly Black Panther women, were invented from invisibility to visibility in the late 1960s. Catachresis allows the possibility to see history as coherent and comprehensible in the unstable category of women.

⁵⁹ Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (New York: Continuum, 2005); Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); and Jonathan Elmer, "Babo's Razor; or, Discerning the Event in an Age of Differences," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 19, no. 2 (2008): 54-81.

of becoming invested in the historical event of women” is situated in a particular period of history.⁶⁰

For example, during the slavery era, a black woman would have hardly been considered as political because of her secondary position as both a slave to be possessed and submissive and a female in a white- and male-centered world; however, black women became visible and recognizable as revolutionary subjects through the invention of Black Nationalism in the late 1960s.⁶¹ This event shows the invisibility of black women in the 1960s, because it was unthinkable and unprecedented in the traditional ideas of black women but “newly presented” in the late 1960s.⁶² The same concept can be applied to the event of women in new feminist movements for women’s liberation and in women’s armed struggles against racism, classism, and imperialism, both of which occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The use of Barlow’s understanding of the event helps explain that revolutionary women, who were unprecedented in the U.S. and the world, were newly presented in the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁶³

⁶⁰ Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism*, 10.

⁶¹ There were political black women activists, especially abolitionists like Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman in the late 19th and early 20th century. However, political black women as a group were rare in historical accounts.

⁶² Tani E. Barlow, “Event, Abyss, Excess,” 58.

⁶³ Similar to Barlow’s catachresis, Joan Scott shows how women constructed their identity through fantasy echo, which made it possible to see women’s unstable identity as a coherent category. Scott constantly questions the category of the identity of women in history, in which most feminist historians produce “continuous histories of women’s activism to their own inventions” because of the difficulty of historicizing the category of women, and because of their resistance against the established idea of women’s nature as apolitical and lacking political participation. Black women’s collective identities, like white women’s, were invented as an effort of political mobilization and the operations of their identification is what Scott called “fantasy echo,” meaning “such identification is established by the finding of resemblances between actors present and past.” The concept of an echo illustrates how women reproduce the same identity that came before, but it is an incomplete reproduction. Identity as an echo demonstrates the process that eliminates differences and discontinuities of subjects in time but produces its identity as a continuous, coherent, and historical phenomenon through fantasy. Through the echo/fantasy,

In the late 1960s, women activists started displaying more aggressive and militant activism, and their political identities became embodied in their physical and symbolic presentation as revolutionaries. Armed resistance became an indispensable revolutionary tool for some American women. They saw how women in Third World countries were powerful and essential in armed struggle, fighting for their liberation against imperialist oppression. American women were also making a revolution in their own country. Nonetheless, these revolutionary American women were invisible most of the time and appeared to the public exclusively in the media's coverage of violent protests, and the FBI's search posters.

The mass media associated women with violence to create a great spectacle. In the media's representation, politically violent women became significant figures. These women did not fit the gender stereotypes of women as weak and passive in American society. Josephine G. Hendin recognizes that media coverage of violent acts by women are sensationalized in extreme ways and argues that revolutionary women in militant movements have played a "significant role in the media culture that uses mastery of persuasive language to represent violence as a positive change [from passivity to action]." ⁶⁴ The dynamics and dialogues among revolutionary women, the media, and the FBI became a place in which women's political subjectivities could be invented. The Sixties produced the first generation of women revolutionaries to offer their experience

women achieved an individual as well as a collective identity. Joan Wallach Scott, "Fantasy Echo: History and the Construction of Identity," *Critical Inquiry* 27, no. 2 (2001): 286-287.

⁶⁴ Josephine G. Hendin, *Heartbreakers: Women and Violence in Contemporary Culture and Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 44-45. Former Black Panther member Angela Davis provides a similar argument that violent women are not simply female incarnations of stereotypical male aggressiveness, but challenges in her own way the imposition of gender-based inferiority. See Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Random House, 1998), 35-36.

for leadership, to receive the attention of the media as militants, and to create a political identity through their self-presentation in both their own media and mainstream media culture. The media is the way in which political activist women tried to communicate with the public and how they invented themselves as revolutionaries in the late 1960s.

As historian Nan Enstad shows, political subjectivity is the way in which an individual who had previously been largely invisible and indiscernible in public spaces due to the stereotypical perspectives of a given society becomes a social and political person. During the Sixties, as a noteworthy example, black revolutionary Angela Davis became a political subject, noticeable and distinguished, when she appeared in the FBI's Most Wanted list. With astonishingly ferocious stories of a murder and kidnapping in 1970, she appeared in the media's consistently reproduced images with her Afro hairdo, naturally curly and combed out to create a dome-like effect. Davis remembers that the FBI and the media reproduced her image as a black revolutionary woman. The FBI declared Davis to be one of the country's ten most-wanted criminals and spread photographs on the Wanted poster: labeling her under her picture as "armed and dangerous."⁶⁵ The militant African American woman's fashionable style—like the Afro—had powerful appeal to the public. Fashion became a potential political resource for inventing one's own political subjectivity.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Angela Y. Davis, "Afro Images: Politics, Fashion, and Nostalgia," *Critical Inquiry* 21 (Autumn 1994): 41.

⁶⁶ There are few historical studies of women activists' fashion as a hidden form of resistance. Enstad shows an interesting history of women garment workers in New York City. Consumer culture provided them a space to fight with "extremely difficult material and ideological constraints a new range of representations, symbols, activities, and spaces with which to create class, gender, and ethnic identities." See Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Columbia University Press, 1999), 5-7. Another historian, Robin D. G. Kelly, also argues that Black Nationalist Malcolm X's early fashion in his adulthood in Detroit, "wearing the zoot suit and the conk hairstyle and speaking in a distinctive "hep cat" language," was vested in his Black

The creation of a political subjectivity is a process that is never complete. Nor is one's political identity essential or fixed. The revolutionary woman continuously reconfigured her identity through visual politics. I define "visual politics," as the way in which women addressed their multiple positions of race, gender, class, and sexuality, by presenting their bodies in their own media outlets and challenging contemporary representations of the concept of a woman in 1960s and 1970s America.⁶⁷ Women in both the BPP and WU promoted their images as revolutionaries through their cultural production and reproduction: newspapers, pamphlets, paintings, fashion, hairstyles, songs, and so on. Clearly, women activists participated in consumer culture and styled their bodies in certain ways. They fashioned a particular form of radicalism and their own gender language. The mainstream media also widely conveyed narratives of the movements' media activism. Self-fashioning, as a nonverbal form of communication, was an important aspect of militant women's self-expressions; it can help us visualize the relation of fashion to women's activism and place these women within women's history, as a contrast with the general perspectives of the "hegemonic" second-wave feminism in the Sixties Movement.

The relationship between political groups like the BPP and WU and the media is especially complex in the history of the Sixties movements. Former SDS leader Todd Gitlin has analyzed the mutual relationship between the movements and mass media. The

Nationalist activism. See Robin D. G. Kelley, "The Riddle of the Zoot: Malcolm Little and Black Cultural Politics During World War II," in *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 162-163. For SNCC women's fashion, see Tanisha C. Ford, "SNCC Women, Denim, and the Politics of Dress," *The Journal of Southern History* 79, no. 3 (August 2013) and "Soul Generation: Radical Fashion, Beauty, and the Transnational Black Liberation Movement, 1954-1980," PhD diss., Indiana University, (2011)

⁶⁷ The term is first used by feminist bell hooks in *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (New York: The New Press, 1995), xii.

media found newsworthy material in political activism and made outspoken activists into stars or celebrities, and in turn they used the media as a means of recruiting members, circulating their political issues, and making spectacles to the public. According to Gitlin, the relationship was, however, problematic because the movements depended on the “media frame.” The media spotlighted leaders as violent and represented select features of the Movement as social problems requiring a solution. Because of this media representation, the movements became isolated and lost public support because of violent activism in the late 1960s.⁶⁸ At first, as Gitlin says, the mass media helped activists by publicizing the movements’ ideologies and political actions. But political activists had to produce their own media to define and build up their own self-determined issues, to achieve popularity, and to recruit members. Both SDS and the BPP published their own newspapers—*New Left Notes* and *the Black Panther*. These papers became the most powerful means to spread and share their ideas, happenings, and upcoming events with the public, and to reach more targetable supporters.

Self-presentation and self-fashioning of militant activist women as revolutionaries, however, could not be directly delivered in their own newspapers and pamphlets as effectively. Their groups would emphasize only those actions and images of women activists that fit into their own political purposes, which did not always reflect women’s motivations. Mainstream media selected particular events and leaders to make newsworthy: those that were dramatic and full of spectacle. The FBI’s demonization and

⁶⁸ Despite Gitlin’s contribution to the scholarship of the Sixties, his analysis of the media is limited to SDS and a few mainstream media—CBS News and *The New York Times*. Given that the activists utilized their own media, the movements’ own media — underground papers, and weekly and monthly newspapers — are especially significant for the relation of the media to the movements. Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

criminalization of revolutionary women also inadvertently legitimized those movements. Therefore, analyzing how revolutionary women's visual politics were used to construct their political subjectivity requires the understanding of the reciprocal interaction of political groups, the mass media, and the FBI.

Sociologist Becky Thompson initiated an analysis of militant women like the Weatherwomen and Panther women beyond rigid second-wave feminism. She calls them “multiracial feminists,” and include in this category Angela Davis, Kathleen Cleaver, and Marilyn Buck of the BPP, and Naomi Jaffe and Laura Whitehorn of the Weathermen.⁶⁹ Thompson points out that “radical” feminists excluded the “white anti-patriarchal feminists”; however, she uncovers personal stories of radical women who only became feminists in the 1980s, without inquiring into Weatherwomen's theories and actions for women's liberation as a group principle.⁷⁰

Applying Becky Thompson's multiracial feminist concept to women in the BPP and WU, and to radical feminists, I believe that the Weatherwomen—regardless of the numbers who participated and the official acceptance of the group for feminism—provided their own version of women's liberation. They offered anti-racist and anti-imperialist perspectives on international women's positions, were conscious of the necessity of solidarity between white women and women of color domestically and internationally, and recognized the limitations of white-centered feminism. Contrary to typical accounts of women's politics in the BPP and WU, the groups had gradually changed their gender politics before and after going underground, unlike the timeless

⁶⁹ Thompson, “Multiracial Feminism”; and *A Promise and a Way of Life: White Antiracist Activism* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

⁷⁰ Thompson, “Multiracial Feminism,” 345.

characters of these women that scholars argue for. They became aware of women's liberation more deeply, and practiced their version of women's liberation through the 1970s.

To find new perspectives on women's political action and image in relation to violence, I have based my research on new sources like personal interviews and rarely-referenced archival materials. However, the oral histories by former activists of the BPP, WU, and feminist organizations were a challenge for me to take into account. Given the fact that most histories of the Sixties have been based on the many outspoken activists' stories of their past, there is a concern regarding the reliability of research materials. Writing about women who were involved in symbolic as well as actual violent activism, especially Black Panther women and Weatherwomen, presents particular problems to historians, as many activists today are reluctant to discuss their past actions, specifically those related to aggressive and violent images and actions. Some Weatherwomen, like Kathy Boudin, are entirely unwilling to give any information regarding their activism prior to their incarcerations, in favor of constructing a new life for themselves.

Revolutionary women in the WU and BPP have continued their devotion to the revolution since the 1960s and were reluctant to identify themselves as strictly feminists, who were primarily white- and gender-focused in the beginning. Since women in both groups were frequently accused of anti-feminist actions by feminists in the past, they largely tended to self-criticize their groups' sexism or illuminate women's leadership and gender politics within the groups in their interviews and memoirs. A few Black Panther women and Weatherwomen whom I interviewed sought to soften and modify the prevailing negative accounts regarding their activism. They also kept silent about their

armed actions, such as bombings and robberies, for legal purposes. Along with the Weatherwomen, Black Panther women showed a similar tendency to dislike media and scholarly accounts that label the group as armed revolutionaries. The Black Panther women's desire to disconnect themselves from their aggressive rhetoric makes it even harder to understand their past thoughts and actions.

In many cases, women in the BPP and WU repeated how historians and feminists have talked about their own groups' sexism and male chauvinism. The memory of their own past has been embellished by the hegemonic feminist narratives. Their memories often followed how scholars and historians had written the history of their own activism. Although these oral narratives presented unique problems, discovering previously unheard voices and finding complicated stories have been necessary for understanding those women and gaining access to other resources that had not been previously analyzed. Contacting former members was not an easy process, yet it provided me with a new approach to sources that scholars rarely get access to. These sources show how women in movements worked for race and gender equality, and reveal the multiracial and transnational nature of late 20th century feminism.

Chapter Overviews

To discover what women's liberation meant for revolutionary women during the Vietnam War era, this dissertation examines a period beginning in the late 1960s when the militancy of the era helped to foster the founding of the BPP and WU, and ending in 1981 with one of the last 1960s-style left-wing militant actions, the Brinks robbery, which was carried out by the May 19th Communist Organization, a group comprised of the BLA, the extremist divisions of the BPP, and the WU. Both the BPP/BLA and WU

were formed in 1970. This dissertation is, however, constituted more thematically than chronologically, because the three case studies of women's revolutionary self-fashioning cannot be described in a neat chronological order. The revolutionary women in the BPP, WU, and radical feminism worked at the same time period in parallel or intersecting ways with each other. However, each group constructed their political subjectivity in complex but distinctive ways that were similar to and different from the others.

Chapter one introduces the construction of women's political subjectivities before and during the 1960s. It briefly traces the trajectories of political women who were involved in militant and armed activism in the early 20th century. Chapter one mainly examines the Women's Liberation Movement as the beginning of second-wave feminism and the transformation of women's activism, especially in SNCC and SDS, from nonviolent and peaceful to militant and violent, and from integrationist to separationist. Many women in the BPP and WU, due to their continuous anti-racist and anti-imperialist activism in SNCC and SDS, became dedicated to more violent movements in their advocacy of armed self-defense and nationalist liberation for anti-racism and anti-imperialism in the late 1960s. The newly emerging feminists, many from the same activist groups, eventually left the movements that they considered male-dominated and sexist, and strengthened their advocacy of gender equality in the well-known "politico-feminist" split. Unlike radical women's efforts to make a revolution and emulate women fighters in Third World liberation, they tended to prioritize one discrete classification, such as race, or gender, or class, for liberation over others. In spite of the division of revolutionary women into three groups, the state, via the FBI's surveillance, targeted all

the women as “domestic subversives.” This common component seriously affected the political activism of all revolutionary women.

Chapter two examines the dynamics of making black revolutionary women in the Black Power Movement in the late 1960s and 1970s, which inspired the other two groups of revolutionary women. It focuses on how Black Panther women like Kathleen Cleaver constructed their political subjectivities in relation to self-defense and women’s liberation. This chapter centers on Black Panther women’s practices of visual politics, their use of fashion, and their production of images of black revolutionary women, echoed those of Third World women. Their self-fashioning was a response to the cult of white womanhood and black women’s previously invisible presence in American public spaces. The discourse and debates over violence versus nonviolence as the group’s tactic for self-defense also shaped many black women’s identities. This chapter especially pays attention to the International Section of the BPP, which has been less accounted for in historical literature in large part because of its split with the more well-known Huey Newton-led BPP based in Oakland, California. The International Section of the BPP placed their militant activism and armed struggle in a global context. Through their contacts with the Third World in the International Section, black revolutionary women further formulated their ideas and actions. By acknowledging the transnational scope of women’s revolutionary movements, and thereby challenging the dominant accounts of women in the BPP, this chapter will demonstrate the transnational nature of late twentieth century black feminism, and the subsequent connections between black activism and “Third Worldism” that distinguished the politics of the Black Panthers as well as that of many white radicals in the Sixties.

Chapter three examines Weatherwomen's politics and activism and how the Weatherwomen's theories and beliefs led to an approach to women's liberation that differed from that of many radical feminist groups. This chapter explores how Weatherwomen were largely perceived as anti-feminist in 1969, and how that myth was perpetuated by the nature of their clandestine activism after they went underground in 1970. This chapter reveals that Weatherwomen expressed their ignorance of and antagonism toward women's liberation in the late 1960s, but how they re-approached feminist ideas and practiced feminist actions in the early 1970s. Weatherwomen's attempts to connect women's liberation with anti-racism and anti-imperialism led them to form the Women's Militia and Women's Brigade, which distinctively highlighted the Weatherwomen's feminist perspectives and actions, much differently from Black Panther women and feminists.

Chapter four centers on the complicated history of self-proclaimed and well-known pacifistic feminists and feminists who were also involved in armed resistance. It discusses how the FBI considered most radical feminists as a threat to the nation's security, causing them to infiltrate women's liberation groups. Seemingly not susceptible to performing violent or terroristic actions, radical feminists were deeply involved in debates on women's activism in violent movements after the 1968 Miss America Pageant protest. This first national feminist event impacted their identity in multiple ways, and led to the media's invention of the myth of radical feminists as "bra-burners" in the violent era of the Sixties. As a result, the FBI and the public were convinced that feminism was dangerous, violent and threatening. The point of this chapter is not to follow the process of inventing the myth and debunking it, but to examine violence as a dominant discourse

in which all the feminist and liberation movements were engaged through their construction of political subjectivity. This chapter will show the self-fashioning of radical and lesbian feminists and examine the similarities and differences of revolutionary women of the late 1960s and 1970s.

Chapter 1

Becoming Political Subjects for Women's Liberation in the 1960s

Throughout the 1960s, women experienced tremendous shifts and changes in their political rights and capacities, and constructed certain political identities, which were unprecedented in American history. The baby boomers born after World War II, were young—in their late teens to early 20s, active in social movements, especially for racial equality and many women were college-educated and highly independent, often choosing careers over marriage.¹ These women gained more political awareness by fighting multiple injustices, such as the end of racism, imperialism, and the war in Vietnam. Amidst the militancy of the Black Power and anti-war movements in the late 1960s, women became more radical, militant, and visible in the public sphere than ever before.

As the U.S. took practical steps into the war in Vietnam in 1964, it made all its young men and women vulnerable to the circumstances of war. The U.S. involvement in the war escalated after the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964 and peaked in 1968 without a triumph or clear justification for the “imperialist war.”² In January 1968, the Vietnamese National Liberation Front (VNLF)—the Viet Cong—launched an attack on South

¹ After World War II, post-secondary/higher education sky-rocketed in the U.S. In the 1950s, college enrollment increased by 49 percent, from 15 to 24 percent of the population; however, during the 1960s it increased by 120 percent. In 1969, it reached 35 percent of the population from 18 to 24 years old, and 41 percent of the college students were women. *120 Years American Education*. 25 percent of Americans did not expect to marry in 1968. Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left*, 76.

² Most Japanese colonies in Asia like Vietnam and Korea gained independence after 1945; however, those post-colonial countries were divided into communist North and anti-communist South sections under the spatial arrangement of the Cold War to prevent the domino effect of a communist takeover. In response to the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964, the U.S. congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which allowed President Lyndon B. Johnson to increase U.S. military forces in Vietnam.

Vietnamese and U.S. forces in an event known as the Tet Offensive, which stunned the American public. Many Americans were already feeling that this was an unjustifiable war and were losing their faith in the U.S. capability to constrain the VNLFF and eventually triumph. The military victory by the North Vietnamese worsened anti-war sentiment, creating massive movements to end the war. As sociologist George Katsiaficas indicates, the Tet Offensive threatened the United States' power to control the "modern world system" during the Cold War.³ During the revolutionary year of 1968, massive anti-war movements were at their peak, gathering and unifying various groups of people from across the globe against the War in Vietnam.⁴

Many young men and women, feeling the urgent need for a revolution, became involved in radical activism, especially anti-war movements, participating in violent rhetoric and extreme measures like the bombing of governmental buildings. New Left and Black Power activists demanded individual freedom, autonomy, and self-determination—meaning liberation from central, dominant, and oppressive power under racist and imperialist control all over the world. The United States, in these revolutionary concepts, was the chief repressor of human rights in terms of domestic racism and subordination of the Third World through intervening in both individual and national freedom. Although many revolutionaries came from affluent middle-class families, they rejected the value their class played on wealth and power, arguing for the decentralization

³ The New Left's argument for decentralizing the world and self-determination was that the "modern world system" consisted of three worlds—the free world, the Communist bloc, and the Third World. Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left*, 19-20.

⁴ "The time was early September 1968, almost four years since President Johnson's bombings of Vietnam had transformed the New Left into 'the movement'—a hodgepodge of politicians, working people, students, hippies, and drug-and-rock freaks united by their opposition to the war," said Jane Alpert. see Alpert, *Growing up Underground*, 13.

of power and the redistribution of wealth in everyday life.⁵ For them, the revolution across races and nations was necessary for their own freedom, so the new movements were interracial and international, and sought global solidarity for self-government of each individual human and nation. Women were instrumental in making these new social movements and construct their own political subjectivity by inserting different historical values and qualities of militancy into womanhood, no matter how positive or negative.

Historical Tradition of Radical and Militant Women

Before the late 1960s, women's political activism was rarely associated with armed resistance in U.S history.⁶ Other than patriots who used firearms in support of their country and families—like female soldiers in the Civil War and armed women on the frontier—and the few women who used firearms for entertainment like Annie Oakley, there were few political women who were left-wing revolutionaries utilizing the tactics for armed activism to oppose governmental subjugation like white racism.⁷

Women who participated in political activism in the late 19th and early 20th century, such as the abolitionist, temperance, and suffragist movements, were predominantly white, middle- and upper-class, and educated women and supported a

⁵ For the notion of the new revolution in the 1960s, see Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left*, 4-5.

⁶ Out of more than 20 presidential assassination attempts since 1835, only two have been by women: Sara Moore and Lynette Fromme. Both attempts took place in 1975 on President Gerald Ford and both failed. Despite Moore's fascination for Patty Hearst who was kidnapped by the Symbionese Liberation Army (a white underground group in the San Francisco Bay Area in the mid-1970s), the presidential assassins were not particularly affiliated with political groups.

⁷ There were hundreds of women enlisted in armies during the Civil War, and women on the Western frontier were frequently armed for self-defense; however, both are examples of patriotic figures. In the case of Annie Oakley, she was a spectacle figure who was elegant, pretty, but also amazingly good at shooting. Neither the women in the Civil War and on the frontier, nor the famous female shooter, ever violated the gender division in the public. Oakley tried to keep her feminine look while she was at her famous Buffalo Bill's Wild West shows. For Annie Oakley, see Browder, *Her Best Shot*, 86-87.

patriarchal society. In the ideology of nineteenth-century liberalism, women were supposed to inhabit only the private sphere of the family and men to control both the private and public spheres. From these ideas came stereotypes of womanhood as inferior and subordinate to masculinity. When women became involved in nineteenth-century politics, they did so as caretakers, treating the society as a form of extended family.⁸ With a few exceptions, most of these women tolerated the white, middle-class, and patriarchal power system of the U.S. Yet 1960s revolutionary women questioned all stereotypes and conventional ideas of women in terms of race, class, and gender, which led them to create a distinctive political identity.

The majority of politically active women at the turn of the century accepted—sometimes eagerly, sometimes reluctantly—gendered identities as nonviolent, domestic and secondary to male control as wives and mothers, or helpers and followers of men. The exceptions were radical women in the labor and anarchist movements. They joined with male counterparts in advocating for militant actions in the form of strikes and boycotts. Mother Jones, longtime labor leader and co-founder of the International Workers of the World, was known as the “most dangerous woman in America,” labeled by a U.S. district attorney.⁹ Jones did not openly call for violence, nor was she known as a feminist. More radical and more feminist action emerged from anarchism, where Lucy Parsons and Emma Goldman became known as the wife and partner, respectively, of the men who were accused of the bombing conspiracy at Haymarket Square, Chicago, in

⁸ Carole Pateman, “Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy,” in *Public and Private in Social Life*, eds., S. I. Benn and G. F. Gaus (London and New York: Croom Helm and St. Martin’s Press, 1983), 281-285.

⁹ AFL-CIO America’s Unions, <http://www.aflcio.org/About/Our-History/Key-People-in-Labor-History/Mother-Jones-1837-1930> (accessed July 19, 2015).

1886.¹⁰ According to contemporary social norms, anarchist women like Parsons and Goldman were exceptional in their support for and advocacy of their men's violent political actions. Therefore, the public considered these women unfeminine, referring to Emma Goldman as a "womanly looking woman, with masculine mind and courage."¹¹

The image of women's rights activists as caretakers has merged with the peace movement since the Civil War. The founding mothers of the U.S women's movement, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony originated the Woman's National Loyal League as a response to the war. Historian Harriet Hyman Alonso described their anti-war sentiment as "feminist-pacifist consciousness," placing women as mothers and peacemakers. The Women's Peace Party (WPP) followed feminist peace activism like Stanton and Anthony. During the controversy over U.S. involvement in World War I, the issue of peace became very prominent among Progressive era women. Social reformer Jane Addams founded the first separatist women's peace organization in 1915. It was also a direct response to the First World War starting in Europe in 1914. As President Woodrow Wilson announced his position as leaning towards preparing to enter the war in November 1915, the WPP took an "anti-imperialist stance."¹² The WPP was reorganized into the U.S. Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in 1919. Jeannette Rankin—the first woman elected to the Congress and the only Congressperson to vote against U.S. entry into both the First and Second World

¹⁰ Eight anarchist men were suspected of the bombing, including founders of the International Working People's Association Albert Parsons and Alexander Berkman, who had attempted to assassinate businessman Henry Clay Frick in 1892.

¹¹ Penny A. Weiss and Loretta Kensinger, eds., *Feminist Interpretations of Emma Goldman* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 44.

¹² Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993).

Wars—worked for the WILPF.

As the most militant American women's movement of its time, the National Woman's Party (NWP) in the 1910s, especially its leader Alice Paul, was well known for its actions, such as hunger strikes and picketing, carried out in support for women's suffrage. However, the NWP did not promote violent actions like such as breaking windows and night arson in addition to hunger strikes, as did their British counterpart, the British Women's Social and Political Union. In the early 20th century, women who picketed at the White House—known as “silent sentinels”—shocked the public and media. Their public demonstration violated the social norm of white women's domesticity and threatened the male-dominant power over political election. The NWP called President Woodrow Wilson “Kaiser” for failing to support the Constitutional Amendment for women's suffrage, and refused to back the U.S. involvement in the First World War. The police arrested the picketers for “obstructing traffic” and the incarcerated protestors, like Alice Paul, went on hunger strikes, which resulted in their being force fed.

The style of political actions used by the NWP and Alice Paul differed from that of the majority of activists in women's rights movements. Relatively conservative and older women's suffragists like Carrie Chapman Catt of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) focused their actions on lobbying for state legislation, and the NAWSA supported President Wilson's decision to enter the war. Although the women's suffrage movement was not a unified movement but a coalition of different women and groups organized under the NAWSA, most suffragists followed the pacifistic and liberalist style of activism. However, Alice Paul and the NWP challenged the

President's authority, gaining public attention with their marches, protests, and civil disobedience like hunger strikes. This was a militant style of political actions by middle-class white women in a public place that contested the liberalist patriarchy, the most pressing issue for 1960s feminists to be dismantled.

Left-wing women's involvement in militant and violent activism pertaining to women's liberation was not active or at least not visible after the Nineteenth Amendment allowed women's enfranchisement in 1920. After the women's movement achieved the goal of suffrage, women's movements maintained their pacifistic activism, and the idea of peace as the most distinctive feminist issue persisted until the 1960s.¹³ After World War I ended, the nonviolent politics in the 1920s greatly influenced women's activism in the World. Indian independence activist Mohandas Gandhi became an international leader for pacifists, preaching the nonresistant reaction and response to violence. In the style of nonviolent activism, women's rights movements retained the idea of women's primary role as that of wives and mothers until the early 1960s.

The more dominant view of American women's relationship to the two World Wars was of their patriotism; they worked to support men on the battlefield. Women who worked and fought for the nation during World War II dramatically altered women's social status and awakened the perception of women's own capacities, as well as changing the limitation to exercise them. Women's experiences during wartime, working outside the home and becoming breadwinners in place of their men who went to fight in the war, had rapidly changed women's consciousness and positions in their families and society. During World War II more women were working outside their homes than ever

¹³ Alonson, *Peace as a Women's Issue*, 220.

before in U.S history, as demonstrated by “Rosie the Riveter” (see illustration 1). Rosie the Riveter was a fictional character who represented all the women who worked in factories that manufactured war supplies and munitions during the war. These women worked for the war effort in mostly military factories to contribute to the victory of the United States, instead of fighting on the battlefield. In the iconic image of Rosie, wearing a uniform of jeans and overalls, and frequently showing her muscled arm, the state promoted the strong and masculine looking woman to help her man, family, and ultimately country.¹⁴

This new image of American working women was promoted by the state and widely circulated by the media. However, these new experiences and images diminished in society after the war ended, as women working for the country made a concession to the demand of men returning from combat. Young women were now instructed to get married, raise children, and live in suburban houses, where they would be safe from outside danger such as nuclear threats. Though more women were able to access the public sphere through education and working, and were willing to overcome gender limitations and discrimination, many well-educated women felt the despair of balancing their career and their domestic roles, as Betty Friedan articulated in her book *The Feminine Mystique*, in 1963.

After the 1950s were a relatively dormant period for women’s political activism, and with their feminist consciousness awakening, radical women were eager to act and fight against injustices like racism and participated in various movements like the Civil

¹⁴ Diana Crane, *Fashion and its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 124.

Rights and New Left movements in Cold War America. The first national event where the early women's liberation movement appeared was a demonstration of the Jeannette Rankin Brigade for peace and for anti-war activism. Following the tradition of pacifistic feminism, Women Strike for Peace (WSP), founded in 1961, organized marches to demonstrate against nuclear weapons and the war in Vietnam in dozens of cities.¹⁵

Honoring the tradition of longtime pacifist Jeannette Rankin, the WSP organized a mass demonstration that drew about 5,000 feminists, pacifists, and radicals to Washington, D.C. in January 1968.¹⁶ Early women's liberation groups like New York Radical Women (NYRW) and the West Side group in Chicago participated in this event to support the anti-war actions, although they disagreed with the WSP's view that women should play the traditional role of mothers and wives. Harriet Hyman Alonso asserted that the peace movement provided early women's liberationists an opportunity to reclaim the importance of feminism in the 1960s.¹⁷

Both SNCC and SDS, representative groups of the movements popularized in the mid-60s, developed more radical ideas, and increased in militancy in the late-60s.¹⁸ SNCC and SDS, like most national organizations in social movements, were principally nonviolent and promoted unarmed tactics in response to racist and imperialist violence

¹⁵ The most famous demonstrations by the WSP were one at the Pentagon in 1967 and an anti-Vietnam War in 1972. Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 70-71.

¹⁶ Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue*, 221-223.

¹⁷ Ellen Carol Dubois and Lynn Dumenil, *Through Women's Eyes: An American History with Documents* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005), 633.

¹⁸ Both SNCC and SDS were founded in 1960 by students from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (which granted \$800 for forming a conference associated with a few other groups like the Congress of Racial Equality and SDS) and the Student League for Industrial Democracy (which came out of the socialist League for Industrial Democracy).

until the mid-1960s. However, as the political atmosphere grew extremely militant in response to police repression, particularly in anti-war movements, many activists began to consider the idea of armed resistance as a revolutionary strategy to end the institutionalized violence. Women within these groups also used the new aggressive rhetoric to develop their own political subjectivities as revolutionaries throughout the 1960s. Women of color and white women working in SDS and SNCC turned from their nonviolent activism to militant and violent stances, and integrationist efforts gave way to separate and fragmented movements including feminist organizations for women's liberation in the late 1960s.

The Emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement

Earlier in the postwar era, most activists in women's movements focused on legal problems of inequality and eliminating government and workplace sex discrimination. The National Organization for Women (NOW), founded by Betty Friedan in 1966, was the leading liberal feminist organization, comprised of middle-class, educated, and primarily married, professional women like Friedan herself. NOW pursued equality in the public sphere following the tradition of women's rights movements and liberalist ideas of womanhood, mainly focusing on educational, economic, and legislative reforms for women such as Equal Employment Opportunity laws. Although some younger feminists had worked for the NOW, like future radical feminist Ti-Grace Atkinson, most women's liberationists placed private life at the center of women's issues from the late 1960s, distancing themselves from more liberal feminists. These radical, younger, college-educated, mostly white women believed that women's personal issues, like birth control and abortion, were political and as important as making a revolution. The outburst of

women's liberation movements occurred spontaneously all over the country, and women in these movements articulated their growing consciousness of the need for women's liberation in numerous ways.

The women's liberation movement was diverse from the outset. Its leaders came from many different social movements; from sit-ins and helping voter registration in the South, to college strikes for the anti-war movement in the North in the 1960s, as popular feminists author, Gloria Steinem, stated in 1969.¹⁹ These movements provided important opportunities for women to train themselves as activists, working full time to discuss issues in meetings, writing leaflets, and marching in the streets.

Yet, most women in those movements—a place where they looked for equality—still undertook domestic tasks and a secondary role in, as opposed to activist men's outstanding visibility and leadership roles. Many activist men followed the lead of the patriarchal and sexist society, which awakened most women to the need for attention to their own oppression. For many women, participation in such movements, especially the SNCC and SDS, was the driving force for feminist awareness, and many became pioneers for the women's liberation movement. Women in SNCC and SDS published and circulated some of the earliest and most important articles about women's issues in the Civil Rights and the New Left movements, which was the starting point for evoking a new consciousness for women's liberation in the mid-1960s. Growing numbers of more experienced political women initiated their own liberation within the movements and women's liberation groups proliferated across the United States in the late 1960s and

¹⁹ Gloria Steinem, "After Black Power, Women's Liberation," *New York Magazine* (April 4, 1969), <http://nymag.com/news/politics/46802> (accessed February 3, 2015).

early 1970s.²⁰

The Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964 led by SNCC increased awareness of women's issues. Several hundred white students from the North went to the South to work with Civil Rights groups, which became the first event for young white and black activists to work together for the entire summer with nonviolent, integrationist, and optimistic attempts for interracial solidarity, as symbolized by their logo of clasped white and black hands.²¹ However, the project for solidarity raised problems for both black and white women, who by working together began to realize their own distinctiveness, each encountering obstacles specific to their race.

In working for SNCC, both the white and black young women developed their identities as strong political figures, learning from the examples the movement provided of black women as fighters. Older black women in local communities—called “mamas”—like Fannie Lou Hamer and Ella Baker, who helped found SNCC, served as role models for young activist women to become strong leaders, regardless of race.²² The black mamas demonstrated women's resistance and leadership in contrast to the perception of white womanhood as passive, docile, and apolitical. White activist women began to question culturally received notions of femininity as they met powerful black women in the black community who were every bit as effective as male organizers and community leaders. In the black-led movement in Mississippi, however, white women

²⁰ By 1970, there were more than two hundred women's liberation groups in New York State alone. The circulation of the liberal feminist magazine, *Ms.*, founded in 1972, reached 350,000 in 1973. Women's studies programs were created at 78 educational institutions and 2,000 courses for women such as women's history, literature, and sociology were offered at 500 colleges in 1974.

²¹ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*; and Evans, *Personal Politics*, 66-67.

²² For the black mamas as “new role models” for white women, see Evans, *Personal Politics*, 53; and Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, 27.

faced more problems due to their white womanhood and felt alienated from leadership positions, in contrast to black women's comparatively growing power.²³

Black women younger than the mamas, such as Diane Nash, Gloria Richardson, and Ruby Doris Robinson, were further proving women's skills in organization and leadership in their active roles in the Freedom Summer, as SNCC member and future BPP leader Kathleen Cleaver remembers.²⁴ However, black women's experiences in the movement in terms of their gender and race raised different problems and issues, distinguishing their ideas and actions regarding women's liberation from those of white women. Black women who worked like men, in terms of their equal endurance of beatings and arrests, realized their black womanhood was devalued and double-oppressed, unlike white women who suffered only from gender, and not racial, oppression. Contradictory to their empowerment in the public eye, black women were still largely confined to housekeeping responsibilities and kept out of decision-making roles. Labor division followed traditional gender norms: men discussing and drawing up manifestos and women making coffee and typing, due to the "assumption of male superiority."²⁵ In the process of realizing their own sex discrimination within the movement for racial equality and participating in consciousness-raising for women's liberation, black and white women in the Freedom Summer did not ultimately achieve interracial solidarity, but black and white feminist ideologies nonetheless developed on

²³ Evans, *Personal Politics*, 79-80.

²⁴ Many activists worked for several groups like the NAACP, CORE, and SNCC. SNCC was younger than the other groups, founded in 1960, unlike the NAACP which was founded in 1909 and CORE in 1942. According to Anne Moody, SNCC and CORE attracted more teenagers, but the NAACP dealt with "legal services and public relations." Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*; and Kathleen Neal Cleaver, "The Feminist Role in a Race Based Civil Rights Struggle," *Boston Globe* (March 1995).

²⁵ "SNCC Position Paper," in *Personal Politics*, 234.

“parallel tracks.”²⁶ As Sara M. Evans now admits, the women’s liberation movement in the 1960s was “multiracial from the outset,” but rarely interracial.²⁷

As a result of their direct experience with the discrimination against women in the movement, white women particularly expressed their experiences with the movements and the earliest declaration of “women’s liberation” appeared in both SNCC and SDS. Two memos written by Casey Hayden and Mary King, white members of SNCC, drew parallels between the subordination of blacks and of women in American society, calling attention to sex discrimination and the secondary position of women inside the Civil Rights movement. The “SNCC Position Paper (Women in the Movement)” in 1964 criticized SNCC for not recognizing that women were the critical factor that kept the movement running on a day-to-day basis without equality.²⁸

The white women’s call for awareness of feminist issues moved to the northern SDS. Hayden and King developed their idea for the first paper and wrote the second, a kind of memo, entitled “Sex and Caste.” They called the power structure which oppressed women in the United States a “caste system,” stating that “there seem to be many parallels that can be drawn between treatment of Negroes and treatment of women.”²⁹ The documentation of women’s oppression spread among women in SDS and lit a spark for women’s liberation. However, the idea of parallel treatment effectively separated black and white women, because white women did not acknowledge the double

²⁶ For women’s experience in the Freedom Summer, see Evans, *Personal Politics*, 83-89.

²⁷ Sara M. Evans, “Women’s Liberation: Seeing the Revolution Clearly,” *Feminist Studies* 41, no. 1 (2015): 144.

²⁸ “SNCC Position Paper,” in *Personal Politics*, 233-235.

²⁹ The paper was presented at the SDS convention called the “Rethinking Conference” in December 1965. This is one of the famous papers of early women’s liberation in the movement. See Casey Hayden and Mary King, “Sex and Caste: A Kind of Memo,” *Liberation* 10 (April 1966): 33-36.

oppression of black women who did not relate to the issues that the white women were rising. The white women's analysis of women's oppression was more applicable to white women's position in society; their inability to empathize with black women's position ultimately led black and white women to pursue gender liberation along different paths.

After 1965, some Civil Rights groups, particularly the SNCC Freedom Summer project, embraced more of the separatist principles of independent movements in the Third World and Black Nationalist ideas in favor of armed resistance and self-defense rather than nonviolent tactics. As SNCC turned from its original religious basis to a more political ideological movement, as Evans indicates, SNCC's character became more radical and masculine, and the situation more complicated, especially for white women in a primarily black movement.³⁰

The nonviolent strategies of the Civil Rights movement led by national leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., were unrealistic and impractical for most local activists in the South where armed self-defense was inevitable and pervasive.³¹ The Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts did not achieve what most blacks in the North wanted: the end of poverty, employment, spatial segregation in cities, and so on. Black urban uprisings erupted in Harlem, New York, in 1964 and Watts, Los Angeles, in 1965, and the aggressive voice of Malcolm X gained popularity through his anti-white rhetoric and advocacy of armed self-defense. Rejecting the nonviolent preaching of Martin Luther King, Jr., which they once promoted, SNCC adopted the ideas of armed resistance put

³⁰ Evans, *Personal Politics*, 97-98.

³¹ The tactics of nonviolence and self-defense are not oppositional and antagonistic concepts and position between the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement. Emilye J. Crosby, *Civil Rights History from the Ground up: Local Struggles, A National Movement*, 21-22.

forth by Malcolm X and Franz Fanon in 1965.³²

With the growth of pan-Africanism, coming out of the newly gained independence of African nations in the Third World, “Black Nationalism” rapidly affected Civil Rights movements in the United States. Black Nationalists called less for blacks’ efforts to assimilate into white society than to dissimilate themselves. Following the example of many African nations that gained their independence, Black Nationalists called for blacks’ own culture and liberation, self-determination, self-sufficiency, and self-governance rather than white dominance. Under the influence of Black Nationalism and in despair of interracial solidarity after their experience during the Freedom Summer, SNCC expelled all white members in 1966.³³ As SNCC took on the Black Nationalist cry for Black Power and SDS started their major draft resistance, white women became more and more separated from those male-dominated movements and longed to give voice to their own struggle for gender equality.³⁴

Under the influence of SNCC’s militancy and its earliest position papers, SDS women started raising the issue of women’s oppression. They particularly targeted the SDS principle of participatory democracy, a main ideal of the SDS in their manifesto “The Port Huron Statement,” drafted by Tom Hayden in 1962.³⁵ An early issue raised by

³² Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left*, 74.

³³ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 24-25.

³⁴ For white feminists’ abstract antiracism, see Wini Breines, “What’s Love Got to Do with It? White Women, Black Women, and Feminism in the Movement Years,” *Signs* 27, no. 4 (Summer 2002). Evans states that the New Left movement in the North also became a masculine movement in the late 1960s. Evans, *Personal Politics*, 112.

³⁵ SDS proposed that the individual should share in the social decisions that would determine the quality and direction of their life. While the Old Left focused on class-based economic oppression, SDS stressed how capitalist society created mechanisms of psychological and cultural domination over everyone. The idea of women’s liberation also came from SDS but the group was male-dominated and the SDS men could not see the conflict within the movement and their own discrimination.

women's liberationists in SDS was the extent of women's democratic participation in the movement. SDS men held all leadership roles in the mid-1960s, with the exception of one, held by Jane Adams. A former SNCC and SDS member, and the only female National Secretary at that time, Adams also raised the issue of women's equality in January 1967. Thirty percent of SDS members were women, but the leadership and public positions were virtually monopolized by men.³⁶ The membership and convention attendance lists generally reflected between 32 and 39 percent women but executive committee membership among women grew from 14.3 percent in 1961 to 23 percent in 1964. Women's prevalence in lower-level positions was indicated by the fact that in 1964, while only one of seventeen nationally elected National Council members was a woman; five of the nine chapter delegates were female.³⁷ Adams defined the problem as the need to understand "the institutional necessity, the class necessity if you will," of female submissiveness. She argued that women must begin "demanding equality within the organization one is in, refusing to be intimidated by the male chauvinism which does exist, even within the movement."³⁸ Here, the phrase "male chauvinism" is introduced into the movement's debate, and "male chauvinism" continued to be the favored term for sexual oppression among radical feminists.³⁹

³⁶ Jane Adams was only one of the two national secretaries from 1965 to 1966. She was succeeded by Bernardine Dohrn in 1968-1969. Evans, *Personal Politics*, 187; and Jane Adams, "People's Power: On Equality for Women," *New Left Notes*, January 20, 1967, 2.

³⁷ Evans, *Personal Politics*, 112.

³⁸ Jane Adams, "People's Power," *New Left Notes*, 2.

³⁹ SDS coined the phrase that has since come to identify the force that oppresses women. Alan M. Adelson, *SDS* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), 196-197. "Male chauvinism" continued to be the favored term for sexual oppression even among radical feminists through 1968 because "male supremacy" was regarded as a survivor from Old Left terminology. Fred R. Shapito, "Historical Notes on the Vocabulary of the Women's Movement," *American Speech* 60, no. 1 (Spring, 1985): 5.

The earliest impulse to initiate the issue of “women’s liberation” within the SDS resulted in a woman’s workshop was held during the SDS national conference in December 1965. The workshop was endorsed by the National Council, which mandated distribution and discussion of the declaration of women’s liberation. SDS addressed the problem of “democratic participation in SDS” and urged women to “take on tasks like workshop leaders.” After the December conference, some women circulated the memo “Sex and Caste” and started to talk about the problems of “women in the movement and women as an oppressed class.”⁴⁰ In an effort to participate in the movement as equals with male members, SDS women raised consciousness of women’s position in the movement, which affected both white women and women of color. The workshops on women in SDS conferences attracted many women who were later instrumental in the formation of early feminist groups.⁴¹

As the Vietnam War escalated in the mid-1960s, anti-war movements attracted and paid greater attention to men, who were being drafted, and anti-war activist men

⁴⁰ For the workshop on “women in the movement” at the December Conference, see “On roles in sds” and “December Conference impressions,” *New Left Notes*, January 28, 1966, 4. The entire SDS manuscript collection was microfilmed at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. The collection included the SDS newspaper *New Left Notes* published from January 21, 1966 to September 25, 1971, and again June 26, 1972. The first issue of *New Left Notes* did not deal with any women’s issues but when the second issue was published, it included various articles on the secondary role of women in the movement and provided a place to communicate with other women activists. In an issue from January 28, 1966, the SDS says that “over 100 girls have pledged anywhere from \$10 to \$1 a week to pay the salary of an organizer hired from the community by the Newark Project.” This issue shows that women had independent activities of their own and were an important strength in SDS. The editor, Margaret Levi, also described the women’s organizing actions as “really exciting things.” For the chapter news of Margaret Levi, see *New Left Notes*, January 28, 1966, 1.

⁴¹ As Evans pointed out, when the women’s workshop first convened, it was composed of both men and women, but a number of men reacted so defensively that some women resolved to meet by themselves without the “obstructionist men.” While several men angrily demanded to be allowed to participate in the women’s discussion group, some women who had stayed in the mixed group were frustrated by the men’s self-protective behavior. The women’s statement at the SDS convention in December 1965 was not successful because they could not draw the other women’s support, but it was at least endorsed by the SDS National Council. Evans, *Personal Politics*, 163; and Echols, *Daring to be bad*, 34.

burned their draft cards; in contrast, women's roles in draft resistance was secondary and seemed insignificant and invisible in such anti-draft actions. SDS women, like many activist women, advanced debates on women's issues, including special workshops dealing with women's problems and cautious examinations of sexism in American society. In the "We Won't Go" anti-war conference in December 1966, SDS women launched the "Women's Liberation Workshop," with a special session on the "role of women," concerning SDS women's support of draft-resisting men.⁴² Florence Howe, a future feminist, held the women's workshop to discuss "how they could work as an effective, independent group and at the same time support a draft resistance movement."⁴³ Heather Booth, who helped to organize the women's workshop, also asserted that women needed to develop "self-consciousness as women" in order to participate effectively in anti-war movement activities.⁴⁴

By 1967, most articles on women's secondary roles in the movement—at least in the SDS newspaper *New Left Notes*—did not promote separation from male-dominated groups, but rather emphasized an effective and supportive role for women in anti-racist and anti-war activism.⁴⁵ In the summer of 1967, SDS formed a women's caucus that issued a "women's manifesto" demanding an equal role within SDS and an effort by the organization to fight against male chauvinism.⁴⁶ The SDS women compared the role of

⁴² Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Vintage, 1973), 357.

⁴³ Florence Howe was a founder of Feminist Press. For the "We Won't Go Conference," see *New Left Notes*, December 9, 1966; and Evans, *Personal Politics*, 184n-185n.

⁴⁴ Heather Tobis, "A Reexamination of the 'We Won't Go' Conference," *New Left Notes* 2, no. 3 (January 13, 1967), 3.

⁴⁵ Francine Silbar, "Women and the Draft Movement," *New Left Notes*, March 27, 1967, 11.

⁴⁶ The women's statement was one of the earliest documents to use the terms "women's liberation" and "male chauvinism." See "Liberation of Women," *New Left Notes*, July 10, 1967, 4.

women to that of Third World people colonized by white males and called on the SDS to work for communal childcare, rights to birth control and abortion, and equality within the home.⁴⁷ By mid-1967, a group of SDS women called for independent movements for women, apart from male-dominated activism.

The National Conference for New Politics (NCNP), held in August 1967, became a decisive event for the independence of the women's movement from the New Left. 2,000 activists from 200 organizations converged in Chicago over Labor Day weekend. One of the purposes of the conference was to develop a unified leftist program that would prevent the New Left from splitting into increasingly diversified strands of social movements—black and white, adult and student, anti-war and anti-poverty, and women and men. The men who led the NCNP conference thought that it was important to distribute the membership of the representative committee by race but not by gender. In response to this gender-blind rule, a group of radical women led by Jo Freeman (also known as Joreen) and Shulamith Firestone (also known as Shulie) presented “a resolution requiring that women who represent 51 percent of the population, receive 51 percent of the convention votes and committee representation.”⁴⁸ These women's demands were refused, however, and “greeted with ridicule and dismay.”⁴⁹ The SDS men in general did not approve of women's liberation as a serious matter for SDS at that time.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ “Liberation of Women,” *New Left Notes*, July 10, 1967. See Evans, *Personal Politics*, 236; Estelle B. Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of women* (New York: Ballantine, 2002), 86-87.

⁴⁸ Freeman and Firestone were founding members of the first Chicago women's liberation group.

⁴⁹ “Move on little girl; we have more important issues to talk about here than women's liberation.” See Evans, *Personal Politics*, 198-199.

⁵⁰ Evans, *Personal Politics*, 192; Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 371; Jo Freeman, *The Politics of Women's Liberation: A Case Study of An Emerging Social Movement and Its Relation to the Policy Process* (Longman, 1975), 57-58; Mariam Schneir, ed., *Feminism in Our Time: The Essential Writings, World War II to the Present*

Infuriated, women from Chicago planned a women-only conference for the following week, now widely recognized as the first meeting of the women's liberation movement in the United States. The Chicago women saw that only women would be able to define the women's struggle. They circulated their principle statement, "To the Women of the Left," to women in SDS, and urged independent activity, stating "the time has come for us to take the initiative in organizing ourselves for our own liberation."⁵¹ It was the first official declaration for independence of the women's liberation from the New Left movement and the SDS.⁵² Like this small group, which gathered at Joreen's apartment on the West Side of Chicago, many women in other radical movements began forming groups for women's liberation all over the country in the late 1960s: the New York Radical Women (NYRW)—divided into the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell (WITCH) and the Redstockings—the Feminists, New York

(New York: Vintage, 1994), 103-4; and Amy Kesselman, Heather Booth, Vivian Rothstein, and Naomi Weisstein, "Our Gang of Four: Friendship and Women's Liberation," *Feminist Memoir Project*, 38-40.

⁵¹ The conflict surfaced for the first time in Chicago, where the national headquarters of SDS was located and its weekly newspaper was published. Chicago women formed the first women's liberation group, the West Side group, published a national newsletter, *Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement*, and created networks of information which enabled other women's liberation activists to hold the first national women's liberation conference in 1967. Veterans of SDS and other political activist groups organized the West Side group: there were approximately 24 to 36 women including the founding members of the group, Heather Booth, Naomi Weisstein, Amy Kesselman, Sue Munaker, Jo Freeman, Shulamith Firestone, Evelyn Goldfield, and Frances Rominsky. See Sale, *SDS*, 288-289, 357, 396, 528; Echols, *Daring*, 66-67; Evans, *Personal Politics*, 158; Margaret Strobel, "Consciousness and Action: Historical Agency in the Chicago Women's Liberation Union," in *Provoking Agents: gender and agency in theory and practice*, ed., Judith Kegan Gardiner (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Margaret Strobel, "Organizational Learning in the Chicago Women's Liberation Union," in *Feminist organizations: harvest of the new women's movement*, eds., Myra Marx Ferree and Patricia Yancey Martin (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); and Jo Freeman, "On the Origins of the Women's Liberation Movement, from a Strictly Personal Perspective," in *The Feminist Memoir Project*, eds., Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Ann Snitow (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998), 183.

⁵² SDS introduced it as "a Preliminary Statement of Principles used as a working paper by a group of Chicago women" and most were "of the Movement." See "Chicago Women from Liberation Group," *New Left Notes*, November 13, 1967, 2.

Radical Feminists, Bread and Roses, Cell 16, the Furies, Chicago Women's Liberation Union (CWLU), and so on.

The emergence of the women's liberation movement was, nonetheless, not a simple process of separation from larger, movements mostly led by men: many women struggled to pronounce their awareness of women's oppression in the society. It was difficult and complicated for many who worked for the New Left and other organizations. They were hesitant or unwilling to detach themselves from the political groups they had long worked for. Many SDS women—those whom separatist feminists called “politicos”—identified with larger movements, and wanted to organize women *within* those movements with men. They tended to become socialist feminists in contrast to those who identified as “pro-woman” and “feminist” and who were later radical, cultural, and lesbian feminists, insisting that women should be aware of and resist their subjugation.⁵³

From that point, however, different opinions proliferated concerning whether the primary enemy of women's liberation was patriarchy or a capitalist system, whether women should withdraw from male-centered movements or stay there, and whether the movement should take a clear stance on anti-racism and anti-imperialism, or focus exclusively on women's liberation.⁵⁴ Although many SDS women regarded women's liberation as similar to the other political liberation movements in the 1960s, other women saw it in the tradition of a feminist movement going back to the early twentieth

⁵³ Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretative History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 164.

⁵⁴ The SDS and Chicago politics adopted the term “women's liberation” to describe their new women's movement, but New York Radical Women rejected this term in favor of “radical feminism.” See Jo Freeman, “The Origins of the Women's Liberation Movement,” 183.

century. This dispute is referred to as the “politico-feminist split.”⁵⁵ The debates between them continued until the end of the 1960s, and politicians and radical feminists have each represented women’s liberation in different ways in their subsequent accounts. Most early women’s liberation groups were dominated by politicians, but within two years radical feminism had established itself as the most vital and imaginative force within the women’s liberation movement, as Alice Echols asserts.⁵⁶

The split between these women demonstrated their different paths for women’s liberation and became more visible and apparent in the Jeannette Rankin Brigade demonstration in 1968.⁵⁷ SDS member Marilyn Salzman Webb reported that radical women like the West Side group decided to have their own program and fifty young women from fourteen different cities met to discuss their organizational, political, and personal futures before the Brigade. They traveled long distances to talk with each other and the meeting continued for two days. Most of the participants during the peace demonstration were women who had been involved in the movement for several years. Webb, however, emphasized that they were “not at all anti-man,” but saw “men as much

⁵⁵ Echols, *Daring*, 74. Evans, however, pointed out that this is “an unfair designation because the ‘politico-feminist split’ was less a split than a debate in most places.” See Sara M. Evans, *Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at Century’s End* (The Free Press, 2003), 29. Most of the New Left women were married or living with New Left men and were often still involved in New Left activities. In their minds, the New Left set the standards for discourse and action that they wanted to meet. Jo Freeman, “Origins,” *The Feminist Memoir Project*, 183. As Sara Evans showed, a striking number of early leaders in the women’s liberation movement that emerged in the winter of 1967 had recently married SDS men. For example, Heather Tobis had married Paul Booth, former National Secretary of the SDS and organizer of the National Conference for New Politics; Marilyn Salzman had married Lee Webb, an early SDS leader and director of the Vietnam Summer Project; and Vivian Leburg had married Richie Rothstein, one of the key leaders in SDS.

⁵⁶ Echols, *Daring*, 74.

⁵⁷ This difference became clearer after June 1968 when New York Radical Women published *Notes from the First Year: The Women’s Liberation*. After the demonstration, Chicago and New York women held a conference in Sandy Spring, Maryland.

victimized by this social system” as they were.⁵⁸

It was not until 1969 that radical feminists and militant women and ‘politicos,’ in SDS became divided in their strategy for women’s liberation. Many women in SDS who became revolutionaries, prioritizing anti-racist and anti-imperialist issues over gender, from 1968 to 1969 were originally in women’s groups when they started participating in movements that were not clearly divided into distinctive identities. SDS members and future Weatherwomen like Bernardine Dohrn, Naomi Jaffe and Eleanor Stein recall that their earliest participation was in women’s groups.⁵⁹ By late 1969, there had emerged different, and sometimes widely divergent, strains of women’s liberationists but many were connected with different movements, not connected to any one feminist movement alone.

Like the white female revolutionaries, black women also struggled with their loyalty to male-dominated movements for racial equality and their desire for racial *and* gender liberation. Black women in Civil Rights groups like SNCC confronted emerging concerns, issues, and debates on women’s liberation specifically for black women. After the SNCC Position Paper, the most prominent figure of black feminism, Frances Beal, co-founded SNCC’s first Black Women’s Liberation Committee, and wrote the first essay by a black woman to connect black women’s experiences to feminism, titled “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female” in 1968. The SNCC Women’s Committee transformed into the Black Women’s Alliance, and then into the Third World Women’s

⁵⁸ Marilyn Salzman Webb, “Women: We Have a Common Enemy,” *New Left Notes*, June 10, 1968, 15.

⁵⁹ Bernardine Dohrn, e-mail to author, January 3, 2015; and Eleanor Stein, e-mail to author, December 14, 2014. For Naomi Jaffe’s early participation in the New York radical feminist group, WITCH, see Thompson, *A Promise and a Way of Life*, 391-392.

Alliance (TWWA) to include other women of color, particularly Puerto Rican women, in 1969. TWWA had particularly Marxist, anti-imperialist, Third World, and feminist politics.⁶⁰ Beal also invoked the concept of “triple jeopardy” encompassing not only race and gender but also class as an important issue for women of color. Beal’s ideas differed from white feminists’ in her denying of the term “feminism,” like many other black women’s liberationists of the time. They considered “feminism” to make gender the priority, instead of the “integration of race, gender, class in consciousness” without a hierarchy.⁶¹ Beal’s refusal of the term “feminism” suggests how black women thought of women’s liberation differently from white women’s gender-centered feminism.

Even though women’s issues appeared first in the SNCC meetings in 1964, black women’s struggle for liberation for their race and gender was relatively invisible and unrecognized by white-centered women’s movements, due to black women’s second-class citizenship and unique status even in black movements and communities. While the majority of black social movements meant to acquire black people’s full citizenship, the Black Power Movement attempted to gain power for blacks by reclaiming black patriarchy. The Black Power Movement promoted an image of manhood to change the perception of black men as powerless and black families as matriarchal. Black women tried to be silent, at least at the beginning of the movement, about gender issues in black society due to the negative view of black women’s power in history as a castrating to black manhood.

⁶⁰ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*; and Loretta J. Ross, “Excerpts from the Voices of Feminism Oral History Project Interview with Frances Beal,” *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 8, no. 2 (2008).

⁶¹ Frances M. Beal and Loretta J. Ross, “Interview with Frances Beal,” *Meridians*: 158-159.

Even though the stereotype of black women as matriarchs has long existed, sociologist Daniel Patrick Moynihan articulated this idea about black families and influenced black women's positions in the Black Nationalist movement.⁶² In 1965 Moynihan wrote a report to President Lyndon Johnson titled "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action." In the "Moynihan report," as it was known, he argued that the matriarchal structure of black families was the main source of the black community's impoverishment; the state of the black community was "pathological" and originated from slavery, which imposed a gender role reversal on black men and women.⁶³ According to Moynihan, slavery emasculated black men through black women's collusion with the white power structure, and black families were disadvantaged because of the women-headed, nuclear family structure.

The Black Power Movement challenged the perceptions that white society had of gender roles and stereotype of black men and women in the 1960s. Moynihan's report on the pathology of the black family had various effects on black men and women. One was hostility toward black women from members of their own communities who believed the analysis of black matriarchy in the report, and who, in trying to bolster black manhood, degraded black womanhood. Black women seemed more powerful than and superior to black men, according to the theory of the Moynihan report. In this theory of "sex role reversal on black men and women," black women's independent movement or claiming

⁶² Moynihan was not the only one who put forth this thesis but his report helped it to gain popularity. Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981), 14. For criticism about the Moynihan report, see Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*; and Kimberly Springer, *Living For The Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005).

⁶³ Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*, 122.

of their rights seemed absurd.⁶⁴ Regardless of whether political black men and women accepted Moynihan's view of black matriarchal structure, black women in Black Power movements like the Black Panthers tried down-playing their voice in support of their men, as shown in their newspaper in the late 1960s, *The Black Panther*.⁶⁵

The Black Power Movement in the late 1960s also tended to cast women as mothers of a new people-hood rather than as political actors themselves. Black men were to lead and defend their family and people; black women were to give birth to and nurture them. This patriarchal reclaiming of manhood in black families was in direct conflict with women's growing power in the movement. The Black Power Movement is mostly perceived as masculine and male-dominated, and therefore, women have been intentionally and unintentionally less spotlighted than men. Many scholars emphasized sexist treatments of women by male members in the movements to account for the emergence of the black women's movement.⁶⁶

Black feminist and cultural critic Michele Wallace exposed the issue of sexism and misogyny in black communities in general and in the Black Power Movement in particular in her controversial book *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* published in 1979.⁶⁷ Wallace called a black woman a "superwoman," in the mythological

⁶⁴ Springer, *Living For The Revolution*, 37-38.

⁶⁵ For instance, black women in the Civil Rights and Black Nationalist movements have not been considered leaders but "bridge leaders," such as Ella Baker and Rosa Parks.

⁶⁶ Simon Wendt, "'They Finally Found Out that We Really Are Men': Violence, Non-Violence and Black Manhood in the Civil Rights Era," *Gender & History* 19, no. 3 (November 2007): 543.

⁶⁷ Michele Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (New York: The Dial Press, 1979). For the controversy over Wallace's book, see Nikol G. Alexander-Floyd, "'We Shall Have Our Manhood': Black Macho, Black Nationalism, and the Million Man March," *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism* 3, no. 2 (2003): 171-174. In the early 1970s, there were a few black feminist literatures that revealed sexism and patriarchal oppression in black communities. Black feminist Toni Cade Bambara published her edited collection, *The Black Woman* in 1970 and Ntozake Shange published *for colored girls*

sense, defining her as “less of a woman in that she is less ‘feminine’ and helpless, she is more of a woman in that she is the embodiment of Mother Earth, the quintessential mother with infinite sexual, life-giving, and nurturing reserves.”⁶⁸ In this hypersexual idea of black womanhood, constructing “Black Macho, as a vehicle of liberation,” was crucial for recovering black manhood so as to build and strengthen black patriarchy.⁶⁹ As Wallace asserts, the Black Power ideology supported a reclamation of black manhood that mirrored the white racist idea of masculine domination and sexualized power relations. These “twin stereotypes” of the patriarchal black macho and “self-sacrificing” superwoman were problematic and controversial; however, scholar Kimberly Springer argues this debate allowed black women to generate the ideas of gender equality and anti-sexism during the Black Power era.⁷⁰

In black feminist perspectives, black revolutionary women saw themselves as being under a twofold pressure, both within their communities as well as in the BPP. Instead of increasing their power as leaders and speakers, they stood behind their men to show black manhood. While limiting their own freedom within political groups in spite of their consciousness-raising about sexism and male supremacy, women in the BPP were also pressured from an outsider’s view, particularly from a feminist perspective of black women’s liberation, Black Panther women perpetuated the stereotype of a “superwoman,” ignoring feminism and women’s issues. In this perception of women in

who’ve considered suicide/ when the rainbow is enuf in 1975. Toni Cade Bambara, *The Black Woman: An Anthology* (New York: New American Library, 1970).

⁶⁸ Wallace, *Black Macho*, 107.

⁶⁹ Wallace, 73.

⁷⁰ Springer, “Black Feminists Respond to Black Power Masculinism,” in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights*, 115-118; and Alexander-Floyd, “We Shall Have Our Manhood,” 172.

decisively male-dominated groups like the BPP, black women's identification and self-presentation as revolutionaries became more complicated and much different than that of white revolutionary women.

While many revolutionary white women and women of color remained in what were largely perceived as men's movements—Black Power and the New Left—and continued to speak out about and struggle with liberation along both race and gender lines, many white radical feminists left male-dominated groups like SDS to focus solely on the women's movement. Women in the Black Power Movement especially, were unwilling and reluctant to leave their men and the fight for racial equality, and practiced their liberation within the movements. As the influence of more militant groups like the Weathermen and the BPP increased, many radical women, especially in the SDS and SNCC, were greatly influenced by images of Third World women guerrillas, especially Vietcong women, and adopted these images to represent themselves as revolutionaries, in their struggle for women's liberation. In contrast to radical feminists who emphasized the need for female separatism and sought to develop an explicitly feminist critique of American society, primarily feminine and pacifistic, women in the Weathermen and BPP who continued their activism within militant groups had distinctive types of self-presentation, which represented their womanhood through more aggressive and masculine styles, fashion, and actions.

Fashioning Revolutionary Women

With the growing militancy of the domestic and international liberation movements in the late 1960s, American radical women performed as more visible political figures through their self-presentation, especially their fashion, their presence in

picket lines, and their militant imagery. In spite of the fact that militant women like those in SNCC and SDS did not work solely for women's liberation, their ways of practicing liberation were nonetheless characteristic of their political actions and daily body politics.⁷¹ Revolutionary women's self-presentation utilized militant fashion and style, demonstrating the "revolutionary chic" that became attractive to radical men and women through militant images of both whites and blacks.⁷²

I use the term "revolutionary chic" to describe the way in which militant American women like Black Panther women, Weatherwomen, and feminists fashioned themselves as revolutionaries in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Journalist Tom Wolfe coined the term "radical chic" in 1970. The famous composer Leonard Bernstein and his wife Felicia Bernstein held a cocktail party at their Park Avenue house in New York City to support the twenty-one Black Panthers, also known as the New York 21, who had been charged with the bombing of five midtown Manhattan department stores. Wolfe described the fashionable adoption of the black radical cause by white elites and celebrities like Bernstein derogatively, revealing the white elitist tendency to promote and

⁷¹ Feminist philosopher Susan Bordo's concept of the body as a battleground is crucial for understanding women's identity politics in the social movements that erupted in the United States during the Sixties: "[B]ody is a battleground whose self-determination has to be fought for. The metaphor of the body as a battleground, rather than postmodern playground, captures, as well, the *practical* difficulties involved in the political struggle to empower 'difference.'" Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (California and London: University of California Press, 1993), 263.

⁷² Tom Wolfe, "Radical Chic: That Party at Lenny's," the *New York Magazine* (June 8, 1970). Wolfe's purpose is not to praise but lampoon of the high-class whites' favor of "radicals who seem primitive, exotic, and romantic." Wolfe calls what brought 'Radical Chic' to the fore in New York Society *nostalgie de la boue*, or "romanticizing of primitive souls." *Nostalgie de la boue* is the nineteenth century French term for "nostalgia for the mud." According to Wolfe, *nostalgie de la boue* was a motif that described new celebrities' ways of "certifying their superiority over the hated middle class" throughout the 1960s. See Tom Wolfe, *Radical Chic & Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1970), 32-33. There were many fund-raising parties for the Black Panthers among celebrities like Leonard Benstein, and the saw the Panthers as fashion icons and their consumer culture—like "soul" foods—later surfaced in *Vogue*." Hending, *Heartbreakers*, 47. Wolfe's term "radical chic" became more widespread due to the adoption to various fashions: "terrorist chic or terror chic," "militant chic," "shooter chic" and even "funky chic."

mirror the images of radical activists. Unlike Wolfe's radical chic, which was meant to be sarcastic, my use of the term "revolutionary chic" shows the imagination and experimentation of revolutionary women who brought the ideas of liberation from various domestic and transnational sources into a fashion style that came to represent each of their own groups' agendas.

This revolutionary experimentation coincided with and contributed to a crucial transformation of American women's fashion in 1960s consumer culture. The miniskirt, a significant symbol of women's autonomy and sexual liberation, was one of the defining fashions for young women. Former Weatherwoman Naomi Jaffe explains the counterculture influences on radicals, such as "the hippie and flower child cultures of the 60s and 70s"—"loose flowering clothing, tie-dyes, and jeans were more common in women under 30" than the typical 1960s feminine styles including dresses and heels.⁷³ The counterculture style also adopted African dashikis or peasant blouses influenced by Native Americans and multi-ethnic cultures, as a way to express their support for nationalist movements. Radical political women were inspired by the counterculture, yet Weatherwomen and Panther women further developed revolutionary styles, adopting working-class and Third World fashion items, to represent their identities.

American revolutionary women were inspired by images of global revolutionary women who represented violence as a positive and necessary change for their nation in the 1960s Third World. The 1966 film *The Battle of Algiers*, for instance, influenced radical women especially Black Panther women. The film highlights the role of female insurgents in guerilla warfare. Historian Robyn Ceanne Spencer asserts that the Black

⁷³ Naomi Jaffe, e-mail to author, September 30, 2014.

Panthers linked the image of the female guerilla fighters in the film with anti-imperial movements throughout the Third World, developing the image of black women as engaged in armed insurrection.⁷⁴ They were also inspired by Vietnamese women who were fighting with their brothers against American imperialism, even holding guns with “their babies on their backs.”⁷⁵ These images represent the Black Panther women’s performance of the potent trope of the female guerilla fighter. To this point, strong and powerful female images from the Third World were a model for women in SDS and the BPP inspiring their women’s liberation as female fighters.

Revolutionary American women took their inspiration for women’s liberation from the revolutionary women of Third World countries such as Vietnam, Cuba, and China. Similar to how white women saw black “mamas” as new role models for strong activists, many radical women and women’s liberationists, both white women and women of color, found role models in those Cuban and North Vietnamese women who played critical roles in their respective national liberation struggles.⁷⁶ The Vietnamese guerilla women particularly represented the strength of Third World women, which was strongly influential on American revolutionaries who thought of themselves as secondary and inferior in male-controlled movements. The Vietnamese female guerrillas provided American women with the new concept of political identities that would work beyond the traditional dichotomy between masculinity and femininity, while giving women access to the male realm of power and aggression.

⁷⁴ Spencer, “Engendering,” 99.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, 27.

Women's violence exists as part of their transition from passivity to activity, as women have been historically considered non-violent: not aggressive or militant, but supportive. As black revolutionary women embodied Third World women's militant and violent identities, white women found their inspirational figures in the media culture that generally objectified women. One particular example, the film *Bonnie and Clyde* from 1967, constructed graphic violence and a new icon in sixties counterculture—"the fun" of violence as "the path to celebrity and chic."⁷⁷

The film's director, Arthur Penn linked the film to the Black Panther militants, and identified black activists with *Bonnie and Clyde*.⁷⁸ The Bonnie character in the movie represented and visualized the fashionable style of white radical women. Literary critic Josephine G. Hendin stresses that in the media culture "the brutal actions of good-looking women" were crucial for transforming women's passive nature into violent activism and debunking "stereotypical female gentleness."⁷⁹ According to film critic J. Hoberman, the New Left activists experienced "*Bonnie and Clyde* as a miraculous vision."⁸⁰ SDS member Gerald Long actually acclaimed the film in the Old Left weekly *Guardian* on September 9, 1967, linking the "consciousness-expanding" outlaws to influential philosopher Frantz Fanon and the North Vietnamese hero Nguyen Van Troi.⁸¹

The representation of militant and violent women in the media shows how American society was drawn to the armed resistance of women activists, and women's

⁷⁷ Hendin, *Heartbreakers*, 46.

⁷⁸ J. Hoberman, *The Dream Life: Movies, Media and the Mythology of the Sixties* (New York: The New Press, 2003), 177-178.

⁷⁹ Hendin, *Heartbreakers*, 44.

⁸⁰ Hoberman, *The Dream Life*, 178.

⁸¹ Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 386.

self-expression as militants was powerful in Sixties movements.⁸² Images of a woman with a rifle like Bonnie became New Left pinups, boosted by the media (see illustration 2). The SDS newspaper presented the character of Bonnie as a militant fashion leader and featured a picture on its cover of a young, smiling, rifle-toting white woman—the “New American Woman” on June 26, 1967 (see illustration 3).⁸³ Inside the newspaper, the SDS scheduled a panel on the “woman question” for the SDS convention to be held on the following day. The panel advanced a “Women’s Liberation Workshop” which projected the SDS women’s idea of a revolutionary woman in relation to armed struggle in the Third World. The SDS women stated, “Women, because of their colonial relationship to men, had to fight for their own independence. This fight for our own independence will lead to the growth and development of the revolutionary movement in this country. Only the independent woman can be truly effective in the larger revolutionary struggle.”⁸⁴ This was a “1967 version of the analogy between women and blacks that Casey Hayden and Mary King had explored in 1965,” states Sara Evans.⁸⁵ The SDS women envisioned their women’s liberation through the style of armed resistance in the Third World.

Radical alternative media like *New Left Notes* of the SDS and *The Black Panther* of the BPP were filled with articles praising the heroic struggles of the Third World guerilla fighters, especially North Vietnamese women. North Vietnamese women guerrillas represented the fight against American imperialism, and the revolutionary

⁸² Hoberman, 178-179.

⁸³ Evans, *Personal Politics*, 189-190; Hendin, *Heartbreakers*, 47-48; and J. Hoberman, “A Test for the Individual Viewer: Bonnie and Clyde’s Violent Reception,” in *Why We Watch: The Attractions of Violent Entertainment*, ed., Jeffery Goldstein (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 134-135.

⁸⁴ Evans, *Personal Politics*, 190.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

potential for American women who also worked for the anti-Vietnam War movements.⁸⁶ American revolutionary women tended to link the Vietnamese women's fight for national liberation to the way in which women in Vietnam achieved gender equality. Many SDS women like Marilyn Salzman Webb—founder of the politico women's liberation group in Washington, D.C.—praised the “Vietnamese woman [who] has literally won her equality with a weapon in her hand and through the sheer strength of her arms” in her SDS newspaper article in 1968.⁸⁷ However, historian Judy Tzu-Chun Wu indicates that there was a difference between the “women's liberation” in liberationist activism in Third World countries like Vietnam and the U.S.—roughly speaking, for Vietnamese women, it meant “anti-colonial struggles for national liberation,” unlike American women's pursuit of the subversion of patriarchy.⁸⁸ Since Vietnamese women had long struggled in warfare, they played multiple roles in politics, the economy, and the military. Yet, American revolutionary women lacked the experiences that the Vietnamese women faced.

SDS members who visited North Vietnam in the late 1960s conveyed stories about North Vietnamese guerilla women attacking American soldiers and rescuing Vietnamese men, authenticating revolutionary womanhood.⁸⁹ Leader of SDS and future Weatherman Bernardine Dohrn introduced SDS to a Vietnamese women's militia through an article that appeared in the SDS newspaper for the first time. In a picture accompanying the article, two Vietnamese women take aim with a machine-gun. In

⁸⁶ Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 136-137.

⁸⁷ Marilyn Webb, “Women: We Have a Common Enemy,” *New Left Notes*, June 10, 1968, 15.

⁸⁸ Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, “Rethinking Global Sisterhood: Peace Activism and Women's Orientalism,” in *No Permanent Waves*, 200.

⁸⁹ “The Guerrilla Theatre of the NLF,” *New Left Notes*, December 18, 1967, 4.

another picture in the same article, Vietnamese women are pictured tending a rice harvest as it dries. These pictures showed the productivity of the Vietnamese women's militia. Dohrn noted that about seventy percent of the productive power in the "rear front" was due to women. Vietnamese women managed and operated most of the large grain cooperatives, many factories, light industry, and education.⁹⁰ The Vietnamese women's power in labor and combat provided for the militant SDS women a standard for creating their own revolution.

State Surveillance and Domestic Subversives

Along with the media as a resource to invent women's political identity, law enforcement agencies, particularly the FBI, also contributed to American women's political activism in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In its leading role for U.S. security, counter-terrorism, and counter-intelligence, the bureau surveyed militant leaders who were outspoken on racism, were anti-war, or held other views opposed to U.S. domestic and international policies. Although the bureau's surveillance was pervasive in all social movements—they targeted even moderate and conservative Civil Rights groups and activists like Martin Luther King Jr.—they mainly focused on militants that they called "domestic subversives," including the BPP, WU, and women's liberation groups. The bureau attempted to repress not only the groups' activism but also the growth of American radicalism in general during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The domestic policies of the state during the Cold War meant to control dissidents caused dramatic transformations among individuals and organizations working for social

⁹⁰ Bernadine Dohrn, "The Liberation of Vietnamese Women," *New Left Notes*, October 25, 1968, 9.

justice. U.S. governmental agencies, especially the FBI, powerfully subjugated women in different movements with their “divide and conquer” tactic, especially through Counter Intelligence Programs—so-called COINTELPRO.⁹¹ The state law enforcement agencies carried out enormous illegal surveillances, espionage, and assassinations. The bureau’s campaigns against political individuals and groups with its legal and illegal operations began in 1956, yet escalated from the late 1960s to early 1970s. The bureau specifically targeted men *and* women in the BPP and WU, and radical feminists were also not immune to the FBI’s surveillance.

The FBI specifically focused on “domestic subversives” including the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers Party, white hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan, black extremists, New Left groups, and militant Puerto Rican nationalists. After August 1967, when the BPP gained national notoriety for their march at the California State Capitol in Sacramento, the FBI officially started its COINTELPRO against the BPP and other black radicals. J. Edgar Hoover, the Director of the FBI, identified the BPP as the most dangerous domestic group and initiated powerful reactions. Kenneth O’Reilly explains that the FBI and Hoover considered all black “dissident[s] as subversive.”⁹² On

⁹¹ After Watergate in 1972, illegal and clandestine governmental activities under President Richard Nixon’s administration were revealed. In spring 1976, the federal agencies’ “divide and conquer” tactic became generally known after the Church Committee (the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities) published seven volumes of hearings and six books of its final report. For the Church Committee Report by the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, see http://www.aarclibrary.org/publib/contents/church/contents_church_reports.htm (accessed June 25, 2015). United States Congress Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Foreign and Military Intelligence: Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, United States Senate: Together with Additional, Supplemental, and Separate Views* Vol. 1 (1976), <http://archive.org/details/finalreportofsel01unit> (accessed June 25, 2015) and http://www.aarclibrary.org/publib/church/reports/book1/html/ChurchB1_0001a.htm (accessed June 25, 2015).

⁹² Kenneth O’Reilly, *Racial Matters: The FBI’s Secret File on Black America-1960-1972* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 12.

September 8, 1968 in an interview for the *New York Times*, Hoover declared that the BPP was “the greatest threat to the internal security of the country” and explained the FBI’s projects “to thwart and disrupt the BPP.”⁹³ The COINTELPRO programs against the BPP, right after Hoover’s declaration, were particularly aimed to make cracks in the BPP’s leadership by fostering misleading doubts between the members.⁹⁴ The FBI specifically and successfully worked to split up Eldridge Cleaver in Algeria and Huey Newton, who had been recently released from prison in 1970.⁹⁵

The FBI’s destructive actions were not exclusive to breaking down the leadership but extended to the BPP’s community programs and its newspaper as well. In an FBI internal memo on May 15, 1969, Hoover recognized Black Panther’s community programs like free breakfast for children as “the best and most influential activity...[and]

⁹³ Ward Churchill and Jim Bander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI’s Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1988), 77 and 405n.

⁹⁴ The FBI clearly states their strategy in a memorandum: “These suggestions are to create factionalism between not only the national leaders but also local leaders, steps to neutralize all organizational efforts of the BPP as well as create suspicion amongst the leaders as to each other’s sources of finances, suspicion concerning their respective spouses and suspicion as to who may be cooperating with law enforcement. In addition, suspicion should be developed as to who may be attempting to gain control of the organization for their own private betterment, as well as suggestions as to the best method of exploiting the foreign visits made by BPP members.” The FBI justified its COINTELPRO activity against the BPP because of the BPP’s particular attacks on police as well as its “connections with foreign revolutionaries.” FBI memorandum from G. C. Moore to Mr. W. C. Sullivan, 9/27/68, Black Nationalist Hate Groups 100-448006 Section 4.

⁹⁵ The FBI’s COINTELPRO programs were expanded through the process of exchanging suggestions from both local and national offices, like sending fabricated letters and phone calls to discredit each BPP member. These COINTELPRO activities especially targeted Cleaver who was more limited in his communication with other members. The FBI agents sent letters anonymously or with false names to Cleaver, telling him how BPP leader David Hilliard, who led the BPP during Newton’s absence, was distrustful and wasting the BPP’s funds for his personal use. Since Eldridge Cleaver was isolated from contact with leaders in the U.S., he harbored mistrust as a result of the FBI’s fraudulent information on the leaders. After the split between Cleaver and Newton became clear, the FBI agent in San Francisco sent an urgent Teletype to Hoover, noting the FBI’s victorious counter-intelligence activities to break the two leaders’ relation and promoting the next step to rupture solidarity between Newton and other leaders. Teletype on March 4, 1971 from San Francisco (157-601) to Director (100-448006) 11:35AM URGENT 3/4/71 Black Nationalist Hate Groups 100-448006 Section 26.

potentially the greatest threat.”⁹⁶ Interestingly enough, the BPP’s militant activism against the state was not the only aspect seen as a threat but any programs by the BPP that would affect black communities were considered a serious danger by the FBI. The FBI further attempted to restrict the BPP’s freedom of the press. In May 1970, the FBI emphasized the power of the BPP’s communication with the public through its newspaper, reporting, “The BPP newspaper has a circulation in excess of 100,000 and has reached the height of 139,000.”⁹⁷ The FBI, therefore, requested local agencies to submit proposals to “hinder the vicious propaganda being spread by the BPP... to cripple the BPP.”⁹⁸ In addition to the FBI’s COINTELPRO programs physically restricting the BPP’s activities and alienating main leaders from each other, they also permeated into the BPP’s daily programs for communication and community services.

According to scholar-activist Dan Berger, the FBI also conducted COINTELPRO against white New Left groups, mostly SDS and later Weatherman, three weeks after the Columbia strike in the spring of 1968.⁹⁹ Following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. Jr. in early 1968, one of the most sensational conflicts between the state and anti-war activists occurred at Columbia University in New York in May.¹⁰⁰ While Mark Rudd— chairperson of the Columbia SDS chapter—became the most famous activist at the Columbia strike, many SDS women, like future Weatherwoman Eleanor Stein,

⁹⁶ Huey P. Newton, *War Against The Panthers: A Study of Repression in America* (New York & London: Harlem River Press), 108-109.

⁹⁷ FBI memorandum from Director to SACs, Chicago, LA, NY, New Haven, SD, SF, Miami Newark, 5/15/70, Black Nationalist Hate Groups 100-448006 Section 19.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Berger, *Outlaws of America*, 64-65.

¹⁰⁰ Gurr, *Violence in America* (1989), 214.

participated as students and were arrested at the strike.¹⁰¹ The Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Illinois, in August 1968, became another violent conflict between the local police and anti-war protestors that shocked the public. The state accused the “Chicago Eight,” including leaders of the SDS and BPP like Tom Hayden and Bobby Seale, of conspiracy to incite the riot.

The FBI’s surveillance also targeted the women’s movement after the feminists’ first national demonstration to protest against the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City, New Jersey in 1968.¹⁰² Although feminists assumed the agencies would investigate them, state surveillance of the women’s movements was still surprising, because feminists in general were less supportive of violent activism, and were perceived as less dangerous than the women in the WU and BPP. Nonetheless, the FBI files show that the state defined feminists as “domestic subversives”—a threat to the nation’s security—and considered the women’s liberation movement as a whole to be dangerous and violent.

Nonetheless, the FBI’s counterintelligence programs were far more serious and fatal to the members of Black Power groups, especially the leaders who received nationwide fame through their extraordinary speeches, charismatic personalities, and powerful influences on followers. The most shocking case was the assassination of the leader of the Illinois chapter, twenty-one year old Fred Hampton, on December 4, 1969—the year the FBI declared as the end of the BPP.¹⁰³ The FBI plotted a raid to kill Hampton, who

¹⁰¹ Eleanor Stein was a student at Columbia Law School. Eleanor Stein, email to author, December 14, 2014.

¹⁰² Norman Kempster, “FBI Investigation of Women's Lib Groups Disclosed: FBI Probe of Women's Movement,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 1977; and Letty Cottin Pogrebin, “The FBI Was Watching You: Have You Ever Supported Equal Pay, Child Care, or Women’s Groups?” *Ms.* (June 1977).

¹⁰³ There were approximately 90 shots from the police and only a single shot from the Panthers in response to numerous shootings. G. Flint Taylor, “How the FBI Conspired to Destroy the Black Panther Party: The

was rapidly becoming popular in black communities and had been promoted to a position as leader of the Central Committee of the BPP. The FBI hired an informant to slip a barbiturate sleep agent into Hampton's drink and attacked his apartment while he was asleep in his bed with his pregnant fiancé. The officers targeted Hampton and shot him numerous times. This case became symbolic of the FBI's COINTELPRO programs against the BPP, and Weatherman member Laura Whitehorn called it "counterinsurgency—a tactic of warfare."¹⁰⁴ These assassinations were not isolated, as such attacks were not rare incidents for black activists in the late 1960s.

After the FBI's counter-intelligence activities particularly targeted the BPP, the incarceration and murder of most of its leaders forced the group to nearly collapse and split off into two parts at home and abroad. As a result, the BPP leaders became even more divided on the issue of armed self-defense. Despite the well-known armed demonstrations of the BPP, there were in fact serious debates within the group on the effectiveness of its tactics of armed resistance. Huey P. Newton strengthened the group's nonviolent strategies, such as their free breakfast programs. Eldridge Cleaver, however, reinforced revolutionary ideas influenced by Third World guerrillas, and maintained the BPP's violent rhetoric and tactics during his exile. The dynamics and dialogue between the two main leaders, Newton and Cleaver, which centered on the debate for and against violent strategies for the BPP, are the key to understanding the interrelationship between the social movement's militancy and the state's oppression.

assassination of BPP leader Fred Hampton 44 years ago was just the beginning," in *These Times* (December 4, 2013).

¹⁰⁴ Laura Whitehorn, introduction to *The War Before: The True Life Story of Becoming a Black Panther, Keeping the Faith in Prison & Fighting for Those Left Behind* by Safiya Bukhari (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2010), xxviii.

In the struggle against state repression and for liberation, women in activist groups constructed unique identities as revolutionaries from the late 1960s through early 1970s, becoming some of the most notorious figures in 20th century America. In encounters between the FBI and militant women in the “domestic subversive” category, the state surveillance made some activists take on more surreptitious political activism, to counter to its investigations. These women’s political identity was distinct from that of women’s rights activists in 19th and early 20th century and from white middle-class style in general. As a new political subjectivity, Black Panther women and Weatherwomen constructed the revolutionary women’s fashion in the form of revolutionary chic, inspired by many different influences.

Chapter 2

Black Revolutionary Mothers and the Third World

In 1968, Kathleen Cleaver fashioned herself into a revolutionary in front of her house, wearing an Afro hairdo and leather jacket—the typical uniform of the Black Panther Party (BPP)—and holding a shotgun (see illustration 4). As the Communications Secretary of the BPP and wife of its leader, Eldridge Cleaver, she manifested the group's principle of self-defense against institutional violence, while simultaneously utilizing the underground media to construct her political identity. Exemplifying her original intention to be a revolutionary, this famous photograph of Cleaver with a gun became a pinup for Civil Rights supporters, and also spread more widely into the popular iconography of the 1960s. The aggressive and violent self-presentation of a black woman like Cleaver fascinated the media as the most outrageous aspect of the Civil Rights movement, because she broke down the gender stereotype of American women: no longer passive and non-violent, but active and militant in defense of her people. Through fashioning themselves with weapons and arms, the Black Panther women, especially Cleaver, were able to break through their peripheral position in American society, while practicing and inventing a new identity for the black woman as a revolutionary.

Becoming Black Revolutionary Women in the Black Panther Party

Reflecting the increasing militancy of the Civil Rights era in the late 1960s, the BPP like many other black activists identified themselves as militants and radicals who would arm themselves for self-protection and attack whites in response to white racist

terror against blacks.¹ Black radicals Huey Newton and Bobby Seale formed the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California, in late 1966. The Oakland BPP was influenced by the SNCC-sponsored Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO), a short-lived African American Civil Rights group in Alabama, which was co-founded by Stokely Carmichael, who would become elected chair of the SNCC in May 1966.² Along with Carmichael, who would become the Honorary Prime Minister of the BPP, some prominent members from the SNCC also became associated with the BPP, among them Kathleen Cleaver, Bobby Rush, and Bob Brown. The BPP, which had the greatest impact on the Black Power Movement, produced a new figure of black revolutionary womanhood in relation to formulating new black manhood.

The symbol of the Black Panther came from LCFO and SNCC chairman Stokely Carmichael, and influenced the use of the emblem of the panther for many Black Nationalist groups. Carmichael declared that a black panther is a “bold, beautiful animal representing the strength and dignity of the black demands.”³ In his declaration, Carmichael encouraged African American Civil Rights activists like Newton and Seale to be stronger and more militant in order to promote a new vision of black manhood. The concept and image of the ‘black panther’ denoted the Black Nationalist group, with their

¹ For instance, the SNCC officially changed its name from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee to the Student National Coordinating Committee, removing the adjective “nonviolent” in 1969.

² Hasan Kwame Jeffries, “SNCC, Black Power, and Independent Political Party Organizing in Alabama, 1964-1966,” *The Journal of African American History* 91, no. 2 (Spring, 2006): 181; and Erika Doss, “Imaging the Panthers: Representing Black Power and Masculinity, 1960s–1990s,” *Prospects: An Annual of American Studies* 23 (1998): 488.

³ Stokely Carmichael, “SNCC Chairman Talks About Black Power,” in *New York Review of Books*, September 22, 1966. See Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 75; and Doss, “Imaging the Panthers,” 488.

strategy of armed self-defense, as clearly masculine.⁴ As art historian Erika Doss argues, Black Panthers projected “black masculine power” with the image of a black panther.⁵ It helped them construct a “visual image of black power and revolutionary martyrdom that hinged on potent black masculinity and patriarchal authority,” which denied the stereotype of submissive and subordinated black men from the slavery era.⁶

While the panther imagery played up masculine strengths, the armed militancy incorporated welfare programs on behalf of a larger community of men, women, and children.⁷ The ‘Ten-Point Programs’—the BPP’s principle policies and goals—advocated full employment, housing, education, and fair trials for blacks. For the first point of the ten-point programs, in particular, the BPP claimed black self-determination, as they explained, the “power to determine the destiny of our black community,” a concept influenced by liberation movements in the Third World, such as the Cuban revolution led by communist Fidel Castro in 1959.⁸ The BPP simultaneously provided many community services for poor blacks like free school and free breakfast for children as the ten-point program outlines. Among the welfare programs, the biggest spectacle for both the mass media and the public exposed to it was the patrolling of white police officers by Black Panthers with unconcealed arms.⁹ The early activities of the group included monitoring

⁴ Doss, “Imaging the Panthers,” 488.

⁵ Doss, “Imaging,” 493.

⁶ Doss, 484.

⁷ Erika Doss calls it the “Panther’s mixed agenda of armed militance and community welfare.” Doss, “Imaging,” 484-485.

⁸ For the seventh in the ten-point programs, see “What We Want Now! What We Believe,” *The Black Panther*, May 15, 1967, 3.

⁹ Black Power scholars like Akinyele Omowale Umoja and Nikhil Pal Singh see the Black Panther’s armed resistance in the tradition of African American radicalism and its armed self-defense advocacy from 1920s

the police to end “police brutality and the murder of black people,” as described in their statements of self-defense and self-determination.¹⁰

Many blacks considered the BPP’s armed self-defense empowering for black citizens and black neighborhoods, and strongly supported the patrol activity by the BPP as a way to end the frequent racist harassment by white policemen. The BPP provided not only physical protection from racist brutality against blacks, but also offered legal support and education, giving information on legal rights to the person being arrested. The group members showed their support for the black communities by standing by with guns, which promoted black pride in exercising their entitlement to full citizenship with the right to bear arms.¹¹ The BPP’s militancy, aggressiveness, and bravery appealed to local radicals based in California like Eldridge Cleaver, who believed that the black revolution had to involve in an armed struggle against white dominance.¹²

The militancy also attracted women like Joan Tareka Lewis (also known as Matilaba) who became the first woman to join the BPP. Sixteen years old Lewis walked into the BPP’s Oakland office and asked Bobby Seale who was were there for a gun.¹³ Lewis later produced her drawings for the group’s newspaper as well. Like Lewis, black men and women sought out weapons to protect themselves, especially when living in the

Marcus Garvy to 1950s and 1960s Robert Williams. Nikhil Pal Singh, “The Black Panthers and the ‘Underdeveloped Country’ of the Left” in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, 28.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ For instance, after an officer shot and killed North Richmond, California resident Denzil Dowell on April 1, 1967, Dowell’s family requested the BPP’s assistance with the investigation of Dowell’s murder. “Why Was Denzil Dowell Killed,” *The Black Panther*, April 25, 1967, 1.

¹² Newton and Seale recruited ex-convict Eldridge Cleaver after they served together as security escorts for Malcolm X’s widow Betty Shabazz in February 1967. That event also encouraged Earl Anthony and Emory Douglas to join the BPP.

¹³ Spencer, “Engendering,” 94.

South, as indicated in an article written by Angela Davis, who was a communist and shared the idea of self-defense with the BPP:

I grew up in Birmingham, Alabama. Some very, very good friends of mine were killed by bombs, bombs that were planted by racists. I remember from the time I was very small, I remember the sounds of bombs exploding across the street, out house shaking. I remember my father having to have guns at his disposal at all times, because of the fact that at any moment, someone...we might expect to be attacked. The man who was at that time in complete control of the city government—his name was Bull Connor—would often get on the radio and make statements like, “Niggers have moved into a white neighborhood. We better expect some bloodshed tonight,” and sure enough, there would be bloodshed.[...] And then after that, in my neighborhood, all of the men organized themselves into an armed patrol. They had to take their guns and patrol our community every night because they did not want that to happen again.¹⁴

As Angela Davis explained in legitimating gun possession for black men and women, self-defense with such a weapon was a necessary and subsequent reaction to racist and institutionalized violence.¹⁵ In the sense that Franz Fanon thought of decolonization and Third World liberation as a “violent event,” it seemed reasonable in the late 1960s for Davis and Lewis to arm themselves for black liberation in white-controlled society.

The militancy of the BPP, including its principles of self-defense and self-determination helped the group successfully recruit new members. However, its militancy also cost the group dearly in terms of gaining the attention of the state, whose attempts to subdue the threat of violent activism would result in the decline and splintering of the group.

¹⁴ *The Black Power Mixtape, 1967-1975*, directed by Göran Olsson, 2011.

¹⁵ Spencer, “Engendering,” 95.

The BPP enhanced the tension between themselves and local police by their verbal and visual assaults on police as the enemy. With their slogan “off the pigs,” Black Panthers called white police officers “pigs” and frequently portrayed black men and women fighting with white police in illustrations (see illustration 5).¹⁶ Depicting white policemen as fat pigs in police uniforms, and greedy and cruel ‘imperialist’ pigs, Black Panthers called for militant actions and armed resistance with a common caption, “Kill the pigs before they kill you.”¹⁷ The depiction of white police as pigs carried the clear and powerful message for most blacks that the state and local law enforcement officers were the oppressors. Therefore, for black radicals, armed self-defense was not only necessary but also fashionable “militant chic...cool, brave, and strong,” regardless of gender, race and class, states historian Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar.¹⁸

As the hostility between the Panthers and local police heightened, the group, including its women leaders, gained attention on the national level. A key moment came on May 2, 1967, when a group of thirty Black Panthers, including six women, marched to the California State Capitol in Sacramento to protest a pending gun-control bill, wearing black berets, leather jackets and Afro hairstyles, and carrying loaded guns in public. Republican assemblyman Don Mulford proposed the bill to prohibit the carrying of loaded firearms in public.¹⁹ This attempt by white legislators to disarm black citizens was

¹⁶ Robyn Ceanne Spencer, “Repression Breeds Resistance: The Rise and the Fall of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, CA, 1966-1982” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2001), 106.

¹⁷ Martha Schwendener, “Paint It Black Panther: Emory Douglas at the New Museum The LES hosts the work of a true revolutionary artist,” *The Village Voice* (August 25, 2009).

¹⁸ Both lower- and middle-class blacks, men and women, with similar experiences of police brutality on blacks, joined the BPP. Ogbar, *Black Power*, 108.

¹⁹ Kathleen Neal Cleaver, “Memories of Love and War,” Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, February 27, 2001, <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/162985-1> (accessed February 28, 2015).

a direct response to the blacks using arms to defend themselves, many cases of which were happening in the South.²⁰ The mass media called it “the Panther bill,” since it was obvious that the bill was directly intended to terminate the BPP’s armed patrol.

The BPP founders Newton and Seale carefully planned the event to receive national attention. Newton recalled that the state’s efforts to distract the BPP started after the BPP’s armed demonstration in Sacramento.²¹ Historian Jane Rhodes states that the mass media coverage of the Sacramento event “marked the emergence of the BPP as a national media subject.”²² The spectacle of armed resistance amazed and dazzled the local and national media. It simultaneously brought the public’s attention to the “Panthers Invasion” as it was described in the *Oakland Tribune*.²³ In the early coverage, the media focused exclusively on Black Panther men with headlines like “Armed Men Invade Assembly,” and “A Group of Young Men, armed with loaded pistols and rifles, entered the Capitol today.”²⁴

After the BPP gained local and national notoriety as militants and armed protestors, there were many physical and deadly battles between Oakland local police officers and BPP members in 1967 and 1968. In October 1967, the BPP’s Minister of Defense, Huey Newton was wounded and arrested after allegedly killing a police officer

²⁰ Emilye J. Crosby, “‘You Got a Right to Defend Yourself’: Self-Defense and the Claiborne County, Mississippi Civil Rights Movement,” 149-150.

²¹ Wendt, “They Finally Found Out,” 559. California Governor Ronald Reagan signed the Mulford bill. For the Act, see California penal code 12031 and 171(c).

²² “It’s All Legal: Oakland’s Black Panthers Wear Guns, Talk Revolution,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (April 30, 1967); and Jane Rhodes, “Fanning the Flames of Racial Discord: The National Press and the Black Panther Party,” *The Harvard International Journal of Press Politics* 4, no. 4 (1999): 96.

²³ Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers*, 71-72.

²⁴ For the newspaper report on the Sacramento event, see *Oakland Tribune*, from May 2nd to 4th, 1967. Also see Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers*, 70-72.

in self-defense.²⁵ To defend Newton, Eldridge Cleaver, along with Bobby Seale, organized the “Free Huey” campaign, which significantly popularized the BPP as the vanguard of anti-racist and anti-imperialist groups and characterized Newton as a black revolutionary. The campaign appealed to Black Nationalist organizations and broadened the BPP’s ideology through alliances with other political groups such as anti-war and New Left groups, like the SDS. The notoriety of the Black Panthers’ militancy even drew international attention, as Angela Davis recalls of the news about the Panthers in Germany during her study abroad.²⁶

While Black Panthers usually presented male Panthers as representatives of the group, women’s roles in the group were growing as speakers, organizers, and leaders. Amid many Panther women, Kathleen Neal Cleaver was an outstanding figure. When Cleaver met and married Eldridge Cleaver, she was in her early 20s, with a middle-class family background, college education, and experience in the Civil Rights movements, especially the SNCC.²⁷ Along with Panther leaders like Eldridge Cleaver and Bobby Seale, she played an important role in the “Free Huey” campaign: she was said to have been “instrumental in organizing” the campaign.²⁸ As the first woman in the Central Committee of the BPP, she was a spokesperson who wrote the leaflets and pamphlets for

²⁵ Newton was convicted of “voluntary manslaughter” of a police officer in September 1968 and sentenced to 2 to 15 years in prison. He was incarcerated for 22 months at the California Men’s Colony in San Luis Obispo with maximum security, very restricted contact with other inmates and outsiders. After the California Appellate Court reversed his conviction, Newton was released in August 1970. J. Herman Blake, “The Caged Panther: the Prison Years of Huey P. Newton,” *The Journal of African American Studies* 16, no. 2 (June 2012).

²⁶ C. A. Griffith and H. L. T. Quan, *Mountains That Take Wing—Angela Davis & Yuri Kochiyama: A Conversation on Life, Struggles and Liberation* (Quad Productions, 2010).

²⁷ Like many members in the BPP, Kathleen Cleaver was a dropout of her college to work for the SNCC in 1966. After she met Eldridge Cleaver, married him, and joined the BPP.

²⁸ Julia Herve, “Black Scholar Interviews: Kathleen Cleaver,” *The Black Scholar* 3, no. 4 (December 1971): 56.

the demonstrations. During the campaign, Kathleen Cleaver, as much as Eldridge Cleaver, appeared as a leader and became a distinctive representative of Panther women in the group in the late 1960s.

Black women of the Sixties, like Panther women, created distinctive identities through their fashion, and enacted their identities as blacks *and* women. The process of naming is itself a historical event in which two separate nouns were combined—*black* and *women*—to identify black women as collective subjects rather than individuals. Using the term ‘black’ to identify or name African Americans, made it possible for African Americans to develop a new meaning for their subjectivity through the creation of a black culture—for example, fashion and style—in the late 1960s. The term ‘black’ was a new invention of Black Nationalists in the late 1960s. Radical and militant African Americans, such as Black Muslims like Malcolm X and the Black Panthers favored the term ‘black’ rather than ‘colored’ or ‘Negro’ in the late 1960s. From the late 19th century to the early 20th century, ‘colored’ was the dominant term to describe mixed race individuals as well as African Americans. It gave way to ‘Negro,’ used by black intellectuals like Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois. Black Nationalists in the late 1960s, however, invented “black” to designate their identity as a nation against negative representation. They used “black” to “describe those [African Americans] who were progressive, forward-looking, and/or radical, while “Negro” was used for those who were more established and identified with the status quo.”²⁹ The term ‘black’ was a rupture of the previous names and created new meaning for African Americans.

²⁹ Tom W. Smith, “Changing Racial Labels: From ‘Colored’ to ‘Negro’ to ‘Black’ to ‘African American,’” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (Winter, 1992): 496-514.

Women in the Black Power Movement, especially BPP women, differentiated a Negro woman from a black woman. To them, Negro women were competitive with each other, filled with self-hatred, and frustrated because of their experiences in “attempting to obtain acceptance and recognition by whites.”³⁰ Unlike Negro women who rejected their blackness in order to belong to white society, black women stressed their natural look, emphasizing and exaggerating their African features and femininity. Black women’s consumer culture became an important resource for constructing their political subjectivities as revolutionary women.³¹ Many black women resisted elements of white beauty—typically straight hair and light skin—and turned to Pan-Africanist traditions for inspiration. Yet black women invented their own American style rather than solely emulating African fashion and culture.

From the time of the slavery era, black men and women were regarded as physically ugly from the perspective of white supremacy. Enslaved women who wore fancy dresses rather than rough and plain clothing therefore challenged and threatened the axiomatic quality of the slavery society, in the same way that the wearing of blue jeans was seen as a rejection of middle-class norms in the 1960s.³² As a response to this stereotype, modern mainstream black beauty culture constructed a new black identity in the 1960s through African American consumption of beauty products that mimicked the

³⁰ Robin D.G. Kelley and Betsy Esch, “Black like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution,” *Souls* (Fall 1999): 27; and A black revolutionary, “Black Woman,” *The Black Panther*, September 14, 1968, 6.

³¹ Mass-produced popular culture such as fashion provided black women a space in which to fight for their intersected identities in gender, race and class. For the fashion as the resource, see Enstad, *Ladies of Labor*, 5-7.

³² Stephanie M. H. Camp, “The Pleasures of Resistance: Enslaved Women and Body Politics in the Plantation South, 1830-1861,” *The Journal of Southern History* 68, no. 3 (August 2002): 95; and Edward J. Rielly, *The 1960s: American Popular Culture Through History* (Westport and London: Greenwood, 2003), 85-86.

style of “beautiful” white women. Historian Tanisha Ford reveals that the SNCC women’s fashion, particularly clothing and hairstyle, was transformed from a middle-class style of clothing and processed hair, known as “Sunday best,” to jeans, denim skirts, bib-and-brace overalls and natural hair, even in the early days of the SNCC between 1961 and 1963.³³

The “SNCC skin,” as Ford calls it, especially denim and natural hair, became the SNCC uniform. Jeans, made of blue denim in particular were originally the typical clothes for farmers, miners and other manual laborers; however during the 1960s blue jeans became very popular as radicals rejected middle-class and materialistic ideas and supported working-class values.³⁴ The SNCC used the uniform to represent their solidarity with working-class African Americans—especially sharecroppers—in the South, for whom the young activists worked. For SNCC women in particular, the SNCC skin of denim skirts and pants, especially overalls, was a tool for their gender politics, “to desexualize their bodies, not only to protect themselves from sexual assault, but also to blur the prescribed gender roles and notions of feminine propriety,” says Ford.³⁵ The use of body politics by SNCC women to overcome the stereotypes of race and gender was continued and reinforced in radical women’s attire in the Black Power Movement, specifically in blacks’ natural look that broke the invisibility of African Americans in the

³³ Tanisha C. Ford, “SNCC Women,” and “Soul Generation: Radical Fashion, Beauty, and the Transnational Black Liberation Movement, 1954-1980,” PhD diss., Indiana University, (2011). I thank Robyn Spencer for introducing me to this recent study of women and fashion in the SNCC.

³⁴ Edward J. Rielly, *The 1960s: American Popular Culture Through History* (Greenwood, 2003), 85-86.

³⁵ Ford, “SNCC Women,” 627.

white beauty standard.³⁶

The natural hairstyle, especially the Afro, was the most familiar symbol of black pride, and became synonymous with Black Nationalist activism and black political consciousness in the late 1960s and the 1970s. Black women, especially in the SNCC and BPP, stopped relaxing their hair and promoted natural hair as beautiful and fashionable. The Afro style was originally rooted in the high fashion of the late 1950s, and performers like Nina Simone inspired short Afro styles in the early 1960s. As soon as Black Nationalist culture appeared with the slogan “Black is Beautiful” in the mid-1960s, black women, who had been straightening their hair, began to proudly promote their black culture and customs by leaving their hair natural.³⁷ Those women saw the style of emulating white beauty as perpetuating the stereotypes that black hair is not “good hair.”³⁸ They even exaggerated elements of their style—such as the amplified Afro hairdo—creating a “specifically coded femininity without following” white women’s beauty in the look of the time.³⁹

The Afro hairstyle was the most important fashion item for the militant black women. It presented pride in their black bodies to fight against the American idea of black inferiority according to the white beauty standards, such as white skin and straight

³⁶ Robert E. Weems also states that African American women as consumers have a “degraded past,” unlike white women. See Robert E. Weems, “Consumerism and the Construction of Black Female Identity in Twentieth-Century America,” in *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader*, ed., Jennifer Scanlon (New York and London: New York University Press, 2000), 166.

³⁷ Angeline Morrison, “Black Skin, Big Hair: The Cultural Appropriation of the ‘Afro,’” in *Image into Identity: Constructing and Assigning Identity in a Culture of Modernity*, ed., Michael Wintle (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi B.V., 2006), 111.

³⁸ *Good Hair*, directed by Jeff Stilson, 2009.

³⁹ Historian Nan Enstad states that the working-class women’s “cultural style was similar to drag because they appropriated an overdetermined style of femininity that they were excluded from by the dominant culture.” Nan Enstad, “Fashioning Political Identities: Cultural Studies and the Historical Construction of Political Subjects,” *America Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (1998): 759-761.

hair. Black radical women, including SNCC and BPP women, wore the natural hairstyle as a political statement and embodied the new invention of a black woman becoming a political subject through dressing her body in public.⁴⁰ Black Panther women were instrumental in promoting the Afro and natural style in the late 1960s. Afro wigs became a white fashion accessory to support militant black activists soon after. The Afro hairstyle determined the degree of a woman's militancy and was seen almost exclusively on political picket lines at black liberation demonstrations. Black men also adopted black women's natural look by growing their hair long and kinky. The Afro style of the Black Panther women is the best example of the revolutionary chic, combining fashion with political activism.⁴¹

In terms of black women's activism, the Afro hairstyle became associated with black militancy and violence in the late 1960s and 70s.⁴² Black women with the 'Afro' hairdo symbolized a new identity of black women's militancy. Activist and scholar Angela Davis, well-known for her Afro hairstyle, received nationwide notoriety when a weapon registered in her name was linked to the murder of Judge Harold Haley in Marin County, California during an effort to free a black convict who was being tried for the attempted retaliatory murder of a white prison guard who killed three unarmed black inmates. The FBI circulated a picture of Davis on the "Ten Most Wanted List" in 1970 and the dissemination of her picture as a dangerous and militant woman attracted the

⁴⁰ The Afro image and advocacy of Kathleen Cleaver and Black Panthers are best shown in her short interview in 1968. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwLpoy0nfng> (accessed February 22, 2015).

⁴¹ There is controversy over whether or not the Afro is truly African. Art historian Kobena Mercer argues that there was no direct relationship between the Afro and Africa, and that the style did not exist in African cultures. Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), Kindle Edition.

⁴² Wendt, "They Finally Found Out that We Really Are Men," 552.

attention of the American public and media. The FBI was instrumental in constructing and popularizing the new subjectivity of women in visual politics despite their efforts to suppress the violent activism.

The Afro style became extremely popular because of widespread imagery of militant women like Angela Davis. Many white youths who sympathized with the black movement used the Afro to show their support. The Afro style became not only the militant woman's possession, but also became extremely popular and fashionable to the general public as a symbol of the Black Power era. Even when taking pictures for the cover of Angela Davis's autobiography, which was published in 1974, photographer Phillippe Halsman automatically assumed that he was to recreate her signature militant fashion with her Afro hairdo and leather jacket.⁴³ The black magazine *Ebony* used a black woman with a natural Afro hairstyle as their 'cover girl' in January 1969. One of the articles in the magazine paid specific attention to natural wigs on white women.⁴⁴ The fashion magazine *Vogue* illustrated white fashion appropriating Afro symbolic style, with pictures of white models wearing an 'Afro' style for 1969 season; from radical statement to fashionable 'radical chic.'

Contrary to the mass media, which focused more on the Black Panther men, the BPP's own media made these new Black Panther women visible and noticeable to the public and portrayed them as militants and revolutionaries. Of particular importance was the Panther weekly newspaper *The Black Panther: Black Community News Service*, in which Panther men and women redefined their identities against the dominant images of

⁴³ Davis, "Afro Images," 41-42.

⁴⁴ "The Natural Look—Is It Here to Stay?" *Ebony* (January, 1969): 104.

black people promoted by white society.⁴⁵ Unlike black liberal media publications like *Ebony* and *Jet*, the BPP newspaper created counter-identities of black men and women as powerful militants, but also created respectful and positive images, as they challenged stereotypes from the slavery era, eradicating racist associations of black inferiority.⁴⁶

Images of Kathleen Cleaver in particular appeared frequently in the newspaper. In the most widely-circulated image, she is dressed all in black—dark sunglasses, a miniskirt, leather jacket and boots—while sporting the Afro hairstyle and holding a shotgun (see illustration 4). She used this image for her campaign as a candidate of the Peace and Freedom Party—a left wing political Party founded in 1967 in California—when she ran for the 18th Assembly District in San Francisco with the slogan “Ballot or the Bullet.” A full-page shot of Kathleen Cleaver appeared consistently from September 28 to November 2, 1968 in the BPP newspaper. The slogan of the campaign originated from Malcolm X’s 1964 speech “The Ballot or the Bullet.”⁴⁷ The young black woman in a Panther’s leather jacket holding a shotgun stunned the public. This photo unveiled her self-presentation as a black revolutionary woman, reflecting the BPP’s principle of self-defense and their intense conflicts with local police in 1968. In an interview in 2001, Kathleen Cleaver recalled that she crafted the photo as a response to local police’s frequent invasions of her house, looking for guns:

⁴⁵ Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers*, 43.

⁴⁶ Lumsden, “Good Mothers with Guns,” 900-901. *Ebony* was first published in 1945 and *Jet*—known as “the bible of the civil rights movement”—started their issue in 1951. Post Staff Report, “Ebony, *Jet* and *Essence* making history on their own,” *Media*, *New York Post*, February 2, 2014, <http://nypost.com/2014/02/02/ebony-jet-and-essence-making-history-on-their-own/> (accessed April 12, 2015).

⁴⁷ “Kathleen Cleaver for Assemblywoman: 18th District San Francisco, Calif.,” *The Black Panther*, May 18, 1968, 18. Malcolm X’s speech “The Ballot or the Bullet,” MPEG audio file, *Great Speeches in History*, Podcast (2010); and Kenneth Gross, “The Black Panthers: Militants vs. the police,” *New York Post* September, 7, 1968.

[T]ax squad had come to our home at two o' clock in the morning and kicked the door in our apartment. Six of them rushed in, searching for guns. Next morning there was a rally at Huey Newton's preliminary hearing and they wanted to arrest Eldridge Cleaver, because they knew he would speak there. But whoever told them, that there were guns in the apartment gave them wrong information. They couldn't find the guns and they left...But I was living in the house, too, and I said, wait a minute: We are the panthers, they are chasing us, am I not allowed to have a weapon just because Eldridge is an ex-convict? So I went and bought a big shotgun, and a 3.57 Magnum. And instead of making it a secret we called two reporters from underground papers telling them: We want you to put a story in the papers that I have a gun in my house. So we took a picture of [me] holding a gun in front of my house and it would run with the stories in the paper. [T]hat was to send a message to the police: Here you see, I have a gun...I will use that gun if you come to kick down my door.⁴⁸

This anecdote highlights the complex relationship between political women, the alternative media, and the state. At that time, the most famous leader of the Black Panthers, Huey P. Newton, was in prison and Cleaver's husband, Eldridge Cleaver, functioned as a prominent leader of the BPP, particularly for the "Free Huey" campaign, which gained massive support by radicals throughout the world. For the sake of her husband, who was an ex-convict prohibited from possessing a firearm, as well as to show her constitutional right to bear arms, Kathleen Cleaver bought the shotgun so she could display the unconcealed weapon to make a statement of her armed self-defense.

With the purchase and possession of a gun, Kathleen Cleaver exemplified most Panther women's personal and political statements for self-defense against institutional racist violence. Her fashion and self-presentation with the militant image can be seen not only as a symbol of the Black Power era in the 1960s and 1970s, but also as a new

⁴⁸ Jonathan Fischer, "Black & Proud: Interview with Black Panthers Bobby Seale, Jamal Joseph, and Kathleen Cleaver," Summer 2001, <http://www.docspopuli.org/articles/Trikont.html> (accessed July 19, 2015).

invention of a black woman becoming a political subject through dressing her body and exposing aggressiveness in the public eye. Her image also reflected the strength and power of militant black women and was the best example of the visual body politics of Black Panther women, who fashioned themselves as revolutionaries. As an exemplary figure who utilized visual politics to reclaim her black womanhood, Kathleen Cleaver represents a black revolutionary woman with her role as a leader, as well as with her fashion as a militant, as many Black Panther women adopted and enacted their organizational skills and fashion styles as their political statement.

The Panther women's invention of the concept of black revolutionary women originated from their consciousness of racial and gender injustice, as they took their cues from women in the Third World, especially during the Vietnam War. In their survival politics, black women and women of color in the Third World did not distinguish women from men in the fight for liberation. Although they embodied their gender in their choice of fashions, sometimes wearing miniskirts and high-heeled shoes, Black Panther women identified their actions as ambiguous—neither feminine nor masculine, in the traditional definition of gender. For example, June Culberson from the Southern California chapter of the BPP stated that women's roles are:

[T]o fight in and participate in this revolution on an equal footing with [their] men. They [Chinese and Cuban women] have proved through practice that (1) it is a necessity that we be given equal footing and equal rank according to acquired abilities, (2) it can be done without the emotional hangups concerning our sex (female) in direct relation to theirs (male). We would like to be regarded as PANTHERS not females (Pantherettes), just Panthers.[...] The Cuban and Vietnamese women have fought side by side with their men and the Panther women would do well to follow that example without being restricted because of their sex.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ June Culberson, "The Role of the A Revolutionary Woman," *The Black Panther*, May 4, 1969, 9.

Black Panther women like Culberson desired to remove their sexual character in order to achieve equal foundation for black liberation. Panther women wanted to overcome their racial and gender stereotypes through the de-sexualization and Third World women became the Panther women's role models.

With a picture of a Viet Cong woman—Madame Nguyen Thi Binh (see illustration 6)—smiling in the middle of two men, Culberson equates black women's roles to those of Third World revolutionaries like Vietnamese, Chinese, and Cuban women. Madame Thi Binh, who was the leader of the Delegation at the Paris Conference on Vietnam, was the heroine of American anti-war activists, as former SDS and Weatherwoman Eleanor Stein recalls.⁵⁰ “Third Worldism,” or internationalism, characterized the politics of the Black Panthers in the late 1960s, as well as those of many white radicals, as we will see in the following chapters.⁵¹ The struggle of the Third World revolutionaries—especially the Vietnamese against U.S. intervention—mirrored the fights of Black Nationalists like the BPP against white racists in the U.S., as they both struggled against their oppressors.

The BPP, especially Emory Douglas—self-identified revolutionary artist and the Minister of Culture of the BPP from 1967 to 1980—depicted a number of women as black revolutionaries, including Black Panther leaders like Kathleen Cleaver. Black Panther leaders Eldridge Cleaver and Huey Newton recruited 22-year-old artist Douglas

⁵⁰ Eleanor Stein, e-mail to author, December 14, 2014. During the conference on January 27, 1973, Member of the Vietcong's Central Committee and vice-president of the South Vietnamese Women's Liberation Association, Nguyen Thi Binh signed the Paris Peace Accords, which was the turning point to ease and end the Vietnam War.

⁵¹ Breines, “What's Love Got to Do with It?” 1108.

to produce the visual identity for the Black Panthers, not only leaders but also ordinary black women and men as revolutionaries fighting against racist police, while associating them with Third World fighters.⁵² Through Douglas's revolutionary art, the BPP constructed powerful representations of black men and women, particularly Black Panther women. He made many provocative illustrations of black men and women as "disciplined and tough-looking" militants, unlike black characters in mainstream popular culture, frequently represented as submissive servant figures like 'Uncle Tom' and 'Aunt Jemima' (see illustration 7).⁵³

The Black Panther's production of images of black revolutionaries led to a historical exchange with the Third World. In the first Pan African Cultural Festival in Algiers, Algeria, organized by the Organization of African Unity in July, 1969, the Black Panthers exhibited the BPP's revolutionary art at the Afro-American center, which attracted thousands of visitors from all over the world (see illustration 8 and 9).⁵⁴ Douglas linked the image of the female guerilla fighters with anti-imperialist movements throughout the Third World, developing the image of black women engaged in armed revolution, as shown in the film *The Battle of Algiers*. As Homi K. Bhabha explains, the

⁵² Douglas studied commercial art at San Francisco City College after working in a prison printing shop as a teenager. For the recruit of Douglas, see Colette Gaiter, "Visualizing a Revolution: Emory Douglas and The Black Panther Newspaper," *AIGA Journal of Design*, June 8, 2005, <http://www.aiga.org/content.cfm/visualizing-a-revolution-emory-douglas-and-the-black-panther-new> (accessed April 12, 2015); and Jessica Werner Zack, "The Black Panthers advocated armed struggle. Emory Douglas's weapon of choice? The pen.," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 28, 2007, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/03/28/DDGIFOS2F61.DTL&ao=all> (accessed April 12, 2015).

⁵³ Erika Doss, "Revolutionary art is a tool for liberation"; Emory Douglas and Protest Aesthetics at *The Black Panther*," *New Political Science* 21, no. 2 (1999): 255.

⁵⁴ George W. Shepherd, "Reflections on the Pan-African Cultural Conference in Algiers," *Africa Today* 16, no. 4, (1969): 1. For the photos of the 1969 Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers, Algeria, see the Robert Wade Photography, <http://rw.photoshelter.com/gallery/Pan-African-Cultural-Festival-Algiers-1969/G0000u9FlzUoMuNQ> (accessed April 11, 2015).

film was a “cult film” for Black Panthers due to its portrayal of a revolutionary movement in “Fanon-linked” style.⁵⁵ With the title “1969: Afro-America Solidarity with the Oppressed People of the World,” the black woman (see illustration 10) reflects the photo of Kathleen Cleaver with her Afro hairdo and holding a gun, displaying her strength and militancy for a revolution.⁵⁶ Douglas’s images represent the Black Panther women’s performances of the emerging trope of the female guerilla fighter. Black Panther women were portrayed in the style of Third World guerrilla fighters, making them part of a global liberation.

Having lived in Asia, India and the Philippines for eight years during her youth, Kathleen Cleaver was aware of colonized people’s urgent desires for independence.⁵⁷ Just as Black Nationalists considered urban ghettos to be internal colonies, Cleaver considered “the regime of segregation as a variant of colonialism” and rejected the second-class citizenship of African Americans.⁵⁸ For Cleaver, African Americans in the United States were “colonial subjects.” Cleaver’s principles of self-determination and self-defense echoed the anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist struggles of Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans. In the concept of the internalized “colony” in the U.S. of all people of color, the Panthers remapped their position and bodies as the “frontiers of the nation,” and closely associated themselves with anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist activism in the

⁵⁵ Homi K. Bhabha, forward to *The Wretched of the Earth*, xxviii.

⁵⁶ It was originally published in the BPP newspaper in January 1969. *The Black Panther*, January 4, 1969. This is reworked from an earlier version published in the newspaper by Chuck Sperry at Firehouse Kustom Rockart Co., <http://station4.co.uk/gallery/art/emory-douglas> (accessed November 24, 2010).

⁵⁷ Aaron Shuman, “A Sit-Down with Kathleen Cleaver,” *Bad Subjects* 60 (April 2002), <http://bad.eserver.org/issues/2002/60/cleaver.html> (accessed December 26, 2014).

⁵⁸ Kathleen Neal Cleaver, “Racism, Civil Rights, and Feminism,” *Critical Race Feminism: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 50-51.

Third World.⁵⁹ The link of black women to the Third World makes black women's political action global and universal in terms of a postcolonialist claim to be free from an imperialist power both within the U.S. and in the Third World.⁶⁰ The Panther women's practice of connecting themselves to the Third World distinguished the Panther gender politics from those of many white feminists in the late 1960s.

The BPP, unlike most white radicals, promoted the ideas and images of the revolutionary mother, connecting themselves with Third World guerilla mothers.⁶¹ The BPP published a full page of a painting on the back cover of its newspaper in the spring of 1969 in which a Vietnamese woman sits holding a rifle in her right hand and her baby on her left arm, under the title "VIETNAM: We will fight and fight from this generation to the next" (see illustration 11).⁶² In his paintings, Emory Douglas not only pictured Black Panther leaders like Kathleen Cleaver and Ericka Huggins, but also ordinary black women such as grandmothers, mothers, and working women. The image of a black woman with her baby was the most popular, and a favorite figure of the BPP, in that it defied the stereotype of black women as "mammies" who raised white children in the history of slavery. Black Panthers, instead, celebrated the politicized black motherhood as the agent to rebuild the black nation. The group reproduced the image on 'Revolutionary Posters' and 'Revolutionary Greeting Cards.'⁶³ The figure of the Vietnamese woman was appropriated, and exchanged for black women to show that black and Vietnamese women

⁵⁹ Develop the idea of Singh about black anti-citizenship

⁶⁰ Doss, "Revolutionary art," 248-249.

⁶¹ Browder, *Her Best Shot*, 162.

⁶² *The Black Panther*, March 3, 1969.

⁶³ For the list of the greeting cards, see *The Black Panther*, December 26, 1970, 19. For the list of posters, see *The Black Panther*, October 12, 1968, 4.

had common struggles against America. Illustration 12 was originally produced for the Organization of Solidarity of the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America, focusing on Cuban solidarity with African-Americans' struggle against racism and imperialism in the United States. In the reworked painting, two posters/greeting cards are combined: originally titled "Hope" (on the left) and "Mother and Child" (on the right).⁶⁴ In this painting, black women in the BPP became not just black women revolutionaries but also international figures sharing commonality with all women as mothers. The paintings by Douglas reinforced the identity of black women as women revolutionaries, associating political actors with their maternity.

Maternity was critical to the re-imagining of black women as agents for building the black nation, and for producing children to serve as future fighters, as also seen with Third World guerrilla mothers. Panther women like Candi Robinson called for women's equal rights in the BPP, stating the importance of black women's maternity: "Our men need, want and will love the beautiful children, that come from our fruitful wombs... We are mothers of revolutionaries, with us is the future of our people. We my sisters, are mothers of revolution and within our wombs is the army of the people."⁶⁵ In Robinson's article, black women linked their femininity to black revolution through their maternity. Black women became an important agency for revolution because revolution would not be possible without black women in that the black nation would not exist without black mothers and babies.

In the summer of 1969, Kathleen Cleaver, after giving birth to her first child, was

⁶⁴ The painting was reprinted by Chuck Sperry in 2009 at Firehouse Kustom Rockart Co., <http://station4.co.uk/gallery/art/emory-douglas> (accessed August 10, 2015).

⁶⁵ Candi Robinson, "Message To Revolutionary Women," *The Black Panther*, August 9, 1969, 23.

also transformed into a representative of Panther women as a black revolutionary mother, pictured with her newborn son and her husband Eldridge Cleaver during their exile in Algeria (see illustration 13).⁶⁶ The BPP in the U.S. and the International Section celebrated her revolutionary act for the black community. Cleaver—along with many other Black Panther women like Assata Shakur and Elaine Brown—became a mother for armed revolution; in doing so, she differentiated herself from white women, who felt that the decision to give birth to white babies was “counterrevolutionary in and of itself, for reasons having to do both with eugenics and with their ideals of personal liberation.”⁶⁷ White abortion rights activists supported women’s “voluntary motherhood” with birth control crucial to women’s liberation, in contrast to their ‘duty’ to maintain the white population, according to white supremacists. However, black women thought of birth control as “genocide” in the history of the American birth control movement.⁶⁸ Black people suffered from compulsory sterilization campaigns and laws that intended to discourage black people from reproducing, what Angela Davis called a “racist form of mass ‘birth control’.”⁶⁹ Black women’s maternity and eugenic claims were a revolutionary act for a black community and nation, and operated in direct contrast to white women’s refutations of maternity.

The Black Panther’s affirmation of maternity was associated with their armed

⁶⁶ *The Black Panther*, August 16, 1969, 1.

⁶⁷ Browder, *Her Best Shot*, 162.

⁶⁸ For example, birth control movements in the 1930s, such as the organizations of the Eugenics Society and American Birth Control League, justified the racist ideology that combined with eugenic ideas to fertilize ‘superior’ whites but sterilize the inferior racial minorities of the population—Blacks, Chicanas, Puerto Ricans, and Native Americans. Birth control advocates like Margaret Sanger also supported the forced sterilization of blacks in the 1930s. Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race and Class*, 214-215.

⁶⁹ Davis, *Women, Race and Class*, 204.

resistance and sexuality. Unlike established idea of the BPP emphasized guns as phallic, Browder stresses, “the women of the movement had the means to combine guns with their sexuality in ways unavailable to men. They did this through bearing children for the revolution and by choosing whom to sleep with, and predicating that choice on political calculation.”⁷⁰ While Panther women performed a traditional gender role as mothers, their motherhood was different from white womanhood because they renewed their quality as mothers to solely serve for blacks. The association of black women’s motherhood with armed struggle created a masculine quality, and at the same time, a feminine nature that furthered the uniqueness of black women’s liberation.

Black Panthers and Women’s Liberation

Contrary to some historians’ emphasis on black women’s reluctance to identify as feminists, their rhetoric increasingly promoted gender equality in both the Black Panther Party and American society. However, the process by which they claimed women’s liberation was more complex than in the white women’s movement. Amidst the turmoil of 1968 and 1969, the newly emerging feminist movements in the United States were influential on Black Panther women who, according to Bobby Seale’s survey in 1969, constituted two-thirds of the membership, with many also acting as group leaders. Aware of sexism and the secondary position of women in the BPP, as well as in American society, Panther women criticized male dominance and chauvinism within the group and made a feminist call for women’s liberation. In interviews and lectures from the early 1970s until now, Kathleen Cleaver recalls chauvinist attitudes of men in the movement,

⁷⁰ Browder, 149.

who ignored and dismissed women's ideas. Still, she did not consider men as women's enemy:

And I don't think that either of our roles can be considered superior or inferior to the others. I viewed myself as assisting everything that was done, and you must recognize that this is what's key in the liberation of women. That the form of assistance that women give in political movements to men is just as crucial as the leadership that men give to those movements. And this is something that is never recognized and never dealt with. Because women are always relegated to assistance and this is where I became interested in the liberation of women.⁷¹

Like most anti-racist black women in the late 1960s and early 70s, Panther women, including Cleaver, understood black women's liberation differently from white women's liberation and did not believe white feminist strategies would solve black women's difficulties. They thought of white women as suffering solely from white men's patriarchal oppression, but black men who shared black women's own racist struggles also repressed black women. Therefore, black women's gender problems, like black men's sexism and male supremacy, were not the same as whites', in the double oppression of black women.

Unlike many white feminists' claims for separate women's movements, Panther women like Cleaver argued that black women's liberation was "not something we could obtain separately, nor would consciousness-raising groups serve as an appropriate channel for our rage."⁷² For revolutionary black women like Cleaver, women in the Third World who fought for national liberation with their men were analogous with women in the black liberation. The Maoist idea of women's equality in Third World liberation

⁷¹ Herve, "Black Scholar Interviews," 55-56.

⁷² Cleaver, "Racism, Civil Rights, and Feminism," 50.

especially helped Black Panther women articulate their equality to black men. Mao's infamous phrases, like "Women hold up half the sky," shaped most Black Nationalist women's feminist thoughts, as historians Robin D. G. Kelley and Betsy Esch assert.⁷³ Panther women like Cleaver, Shakur, Huggins, Lynn French and Akua Njere followed the style of women's liberation in the Third World as many radical feminists like Maoism also influenced white radical feminist group in New York, Redstockings and many other feminists.⁷⁴

Black Panther women did not clearly demand women's liberation first, but regarded gender equality within the group and in black communities as secondary to women's supportive roles for black men by 1967. Early articles in the BPP newspaper frequently framed black women in the group not as independent activists, but as supportive subordinates to men who were fulfilling the revolution. During 1968, BPP women continued to emphasize women's roles in the group as supporting their men to achieve "the awakening of the black consciousness of her man. Her main objective should be to assist in the re-birth of the black man's mind."⁷⁵ In September 1968, BPP member Gloria Bartholomew even urged black women to "drop the white ways of trying to be equal to the Black man. The woman's place is to stand behind the Black man, so in the event he should start to fall she is there to hold him up with her strength."⁷⁶ In her article, Bartholomew refuses the claim of white feminists to be equal to men and argues that black men should stand up first and black women go behind them for their

⁷³ Kelley and Esch, "Black Like Mao," 25.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ A black revolutionary, "Black Woman," *The Black Panther*, September 14, 1968, 6.

⁷⁶ Gloria Bartholomew, "A Black Woman's Thoughts," *The Black Panther*, September 28, 1968, 11.

revolution. For her, black women were collective agents to help black men for revolution.

On the same page as the article by Gloria Bartholomew, another BPP woman, Linda Greene, expressed a slightly different idea of black women:

There is a phenomenon that is beginning to evolve out of many other phenomenon. That phenomenon is the revolutionary Black woman. She is a new, different creature, different from all women who have walked the face of the earth [...] the Black Woman. She is a change; she is inherently revolutionary[...] She is a worker for Black Liberation. It is her goal. Within this goal lies the fulfilling of Black man in every way that they must be fulfilled in order to live and fight. [...] She will, and does fulfill the needs of her Black man when they are made known to her, [...] Her hangups about being used, being taken advantage of, or cut out of her man's life, must vanish, have vanished as did straight hair and bleaching cream did in her life when she became truly black and revolutionary[...] She is everything, because she is and must be the reservoir of life for Black brothers who fight and live and die in these desert sands of life as we know it now. She must be his other world, total and complete. She is militant, revolutionary, committed, strong, and warm, feminine, loving, and kind. These qualities are not the antithesis of each other; they must all be her simultaneously.⁷⁷

Scholar Tracye Matthews explains this claim of black revolutionary women was a partial challenge to the stereotype of a black woman as “overbearing and domineering,” as portrayed in the Moynihan’s report.⁷⁸ Although Greene also promoted black women as supporting men in their heterosexual relationship, unlike Bartholomew, Greene more clearly configured the way in which the black women became revolutionaries and constructed the revolutionary identity.

In light of the contemporary discourse surrounding black women—such as the black domestic inequalities in the Moynihan report, as well as white feminism—Black

⁷⁷ Linda Greene, “The Black Revolutionary Woman,” *The Black Panther*, September 28, 1968, 11.

⁷⁸ Tracye Ann Matthews, “‘No One Ever Asks What a Man's Place in the Revolution Is’: Gender and the Politics of the Black Panther Party, 1966-1971,” in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, 286-287.

Panther women primarily maintained and even reinforced the ideas of women's secondary positions in the BPP. Their downplaying of women's liberation, however, was not fixed but continued to evolve through the late 1960s. In a 1968 poem by Joan Tareka Lewis (signed as Matilaba), the first female member of the BPP, Black Panther women are encouraged to maintain their equal standpoints to men, working together. The poem begins:

Revolutionary brother
And a
Revolutionary Sister
Work
Hand and Hand
Together
As a
team
Their relationship is
An Act of
War
The Respect for
One another
Is inevitable...⁷⁹

Lewis envisions black women and men as brothers and sisters for future revolution rather than enemies, contrasting with white feminists' antagonism toward men. Although black women were mainly reluctant to identify themselves as feminists—of whom the noticeable majority at the time were white women—black women's rhetoric, like Lewis's, increasingly promoted gender equality. Former member of the BPP Regina Jennings uses "Africana Womanism," rather than feminism to explain the way in which black women considered the fight against racism as more important than that against

⁷⁹ Matialba, "Revolutionary Bro' n sis," *The Black Panther*, November 16, 1968, 11.

sexism. Despite her personal experience of sexual harassment from a male member, Jennings considered the people of the black community as her extended family: her sisters and brothers. Jennings's memories and women's writings in the BPP show how women positioned themselves in the black community through Black Nationalist perspectives. "Africana Womanism" is the idea in which black women talk about women's issues through feminist perspectives without white women's meanings.⁸⁰

The BPP encountered more conflicts with local and national police and law enforcement agencies in 1968, which caused various transformations in the group's memberships, leadership, communal programs and activities, and tactics for survival from white racism. The assassination and incarceration of BPP leaders drastically affected women's positions and activities by shifting the gender balance within the group. Two days after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., on April 6, 1968, under the shock and pressure of inevitable fights with local police, Eldridge Cleaver led an ambush on and had shootouts with Oakland police.⁸¹ Charged with attempted murder and having already been an ex-convict, Cleaver jumped bail and fled to Cuba, and then went into exile in Algeria, where he continued his political activity by building the International Section of the BPP. Fearing that his life was in danger, Eldridge Cleaver remained in exile for seven years before returning to the U.S. in 1975.⁸²

⁸⁰ Regina Jennings, "Africana Womanism in The Black Panther Party: A Personal Story," *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 25, no. 3 (2001).

⁸¹ He was wounded after the shootouts and 17-year-old Bobby Hutton was killed by the police after his surrender. The police claimed that Hutton tried to run away and ignored orders to stop, however, Eldridge Cleaver testified that Hutton was shot more than 12 times after the police checked his unarmed body. Henry Luis Gates, "Interview Eldridge Cleaver," *Frontline*, PBS, 1997.

⁸² For the frame-up and imprisonment of Geronimo ji Jaga Pratt in 1970 and his release in 1997, see Austin, *Up against the Wall*, 243-244. 458

The trials and imprisonments of the primary leaders of the BPP—Newton, Cleaver, and Seale—limited the scope of their political influence. For instance, Bobby Seale was charged with conspiracy to incite a riot, as part of a group called the “Chicago Eight,” during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago 1968. After President Lyndon B. Johnson announced that he would not be running for re-election for a second-term, the Convention received great attention, as it focused on the new presidential nominee of the Democratic Party. It also became a major arena for anti-war protests from the SDS, the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam and the Youth International Party (Yippies). About ten thousand protesters gathered at the Convention, and Chicago mayor Richard J. Daley called for twice the number police and National Guardsmen to defend against protesters, which became known as a “police riot,” according to Katsiaficas, involving “12,000 police, 5,000-6,000 National Guard, and 6,000-7,000 Army troops.”⁸³ While the police were beating not only protesters but also bystanders and reporters, the bloody violent scenes were televised. In the aftermath of the obvious brutality and overwhelming power of the city police and the state military force during these protests, the federal grand jury accused eight activists of the violent demonstration from several groups like the BPP and SDS, including Bobby Seale.⁸⁴ He was put on trial again in 1970, charged with the conspiracy to kidnap and murder BPP member Alex Rackley on May 21, 1969 in Middlefield, Connecticut; Rackley was murdered by fellow Panthers who suspected him of being an informant. The charge was eventually dropped. However, Seale was also in trials and prison until 1972.

⁸³ Katsiaficas, *The Imagination*, 80.

⁸⁴ The trial soon became “Chicago Seven,” which excluded Bobby Seale but remained other members: Lee Weiner, John Froines, Abbie Hoffman, Rennie Davis, Jerry Rubin, Tom Hayden, Dave Dellinger.

Due to the absence and inactivity of Black Panther men under these circumstances, the BPP required an increase in women's membership and leadership. Panther women maintained BPP headquarters and local offices, organized campaigns for incarcerated and exiled Panthers, and continued their community programs. Some Panther women were affected by the consequences of the violent actions of the male leaders and became nomadic, traveling throughout countries in the Third World to follow their exiled men. Kathleen Cleaver, for instance, moved back and forth between the U.S. and other foreign countries, where her husband was in exile. However, as much as Panther women had insecure surroundings under the violent oppression by the state, under their special circumstances black women were also presented with opportunities to showcase their empowerment and the transformation of their identities in their personal and political lives.

If Panther women like Cleaver were representative of global Panther women, the BPP also produced strong female fighters against the state repression within the U.S., like Ericka Huggins, who initiated the turning point for BPP members to consider women's struggles as of equal importance to the struggle of race, and to recognize black women's roles, giving special attention to gender issues. In 1969, eighteen-year-old Ericka Huggins became a leader in the Los Angeles chapter of the BPP with her husband John Huggins. Three weeks after the birth of their daughter in January of that year, John Huggins was killed, and she opened a BPP chapter in New Haven, Connecticut, where she was arrested as part of the Alex Rackley murder conspiracy. After she was imprisoned and separated from her newborn child, Huggins symbolized a Panther woman as a black revolutionary, enduring incarceration as a consequence of her political

struggle.

In July 1969, still exiled in Algeria, Eldridge Cleaver sent a letter to Ericka Huggins promoting gender equality as the group's policy, which the BPP published in their newspaper.⁸⁵ Eldridge Cleaver, up until that point a well-known male supremacist, demonstrated his acceptance of the position of women as equal to men in his letter:

The incarceration and the suffering of sister Ericka should be a stinging rebuke to all manifestations of male chauvinism within our ranks [...] we have to recognize our women as our equals and that revolutionary standards of principles demand that we go to great lengths to see to it that disciplinary action is taken on all levels against those who manifest male chauvinism behavior. Because the liberation of women is one of the most important issues facing the world today.⁸⁶

For Cleaver, Huggins's suffering from violent activities by the state and its meaning of armed self-defense deserved a new perspective on the women in the group. Recognizing the emergence of the movements for women's liberation, Cleaver's letter clearly banned sexism and male chauvinistic attitudes within the group.⁸⁷ The militant black women in the BPP in particular and women who suffered the most severe repression of the state in general received the men's respect in the Black Power Movement. In this logic, the revolutionary black women were no less than fighters for the community, and their gender identities became homogenized with those of black men. Panther women recognized that the BPP had different roles for women and men, and defined women's roles as the "office-type jobs, the clerical-type job"; however, the position of black

⁸⁵ "Message to Sister Ericka Huggins of the Black Panther Party," *The Black Panther*, July 5, 1969, 12-13.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ For Cleaver's and Newton's positions on women's and gay liberation, see Huey P. Newton, *To Die for the People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton* (New York, 1972), 152; and Eldridge Cleaver, quoted in *The Black Panthers Speak*, ed., Philip Foner (New York, 1995), 99.

women in the group changed through the example of Ericka Huggins, who shed on the group a “new light because she had been [through] a lot of things that some Brothers hadn’t even been [through].”⁸⁸ The case of Huggins as a strong revolutionary woman provided the best justification for black women in the BPP to be treated as equal comrades of men.

Black Panther women began to develop their feminist ideas and theories in the summer of 1969. On August 2nd, BPP member Roberta Alexander’s speech pointing out the problem of male chauvinism in the BPP stressed the women’s struggles against sexism within the black movement. She cited women’s credentials in the movement, stating that black women had “gone through women leadership; women being able to be armed, to defend themselves as well as the brothers.”⁸⁹ She further urged black women to see themselves as equal to black men as revolutionaries. Alexander developed the concept of the double oppression of black women: “Black women, interestingly enough, are oppressed as a class, part of the super-oppressed class of workers and unemployed in this country. Black women are oppressed because they are black, and then on top of that, black women are oppressed by black men.”⁹⁰ On August 9th, a week after Alexander’s speech, fellow BPP member Candi Robinson further pronounced black women as “revolutionaries... the other half of [black] revolutionary men...their equal halves, may it be with gun in hand, or battling in streets to make this country a socialist lead.”⁹¹ In the article, Robinson also reiterated Alexander’s notion of the status of black women as

⁸⁸ “Sisters,” *The Black Panther*, September 13, 1969.

⁸⁹ “U.F.A.F. Women’s Panel: Roberta Alexander at Conference,” *The Black Panther*, August 2, 1969, 7.

⁹⁰ “U.F.A.F. Women’s Panel,” 7.

⁹¹ Robinson, “Message To Revolutionary Women,” 23.

doubly oppressed; “We are as revolutionary as [black men].... we have been double oppressed, not only by the capitalist society, but also by our men... We revolutionary men and women are the halves of each other. We must continue to educate our men, and bring their minds from a male chauvinistic level to a higher level.”⁹² The two articles by Candi Robinson and Roberta Alexander in August 1969 show a change in the philosophy of the BPP women, who now criticized male dominance and chauvinism in the group and made a feminist call for women members to be real and equal revolutionaries.

In late 1969, black women established their identities as black revolutionaries with feminist perspectives. On September 13th, the BPP published an article on how Black Panther women thought of women’s liberation because they thought that black women were excluded from the debates over “organizational and political strategy for the women’s liberation movement.”⁹³ In this article, six anonymous women from the BPP elaborated on their ideas regarding male chauvinism in the BPP, and articulated strategies for women’s liberation in terms of socialist revolution.⁹⁴ Black women also strengthened their identities as female revolutionaries by eliminating separate jobs and roles between women and men, and seeking unity within the party in the fight for revolution. An interviewee on September 13th emphasized the change of the women’s position in the group, analyzing that the BPP had a bourgeois attitude of male chauvinism but that they were moving “toward a proletarian revolution.”⁹⁵ Women’s liberation became primary for the “struggle towards socialist revolution,” not separate from men’s struggle, but

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ “Sisters,” *The Black Panther*, September 13, 1969, 12-13.

⁹⁴ “Sisters,” *ibid.*

⁹⁵ Ibid.

united with men. Another interviewee even stressed female chauvinism, seemingly targeted at white women's movements; "Chauvinism isn't just relegated to the male. Chauvinism is an undying or unreasoning or irrational love for one's sex and if a women's liberation organization gets uptight because a man comes around, that's unreasoning and irrational."⁹⁶ Speaking as a black woman, she placed black women in the intersected space of race and gender. In that context, black women became exceptional because of their double oppression, and they became very important agents for gender and racial revolution. At this time, black women made their position even stronger in the black revolution.

Although black women in the BPP raised the issue of sexism within the group, they mostly emphasized the similarity of their positions as revolutionaries to those of black men. An anonymous member from the Kansas City Chapter of the BPP represented black women as warriors like Ericka Huggins and other women in the BPP, in an article in March 1970.⁹⁷ Huggins was not the only woman to be incarcerated for her struggle. Several other women in the BPP were also in prison. Most remarkably, two black women were pregnant and gave birth while in prison. As a revolutionary mother, BPP member Francis Carter had delivered a baby boy named Che Alprentice Carter, but he was separated from her: "After [the] birth of this new warrior he was taken away by the fascist racist state of [Connecticut] by saying that this beautiful sister was an unfit mother...Sisters, being a whole part in the revolution, you must know that your part is basically the same as the brothers and that is liberation for all oppressed people by any

⁹⁶ "Sisters."

⁹⁷ "Revolution and Women," *The Black Panther*, March 16, 1970, 5.

means necessary.”⁹⁸ Having a baby in prison—a difficult circumstance in which to give birth—established black women in the BPP as more serious and important revolutionaries than male members, and black women’s political position became considered by black radicals as equal to, or even higher than the position of black men.

With the examples of women in prison as the highest models of black female revolutionaries, black women continued to analyze women’s position in society. An unknown woman, signed as “Eve from South Africa,” established the concept of the “triple oppression” of black women in July 1970: “women realize that the fight is not for equal rights. The fight is for change in the society itself...the Women’s Liberation Front, this cannot be seen as an advance towards the emancipation of women...All classes of Black people thus suffer, and the great majority of Black women are triply oppressed, as Blacks, women and workers.”⁹⁹ Black women remained in the lowest paid jobs, working primarily as domestic servants, farm or factory workers in “the cheapest of a very cheap labor market.”¹⁰⁰ Black women’s positions in society were the lowest under the triple oppression of gender, race, and class: the working-class black woman was triply exploited by the patriarchal, capitalist, and racist systems. This article outlining the ‘triple oppression’ of black women provides a very early analysis of feminist perspectives, and women in the BPP established their identity through this new vision of black women.

The thoughts of Black Panther women about women’s liberation were often contradictory or complicated. Despite the fact that Black Panther women were aware of

⁹⁸ Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁹⁹ Eve, “Women’s Liberation,” *The Black Panther*, July 11, 1970, 18.

¹⁰⁰ Eve, “Women’s Liberation,” 18.

the double and triple oppression of black women in society, they felt that their was relatively emancipated from sexism. Different from women's experiences with male chauvinism in daily life, Black Panther women thought of the BPP as more equal to men and women than any other sites in the society. As Sara Evans clarifies, the sexism in the New Left was lesser than other "environments" in society, and actually provided "free spaces" for women to develop feminism. The sexist and male supremacist attitudes of many men in the Black Power Movement greatly helped the new policies and practices for women's liberation.¹⁰¹ Kathleen Cleaver remembers that the BPP took a formal position on women's liberation as soon as a male member raped a young sister and was voted out of the group in 1970. In this mini-trial, Cleaver argued that the Black Panther's decision to expel the male member from the group was very significant for women's liberation, in contrast with the Black Panther's earlier masculine politics.¹⁰² For Kathleen Cleaver, there were now only revolutionaries, both men and women. Even though black women in the Black Power Movement were better qualified for their motherhood, they considered their mother role as a sex-less or desexualized revolutionary quality. Their "tasks" were no longer divided between men and women, who were now working equally on papers and breakfast programs. Both men and women were leaders, equal in their incarceration and danger of death. She asserted that the BPP was no longer "an

¹⁰¹ Sara M. Evans, "Women's Liberation: Seeing the Revolution Clearly," *Feminist Studies* 41, no. 1 (2015): 147-148.

¹⁰² Kathleen Neal Cleaver, "Women, Power, and Revolution," *New Political Science* 21, no. 2, (1999): 234-235.

organization that had sexual parts or women's sections or women's role," unlike the rest of sexist American society.¹⁰³

Black Panther Women and the Third World

By the early 1970s, Black Panthers in the Oakland BPP transformed their politics to be less aggressive and non-confrontational, although the mass media and public continued to identify the group in terms of their armed self-defense. During his incarceration for three years with limited communications, Newton gradually moderated his radicalism, counter to his growing fame outside the prison as a militant revolutionary, an image promoted by the BPP's "Free Huey" campaign. After his release from prison in August 1970, Newton faced more than fifty chapters of the BPP and thousands of new members, as opposed to the small number of chapters that existed before he was imprisoned, as writer Bryan Burrough indicates.¹⁰⁴ He strengthened the group's relatively nonviolent strategies and "survival" programs in black communities, such as free breakfast programs for children, free medical clinics, house searches for the homeless and free clothing and food, instead of militant activities like patrolling local police. Eldridge Cleaver, on the other hand, reinforced revolutionary ideas, influenced by Third World guerrillas, and maintained the BPP's violent rhetoric and tactics during his exile.¹⁰⁵ He publicly supported the Weatherman's violent activism, like the bombing of

¹⁰³ Kathleen Cleaver, "Memories of Love and War," Vassar College, 2001.

¹⁰⁴ Bryan Burrough, *Days of Rage: America's Radical Underground, the FBI, and the Forgotten Age of Revolutionary Violence* (New York: Penguin, 2015), 184.

¹⁰⁵ According to Kathleen Cleaver, Huey Newton had less interest in the International Section and provided his "increasingly theoretical analysis divorced from practical merit." Ogbar, *Black Power*, 102.

governmental buildings, to get public attention regarding the U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

Centering on the issues of armed self-defense and resistance, the disagreements between Eldridge Cleaver and Huey Newton struggles were exacerbated by the state's efforts to terminate the BPP that stimulated its eventual breakup. Newton expelled the more militant members of the BPP in New York, after they expressed support for Eldridge Cleaver and the Weatherman, an extremist faction of the SDS. On April 2, 1970, the New York Panther 21 were charged with conspiracy to kill police officers and bombings. In March 1971, the Panther 21 wrote an open letter from prison to the Weatherman, which criticized the BPP's lack of militancy and declared the Weatherman as a vanguard of a revolution, which resulted in Newton's immediate expulsion of the Panther 21.¹⁰⁶ In early 1971, Eldridge Cleaver publically criticized the leadership and reformist programs of David Hilliard and Newton, as well as the expulsion of the New York BPP, during a telephone interview on television with the current appearance of Newton. Newton immediately expelled Cleaver and former Central Committee members in the International Section of the BPP in February 1971.¹⁰⁷ The two leaders' breakup caused the BPP's division into two different sections in the U.S.: the West coast, led by Newton, and the East coast, which followed and supported Cleaver and the International

¹⁰⁶ Eldridge Cleaver, "On the Weathermen," with Introduction by Stewart Albert circa 1970," Eldridge Cleaver Papers, BANC MSS 91/213 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA.

¹⁰⁷ Cleaver, "Timeline" and "On the Weathermen," Eldridge Cleaver Papers.

Section of the BPP, organized by Kathleen Cleaver, Emory Douglas and several other Panthers who had joined Eldridge Cleaver in Algeria in the summer of 1969.¹⁰⁸

Following Newton, the rhetoric and programs of the Oakland led BPP changed from radical fights against police oppression to more community programs like free breakfast, medical clinics, and so on. Although those programs had coexisted with their more militant and armed actions from the beginning, Newton softened his rhetoric to alleviate the state's repression and reduce conflicts with local police. In his autobiography *Revolutionary Suicide*, Newton articulated the conflict with Cleaver. Newton states that the reason Cleaver joined the BPP was mainly its violent appeal:

Eldridge Cleaver identified with other negative aspects of the Party [...] What appealed to him were force, firepower, and the intense moment when combatants stood at the brink of death. For him this was the revolution. Eldridge's ideology was based on the rhetoric of violence; his speeches abounded in either/or absolutes, like "Either pick up the gun or remain a sniveling coward." He would not support the survival programs, revolutionary process, a means of bringing the people closer to the transformation of society. He believed this transformation could take place only through violence, by picking up the gun and storming the barricades, and his obsessive belief alienated him more and more from the community. By refusing to abandon the position of destruction and despair, he underestimated the enemy and took on the role of the reactionary suicide.¹⁰⁹

In his critique of Cleaver's tendency towards violence, Newton amends the perception of the BPP as militant and violent, which he connects solely with Cleaver and calls

¹⁰⁸ Kathleen Cleaver, "The Evolution of the International Section of the Black Panther Party in Algiers, 1969-1972," 1983, Box 17, Folder 194, Yale Student Papers Collection (RU 331), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, CT, 50. This paper is published in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*.

¹⁰⁹ Huey Percy Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973), 330-331.

“reactionary suicide.” Newton redefines the identity of the BPP as being more close to its communities, and its relationship with the police as reconciled:

Nonetheless, I believe that the Black Panther approach in 1966 and 1967 was basically a good and necessary phase. Our military actions called attention to our program and our plans for the people. Our strategy brought us dedicated members, and it gained the respect of the struggling peoples of the Third World. Most important, it raised the consciousness of Black and White citizens about the relationship between police and minorities in this country, [...] Our communities are still not free from brutal incidents and corruption, but it is nonetheless true that police departments have become more sensitive to the problems of urban minorities. [...] But revolution is not an action, it is a process. Times change, and policies of the past are not necessarily effective in the present. Our military strategies were not frozen. As conditions changed, so did our tactics. Patrolling the community was only one step in our ten-point program and had never been regarded as the sole community endeavor of the Black Panther Party.¹¹⁰

Although Newton appreciates the earlier violent strategies of the BPP, he stresses the changes of his policies from internationalism to “intercommunalism.”¹¹¹ Eldridge Cleaver, however, denied the leadership of Newton and called his reformative activities “reactionary policies.”¹¹²

The peaceful and communal activities of the BPP remained in the local and national movement; however, there was a continuation of armed and underground activism by the International Section. After the split, Eldridge and Kathleen Cleaver focused on their international organization called the Revolutionary Peoples’ Communication Network (RPCN), which was based on the expelled International Section

¹¹⁰ Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 329-330.

¹¹¹ Newton, *War Against The Panthers*, 29.

¹¹² Eldridge Cleaver, “Timeline of Black Panther Party Split with International Section 1971,” Eldridge Cleaver Papers, BANC MSS 91/213 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

of the BPP. As its spokesperson, Kathleen Cleaver moved to New York to give speeches on the RPCN and recruit members for the group. The rift between Newton and Cleaver led to the formation of the Black Liberation Army (BLA), an underground organization founded by former BPP members like Eldridge Cleaver and his followers in New York. Bryan Burrough estimates the number of Black Panthers that went underground to be about fifty to sixty in the Bronx and Brooklyn in July 1971.¹¹³ Cleaver eventually resigned from his organization, the RPCN, to focus on the BLA. Eldridge Cleaver focused his activism on organizing international connections and support for the militant parts of the BPP, in developing his encounters with Third World countries in Latin America and Africa, and expanding to Asia as well.

From 1969 until the mid-1970s, while working for the International Section during Eldridge Cleaver's exile, Kathleen Cleaver constructed her global identity as an American black revolutionary woman in Africa. In addition to symbolizing politics of black revolutionary women, Cleaver was also instrumental in the maintenance of the International Section, due to the limitations set by her husband's exile. The International Section of the BPP represented the international activities and revolutionary figures of the BPP, particularly in the Third World.¹¹⁴ During the 1969 Pan-African Festival, the BPP in general and the International Section in particular received international recognition as the representation of black revolution in the world (see illustration 14). Kathleen Cleaver remembers that the International Section was like "a magnet for an increasingly diverse

¹¹³ Even though Eldridge Cleaver was the most famous national figure, the BLA worked autonomously. Burrough, *Days of Rage*, 200.

¹¹⁴ European radicals like Netherland militant group Red Youth recognized the International Section as the legitimate black revolutionary faction of the BPP. Correspondence—Kathleen Cleaver, 1969-1971, Eldridge Cleaver Papers.

crop of fugitives from the United States.”¹¹⁵ As Cleaver also recollects, the villa where they were located turned into “a kind of embassy of the American revolution, receiving visitors from all over the world.”¹¹⁶ The African American figures in Algeria signaled the Black Panther’s political and cultural connections with Third World nations that recognized the International Section of the BPP as Black militant representatives from the U.S.¹¹⁷

Exploring Kathleen Cleaver’s work in the International Section of the BPP further uncovers the transnational activities of the Panther woman. Kathleen Cleaver recorded their activities in her “Daily Report” in 1970 and 1971. As Communications Secretary of the Section, Cleaver played multiple roles: she did all the clerical and receptionist work, keeping records and accounts of office administration, in addition to her continuous leadership duties as a Communications Secretary in the U.S.¹¹⁸ The Report was composed of tasks she completed everyday: Mail, Telephone, Runs, Appointments, Visits and Meetings, Typing and Translation. She typed papers, answered phone calls, made appointments and mailed out letters; she also translated the BPP’s statements into foreign languages, and also foreign leaders’ letters and statements into English. Her work was not exclusive to maintaining the office of the International Section; she was also present in most meetings with foreign ambassadors, reporters, and other activists from all over the world. Kathleen Cleaver was playing roles in both domestic and political fields as a wife,

¹¹⁵ Cleaver, “Back to Africa,” in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, 235.

¹¹⁶ Kathleen Neal Cleaver, “Back to Africa: The Evolution of the International Section of the Black Panther Party (1969-1972),” in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered* (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1998), 235.

¹¹⁷ Shepherd, “Reflections on the Pan-African Cultural Conference in Algiers,” 1.

¹¹⁸ Kathleen Cleaver, “Daily Reports,” Communications Secretary 1970, 1971, Eldridge Cleaver Papers.

mother, officer, typewriter, translator, spokesperson, fund-raiser, and so on.

Panther women's activities expanded from Africa to Asia, and Cleaver's experience in Asia especially shaped her revolutionary black womanhood and motherhood. In Algeria, the Black Panthers focused their activism on organizing international connections, developing their encounters with Third World countries in Latin America and Africa, and Asia as well. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) or North Korea, for example, developed close relationships with the Panthers. As Kathleen Cleaver stated, "North Korean representatives became the closest associates of the Black Panther Party."¹¹⁹ North Korean enmity toward U.S. imperialism appealed to the Panthers, and the North Koreans saw the Black Panthers as comrades fighting against American imperialism, a potential "vehicle for disseminating the ideology of Kim Il Sung within the United States."¹²⁰ In her close contacts with North Koreans, Kathleen Cleaver gained the opportunities to observe the achievements of Third World socialist revolution in Asia, and to develop her concepts of both black and women's liberation.¹²¹

Although the Panther women's visit to North Korea has received hardly any scholarly attention, Cleaver's unpublished memoir, *Memories of Love and War*, reveals how Panther women developed their transnational ideas.¹²² In the later portion of their simultaneous pregnancies, Kathleen Cleaver and fellow Panther Barbara Easley Cox—

¹¹⁹ Cleaver, "The Evolution of the International Section of the Black Panther Party," 26.

¹²⁰ Cleaver, "The Evolution," 26.

¹²¹ For Maoism, see Kelley and Esch, "Black Like Mao."

¹²² There are only two studies that extensively covered the Black Panther's trip to Asia; however, both lack the stories of Kathleen Cleaver. See Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013); and Young, Benjamin R, "'The Enemy of Your Enemy is Your Friend': The Black Panther Party's Relations with North Korea, 1969-1971," master's thesis, State University of New York at Brockport, 2013.

wife of the BPP's Field Marshal Don Cox—visited North Korea as guests of the Korean Democratic Women's Union (*Choson Minju Nyosong Tongmaeng*). According to Cleaver, this was not solely a personal, maternity trip, but a politically progressive experience for both Panther women.¹²³ The Black Panther women, especially Kathleen Cleaver, requested lessons on Marxism-Leninism, which were provided by a professor from the School of Marxism-Leninism and his translator over several days. Regarding the experience, Cleaver remembers “[an] exciting give and take of ideas, on the themes of revolutionary traditions of the anti-Japanese struggle, opportunism and reaction, socialist construction and the ideology of *Juche*.”¹²⁴ The ideology of *Juche*, which the Panthers translated as “self-reliance,” appealed to Black Panthers like Cleaver in terms of their own promotion self-determination and self-defense against U.S. imperialism.

After the lessons in Marxist-Leninism and *Juche* ideas, Cleaver's participation in international and political events reinforced her ideas of anti-imperialism in the context of Asia. On the 20th anniversary of the Korean War, June 25th, the North Korean government invited the Panther women to an event called “Day of Struggle for the Withdrawing of the U.S. Imperialist Aggressive Army from South Korea.”¹²⁵ Kathleen Cleaver was “surrounded by powerful opponents of the U.S. imperialists” and it evoked in her a feeling of honor to be there as a member of the BPP and reinforced her “desire to bring about the revolutionary transformation” of American society.¹²⁶ In acquiring knowledge of the history of North Korea and its concept of *Juche*, Cleaver associated the

¹²³ Kathleen Cleaver, e-mail to author, December 18, 2014.

¹²⁴ Kathleen Cleaver, “Memories of Love and War” (Unpublished Memoir, 2011), 565-570.

¹²⁵ Cleaver, “Memories,” 570-572.

¹²⁶ Cleaver, 571-572.

BPP's concepts for black liberation with Korean struggles against imperialism. For instance, she wrote a message to the black G.I.s stationed in South Korea, which was later published in the BPP newspaper.¹²⁷ Cleaver urged American soldiers to resist against "American occupation of the South [Korea]" to help Korean unification and independence. Reflecting the BPP's concept of self-determination, Cleaver's association with the Third World, especially North Korea, broadened her international view of liberation.

The Black Panther women's stay in North Korea during their pregnancies limited their activities, and as foreign guests their isolation from society was obvious. Except for their interpreter, direct contacts with North Korean women were absent; however, the Panther women's meeting with one particularly powerful woman became symbolically significant. Kathleen Cleaver and Barbara Cox met Kim Sung Ae, the president of the Democratic Women's Union, the host of their visit, and the wife of North Korean leader Kim Il Sung, right after Cleaver gave birth to her daughter on July 31, 1970.¹²⁸ In the photo are Cleaver's two children at each corner and the translator in the middle (see illustration 15). As shown in the photo, the women's respective styles distinguished their nationalist concept of Korean and African American women, respectively, and were stunning for both women. Cleaver recalls Kim Sung Ae's traditional floor length skirt, in

¹²⁷ Cleaver argued that the purpose of American soldiers in South Korea was "to prevent the peaceful unification of the country and perpetrate war, plunder, and barbarism against the Korean people in order to maintain a foothold for their military domination over the peoples of Asia... The peoples of Asia have heroically fought against colonial oppression and feudal exploitation and several communities are partially liberated; China, North Vietnam, and North Korea. The U.S. government still occupies Taiwan, South Vietnam, and South Korea." Kathleen Cleaver, "A Message to the Black GI's in South Korea," *The Black Panther*, December 14, 1971, 12-13.

¹²⁸ Photo, courtesy of Kathleen Cleaver.

contrast with her own large Afro and miniskirt.¹²⁹ Kim Sung Ae gave the Cleavers' daughter the name "Jojuyounggi" meaning "a young heroine born in Juche Korea," and North Korean leader Kim Il Sung became Joju's godfather.¹³⁰ The adoption of the name symbolized Cleaver's acceptance of the idea of *Juche* promoted by the North Koreans, and their respect for Kathleen Cleaver as the Communications Secretary of the BPP, rather than merely as Eldridge Cleaver's wife.¹³¹

During the Panther women's stay, a delegation of journalists and activists called the U.S. Peoples' Anti-Imperialist Delegation also visited North Korea, to "express solidarity with the struggles of the Korean people and to bring back to Babylon [the United States] information about their communist society and their fight against U.S. imperialism," as Cleaver stated.¹³² The delegation arrived in Pyongyang on July 14, 1970, and their trip was extended to other socialist Asian nations, such as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, or North Vietnam, and the People's Republic of China over the course of two and a half months. Eleven delegation members, multiracial and multiethnic, represented various activist groups such as the BPP, Antiwar activists, women's liberationists, alternative media, and Asian-American movements. The majority of the delegates were female—seven women, including Elaine Brown of the BPP, Pat Sumi from the Asian movements, and Randy Rappaport of the Boston feminist group, Bread and Roses (see illustration 16). During their travels within the Third World, the

¹²⁹ Wu, *Radicals on the Road*, 119.

¹³⁰ Cleaver, "Memories of Love and War," 583-4.

¹³¹ The Democratic Women's Union provided housing, accommodations, a personal interpreter, house helpers, most importantly medical care for her labor, and a private aircraft for their return to Algeria. Cleaver, "Memories of Love and War."

¹³² "Los Angeles Times Columnist Robert Scheer's Trip to North Korea (1970)," <http://archive.frontpagemag.com/readArticle.aspx?ARTID=18363> (accessed February 28, 2015).

women participants in the delegation encountered “strong revolutionary women who were engaged in building socialist societies and fighting wars of liberation.”¹³³ As Kathleen Cleaver applied *Juche* ideas to the black community, women in the delegation also appropriated their meeting with Asian women to black women’s consciousness of women’s movements.

North Korean women working in heavy industries impressed the women in the delegation. They verified that women in the socialist countries achieved both national and women’s liberation, building the country as prosperous at the same time working equal to men. In an interview later, Elaine Brown contrasted North Korea with America, in terms of the imbalance in wealth distribution and subsequent poverty and disorder in urban areas, emphasizing the well-organized North Korean cities, and the clean and prosperous working conditions.¹³⁴ Women like Brown witnessed socialist systems that allowed women to work as freely as men. Korean women who worked in heavy industries served as role models for the American women in terms of women’s liberation, which they associated with the Equal Rights Amendment.¹³⁵ In meeting with the Vietnamese Women’s Union in August 1970, according to a transcript, the delegation emphasized women’s mobilization as workers and peasants, and discussed how to train the women’s group “to develop self-reliance in them” recalling the North Korean idea of *Juche*.¹³⁶ As

¹³³ Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, “U.S. People’s Anti-Imperialist Delegation,” *Journeys Towards Peace: Internationalism and Radical Orientalism During the U.S. War in Viet Nam*, <http://digitalunion.osu.edu/r2/summer09/caldwell/Pages/eldridgecleaver.html> (accessed February 28, 2015).

¹³⁴ Wu, “U.S. People’s Anti-Imperialist Delegation.”

¹³⁵ “Report from North Korea,” *Rat* (titled *Women’s LibeRATion*) (October 6-27, 1970).

¹³⁶ U.S. People’s Anti –Imperialist Delegation—Meeting with Vietnamese Women’s Union 1970 August 22, Eldridge Cleaver Papers.

Kathleen Cleaver applied the concept to help anti-imperialist struggles in Korea and to connect with African Americans in the United States, black women like Brown learned the *Juche* ideas as empowering black women.

Black Panther Women and Global Women's Liberation

Black Panther women like Kathleen Cleaver were also struggling with the oppression of domesticity, even though they were highly respected political figures. In her memoir, Cleaver reveals her struggle against the confinement of domesticity and motherhood in Algeria, which was contradictory to her political identity as a revolutionary:

[Eldridge and I] were both becoming revolutionaries when we met; but by July 1969, after our son was born, my husband expected to see me transform overnight into a housewife. I had neither the ability nor the desire; the idea of relinquishing my place in the radical political arena where we met left me uncomfortable.¹³⁷

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, black women like Cleaver were becoming unprecedented revolutionary figures, but the long history of male chauvinism restricting women's roles to domestic spheres troubled black women who were looking to fashion themselves as revolutionary subjects in a way that did not frame their political activism through a white bourgeois's domestic ideal.

The political disagreement of the BPP male leaders, especially Newton and Cleaver, reinforced the gender contradictions of black revolutionary women. As historian Robyn Ceanne Spencer mentioned, the conflicts between the leaders constructed the

¹³⁷ Cleaver, "Memories of Love and War," 590.

gender politics of BPP women as well.¹³⁸ On March 6th, 1971, right after the open conflict between Eldridge Cleaver and Huey Newton was exposed, Brown, supporting Newton's nonviolent ideology, published an article in *the Black Panther* regarding the Cleavers in North Korea. Although the cover page carried the photo of Kathleen Cleaver as a revolutionary woman with her raised fist, under the caption "Free Kathleen Cleaver and All Political Prisoners," the article by Brown in the extra inner page included a photo of Kathleen's bruised eyes.¹³⁹ Brown accused Eldridge Cleaver of beating and cheating on Kathleen, as well as controlling her personal political activities. Brown called Eldridge Cleaver a male chauvinist, and Kathleen Cleaver his "virtual prisoner."¹⁴⁰ In the story, Brown supports Newton's claims that Cleaver was a maniac for violence.

Kathleen Cleaver now claims that Brown, "fabricated conversations she claimed to have had with me in Pyongyang and published them in *the Black Panther*—as part of a nasty campaign to discredit and smear Eldridge's notoriety, which she designed to destroy the revolutionary thrust of the organization."¹⁴¹ Cleaver accused Brown of falsifying the story after only a brief visit to the hospital after Kathleen Cleaver gave birth to her daughter. Although Kathleen Cleaver reveals in her unpublished memoir that Eldridge Cleaver did have an affair with a woman, and that she experienced serious physical abuses by her husband in Algeria, Brown's story was, according to Kathleen, only a dishonest maneuver to exclude the Cleavers from the BPP. The story of her husband's abuse and unfaithfulness was hardly news to other blacks at that time, as

¹³⁸ Spencer, "Engendering," 100.

¹³⁹ Elaine Brown, "Free Kathleen Cleaver," *The Black Panther*, March 6, 1971, B-C. One doesn't recall the Elaine Brown's report on Kathleen Cleaver abused by Eldridge Cleaver.

¹⁴⁰ Brown, "Free Kathleen Cleaver," C.

¹⁴¹ Cleaver, "Memories of Love and War," 583.

Kathleen Cleaver was aware of other women who had similar experiences from their own husbands and other men in the group.¹⁴² The disputes between Kathleen Cleaver and Elaine Brown were an expansion of the antagonism between Eldridge Cleaver and Huey Newton; nonetheless the personal stories also contributed to Black Panther women's advocacy for women's liberation in contrast to their empowerment in their public politics.

During her chairmanship, Brown worked significantly against male chauvinism and Panther men's sexist attitudes, although she did not consider herself a feminist. In 1977, when Newton returned from Cuba, Panther brothers beat Regina Davis—an administrator of the Panther Liberation School and Ericka Huggins's assistant—as punishment for misbehavior.¹⁴³ Regina Davis, in charge of managing the school, had reproached a Black Panther man for not adequately doing his job. The brutal beating caused Davis to be hospitalized for a broken jaw.¹⁴⁴ In her recollection of the phone conversation with Newton, Brown found out that Newton endorsed the men's actions.¹⁴⁵ The male supremacist and misogynist attitudes of both Newton and other men in the group made Brown seriously consider the need for change, otherwise the negative actions toward women would endanger “the very foundation of the party.”¹⁴⁶ This incident shows the BPP's contradictory conditions, like the abuse of women in coexistence with the official rhetoric of gender equality, rather than its progress towards women's liberation. Although Brown clearly told Newton that the male chauvinism was not

¹⁴² Cleaver, “Memories,” 599-600.

¹⁴³ Brown, *A Taste of Power*, 444.

¹⁴⁴ Brown, 444-445.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Brown, 445.

tolerable, she also experienced Newton's physical assault and left the group. These occasions demonstrates that the sexist attitudes of Black Panther men remained, despite Panther women's increasing leadership roles and discussions on gender equality. This case of Brown and Newton, a typical victimization of women by men through physical assault, proves recurrent gender issues in black activists and communities were as pervasive as in American society as a whole.

Although the BPP in the U.S. and the International Section followed different paths, they both continued their work to transform racist and sexist societies. After the split and the incarceration of many of its members, women maintained the programs and functioned as leaders.¹⁴⁷ Huggins calls feminism "spiritual maturity," meaning "a humane approach to living on earth, a person who is spiritually mature supports, advocates, and helps to realize the economic, political, and social equality of the sexes (male, female, and intersex)."¹⁴⁸ Even though Huggins' ideas of feminism do not solely focus on gender issues, she provides more evidence for the inclusive views of black feminism. Huggins focused her activities in the BPP on educational programs like the Intercommunal Youth Institute (IYI), started in 1971.¹⁴⁹ Continuous with their home schooling program for BPP children, the IYI provided schooling and offered childcare for Black Panther members. The BPP, as Huggins especially recalls, worked with the Third World Women's Alliance in the late 1970s, which originated from the Black Women's Liberation Committee of the

¹⁴⁷ Working for the BPP, Ericka Huggins recalls that every member of the party had feminist perspectives "if they are awake," as opposed to the tendency of most Panther women to refuse to be feminists. Phillips, "The Feminist Leadership of Ericka Huggins," 200.

¹⁴⁸ Phillips, "Sister Revolutionaries: The Leadership of Ericka Huggins and Elaine Brown in the Black Panther Party" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 2012), 125.

¹⁴⁹ Phillips, "Sister Revolutionaries," 140-141.

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (later the Black Women's Alliance)—a New York-based African American and Puerto Rican organization.¹⁵⁰ Panther women in both the International Section and the U.S. were developing a women's liberation that did not prioritize gender over race.

At the turn of the mid-1970s, the BPP mostly worked for the improvement of black communities rather than national black revolution. During Elaine Brown's leadership as a chairperson from 1974 to 1977, the BPP was "no longer national or revolutionary," as Joy James indicates.¹⁵¹ During Huey Newton's exile in Cuba and Bobby Seale's expulsion from the BPP by Newton in 1974, the leadership of the BPP, with Brown as the chair, moved away from their original identities of masculinity with armed resistance. However, as many scholars admit, the group accepted more women's leadership roles and feminist approaches to their activities. Unlike the public self-presentation of Panther women as strong and masculine, as shown in Kathleen Cleaver's photo in the late 1960s, Black Panther women in the mid-1970s fashioned themselves as revolutionary subjects in different ways from the early years. Panther women incorporated more ideas of women's liberation in the group's activities and principles, and their political identities became nonviolent and peaceful. Brown recalls herself introducing a number of women into the Black Panther administration, like women in the Central Committee, including Phyllis Jackson, Joan Kelley, Norma Armour, and Ericka Huggins.¹⁵² Brown's experience suggests that the BPP provided a space for

¹⁵⁰ Phillips, "Sister Revolutionaries," 140-141; and "The Feminist Leadership," 206.

¹⁵¹ Joy James, *Shadowboxing: Representations of Black Feminist Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 102.

¹⁵² Brown, *A Taste of Power*, 362-363,

female activists to hold leadership roles and develop their political consciousness of sexism and racism, unlike its previous overtly masculine position. One of the articles in the Black Panther newspaper significantly pointed out the group's editor Ericka Huggins and female leader Elaine Brown as representatives of the group that became one of the more women-centered organizations in American society.¹⁵³

Black Panther women developed their connections with Third World movements in North America as well. Elaine Brown especially assisted in the organization of the historic Indochinese Women's Conference of 1971 in Canada, which was the first opportunity for women from the U.S. and Canada to meet their Asian sisters. The conference drew about one thousand women to North America.¹⁵⁴ Asian women like Japanese American Yuri Kochiyama were also instrumental in connecting the Black Panthers with Third World movements. In the close relationship between Asian and African Americans, Kochiyama introduced Asian-Americans like Marilynne Hamano Quon, Pat Sumi, and Brenda Paik Sunoo to the Panthers. As one of the delegation members to Asia, Sumi remembers that her trip boosted her activities with Third World movements and Black Panthers like Yuri Kochiyama.¹⁵⁵ Kochiyama was a mediator between Black Panther leaders and the Third World movements, especially Asian activists.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ For the issue, see "Reading Balks on Appointing Women," *The Black Panther*, July 7, 1973, 5.

¹⁵⁴ Wu, *Radicals on the Road*, 186.

¹⁵⁵ Ryan Masaaki Yokota, "Interview with Pat Sumi: In Memoriam May 15, 1944-August 15, 1997," in *Asian Americans: the Movement and the Moment*, ed., Steve Louie and Glenn K. Omatsu, (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2001), 24-25.

¹⁵⁶ The relationship between Black Panthers and Asian American activists was extremely complicated by the FBI's COINTELPRO activities to discredit the group in many cases. For example, Seth Rosenfeld revealed a shocking fact that Japanese American Richard Aoki, who were close to the early leaders, Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale, and David Hilliard, and served the BPP as Field Marshall, was a FBI's informant.

According to a letter in early 1972, Kochiyama especially illustrates Cleaver's continuous ties with Asian American activists, particularly with Korean Brenda Paik Sunoo, both of whom were working to organize a Korean American movement in New York. This rare document reveals that the connections between Panther women and women in the Third World movements opened the possibility of a 'global sisterhood,' developed and promoted by women of color in the world.¹⁵⁷ Black Panther women were associated with women in Third World movements throughout the late 1970s. In California, black and Third World movements worked closely for liberation. For example, the Young Lords Party aimed to be a Puerto Rican counterpart to the BPP. In 1978, the BPP, as Ericka Huggins recalls, worked with the Third World Women's Alliance (TWWA), which originated from the Black Women's Liberation Committee of the SNCC (later Black Women's Alliance)—a New York-based African American and Puerto Rican organization, mainly working against infant mortality.¹⁵⁸

By associating with the Third World in their visual politics, contacts and activities, Black Panther women became international revolutionaries. In Algeria, women in the BPP presented African American women's identities as revolutionaries and tied their culture back to Africa with Kathleen Cleaver as a prominent figure. Black Panther women contested stereotypical ideas about black femininity as inferior to white middle-

Seth Rosenfeld, *Subversives: The FBI's War on Student Radicals, and Reagan's Rise to Power* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), 418.

¹⁵⁷ Correspondence—Kathleen Cleaver, 1969-1971, Eldridge Cleaver Papers. Sunoo confirmed that the Korean woman Yuri Kochiyama mentioned in her letter to Kathleen Cleaver was herself; however, she also clarified that their meeting never happened and she didn't have any direct connection with the BPP, except her close relationship with Kochiyama, thereby admitting an "indirect" connection through Kochiyama. Brenda Paik Sunoo, phone call to author, December 19, 2014.

¹⁵⁸ Phillips, "The Feminist Leadership," 206.

class womanhood, passive and nonviolent. In the Black Power Movement, which was promoted as masculine, black women constructed black womanhood with desexualized values by self-fashioning themselves as strong revolutionaries. Their new claim of motherhood particularly shaped a special political identity as a significant agency for black revolution. The International Section offered rare opportunities for women in the BPP to experience socialist Asian countries such as North Korea. Panther women who visited these countries translated that experience into new insights for black women's liberation, intersecting issues of race, class and gender, rather than prioritizing gender over others. In these transnational contexts and encounters with Third World women, Black Panther women—aware of the limitations of white-centered feminist ideas—provided distinctive perspectives on women's liberation, both anti-racist and anti-imperialist, conscious of necessary domestic and international solidarity between women of color.

Chapter 3

Weatherwomen, Violence and Feminism

On October 9, 1969, about seventy women from the Weatherman gathered at Grant Park in Chicago to march toward the city's Armed Forces Induction Center.¹ The Weatherwomen, including Bernardine Dohrn, Cathy Wilkerson, and Diana Oughton, had planned to shut down the draft board office as an anti-war demonstration. They were wearing helmets, heavy gloves, boots, and carrying Vietcong flags—a few women were even holding wooden sticks and pipes (see illustration 17).² Facing hundreds of police, they could go no further than half a block, and a dozen women were arrested. At the park, Dohrn distinguished the Weatherwomen's march from the actions of the newly emerging feminists, saying, "We're not picketing in front of bra factories. [...] This is not a self-indulgent bullshit women's movement."³ Reminding the public of the anti-Miss America Pageant protestors in the previous year—called "bra burners" by the media—the Weatherwomen called for women's strength and courage as revolutionaries fighting

¹ Throughout this chapter, I use the various names of the group, from Weatherman, Weather Underground, and Weather Underground Organization (WUO). By changing its name, the group transformed its character in many different ways. The extremist faction of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was named the Weatherman in 1969, but changed its name to the Weatherman Underground in their first communiqué after the group went underground. However, in the "New Morning" communiqué they called themselves the Weather Underground to show their adoption of the idea of gender equality. WUO appeared on September 11, 1974 in the communiqué titled "Weather Underground Organization Bombs Anaconda, Oakland, California" and the group finally split into the WUO folded in 1977, Prairie Fire Organizing Committee (PFOC) formed in 1977 and lasted through 1990s, and May 19th Organization folded in the mid-1980. They were active until the mid-1980s. I refer to the women in the group in its various stages as "Weatherwomen."

² Weatherwomen were followed by over a hundred protesters and faced hundreds of police waiting to arrest them. Ayers, *Fugitive Days*, 185. Wilkerson remembers the number of women gathered as about fifty because of arrests the day before. Wilkerson, *Flying Close to the Sun*, 303-304.

³ Jonathan Black, "Report from Chicago: The Expectation of Rising Revolutions," *The Village Voice* (October 16, 1969), 64.

against racism, imperialism, and sexism, rather than for just women's issues alone. The Weatherwomen's militancy and violent approach evoked bitter critique from many feminists like Susan Brownmiller. Brownmiller once said that Weatherwomen, particularly Oughton, were "committed to armed struggle and deeply into Bernadine Dohrn's brand of women's liberation. [Dohrn] rejects monogamy and steels herself for the forthcoming revolution by learning to out-macho the men."⁴ When feminist movements were blooming in the late 1960s, many feminists felt that the Weatherwomen's armed activism on behalf of a revolution undermined the Women's Liberation Movement; the Weatherwomen, on the other hand, believed their armed struggle would lead to both domestic and international women's liberation.

You Don't Need a *Weatherman* to Know Which Way the Wind Blows

During the acceleration of repressive violence in the Vietnam War and subsequent resistance movements throughout the United States in 1968, such as the Columbia Strike and the Chicago Democratic National Convention, many activists, especially SDS women, became more involved in the well known "action faction," states Kirkpatrick Sale, a pioneering scholar on the SDS.⁵ Similar to what would happen in the Chicago Democratic National Convention in the summer of 1968, there was a striking confrontation between protestors and law enforcement agents in the spring of 1968 in New York. The SDS chapter of Columbia University, associated with the Student Afro-American Society, began their nonviolent occupation of campus buildings on April 23,

⁴ Susan Brownmiller, "Diana: The Making of a Terrorist. By Thomas Power," *The New York Times*, April 11, 1971.

⁵ Sale, *SDS*, 292.

1968, in order to prevent the school from building a gymnasium in a black neighborhood and to make it withdraw from the Pentagon's weapon research think-tank, the Institute for Defense Analyses, for the Vietnam War. The students' occupation of several university buildings on behalf of the anti-war cause and black liberation was ended by the New York City Police Department, who routed the protesters violently with tear gas and nightsticks. The local and national media reported the scene, including students' occupation of buildings. This new group, shown in New York and Chicago, was the more militant and aggressive portion of the SDS, in comparison to the organization's previous educational work and recruiting efforts.

In 1969, while the BPP was gaining popularity, the SDS was in the process of a fissure. On June 18th, more than 2,000 members gathered at the Chicago Coliseum for the SDS national convention where an extremist group of the SDS, the Weatherman, expelled the Progressive Labor Party from the SDS, because of the PLP's rejection of domestic and international nationalism, and took total control over the SDS.⁶ The Weatherman, which was action-oriented, focused primarily on violent antiwar protests, and was committed to armed revolution, even carrying out terroristic bombings throughout the early 1970s.⁷ The Weatherman took their name from a line in Bob Dylan's song "Subterranean Homesick Blues" that supposedly symbolized their rejection of the PLP's discipline, which was split from the Communist Party of the United States in

⁶ On the split, see Kelley and Esch, "Black Like Mao," 11-12; and Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew*, 39.

⁷ Steigerwald, *The Sixties and the End of Modern America*, 146. Ron Jacobs states that the Columbia chapter member wrote the article with the same title. Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew*, 24.

1961.⁸ Although old SDS leaders like Todd Gitlin saw the Weatherman's takeover of the SDS as "organizational piracy," a significant number of members, both men and women, followed the Weatherman, agreeing with their aggressive and combative approach to activism.⁹ For some women in the SDS, the experience of extreme physical violence by local and federal law enforcement agencies helped convince them of the necessity for oppositional violence and armed struggle, as it did for many women in the SNCC and BPP.

As representative figures of the action faction, male leaders of the Michigan SDS, aka the Jesse James Gang, promoted militant tactics, and challenged the leadership of the Michigan chapter of the SDS. Impatient with the current SDS leadership, the most militant members announced a new caucus named for "the most celebrated of American social bandits." The Jesse James Gang, which included future Weathermen Bill Ayers, Terry Robbins, and Jim Mellen, was committed to "'aggressive confrontation politics' in the style of Columbia and Chicago," according to Sale.¹⁰ The new SDS caucus included not only the action faction of the Michigan chapter, but also female leaders Bernardine Dohrn and Diana Oughton, who endorsed the shift toward revolutionary armed resistance.

While it included women, the SDS was dominated by male leaders whose verbal and nonverbal actions were very much in a 'macho' style. Former SDS member Eleanor

⁸ The Weatherman's statement "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows" was signed by members including Mark Rudd, Bernardine Dohrn, Karen Ashley, Bill Ayers, Jeff Jones, Gerry Long, Howie Machitinger, Jim Mellen, Terry Robins, Steve Tappis and John Jacobs and represented the RYM in 1969. *New Left Notes*, June 18, 1969.

⁹ Sam Green and Bill Siegel, *The Weather Underground*, 2003.

¹⁰ Sale, *SDS*, 490; Hoberman, *The Dream Life*, 222-223; and Wilkerson, *Flying*, 224-227.

Stein recalls that in “mixed men/women groups,” like the SDS and BPP, “men were asserting their leadership roles, generally disregard[ing] the opinions and creativity of women, and that the archetypal male leadership style—super-verbal, macho, inconsiderate, often inappropriately aggressive—was offensive to women.”¹¹ At the same time, the “macho” style of the SDS was attractive to many leftist women. A leader of the Washington SDS, Cathy Wilkerson recalls that the “toughness and aggressiveness” of militant male members “had its appeal to women who were exploring their own independence and strength.”¹² For former SDS members like Wilkerson, this macho-style activism made women feel more powerful. SDS women identified with the machismo, which they thought debunked conventional ideas about women’s passivity.¹³

The Weatherman’s armed struggle and guerrilla warfare, as a means to end racism and imperialism, also appealed to those women who had been working for justice in these areas for a long time, and who were now looking for a more immediate and effective change in the United States during the global turmoil of 1968. Naomi Jaffe—founder of one SDS chapter—recalls her sense of the urgent revolution just around the corner, and the pride of participating in the creation of that revolution: “It seemed to me that we were entering [into] an incredible period of a revolution. I didn’t want to miss it. I wanted to be a part of it.”¹⁴ Weatherwomen, like Black Panther women, employed a ‘macho’ style to help them assume the part of revolutionaries (see illustration 18). The way in which SDS/Weatherwomen imagined a revolution, and themselves to be revolutionaries, in the

¹¹ Eleanor Stein, email to author, December 21, 2014.

¹² Wilkerson, *Flying*, 226.

¹³ Gilda Zwerman, “Mothering on the Lam,” 35-36.

¹⁴ Sam Green and Bill Siegel, *The Weather Underground*, 2003.

late 1960s and early 1970s was through masculine display—tough, aggressive, and manly. But not all women activists agreed; for many of them, this kind of revolutionary masculinity helped accelerate their turn to radical feminism.

The years of 1968 and 1969 were divisive for women in radical groups. Wilkerson recalls that she was in a women's group with lesbian feminist Charlotte Bunch and SDS member Marilyn Webb. But the conflict between women in the women's group started with questions, such as whether women should stay in the male-dominant left, or build an independent women's movement.¹⁵ Perpetual mockery of women's aspirations for liberation by men *and* women within the New Left and Civil Rights movements was a primary motivator for feminist separatism and disassociation from other forms of activism. Like the SDS before them, many male members of the Weatherman frequently dismissed and suppressed women's issues, consistent with the sexist and male supremacist attitudes of the time.

Some women grew intolerant of sexism; other SDS women made a final attempt to collaborate with their male counterparts at the Counter-Inaugural demonstration in Washington D.C in January 1969.¹⁶ During the demonstration, Marilyn Salzman Webb, a longtime activist and founding member of the SDS, gave a speech on women's liberation, followed by another speech by radical feminist Shulamith Firestone; both speeches were

¹⁵ The Reminiscences of Cathy Wilkerson (1985), p. 50-51, the CCOHC.

¹⁶ According to the observation of longtime SDS activist and earliest women's liberation advocate Jane Adams, SDS men's hostility to speakers on women's liberation was not solely from the topic but also their tiresome after longtime speeches and discussions, and rush for going out for a march. See Jane Adams, "Factionalism Lives," *Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement*, n. 6 (February 1969): 1 and 10. One of the speaker, Marilyn Webb further explains how there were full of disagreements on women's liberationist activities. See Marilyn Webb, "We are Victims," *Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement*, n. 6, 5-12. Also see Marilyn Webb, "D.C. Speeches," *Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement*, n. 6, 9; Shulamith Firestone, "Shulie's Reply," *Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement*, n. 7 (June 1969): 1-2; and Shulamith Firestone, "Firestone Speech," *Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement*, n. 6, 9-10.

drowned out by jeering and catcalling from many SDS men, including such vulgar comments as, ‘Fuck her! Take her off the stage! Rape her in a back alley!’¹⁷ Enraged radical feminists gathered at Webb’s apartment and attempted to persuade her that women needed an independent movement for their own liberation, separate from male-dominated movements, but Webb was hesitant to “embarrass the movement men in public,” due to her close ties to the SDS as a wife of SDS leader Lee Webb. However, later that day, she received an anonymous phone call from some SDS women, threatening her never to speak for women’s liberation in an SDS meeting again. At that time, the SDS and future Weatherwomen, especially Cathy Wilkerson, were accused of being the anonymous callers, and thus were perceived as being anti-feminist. The animosity from her very own SDS female colleagues, with whom she had been working and sharing the experience of being activist women, was too intensely bitter for Webb. She finally decided to leave the SDS and New Left as a whole, and founded an independent women’s liberation group in Washington D.C.¹⁸

Whoever made the phone call that ultimately convinced Webb to separate from the SDS still remains a mystery. However, that caller had a significant effect on the relationship between the Weatherwomen and the independent women’s movement in the face of their previous comradeship. After the demonstration, Marilyn Webb described her experience in an article published in *Voice of the Women’s Liberation Movement*; however, she did not clarify who the caller was other than that it was someone from New

¹⁷ Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 134.

¹⁸ Rosen, 135.

York, Michigan or Ohio.¹⁹ Wilkerson, who denies that she or any other SDS/Weatherman member made the call, now firmly believes that the FBI's COINTELPRO fabricated the call "to divide women from antiwar activities" and "to drive a wedge between Marilyn and [herself]."²⁰ It was possible that the FBI infiltrated the SDS and women's movements and alienated individuals and groups through deception and manipulation in order to suppress their threatening activism.²¹

The Weatherman's early actions of the demonstration, its newspaper *New Left Notes* and later *Fire*, and lifestyles in their collectives clearly invented a new style for the New Left group.²² In late 1969, Weatherwomen and men were becoming like urban guerrillas: a vanguard of white revolutionaries following a Debrayist ideology. They believed a small group of cadres would achieve the revolution by conducting guerrilla warfare. The Weatherman had a governing body called the Weather Bureau, and most members lived in Collectives in Boston, Cleveland, New York, Denver, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Detroit, Cincinnati, Columbus, and Grand Rapids. Leaders in the Bureau traveled to discuss and convey their position to the local Collectives, and organize national actions. There were a few national demonstrations led by the Weatherman before they went underground in 1970. The Weatherman's first project, which later made the group famous, was the "National Action" called "Days of Rage," which took place in

¹⁹ Webb, "We are Victims," 12

²⁰ Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 346; and Wilkerson, *Flying Close to the Sun*, 244-245. In his 1993 edition of the book, Gitlin also hypothesized the possibility of the FBI's infiltration. See Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, 365n.

²¹ The FBI's counterintelligence programs also targeted feminists and women's movements to sever their connections with anti-racist and anti-imperialist movements. For the short history of the FBI's activities on the "domestic subversives," see Roberta Salper, "U.S. Government Surveillance and the Women's Liberation Movement, 1968-1973: A Case Study," *Feminist Studies* 34, no. 3 (2008): 435.

²² The Reminiscences of Cathy Wilkerson (1985), p. 72, CCOHC; and Browder, *Her Best Shot*, 170.

Chicago from October 8th to the 10th in 1969. With the slogan “Bring the War Home,” the group planned to introduce its new approach and recruit new members. They announced potential armed self-defense and promoted confrontation by calling the state a “pig power structure,” echoing the Black Panther’s terminology and conflict with the police.

Given the Weatherman’s call for armed resistance, the tension between the participants and police was extremely high. At the Days demonstration, the Weatherman carried the Vietcong’s National Liberation Front flags, broke windows, and destroyed property, explicitly expressing their support for armed struggle and revolutionary violence. Although this first national demonstration did not attract as many protestors as they expected, it showed their style to the country, drawing 800 participants, including those who participated in the women’s march. In the end, 287 protestors were arrested on charges of “mob action, resisting arrest, disorderly conduct, aggravated battery and other offenses” and fifty-nine police officers reported various injuries.²³ The Days of Rage served as a symbolic representation of the Weatherman for the public, which made them infamous at that time.

The group’s last public meeting was at the National War Council in Flint, Michigan, from December 27th to 31st in 1969. It was at that time that they decided to go underground, to commit to armed struggle without organizing the masses, and to dissolve the SDS. The gruesome death of BPP leader Fred Hampton at the hands of the FBI earlier that month, signaled to radicals the impossibility of continuing the movement

²³ See the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Freedom of Information Act archive, Weather Underground files, “Weatherman Underground Summary Dated 8/20/76, Part # 1,” 115.

aboveground in the face of unrelenting repression by the state.²⁴ Countering white supremacist violence toward the Black Panthers, Bernardine Dohrn romanticized the cataclysmic murders of whites by the Manson Family and gained attention by her speech at the War Council.²⁵ Charles Manson's followers murdered six people, including pregnant actress Sharon Tate, and Leno and Rosemary LaBianca. Dohrn's three raised fingers became known as the Weatherman's "fork salute" to the Manson Family, who used a fork for their murders. In later years, Cathy Wilkerson referred to the salute as evidence of Dohrn's "hallucinated solidarity with the Manson Family."²⁶ Wilkerson recalls the Weatherman's violence as "cultlike behaviors under pressure, especially when the ultimate arbitrator of conflict is violence."²⁷

As she spoke for committing to violence, Dohrn became not only an outstanding female leader of the group but also an extreme representation of the image of Weatherwomen. The FBI added her name to its Ten Most Wanted List—from October 14, 1970 until December 1973—(see illustration 19), along with several other men and women in the Weather Underground; however, the FBI especially gravitated to Dohrn, with J. Edgar Hoover calling her "La Pasionaria of the lunatic left," the most dangerous woman in America.²⁸ While it gained her attention, Dohrn's endorsement of the Manson Family murders and other extremely aggressive rhetoric and actions carried out by Dohrn

²⁴ The SDS office was especially close to the BPP's Chicago office, so many SDS members visited Hampton's house in a tour organized by the Panthers, after the murder of 21-year-old Fred Hampton by the police on December 4, 1969, as Laura Whitehorn recalls. Green and Siegel, *The Weather Underground*.

²⁵ Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Prophet of Love: and Other Tales of Power and Deceit* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2001), 204; Berger, *Outlaws of America*, 123-24; and Wilkerson, *Flying Close to the Sun*, 320-321.

²⁶ Hoberman, *The Dream Life*, 262.

²⁷ Wilkerson, *Flying Close to the Sun*, 276.

²⁸ Ayers, *Fugitive Days*, 202.

and the Weatherwomen in 1969 created strong public backlash from feminists. Dohrn recalls that her comment on the Manson family was “meant to be satirical, ‘mocking America’s unabashed love affair with violence’” so that she aligned herself with Manson who killed white children with no explicitly political reasons as she thought that would “prevent the further spread of white supremacy,” states Dan Berger.²⁹ Dohrn’s public praise of the Manson Family’s fanatic murder fixed the image and identity of the Weatherwoman, a leader of the Weatherman, to armed resistance and anti-feminism.

Amidst debates on Weatherwomen’s violent rhetoric and actions, the Weatherman’s extreme agenda was exposed by its own mistake during the handling of explosives for their practice of armed revolution. On March 6, 1970, in a townhouse in Greenwich Village, New York, a bomb that young activists were working on accidentally detonated, killing one woman and two men who were members of the Weatherman. The media focused on the female members as particularly shocking news: Diana Oughton, who was killed, as well as two survivors, Cathy Wilkerson and Kathy Boudin.³⁰ The mishap revealed that the Weatherman was manufacturing bombs to ensure their revolutionary messages would be heard. The media’s portrayal of middle-class, educated women participating in violent activity stunned the public, and soon after, the FBI added the two surviving women, and other Weatherman members to its Most Wanted list.³¹

²⁹ Berger, *Outlaws*, 123.

³⁰ John Neary, “The two girls from No. 18,” *Life*, March 27, 1970, 27-30.

³¹ Unlike the media's negative portrayal of the explosion, the townhouse accident actually prevented further damages and made the group cautious of their actions. If their plans of bombings had succeeded in the early phase, “the damage could well have been more deadly than it was,” says Wilkerson now. The townhouse explosion did not stop the Weatherman’s bombings or other violent actions, but it is true that they never harmed another person in their bombings. As Wilkerson appreciates, was self-reflecting about their actions after the townhouse explosion. Having lost three of their own comrades, the Weather Underground

This accident confirmed the group's shift to clandestine violence after their announcement to go underground and dissolve the SDS, and solidified the militant image of Weatherwomen. The Weatherman's transformation into an underground group isolated it from the larger social movements. Bryan Burrough calculates that the number of the Weatherman who went underground was about a hundred, but went down to fifty after the Townhouse and thirty-five by 1972 and 1973.³²

Weatherwomen in Leadership Roles

Given the fact that women made up over half of the membership of the SDS/Weatherman and Weather Underground, the conception of the group as male-controlled seems like an overgeneralization based on gender normative views on militant organizations for armed resistance. Although many feminists denounced the Weatherwomen's violent activism and support of New Left groups as conflicting with the women's liberation movement, women's leadership in the Weatherman contributed significantly to both determining the Weatherman's gender politics, and to the Weatherwomen's subsequent development of a women's movement. Weatherwomen were responsible for most of the political actions of the group, and many became iconic public representatives of the movement, especially Bernardine Dohrn.

Dohrn joined the SDS in 1967 and soon became its National Secretary from 1968 to 1969—one of only two women to hold the title—and was the most outstanding leader in the male-dominated Weather Bureau. She emerged as a leader in 1968, which was a

admitted their "military error," as Bernardine Dohrn called it in "New Morning" communiqué. Wilkerson, *Flying*, 2 and 363.

³² Burrough, *Days of Rage*, 218-219.

crucial year for the Weatherman in many ways, primarily in terms of the convergence of soon-to-be SDS extremists or action faction, including Mark Rudd, Bill Ayers, and John Jacobs. Among the radicals, the involvement of Dohrn in the leftist movement was the most remarkable in terms of women's increasing leadership within the group, and the SDS women's identities in particular. Born in 1942, Dohrn earned her J.D. from the University of Chicago Law School in 1967, but chose not to take the bar examination in order to serve in the 'Movement' as the first law student organizer for the National Lawyers Guild. As an assistant executive secretary of the National Lawyers Guild, she helped leftist activists with legal defense. In February, Dohrn became more involved with the New York chapter of the SDS and was elected as a leader along with Naomi Jaffe and Sue Shargell.³³ When the Weatherman faction took over the SDS at the National Convention in the summer of 1969, Dohrn's role became even more significant and visible. According to main leaders Mark Rudd and Jeff Jones, she led the split from, and expulsion of, the rival Weather faction, the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) (see illustration 20).³⁴ In spite of the tendency to consider Bernardine Dohrn as symbolic of the Weatherwomen's subordinate positions to Weathermen, she was the most powerful and charismatic leader in the national New Left and, later, the Weather Underground.

The media preferred to show a pretty, young revolutionary woman, and Dohrn received mixed acceptance within her movement as a result. Male leftists in the SDS especially adored her. Former SDS leader Todd Gitlin designated Dohrn as an SDS muse,

³³ Sale, 408; and Jacobs, 12.

³⁴ Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew*, 25. SDS leaders, particularly Rudd, single Dohrn out for leading the walkout, expulsion, and takeover of the SDS. Rudd, *Underground*, 151-152; and Berger, 84-86.

calling her the “object of many an SDS male’s erotic fantasy.”³⁵ In his perspective, as with many outsiders’ views, Weatherwomen, especially Bernardine Dohrn “fused the two premium female images of the moment: sex queen and streetfighter.”³⁶ Gitlin denounces the Weatherman for making the serious revolution or movement fun using mindless violence and a sexy woman’s image.

For Gitlin and other activists, Dohrn was the “hip outlaw” and made “revolution look like fun,” just as the character of Bonnie presents the fun of violence in the movie *Bonnie and Clyde*.³⁷ The ‘joyride violence’ of the Weatherman was addressed in an article by Gerald Long about *Bonnie and Clyde* for the *Guardian*. The sexiness of violence was one of the elements constructing their chic image during the late 1960s and 70s. Through the Bonnie period, Bernardine Dohrn became one of the symbols for a revolutionary chic woman in the New Left movement through her fashion and image, combined with the Weatherman’s militant activism. Dohrn’s future husband Bill Ayers recalls that at the demonstration of the Days of Rage she achieved “her role as the voice and the leader of the militants through practice, but she was also a stunning and seductive symbol of the Revolutionary Woman.”³⁸ Likewise, Kirkpatrick Sale recognized Dohrn’s “sex appeal,” and that she attracted most movement men with her political personality as well.³⁹

Dohrn’s high visibility to the public and her position as a leader influenced and

³⁵ Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 385.

³⁶ Gitlin, 385-386.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ayers, *Fugitive Days*, 176-177.

³⁹ Sale, *SDS*, 411.

reflected women's more significant and powerful roles in the Weatherman, contrary to the idea that they were merely secondary figures supporting the male members.⁴⁰ Cathy Wilkerson believed that "Bernardine's unique place at the top," as she called it, encouraged women like herself to become leaders and exhibit their own power.⁴¹ Counter to radical feminists' anti-elitist and leaderless policy, Weatherwomen like Dohrn and Wilkerson broke down gender stereotypes by holding these leadership roles, going against the convention that women were not powerful or strong, or even smart enough to have positions of power in political movements. The Weatherwomen's leadership roles ran counter to most feminists' insistence on equal power distribution. Feminist Jo Freeman described this anti-elitist tendency as a dogmatic and distorted condition in which women who display a competent leadership were reproached for 'a star' and retired.⁴²

For radical feminists, Bernardine Dohrn's prominence did not signal women's empowerments, but was rather viewed as an unique exception in an otherwise male-led group that was sexist and male-supremacist. Some radical feminists thought of her leadership position in both the SDS and Weatherman/WU as being the result of her relationship with certain men in the group.⁴³ In the late 1960s, contemporary radical feminists largely did not consider militant women leading a politically active group as

⁴⁰ For Weatherwomen's significant role, see Harold Jacobs, ed., *Weatherman* (New York: Ramparts Press, 1970), 137-138. For Weatherwomen's leadership, see A Weatherwoman, "Inside The Weather Machine," *Sale*, 321.

⁴¹ Wilkerson, *Flying*, 275.

⁴² Joreen, "Trashing: The Dark Side of Sisterhood," *Ms.* (April 1976): 45.

⁴³ A former radical feminist I met at a conference, "A Revolutionary Moment: Women's Liberation Movement Conference" at Boston University in Massachusetts in March 2014, specifically told me that Dohrn's 'sex appeal' and her personal relationships with men were the main source of her leadership as it seemed so obvious for most activist women of the time.

leaders or important at all, even though they were holding important roles as speakers, organizers, and so on. Nonetheless, the historical fixation of Weatherwomen as anti-feminist, and as being secondary to male leadership in the late 1960s would be a mistake, given the fact that women in the SDS, and later the Weatherman and Weather Underground, were in women's groups before the split between separatist and integrationist leftist women.

Weatherwomen and Revolutionary Chic

Weatherwomen's leadership and empowerment as political subjects were signified by their self-presentation as revolutionaries, rather than as feminists, in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Influenced by domestic and international "Third World" women's participation in combat for anti-racism and anti-imperialism, radical women like the Weatherwomen fashioned their identities as white revolutionary women during the late 1960s. If black women and other women of color fashioned themselves with their natural bodies and ethnic cultural items to create their revolutionary subjectivity, radical white women like Weatherwomen approached their fashion with a kind of self-denial, following the refutation of white standards of beauty. They thought of their own physical appearances as symbolic of an American nationality that they considered racist and imperialist; rejecting that identity through outlaw actions and armed resistance was a way to prove their anti-imperialism and anti-racism. White women developed their militant images through a combination of the influences: militant black activists like Black Panther women, women warriors in the Third World, and defiant women, like Bonnie Parker, in American consumer culture. Weatherwomen's fashion—a style I refer to as

“revolutionary chic”—was inextricably connected to their idea of women’s liberation and Third World revolution.

Donning the revolutionary chic fashion, for instance, Dohrn agreed to pose for fashion photographer Richard Avedon on November 10, 1969 in exchange for financial support for the SDS (see illustration 21).⁴⁴ To gratify public interest in the new radicals, Avedon took photos of activist men and women, such as the ‘Chicago Seven,’ the Black Panthers, SDS leaders, and Dohrn as representative figures of radicals of the time. The portraits appeared in *Hard Times*, a book and an exhibit from 1969 to 1973.⁴⁵ For his photo of her, Dohrn fashioned herself not only as a young woman in the late 1960s, but also as a revolutionary woman working for the SDS/Weatherman as a political subject. Similar to the style of Black Panther women, for example Kathleen Cleaver with a shotgun, Dohrn’s trademark look—a miniskirt, high boots, and a leather jacket—represented the fashion of a revolutionary woman of the late 1960s. Boots, which were a necessity for workers, also became a popular trend for many people who had and were influenced by socialist ideas, in the same way that denim became a fashion accessory for the SNCC women. Boots were an iconic sign of her military associations with and support of the working-class people and nationalists like the Black Panthers and Third World liberationists. An FBI informant reported Weatherwomen’s fashion style as fugitives, describing “Weatherman wearing short leather jacket dark brown, multicolored dress over blue dungarees with a red slash at bottom. [DELETED] has short blond hair

⁴⁴ Bernardine Dohrn recalls that Avedon offered a donation, possibly \$100 or \$200, to the SDS in exchange for her agreement to pose for *Hard Times*. Paul Roth, “Richard Avedon, Politics, and Power: 1969–1976,” in *Richard Avedon: Portrait of Power* (Steidl & Partners, 2008).

⁴⁵ PhotoEphemera: Poking through the dustbin of photographic history, http://photemera.blogspot.kr/2009/09/richard-avedon-at-mia-1970_16.html (accessed July 19, 2015).

and wearing large earrings.”⁴⁶ These radical women’s adaptation of the working class and global militant’s look was the Weatherwomen’s way of constructing their revolutionary identity with feminine touches by wearing the miniskirt.⁴⁷

The revolutionary chic look was not exclusive to Dohrn: most Weatherwomen also adopted the style. Other leftist women admired the militant style of Dohrn’s fashion, and her strength as the role model for all political women. Former SDS and Weatherwoman Susan Stern idolized Dohrn as a fashion leader in the movement, labeling Dohrn’s style, with “a short black leather jacket, slacks, a neat purple blouse, and boots” as, “the source of her charisma.”⁴⁸ Cathy Wilkerson also enjoyed wearing the “leather jacket, jeans, and boots” because they were “fashionable” and “macho posturing.”⁴⁹ As she recalled, that style of clothing symbolized a pride “of [her] fearlessness, of [her] willingness to try new things and endure discomfort and hardship,” and the outfit’s “toughness was an ultimate rejection of the image of feminine helplessness,” a way of liberating herself from the ideal images of American womanhood.⁵⁰

The Weatherman also promoted its women’s revolutionary chic look at their political demonstrations. In the Days of Rage, women who went to Chicago for the demonstrations, especially for the women’s march, were instructed to wear “military boots” for their actions, as Naomi Jaffe recalls. The sight of women wearing men’s work

⁴⁶ Letty Cottin Pogrebin, “The FBI Was Watching You,” 37.

⁴⁷ In addition to the revolutionary look, Naomi Jaffe also remembers of the counterculture influences on radicals’ fashion choices, such as “the hippie and flower child cultures of the 60s and 70s.” Naomi Jaffe, e-mail to author, 30 September 2014.

⁴⁸ Stern, *With the Weathermen*, 150-151.

⁴⁹ Wilkerson, *Flying*, 281-282.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

boots was particularly scandalous at the time, according to Jaffe's stories:

I bought myself a pair of used heavy leather workboots—we were told to wear military boots for the actions, and the used workboots were the closest I could afford. I came into Chicago by train and went straight to the Ladies Room in the railroad station. Seeing the workboots under the door of the toilet stall, the women who came into the Ladies Room after me decided in a panic that a man had got into the Ladies Room, and reported it to the station managers, who sent security guards to clear the restroom until the man came out. When “he” did, it was me, all 5 feet 100 pounds of me strolling past the assembled gawking crowd in my workboots and chuckling to myself at the furor I caused.⁵¹

The boots fulfilled a dual function: they not only shocked onlookers but protected feet during battles with the police. For their national action, the Weatherwomen had to be prepared for the state attack and their own necessary self-defense. To do that, they needed the courage to break the social norm of women's dress. For the public, the revolutionary fashion of these women meant an unprecedented conversion in gender, because the women's self-presentation with the radical look challenged the rigid gender binary in 1960s America's dress code.⁵²

For Weatherwomen like Dohrn, Jaffe, and Wilkerson, along with other militant female activists, their fashion shaped their gender and political identities. They clearly gave up dressing like ‘ladies’—trading in combed hair, modest skirts, and heels for jeans and combat boots—and redeployed familiar items of consumer culture to do their political work. Rejecting traditional gender roles in terms of fashion, and reproducing the

⁵¹ Naomi Jaffe, e-mail to author, September 30, 2014.

⁵² The revolutionary chic look was not exclusive to women in the Weatherman. The Weatherman and many radicals donned the revolutionary chic style. As For example, Jerry Rubin—one of the founding members of the Youth International Party (Yippies) to become a counterculture icon—recalled himself dressed as a “world revolutionary,” with “beret, buttons, rifle, bare-chested” and wearing Vietcong pants which he got from Bernardine Dohrn. See Hoberman, *The Dream Life*, 222-223.

powerful images and behaviors of men was the Weatherwomen's way of becoming revolutionary women, while at the same time providing a path to fulfilling women's liberation. If Black Panther women reclaimed their feminine beauty against the white standard with their natural hair and body to be beautiful, white revolutionary women also denied the stereotypical image and gender norm and refused the gender binary.

Weatherwomen's political subjectivity was also a result of their realization of white women's positions as the oppressors, as well as the oppressed. Weatherwomen stressed their struggle against their own oppression of the Third World, emphasizing the importance of fighting against their own identity as white American women, as opposed to feminists who focused on white women's internal oppression. The Weatherwomen's idea of women's liberation was international, in other words, shaped by 'third-worldism.' Since white women in the United States were, by default, the oppressors of people of color, especially African Americans and the Third World, they could not be liberated if African Americans were not granted equal citizenship in the U.S., nor if Third World people were not free from American imperialism. The consciousness of white American women's double bind transformed Weatherwomen's white femininity—the so called "white skin privilege"—into revolutionaries, discarding their racist and imperialist womanhood.⁵³

Imagery from the BPP and the Third World had profound effects on the Weather women's definition of women's strength and position in revolutionary movements: the powerful image of a Black Panther woman holding a shotgun, and of Vietnamese women

⁵³ Unlike Weatherwomen's acknowledgement of the Third World, their Third Worldism was no more than symbolic in their lack of contacts and alliances with Third World women. The Reminiscences of Cathy Wilkerson (1985), p. 79-80, the CCOHC.

holding guns while carrying babies on their backs. The heroic struggles of the Third World guerilla fighters and Black Panther women symbolized the stereotypical extremes of gender identity. These iconographies of revolutionary women allowed Weatherwomen to associate with women's liberation in order to become revolutionaries, rejecting the traditional character of women and the dichotomy between masculinity and femininity, while giving women access to men's realm of power and aggression, and expanding to a more inclusive political subjectivity with gender, race, and class. At the very time when feminists were arguing that women should stop serving others and organize instead around their own oppression, the Weatherwomen were urging radicals to secure guns so they could serve in the white auxiliary of the black and Third World liberation struggle.

The Weatherman and Women's Liberation

To combat the predominance of male chauvinism and supremacy in both American society and its social movements, Weatherwomen and radical and socialist feminists struggled to find the best approach for their own circumstances. In the late 1960s, women in the SDS/Weatherman, as we saw in the BPP, utilized their own media to create new identities for women's liberation, attempting to create images of revolutionary women.⁵⁴ Occasionally, cartoons showing a sexist position on women of the SDS raised hot debates. In the cartoon that appeared in *New Left Notes* in early 1969, a woman is portrayed as a nude marionette and a man wearing a necktie puts on a puppet

⁵⁴ As a former reporter for the *Wall Street Journal*, Alan M. Adelson noted that the SDS was one of the first groups to confront the whole question of the oppression of women, and women's discussions and arguments for liberation were continued through the SDS's newspaper. Alan M. Adelson, *SDS* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), 196-197.

show with the woman.⁵⁵ Another cartoon in the same article shows two Cuban women: one being dragged out by her hair by men, another smiling with a rifle while lying prone (see illustration 22). These cartoons were hyper-heterosexist, and therefore evoked an enraged reaction from outside the SDS. In response to the cartoons, one reader, Frinde Maher of Boston, sent a letter to the SDS. She raged that the SDS did not consider women's liberation "seriously by accepting uncritically anything that passes for an expression of liberated women, but the Cuban cartoon expresses aspects of 'liberation' that women and men must really fight against."⁵⁶ As SDS men largely denied women's issues, SDS women legitimized feminism throughout the Third World, as well as through Black Nationalism.⁵⁷ The SDS newspaper was the battleground for women's images in the late 1960s, and published many articles praising the Black Panther women guerilla fighters and admiring the heroic struggles Third World women.

The Weatherman's official position on women's liberation was not feminist-friendly at first. In "Honky Tonk Women," circulated by the Weatherman at the Flint National War Council in December 1969, the group revealed its national principle position on women's liberation. The Weatherman insisted that women's liberation would be achieved by national liberation, "for national identity, for self-determination."⁵⁸ In the Weatherman's view, Vietnamese women fighting against U.S. imperialism were also fighting for women's equality by picking up the gun. Although in "Honky Tonk Women" the Weatherman limited women's positions to those of fighters, it also shows its feminist

⁵⁵ The cartoon was signed by Tom Lindsay. See "Advance of women's struggle," *New Left Notes*, January 8, 1969, 8.

⁵⁶ Frinde Maher, "Women's Cartoon," *New Left Notes*, February 5, 1969, 3.

⁵⁷ Breines, "What's Love Got to Do with It?" 1119-1120.

⁵⁸ National War Council, "Honky Tonk Women," in *Weatherman*, ed., Jacobs, 313.

analysis that women's liberation was deeply related to "a false consciousness of what women should be... making and keeping [women] weak—by defining what [women] should look like, how [women] should act, and what [women] should think and feel."⁵⁹

The idea of becoming revolutionaries allowed women to be less passive, dependent, and inferior.

At the Weatherman's inception, there were a few women who were in both the feminist movement and the SDS/Weatherman. Naomi Jaffe relates her own experience in the movements in 1968-1970 and her difficulty deciding which one she would make her prime commitment. She was a member of both the SDS and the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell (WITCH), a political division of the NYRW.⁶⁰ Returning from her visit to North Vietnam in 1968, she participated in the first anti-Miss America pageant demonstration in Atlantic City in 1968 as a member of the WITCH. She was arrested for holding a banner reading "Women's Liberation" at the pageant. Despite her activities for feminism, she realized that it was "impossible" for her to keep working for "those two worlds":

Increasingly, the independent women's movement was bitterly critical of the mixed-gender left for its sexism—not only for individual sexism, which certainly existed, but for its positions belittling women's collective struggles for personal independence and dignity as "bourgeois feminism." I agreed with much of that critique, but at the same time I was passionately attracted to the fierce anti-racism and anti-imperialism that was emerging in our part of the left, and which was belittled by the independent women's movement as "male politics." [...] The pinnacle of these contradictions was epitomized for me by the women's movement slogan that Vietnam was not a women's issue. That led me to make the choice I ultimately made, to go underground with Weather even though I

⁵⁹ "Honky Tonk Women," in *Weatherman*, 316.

⁶⁰ Naomi Jaffe, e-mail to author, September 30, 2014.

detested its anti-feminism.⁶¹

Animosity and conflicts between “mixed-gender” groups like the SDS/Weatherman pushed women like Jaffe who were also in both movements to leave the woman-centric movement and focus instead on armed struggles in late 1969.⁶² For Weatherwomen, feminist movements were too narrow minded, focusing only on the single issue of gender, and ignoring anti-racist and anti-imperialist struggles that Weatherwomen thought of as a necessary for a revolution.

According to the article, “Inside the Weather Machine,” published in February 1970, Weatherwomen like Jaffe believed that women’s liberation would be achieved by starting a revolution, not only through political but personal transformation as well, rejecting bourgeois lifestyles and working as full-time revolutionaries. Weatherwomen, not only Jaffe, but also others like Dohrn and Wilkerson, discarded their middle-class status as the necessary first step to becoming revolutionaries. For the Weatherwoman, becoming revolutionary women meant debunking the “myth of the ‘exceptional’ political woman,” and encouraging all women to become political leaders. Despite their shared anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist ideas, socialist feminist groups such as Bread and Roses, a politico-oriented separatist women’s liberation group in Boston, disagreed with the Weatherwomen’s strategy of revolution first and women’s liberation second. The socialist feminists—believing that women’s liberation would come together with economic and social equality for all people—maintained that, “women must make

⁶¹ Naomi Jaffe, e-mail to author, September 30, 2014.

⁶² Thompson, *A Promise and a Way of Life*, 121-122.

revolutions for themselves as well as for other people.”⁶³ Bread and Roses especially condemned the armed resistance of the WU and its style of “manhood.”⁶⁴

While radical feminists differentiated women’s femininity from masculine characteristics, considered male chauvinism as the fundamental source of women’s secondary status and subordination, and separated themselves from men in order to organize women’s independence, the Weatherwomen’s theory followed a much different approach. Although they also considered male chauvinism to be repressive for women, Weatherwomen emphasized the idea that women’s own passivity and dependence on men were also a form of chauvinism, in that women’s liberation could not be accomplished without women becoming active, strong, “self-reliant and self-confident” as revolutionaries with new lifestyles in a new society.⁶⁵ Fighting against white women’s own nature was the way through which white women could achieve their own liberation.

From Women’s Militias to Women’s Brigade

Weatherwomen’s first collective attempts to combine their anti-racist and anti-imperialist perspectives with anti-sexism emerged with their militant actions as women’s militias. The Weatherman’s “city action projects” in 1969 encouraged white, working-class teenagers to join the revolution, in preparation for the upcoming national convention in Chicago. About two hundred Weatherman members rented apartments and went to schools in working-class neighborhoods in cities like Akron, Chicago, Flint, New York, Detroit, Columbus, Pittsburgh, and Boston during the summer of 1969, and tried to

⁶³ Bread and Roses, “Weatherman Politics and the Women’s Movement,” in *Weatherman*, ed., Jacobs, 327-336.

⁶⁴ Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 135-136; and Jacobs, *Weatherman*, 305.

⁶⁵ Jacobs, *Weatherman*, 307.

convince teenagers to join them. Weatherwomen also planned women's actions along with the Weatherman's national and local actions, which were a combined version of domestic city actions and an international concept of a militia. Two successful women's militias—"all-woman units" of the group—appeared in Detroit and Pittsburgh right before the women's march in the Days of Rage.

Weatherman/SDS women performed a symbolic event with the invasion of classrooms and schools through a type of guerilla strategy. On July 31, 1969, nine women, who became known as the 'Motor City Nine,' walked into a classroom at Macomb Community College in the Detroit suburb of Warren, Michigan, and barricaded the doors. They identified themselves as "urban guerrillas," concretely aiding the liberation struggles of the Third World.⁶⁶ Inside, they interrupted students taking final exams to talk about what they thought were more important things: the war in Vietnam and how the Vietnamese women carried on armed struggle together with Vietnamese men against U.S. imperialism. Jonah Raskin recalls that these actions were "inspired by the Red Guards of the Chinese Cultural Revolution," and that those women told students to "leave their 'jails'."⁶⁷ The women told the students about the struggle for women's liberation in the Third World, and the BPP, and about how Macomb College kept black people from attending by raising tuition.⁶⁸ The Weatherwomen's "dirty language," and

⁶⁶ Motor City SDS, "Break On Through To the Other Side," *New Left Notes*, August 23, 1969. The summer projects were short-lived because many student members went back to schools and difficulties created by police surveillance, increasing distrust, and arrests. See Sale, *SDS*, 586.

⁶⁷ Jonah Raskin, "Looking Backward: Personal Reflections on Language, Gesture and Mythology in the Weather Underground," *Socialism and Democracy* 20, no. 2 (July 2006): 124.

⁶⁸ The SDS newspaper applauded the militant Weatherwomen as an exemplary fighting force, fighting on the side of the black liberation struggle and the Vietnamese struggle. For SDS women's militias at Macomb Community College, see "The Motor City 9," *New Left Notes: The Fire Next Time*, August 1969, 8; and "Women's Militia," *New Left Notes*, September 12, 1969.

their un-lady-like outfits—jeans, boots, and a cowboy hat— astonished the outraged administrators who entered the classroom (see illustration 23).⁶⁹ The Motor City Nine were Rachel Bishop, Ellen Borison, Lynn Garvin, Elizabeth Gilbert, Ann Hathaway, Lenore Kalom, Karen Latimer, Charlotte Marchant, and Karen Selin, as Kirkpatrick Sale identifies.⁷⁰

On September 4, 1969, a group of seventy-six women, including Eleanor Stein (who went by her married name, Raskin, at that time), Cathy Wilkerson, Linda Evans, Naomi Jaffe and Laura Whitehorn, carried out the same type of action at South Hills High School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Twenty-six of the women were arrested and became known as “Pittsburgh 26,” according to the FBI’s record.⁷¹ As with the “Motor City Nine,” the media exaggerated their portrayal of the women’s appearances. Stein recalls:

The news reports of the women’s action in Pittsburgh at the time all described the women as running through the halls of the schools *bare-breasted*. Of course we were fully clothed—but probably quite a few women were bra-less, and male reporters apparently were overcome by that sight. This description has been picked up over and over, in all the accounts of the period—but it is completely myth.⁷²

The SDS newspaper *New Left Notes* explained, “the pig newspapers tried to explain the

⁶⁹ Barbara Healy, “SDS Girls Visit Macomb,” *Fifth Estate* 4, no. 7 (August 1969), 10.

⁷⁰ Sale says that there was one more member Denise Ryan and the black woman among the Nine was Rachel Bishop. Sale, *SDS*, 588n.

⁷¹ As the FBI titled the women the “Pittsburgh 26” on the records of the Pittsburgh Police Department, 26 of them were arrested. The list includes Dionne Donghi, Linda Sue Evans, Lynn Raye Garvin, Naomi Jaffe, Eleanor Raskin, Jane Spielman, Marsha Rhoda Seinberg, Laura Whitehorn, Cathy Platt Wilkerson, Mary Wozniak. See the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Freedom of Information Act archive, Weather Underground files, “Weatherman Underground Summary Dated 8/20/76, Part # 1,” 380.

⁷² Emphasis added. Eleanor Stein, email to author, December 21, 2014.

women's action as a nudity show, and announced on the radio that a group of 'bare-breasted women' had run through the school."⁷³ Although nobody was naked, the media tended to label radical and militant women for the public as 'loose girls,' in the same way that they created the 'bra-burning' feminists.

Even though the Weatherwomen did not expand their 1969's all-women actions, they had begun to realize their ideas of women's liberation through their actions to create a "Women's Militia" from 1968 within the SDS. Dohrn first introduced American women to the Vietnamese Women's Militia unit and emphasized the Vietnamese women's contributions to both fighting and production during wartime.⁷⁴ Dohrn spoke very highly of the Vietnamese women in the SDS newspaper and promoted their roles as models for women's liberation in America. Cathy Wilkerson further developed the idea of forming a Women's Militia in her article "Toward a Revolutionary Women's Militia" published in *New Left Notes* on July 8, 1969. As "strategic directions" for fighting against imperialism and male supremacy, Wilkerson suggested founding an American Women's Militia of young working-class women.⁷⁵ Wilkerson realized the Weatherman lacked an analysis of male supremacy after conversations with feminists like Marilyn Webb. Wilkerson proposed organizing high school students to become revolutionaries:

[Girls need] to fight along with men against the tracking system in general, as well as the way it affects girls in particular. Girls will also

⁷³ "Women's Militia," *New Left Notes*.

⁷⁴ Bernardine Dohrn and Naomi Jaffe, "The Look is You...", *New Left Notes*, March 18, 1968. See Bernardine Dohrn, "White Mother Country," *New Left Notes*, July 29, 1968; and "The Liberation of Vietnamese Women," *New Left Notes*, October 25, 1968, 9.

⁷⁵ Wilkerson corrects her concept of women's militia as not violent but instead as "an idea of forming neighborhood women's militias, which could respond to men who were abusive or to parents who kept their daughters locked up at home." Wilkerson, *Flying*, 259-260.

struggle against pigs, and against the war. At the same time we can form women's militias of high school girls which directly attacked male supremacy and the broader set of bourgeois values upon which it rests...Militias can band girls together to fight collectively for collective freedom [...] These militias can also serve an educational and agitational role in the community as a whole. These girls could easily relate to friends who were working in plants or service industries and bring these young women into the struggle against imperialism.⁷⁶

Initiating ideas for the 1969 summer city actions, women like Wilkerson used their transition from the SDS to the Weatherman to build a women's movement to achieve women's liberation. The Weatherwomen discontinued their all-women actions and ideas for a Women's Militia after the summer city actions and women's march in the Days of Rage; however, they continued their attempt to build the movement for women's liberation in their underground activities with the Weatherman.

Women's Brigade of the Weather Underground

The Weatherwomen's original concept of forming a women's militia in 1969 continued with the formation of the Women's Brigade during their time underground. The Women's Brigade, with the initial name "Proud Eagle Tribe," claimed responsibility for three major bombings by all-woman units of the Weather Underground: the Center for International Affairs at Harvard University in October 1970 (to support Angela Davis), the Massachusetts Institute of Technology center for war research in January 1973, and the federal offices of Health, Education and Welfare in San Francisco in

⁷⁶ Although Wilkerson recalls that she did not mean "militias" as armed forces, the group and most Weatherwomen took Wilkerson's idea of building women's militia as armed violent action. Wilkerson, "Toward a Revolutionary Women's Militia," *New Left Notes*, July 8, 1969; and Cathy Wilkerson, telephone call to author, June 27, 2014.

1974.⁷⁷ The violent actions of the Women's Brigade heralded the Weatherwomen's attempt to appropriate feminist consciousness-raising to their continuing anti-imperialist and anti-racist movements underground through forming a study group and practicing their way of women's liberation in a guerrilla warfare.⁷⁸

As opposed to stereotypes of the Weatherwomen as anti-feminist, there were changes and transformations in the gender policies of these women that prefigured feminist studies and actions in the early 1970s. The more significant, but rarely analyzed, documents that explore the Weatherwomen's feminist politics were written in early 1973. During the existence of the Women's Brigade, Weatherwomen produced two internal papers on the women's movement and feminism: "Mountain Moving Day" and "Six Sisters." Both documents were unpublished and internally circulated within the WUO.⁷⁹ These were rare documents by Weatherwomen specifically calling for feminist politics and practices.⁸⁰ They illustrated how Weatherwomen's feminist consciousness fits into their violent actions.

"Mountain Moving Day," titled with the astronomical symbol of Venus, was the Weatherwomen's first attempt from underground to emphasize their "feminist politics and program." The title originated from Japanese feminist Yasano Akiko's popular poem written in 1911. In the early 1970s, radical women shared the poem and adopted it to their engagements for women's liberation, as it also reflects Maoist views on women's

⁷⁷ Berger indicates that the only action by the Proud Eagle Tribe was the bombing at Harvard. Berger, *Outlaws of America*, 365n.

⁷⁸ Berger, *Outlaws of America*, 142-143.

⁷⁹ See "Mountain Moving Day" n.d. [circa February 1973] and "Six Sisters: Summer Study of Women in Struggle of Health, Education & Welfare" n.d. [circa Summer 1973], in documents courtesy of Naomi Jaffe and Dan Berger.

⁸⁰ Berger, *Outlaws of America*, 171.

liberation; in Mao's words, "revolutionaries...can 'move mountains.'"⁸¹ It is certain that the Weatherwomen shared ideas that linked them with many other feminist movements. For instance, the rock band of the socialist feminist group, Chicago Women's Liberation Union (CWLU), released its first album, "Mountain Moving Day" in January 1973, and produced the Mountain Moving Day poster, depicting a woman wearing a head scarf, holding a gun and an infant on her back.⁸² In the writing, "Mountain Moving Day," Weatherwomen emphasized that they had practiced their feminism from the beginning of the organization internally, but were now ready to bring it to the public. In this document, the Weatherwomen assessed their feminist consciousness-raising in their "daily work and thoughts" against sexism, and they insisted that they had fundamentally changed in their daily life, working and thinking in feminist ways. Their feminist thoughts and actions, however, had not affected their political projects and did not consciously influence their feminist perspectives in their politics, as they admit.

The Weatherwomen's idea of feminism was analogous to contemporary feminist concepts that women should organize their independent and collective actions first, and then create women's cultural and political projects. For Weatherwomen, feminism meant a "gathering together of women to fight all that tries to enslave us because of our womanness." Although this concept reflects feminist writings in the late 1960s on women's needs for collectivity and solidarity, this unpublished paper is significant in that it reveals the Weatherwomen's feminist stances as different from their initial rejection of

⁸¹ Kelley and Esch, "Black Like Mao," 9.

⁸² Michael F. Scully, *The Never-Ending Revival: Rounder Records and the Folk Alliance* (University of Illinois Press, 2008), 103-104; and OMCA Collections, Oakland Museum of California, <http://collections.museumca.org/?q=collection-item/201054469> (accessed 5 May 2014).

a women's independent assembly and separate movement . The Weatherwomen especially changed their previous position on anti-imperialism as the most important issue, asserting that “anti-imperialism, anti-racism, anti-sexism all intermingle, but are not all the same, and are not all encompassed in anti-imperialism.”⁸³ They admitted their previous devotion to the imperialist and racist oppression over sexism. According to the Weatherwomen, the “moral urgency” of the Vietnam War had lessened, and women's liberation had become an issue equally as important as anti-imperialism.⁸⁴ Once they identified as women, they gave “priority to that part of our politics, of our lives.” With these modifications, the Weatherwomen embraced the women's movement inside the Weather Underground, their statement echoing the pioneering statements of most women's movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Since the Weatherwomen were now underground, they called for aboveground supporters' participation in their feminist projects in the early 1970s. Although they placed themselves outside the “women's movement,” they were expecting and planning to develop their relationships with other women's groups. Weatherwomen started their study groups on feminism and practiced their actions for women's liberation. However, the Weatherwomen were careful to avoid the narrowness of including “only white American women.” They committed themselves to remaining a women's movement for diversity and inclusiveness to ensure the “liberation of all our sisters,” as outlined in

⁸³ “Mountain Moving Day”

⁸⁴ American military's direct involvement in the War ended in June 1973 when U.S. Congress passed the Case-Church Amendment to prohibit additional U.S military activities in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. The war terminated when the North Vietnamese Army captured South Vietnamese capital Saigon in April 1975.

“Mountain Moving Day.”⁸⁵ Unlike most radical feminists at that time, Weatherwomen still sought to simultaneously achieve both world revolution *and* feminist revolution. They called themselves “white revolutionary feminists.” Unfortunately, Weatherwomen had neither a cooperative relationship with other women’s groups, nor with Third World women outside the country, due to partially being underground, as well as a history of hostility toward feminist organizations. The Weatherwomen’s perspectives unveiled their limited approach to feminism and women’s liberation.⁸⁶

The Weatherwomen’s attempts to engage with feminist politics continued in their study and interpretation of women’s struggles in revolutionary-specific ways. Six months after “Mountain Moving Day” was circulated within the group, Weatherwomen reported their feminist programs through the package, “Six Sisters: Summer Study of Women in Struggle for Health, Education & Welfare.” The all-woman group comprised of both underground and aboveground members met for six weeks, twice a week, for an intensive study program on feminism. On June 29, 1973, they planned the meeting for the summer study group and the first meeting was on July 7th. From July 11th, they specifically focused on studying the relationship between feminism and anti-imperialism by reading socialist feminist writings, like Bread and Roses’ critique of the Weatherwomen. Their study moved to the history of the women’s movement in the United States, detailed studies on the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), and culminated in trying to figure out their own ways of fighting for women’s liberation. On August 8th,

⁸⁵ Mona Christina Rocha does not analyze the two documents; however, her points on Weatherwomen as feminists reveal most actively the women’s inclusiveness. See Mona Cristina Rocha, “Militant Feminism and the Women of the Weather Underground Organization” (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2014).

⁸⁶ Weatherwomen’s consideration on women in multilayered aspects like gender, race, and class conveys the “third-wave” feminist perspectives as Rocha shows in her dissertation. See Mona Cristina Rocha, “Militant Feminism.”

they had the last meeting for the summer study to wrap up and evaluate their meetings. At the end, the Weatherwomen evaluated their lack of a concrete “understanding of what we each meant by feminism,” and knew many of them did not want to move away from anti-imperialist politics. But the “Six Sisters” was a serious attempt to build on the women’s politics that were proposed in “Mountain Moving Day.”

During the internal meetings of the Six Sisters, the Weatherwomen released a “Collective Letter To The Women’s Movement” in July 1973 as an attempt to articulate their feminist understanding, and respond to Jane Alpert’s letter “To the Sisters in the Weather Underground.”⁸⁷ Alpert’s open letter to the women in the Weather Underground attached in her famous writing, “Mother Rights: A New Feminist Theory,” had stirred serious debates on women and violence in underground movements. In their collective response to Alpert, the Weatherwomen declared their “change—to commit [themselves] as women to the cause of women.” They criticized their own denial of “women’s demands” in 1969 and 1970 before going underground. This letter particularly validates the Weatherwomen’s transformation in terms of feminism as shown in “Mountain Moving Day,” and the simultaneous projects of the Six Sisters.

The Six Sisters chose to focus on the HEW as the centerpiece of their fight against oppression of American women *and* women in the Third World. Originating from the Federal Security Agency founded in 1939, HEW, also known as the Health

⁸⁷ For the Weatherwomen’s letter, see Women of the Weather Underground, “A Collective Letter to the Women’s Movement,” in *Sing a Battle Song: The Revolutionary Poetry, Statements, and Communiqués of the Weather Underground 1970 – 1974*, eds., Bernardine Dohrn, Bill Ayers, and Jaffe Jones (Seven Stories Press, 2006), Kindle Edition. Catholic antiwar activist Mary Moylan’s letter to Alpert followed the Weatherwomen’s letter, announcing her enlistment in the Weather Underground. For Moylan’s letter, see Jonah Raskin, ed., *The Weather Eye: Communiqués from the Weather Underground, May 1970 – May 1974* (New York: Union Square Press, October 1974), 80-83.

Department, was formed in 1953, and was changed to the Department of Health and Human Services after the separation of the federal Department of Education in 1979. The HEW was “the largest government agency and the one which most directly affects the lives of most women and children (and old people).”⁸⁸ It was also “the major government vehicle of social control of women” in terms of its decisions regarding life, like “who eats how much, what the national health priorities are, and who will be sterilized” according to the Six Sisters. The Weatherwomen thought of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) at home and the Agency for International Development (AID) as camouflaging its control over worldly people by using the term “aid.” Continuing their anti-imperialist struggle, Weatherwomen correlated American oppression in the Third World with its effects on Third World women. The interconnected analysis of both women in the United States who had been affected by “imperialism/sexism at home,” and women in the Third World who suffered from imperialist oppression, made it possible for Weatherwomen to keep their anti-imperialist position, and at the same time to turn toward the women’s movement more actively and practically.

The ways in which the Weatherwomen created harmony between feminism and anti-racism/imperialism in their armed struggle was through their concept of women’s liberation as ‘survival politics.’ Weatherwomen understood feminism in terms of “survival questions” and “women’s fight for survival,” through their “domestic analysis of imperialism” and how it “functions in particular ways against women” in the world.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Weatherwomen, “Six Sisters.”

⁸⁹ Kimberlé Crenshaw expresses similar feminist issues, which become power and survival issues for women of color when they are misrecognized in dominant—white and middle-class centered—feminist programs like women’s shelters. Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1265.

The idea of “women’s fight for survival” provided Weatherwomen with distinctive connections to feminism, anti-racism, and anti-imperialism, as evidenced in their summary and evaluation of the summer meeting on August 8, 1973 in “Six Sister”:

Always been stuck on the question of women issues—a personal dilemma that we feel we should all be able to deal quietly with the questions of survival. But isn’t a personal question, it is at the heart of revolutionary consciousness and demands for women. Integral with everything we’ve been into for 10 years, we began to deal with criticalness with each other...It was easy and natural to go from the health situation of women in the US to Vietnam, population control by US agencies throughout the world, human experimentation funded by HEW, nutrition etc—because the problems are so tied to the needs of imperialism.⁹⁰

Finding the connections inside the group, in American society, and in the Third World, Weatherwomen were able to move their anti-imperialist and anti-racist perspective to anti-sexist struggle without losing their previous commitments in the former and “falling into separate and competitive causes,” as they felt most feminist movements did.⁹¹

Considering their attack on the HEW office in 1974, the Weatherwomen not only examined feminism in terms of that agency, but also rationalized their target in relation to their ideas on women’s liberation. On March 6, 1974, the Women’s Brigade bombed the San Francisco HEW office, to express their “solidarity” with the emerging women’s movement on International Women’s Day, March 8, and to remember their deceased comrades Diana Oughton, Ted Gold and Terry Robbins four years after the townhouse explosion. By bombing of the HEW office, Weatherwomen maintained their identity as armed white revolutionaries; however, they also developed more feminist ideas and

⁹⁰ Weatherwomen, “Six Sisters.”

⁹¹ Ibid.

actions during the evolution from the Women's Militia to the Women's Brigade. Without considering their internal discussions and efforts on the part of women's liberation, in contemporary's and historian's perspectives, the HEW bombing seems to be only part of their armed struggle of clandestine groups mainly led by militant radical men, rather than the Weatherwomen's brand of feminism.

In the communiqué regarding the HEW action, the Women's Brigade identified women's enemy not as men but rather as the system, where sexism, racism, and imperialism all connected. This was a position similar to most socialist feminists' understanding of women's oppression. Targeting the HEW office highlighted the institutional oppression of women; it made sense for the Weatherwomen to pursue the fight against oppression in the name of their feminism. The HEW communiqué called for "women's control of daycare, healthcare, and birth control, and denounce[ed] the forced sterilization by HEW of women of color."⁹² The HEW communiqué was based primarily on the Six Sisters' report on their study and preparation for the action. The main ideas concerning U.S. domestic and international oppression of women both at home and abroad came directly from the "Six Sisters." The Brigade further developed their ideas about feminism in the "Six Sisters" in relation to anti-imperialist ideas, continued from their previous concepts and actions:

In the United States, women bear the major responsibility for the health, education and care of families and friends. This is women's work, unpaid at that. Survival questions are treated as personal problems. We're supposed to have it together, but we're deprived of power in any fundamental social institutions. The State sets women against women, forces us into desperate competition, isolates us from sisters in the Third

⁹² Berger, *Outlaws of America*, 331.

World... We need to remove our struggles from the private sphere where they are fought as individual battles, and make them collective—as the tasks of our sex, our class, our people. International sisterhood. The roots of our oppression are connected. We have common enemies. They include specific institutions like HEW, which are fundamentally antagonistic to the emancipation of the masses of women. Women’s liberation is a matter of survival. We need food, decent medical care, good schools, and community run day care. For this, we need revolution.⁹³

Weatherwomen understood women’s survival in domestic and international terms. For them, women’s “personal problems in the US” were political and international. These were also feminist ideas, especially reflecting the idea of “the personal is political,” in which Weatherwomen apply contemporary feminist analysis to their ideas and actions. In the HEW communiqué, Weatherwomen further developed their idea of women’s intersectional oppression and the need for international “solidarity.”⁹⁴ Nevertheless, there were no known continuous women’s actions or projects after the HEW action.⁹⁵

Unlike the Weatherwomen’s feminist studies and actions, the WU as a whole neither acknowledged their own feminism, nor developed more women’s programs. However, the group publicly expressed the transformation of the group’s policy and strategy for achieving women’s liberation. During the group’s painful breakup in 1976, women in the WUO bitterly criticized their own group’s hetero-sexism from a more self-defensive and feminist-oriented standpoint. Dohrn still played a crucial role as a leader and a woman in the WUO, but condemned the group’s leadership, including her own, and spoke more of her relationship to women’s liberation. Weatherwomen revealed their

⁹³ Raskin, *The Weather Eye*, 105-106.

⁹⁴ Weatherwomen, “Six Sisters.”

⁹⁵ Neither the Women’s Militia nor the Women’s Brigade officially developed any writings and actions after the HEW bombing. The Reminiscences of David Gilbert (1985), p. 338-339, the CCOHC.

more feminist stance breaking their silence with painful self-criticism. After seven years underground, the WUO Central Committee, led by Jeff Jones and Bill Ayers, had a plan to come to the surface. Bernardine Dohrn and the Revolutionary Committee, however, called their plan a “strategy of inversion,” on the “basis of white and male supremacy,” and “in opposition to revolution.”⁹⁶ In her self-criticizing statement regarding the WUO, Dohrn accused them of “serious crimes against national liberation movements and against women.” The main self-criticism of the Central Committee was regarding women’s liberation. The WUO published the book *Prairie Fire* in July 1974. Many former members of the WUO, known as the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, organized aboveground networks of the WUO. The WUO quarterly magazine *Osawatomie*, which was “named after the site in Kansas where John Brown’s army had fought its first open battle against supporters of slavery,” was for two and a half years “the voice of the Weather Underground Organization”—first issued in March 1975 and marked the end of the WUO in June and July 1976.⁹⁷ In “Tape from Bernardine Dohrn” in November 1976, Dohrn announced the split of the WUO, and denounced Bill Ayers and Jeff Jones in the Central Committee, and members under the pseudonyms Celia Sojourn and Joe Reed for publically condemning women’s movements.⁹⁸ After the split, the group divided into the WUO, the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee (PFOC) and the

⁹⁶ “Tape from Bernardine Dohrn,” *The Split of the Weather Underground Organization: Struggling Against White and Male Supremacy*, ed., John Brown Book Club (1977), 33-35.

⁹⁷ Wilkerson, 373; “Introduction,” *The Split of the Weather Underground Organization, 1977*, The Papers of Milo Guthrie, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University, Durham, NC; and John Kifner, “Weather Underground Splits Up Over Plan to Come Into the Open: Dissidents Publish Charges Top Leadership Is Adopting ‘White, Male Supremacist’ Tactics,” *The New York Times*, January 18, 1977.

⁹⁸ “Tape from Bernardine Dohrn,” *The Split of the Weather Underground Organization, 1977*, The Papers of Milo Guthrie, 35.

May 19th Communist Organization (M19CO), also known as the New York chapter of the PFOC, who were active from 1978 to 1985, primarily supporting the BLA.⁹⁹

Despite the often-antagonistic relationship between the Weatherwomen and second-wave feminists of the late 1960s and early 1970s, they shared the core concepts of women's liberation against male chauvinism and gender inequality. Although many women in the SDS/Weatherman were in women's groups in the late 1960s, their paths to liberation diverged. Some women in the Left focused on an independent and separate women's movement; Weatherwomen instead moved to the tactics of guerrilla warfare and identified themselves as revolutionaries. They believed that the way to achieve women's liberation was through first achieving global liberation. They invented a revolutionary women's style through their leaderships, revolutionary chic fashion, feminist writings and theories, and armed activism, unlike 'second-wave' feminists who refused subordination to other political movements, especially male leftists, and built independent women's movements that were women-centered, separatist, and pacifistic. Thus, Weatherwomen found ways to become revolutionaries in order to be liberated from the idea of traditional white women through self-fashioning themselves in their denial of their own white middle-class American womanhood. They invented their own political subjectivity in their armed struggle: strong and masculine or androgenic but heterosexual. Yet, their embrace of violent resistance continued to distance Weatherwomen from their fellow feminists.

⁹⁹ The name May 19th Communist Organization came from the birthdays of Ho Chi Minh and Malcolm X. PFOC national leader and spokesperson was Bernardine Dohrn's sister Jennifer Dohrn. In 1975, Bernardine Dohrn organized the PFOC with Bill Ayers and Jeff Jones. In early 1976, from January 20 to February 1, they organized the Hard Time Conference under the slogan "Hard Times are Fighting Times" at the University of Chicago.

Chapter 4

The Myth of the Bra Burners and Feminists in Armed Resistance

On September 7, 1968, a week after the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, the public observed the crowning of two Miss Americas in Atlantic City, New Jersey: one white and blond-haired, and the other black and wearing a natural hairdo. The next day, the media-juxtaposed two stories with the pictures of Miss America Judith Anne Ford and Miss Black America Sandra Williams.¹ The mass media's attention, however, was focused not on "the first blond to win the title" in eleven years, nor on the first Miss Black America in U.S history, but rather on a group of young women who protested *against* the beauty pageant.² According to mass media reports, such as those in the tabloid *New York Post*, it was the moment in which Miss America, an ideal figure for all American women, seemed to be under attack by fanatical feminists. When it was revealed that the demonstrators were also burning bras, people were shocked, and felt that the demonstration had "*gone too far*" (see illustration 24).³ The protest signaled the first national action by 'second-wave' feminists, who became notorious as "bra burners," a term many people still associate them with.⁴ The image of bra burning placed the

¹ Judy Klemesrud, "Along With Miss America, There's Now Miss Black America," *The New York Times*, September 9, 1968, Robin Morgan Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University, Durham, NC.

² Charlotte Curtis, "Along With Miss America, There's Now Miss Black America," *The New York Times*, September 9, 1968, Robin Morgan Papers.

³ Emphasis added. See Art Buchwald, "The Bra Burners," *New York Post*, September 12, 1968, Robin Morgan Papers.

⁴ The Miss America pageant was founded for attracting tourists to the city by the Businessmen's League of Atlantic City in 1921, popularized through national televising since 1954, and became the highest-rated program on television in the early 1960s. For the history of the pageant, see

Women's Liberation Movement into the discourse of violence in direct and indirect ways. The media, the protesters, and the state were all involved in this dialogue, which had a powerful impact on the Movement itself.⁵ This historical event and its aftermath inspired new ways of becoming feminist revolutionaries that were influenced by the self-fashioning of other radical women, such as the Black Panther women and Weatherwomen, yet diverged from them as well.

1968 Miss America Pageant Protest and the Burning of Bras

The New York Radical Women (NYRW), one of the earliest women's liberation groups in the country that started to emerge in 1967, organized the demonstration against the Miss America pageant in 1968. In the summer of 1968, group members like Carol Hanisch, who initiated the idea of the protest, watched the feminist film "Schmearguntz" by Gunvor Nelson, which included footage of the Miss America pageant.⁶ In order to reject the image of Miss America as an ideal for all American women, members of the NYRW attempted to "raise the public's consciousness" about the meanings of the pageant.⁷ About a hundred young women, from either the NYRW or its affiliates

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/missamerica/filmmore/pt.html> (accessed March 5, 2015). See also Shirley Jennifer Lim, *A Feeling of Belonging: Asian American Women's Popular Culture, 1930-1960* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007). On the myth, see Bonnie J. Dow, "Feminism, Miss America, and Media Mythology," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6, no. 1 (2003): 127-60.

⁵ Patricia Bradley, *Mass Media and the Shaping of American Feminism, 1963-1975* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2003). For the interaction between the media and the social movements in the Sixties, see Bernadette Barker-Plummer, "News as a Political Resource: Media Strategies and Political Identity in the U.S. Women's Movement, 1966-1975," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12, (1995): 306-324; Edward P. Morgan, "From Virtual Community to Virtual History: Mass Media and the American Antiwar Movement of the 1960s," *Radical History Review* 78 (fall 2000): 85-122; and Chad Raphael, "Rethinking Media and Movements," *Radical History Review* 78 (fall 2000): 130-137.

⁶ Echols, *Daring*, 93.

⁷ Echols, *Daring*, 94. Robin Morgan Papers. Carol Hanisch differentiates a zap action from "an "underground" disruptive tactic," which battles with the police. See Echols, *Daring*, 94; and Carol

appeared on the boardwalk in an effort to steer the public away from associating the conventional feminine look with women's identity.⁸ Influenced by larger movements like anti-racism, anti-war, and counterculture, early women's liberationists looked at women's bodies as resources for political statements.⁹ The initial women's liberationists' self-presentation at the protest was intended to be revolutionary, to overthrow all traditional constraints on how women were supposed to look and act. Yet it was distorted in the media by negative connotations and ridiculous accounts of bra-burners. The media coverage stressed the women's gesture of throwing their undergarments into a bonfire as the main action of the demonstration, as if they took off their bras and burned them on the spot, which in fact never actually happened. The media labeled the protesters "bra-burners" and the term became a permanent image of feminists. The very way in which the media described the protest as a bra burning became the label of 'second-wave' feminist history.

According to the leaflet, *No More Miss America!*, and notes that documented the group's preparation for the demonstration, the group had planned various actions for indoor and outdoor events at the pageant. The image of Miss America was promoted in the United States as the "highest ideal," the ideal that all American girls should strive for, from the very first pageant in 1921.¹⁰ A carefully planned and militant action inside the Convention hall where the pageant was held, was undertaken by Peggy Dobbins, a

Hanisch, *Dear Sisters*, 186. For zap actions, see Carol Giardina, "The Making of the Women's Liberation Movement, 1953-1970" (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 2004), 371-372.

⁸ Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas*, 124.

⁹ *No More Miss America!*

¹⁰ "Miss America History," under Our Miss Americas, Miss America Since 1921: Style, Service, Scholarship and Success, <http://www.missamerica.org/our-miss-americas/miss-america-history.aspx> (accessed July 15, 2015). For the lists of the group's plan, see "Atlantic City," Robin Morgan Papers.

member of the NYRW, who sprayed the mayor's auditorium box with spray paint. Dobbins was later arrested and charged with "disorderly conduct" and "emitting a noxious odor."¹¹ As historian Alice Echols points out, Dobbins used the product of one of the pageant's sponsors, Toni permanent spray. The idea was to demonstrate the group's rejection of the sponsors that financed the beauty contest.¹² A "Secret Tactics Group" was gathered to disrupt the pageant, and the more militant members of the protest were "ready for arrest."¹³ In the hall, about fifteen women from the NYRW, including Naomi Jaffe, gathered. They shouted "Freedom for Women" and "No More Miss America" and displayed a banner that read, "Women's Liberation" under the balcony during Miss America's farewell speech.¹⁴ The feminists' demonstration successfully interrupted Miss America's speech; however, the television broadcast was cut during the feminists' protest, preventing their message from being conveyed to the massive number of viewers who were tuned in to the pageant. Had they been televised, these indoor actions in the Convention hall may have had the shocking and powerful effect on the public that the group originally intended.

¹¹ In a letter by Robin Morgan, Dobbins was charged with a "two-to-three year rap" due to her actions in the Convention hall. Robin Morgan to the New York Free Press, October 14, 1968. Robin Morgan Papers. She was bailed out on \$1,000. See Duffett, "WLM Vs. Miss America."

¹² However, other members were irritated by the lack of organized actions by the group, what Echols called "do-your-own-thing" attitude. Echols, *Daring*, 94-95.

¹³ "Atlantic City," Robin Morgan Papers. Between their planning and the protest, the group expected the possibility of arrests, although Echols indicates that the protesters were also afraid of "arrests" due to the groups' financial difficulties. See Echols, *Daring*, 94. Two pages of a flyer titled "No More Miss America!" gave advanced warning that they did not expect "heavy disruptive tactics which can make possible conflicts with the police, although participants are free of actions in the protest. Robin Morgan Papers. It is reprinted in *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement*, ed., Robin Morgan (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 521-524.

¹⁴ Naomi Jaffe, e-mail to author, September 30, 2014; and Echols, *Daring*, 94.

Unlike the lack of media attention given to the interruptions inside the hall, the protests happening outside were the center of media reports. They included guerrilla theater, marching and rallying, calls to boycott products from the sponsors of the pageant, interviews exclusively with women reporters, lobbying for the contestants and judges to join the protest, and multiple demonstrations, including theatrical parades and the Freedom Trash Can.¹⁵ Other women chained a life-sized puppet of Miss America to themselves and paraded on the boardwalk in front of the Convention hall to show that women were enslaved by “beauty standards.”¹⁶ Through these actions, the anti-beauty pageant agitators created their own movement by incorporating many of the radical ideas of the Women’s Liberation Movement, fighting against the objectification and exploitation of women’s bodies. The feminist event at the pageant fundamentally challenged the standard of womanhood and began a transformation in the public’s views of women, from their economic and political power to their role as purveyors of consumer culture.

Right after the pageant, the mainstream news press, such as *The New York Times*, broadcasted accounts of the protest to the public, focusing mainly on what happened on the boardwalk where the protesters picketed and staged guerrilla theater actions, rather than explaining why those feminists were against the pageant—to free women from the traditional beauty standard. The reports of the protest were quite different in the mainstream media than in the leftist alternative press. Unlike the mass media, which focused on the protesters’ looks and actions, the movement media, like the *New Left*

¹⁵ “Atlantic City,” Robin Morgan Papers.

¹⁶ Echols, *Daring*, 93.

Notes of the SDS, covered the feminist's political statements and purpose for the protest.¹⁷ However, the primary difference between the mainstream media and the alternative press was that the mass media reduced the feminist actions to a single act: that of burning bras. They described it as a militant and armed act because of the use of fire, and at the same time, a silly and ridiculous act that made a mockery of more serious leftist movements.

There were various public responses to the protest, mostly negative, and mostly regarding the bra burning.¹⁸ Miss America pageant winners, like Debra Barnes Snodgrass who was crowned in 1967, disagreed with the feminist claim that women were oppressed in society.¹⁹ Others interpreted the act of burning bras as a different version of the American breast fetish. By publicly destroying their bras, the protesters seemed to make breasts more sexy and erotic. At this point, sexual liberation was associated with bralessness, yet an expression of bralessness was also used to symbolize being sexually

¹⁷ "Atlantic City," Chapter Contacts, *New Left Notes*, September 23, 1968, 5.

¹⁸ The image of feminists as bra burners has been reproduced by the media like *Time*, particularly in the figure drawing of a woman holding a burning bra in 1970. Hesford, *Feeling Women's Liberation*, 28-30.

¹⁹ Snodgrass was crowned in 1967 and went to Atlantic City to pass her crown to the next Miss America in 1968. She remembers the demonstration but still thinks that it was a "poor choice" to deliver their feminist messages. She considered herself independent enough to buy a car without her husband's signature two months before the pageant in 1968. Nell Greenfieldboyce, "Pageant Protest Sparked Bra-Burning," *Echoes of 1968*, Morning Edition, NPR, aired September 5, 2008, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=94240375> (accessed July 15, 2015). Bonnie J. Dow explains the responses by the media and women like Snodgrass as "personalization of claims," in which women do not agree with the idea that they are exploited by the image of Miss America so they participate in the pageant to achieve their goal as a free agent. Their competition in the pageant becomes their way of finding freedom, contrary to the feminists' claim of these women's exploitation. See Dow, "Feminism, Miss America, and Media Mythology," 128-129. After the protest, however, the Miss America organization and the Miss Americas themselves have focused on the pageant more as a scholarship competition rather than a beauty competition. <http://www.missamerica.org/organization-info/corporate-info-overview.aspx> (accessed July 15, 2015). For example, Debra Barnes Snodgrass recalls that she participated not in a "beauty pageant" but in a "scholarship pageant." Greenfieldboyce, "Pageant Protest Sparked Bra-Burning." On the view on the pageant as a scholarship competition, watch *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver Show* in September 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oDPCmmZifE8> (accessed July 15, 2015).

available, in contrast to the protesters' desire to negate their roles as sex objects.²⁰ Bralessness was subsequently marketed by fashion industries. See-through clothing was created to enhance the natural look of breasts, in contrast to the women's liberation group's intent to reject the commercialization of women's bodies.²¹ There were also many people who thought that the feminists' protest against the beauty pageant was simply out of their personal jealousy of and hostility toward the Miss America contestants' beauty.²² Those who sympathized with the feminists evaluated the bra burning as a shortcoming for the protest because it became the sole focus of the media's spotlights. In the end it was used to trivialize and ridicule the women's movement.²³ The protest and the bra burning were denounced by both the feminists, who thought the image detracted from the overall cause of women's liberation, and the viewers, who were

²⁰ For the sexualizing effect of the bras, see Dow, "Feminism, Miss America, and Media Mythology," 130; and Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 160–61.

²¹ Sociologists analyze why the protest and the Women's Liberation Movement were associated with a bra burning in terms of a "breast fetish" in American society. They point out that by the "discarding of bras" the participants in the protest de-emphasized breasts as "objects of erotic awe, potency, and significance" which was invaluable for displaying attractiveness on female bodies. See Denton E. Morrison and Carlin Paige Holden, *The Burning Bra: The American Breast Fetish and Women's Liberation* (Michigan: Ann Brown Printing and Typing Service, 1970), 4-5, Kate Millett Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Duke University, Durham, NC. For the responses on the bra burning, see *Ibid.*, 26-28.

²² After the protest, the participants variously evaluated their actions. Carol Hanisch most regretfully states that most picketers attacked Miss America instead of the pageant. In contrast to her, Morgan indicates differently that the signs insisted "solidarity with the pageant contestants, while condemning the pageant itself." Carol Hanisch, "A Critique of the Miss America Protest," *Notes From the Second Year* (1970): 87; and Morgan, *Going Too Far*, 65.

²³ Shana Alexander in *Life* gave her full support for the protesters. Shana Alexander, "The Feminine Eye: Horray! Getting Back to Normal," *The Feminine Eye*, *Life*, September 20, 1968. However, readers had mixed reactions: some agreed with Alexander but others expressed more sympathy for the Miss America contestants. Feminine Eye, Letter to the editors, *Life*, October 11, 1968. For the media's trivialization and sexualization of the Women's Liberation through the tale of the bra burning, see Sheila Tobias, *Faces of Feminism: An Activist's Reflections on the Women's Movement* (Colorado and Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), 86; Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 160–61; and Beth Kreydatus, "Confronting the 'Bra-Burners': Teaching Radical Feminism with a Case Study," *The History Teacher* 41, no. 4 (2008): 495.

generally under the false impression that the protesters disavowed the beauty of the contestants, or were exposing their own sexual accessibility.²⁴

In addition to the sexual connotations of bra burning, the media also associated it with the armed resistance of antiwar activism. Many people thought of the protest against the beauty pageant and the bra burning as “both morally and politically threatening” to American values, and the act of burning seemed extremely militant.²⁵ Unlike scholar Patricia Bradley’s insistence that second-wave feminists did not copy the New Left’s antiwar protests, and that there was no “militancy” in second-wave feminism, the early actions of the feminists were similar to the actions of other movements.²⁶ The feminists crowned a live sheep as “Miss America,” just as the Yippies at the Democratic Convention in Chicago nominated a pig for presidency. Likewise, the idea of a burning seemed to have been influenced by the activism of the New Left. Some within the SDS promoted burnings and bombings as serious tactics of anti-war activism. The burning of flags and draft-cards often resulted in police attacks and landed many activists in prison. In July 1966, the idea of burning draft-cards as a group action was first mentioned, with several men burning their draft-cards that November, and “mass draft-card burning” became one of the main acts for antiwar protest by the SDS the following month.²⁷ In spring 1967, the SDS had promoted the “mass draft-card burning” that reached New

²⁴ Dow, “Feminism, Miss America, and Media Mythology,” 134.

²⁵ Morrison and Holden, *The Burning Bra*, 27-28.

²⁶ Bradley, *Mass Media and the Shaping of American Feminism*, 60.

²⁷ For the origin of the burning draft-cards by the SDS, see Sale, *SDS*, 312-313.

York City in April 1967. Draft card burning was at its peak during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, a week before the Miss America pageant.²⁸

In the late 1960s, feminist actions were also labeled by the media as consistent with the militancy associated with other protests occurring at the time. In late August of 1968, the mass media was especially full of news stories on violence inside and outside the country, from the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia, to the Black Panthers and the Chicago Democratic National Convention, which were illustrated with pictures of tear gas, arrests, bloody faces, and so on. The story of the bra burning became linked with the radical protest in Chicago in the media coverage. The media and reporters reminded people of the chaos and violence in the Democratic Convention with their reports of the bra burning during the feminists' demonstration in Atlantic City.

Lindsay Van Gelder, a reporter of the *New York Post* then in her early 20s, introduced the concept of the "bra-burning" in her coverage of the planning of the anti-Miss America protest, as she recollects:

I swear I remember plans to set a bonfire in the trash can—and that the only reason it didn't happen was that the Atlantic City police chief threatened to arrest any protesters who set a fire on the boardwalk without a special permit, which he wasn't about to give them... But "bra-burner," aside from being pleasingly alliterative, had a connotation that carried moral weight in 1968. At the height of the war, thousands of young men had set fire to their draft cards in public demonstrations. It was an act associated with dignity, bravery, and impeccable politics. To talk about bras being burned was at one and the same time to speak in a language that the guys on the city desk could understand (i.e., tits) and to speak in code to the radicals of our generation. And so the lead of my article in the *Post* went: "Lighting a match to a draft card or a flag has been a standard gambit of protest groups in recent years, but something new is due to go up in flames this Saturday. Would you believe a bra-burning?"... The

²⁸ Sale, *SDS*, 322-323.

headline above the story, however, was less ambiguous. It simply blared: BRA-BURNERS & MISS AMERICA.²⁹

Van Gelder—eager to write on social issues, rather than her primary task of reporting on “women’s issues” like cooking, marriage, and so on—wanted to make the connection of the new women’s movement to other social movements. Her interviewee, Robin Morgan, the key organizer of the pageant protest who was in charge of dealing with the press, also regarded women’s actions as being as serious and radical as anti-war actions like men burning their draft-cards. By using the term “bra burning,” Van Gelder recalls that she did not mean to ridicule the feminists’ action but rather wished to incorporate them into political actions “associated with dignity, bravery, and impeccable politics.”³⁰ It is ironic that in Van Gelder’s attempt to create hype for the protest that would make the Women’s Liberation Movement seem as important and significant as other social movements, she inadvertently created an image that would do just the opposite.

The feminist action was viewed in media reports through the context of the radicals’ armed resistance, like the burning of draft cards by the New Left males. Newspaper commentators, probably inspired by Van Gelder’s preview of the event, particularly concentrated on the image of bras going up in flames, which was something at once terrifying and foolish, and articulately commenced to construct the myth of the bra burners. Editorialist of the *New York Post* Harriet Van Horne, in her article titled “Female Firebrands,” denounced the use of fire involved in the protest and alleged that

²⁹ Lindsay Van Gelder, “How We Got Here: The Truth about Bra-Burners,” *Ms.* 3, no. 2 (September/October 1992): 80-81. For Gelder’s interview by Susan Brownmiller, see Brownmiller, *In Our Time*, 60.

³⁰ Gelder, “How We Got Here,” 80-81.

she was willing to accept any protests, “even in Chicago,” but felt “embarrassed by those sturdy lasses in their sensible shoes” who marched with “a bonfire in a Freedom Trash Can.”³¹ For Van Horne, the burning bras was a less acceptable form of protest than Chicago, because she thought of the feminist protest as coming from men’s mistreatment of those women that made them feel impossible to be “utterly feminine [and] desirable.”³² Van Horne thought of the protest as merely a display of unfeminine and unladylike actions. Three days later, Art Buchwald further fabricated the myth by writing that the picketers “set up ashcans...[and] publicly [burned] their brassieres.”³³ Buchwald even situated the burning event in Atlantic City into the context of the beaten female protesters in Chicago by the police, and insisted that the brutal attacks on the women in Chicago were reasonable inasmuch as the women wanted to look like men and consequently they were treated just like men by the police. In his view, similar to that of Van Horne, the female protestors in Chicago and the feminists in the pageant protest in Atlantic City were the same in their rejection of their femininity, and imitation of violent manhood.³⁴

The image of 1960s radical protests took, even more explicitly, possession of black women’s identities. On the same day as the Miss America pageant, a few blocks away at the Miss Black America pageant, 19-year-old Sandra Williams became the first Miss Black America in history, as previously mentioned.³⁵ The black beauty contest was

³¹ Harriet Van Horne, “Female Firebrands,” *New York Post*, September 9, 1968, Robin Morgan Papers.

³² Ibid.

³³ Art Buchwald, “The Bra Burners,” *New York Post*, September 12, 1968, Robin Morgan Papers.

³⁴ Buchwald, “The Bra Burners.”

³⁵ The Miss Black America pageant was created by J. Morris Anderson on August 17, 1968. Klemesrud, “Along With Miss America, There’s Now Miss Black America.”

a form of political statement against white racism and supremacy because the Miss America pageant had excluded black candidates from its inception. It was not until 1970—two years after the 1968 protest—that African American women were allowed to participate in the Miss America beauty pageant.³⁶ With the rising radicalism of the Civil Rights Movement and Black Nationalism, and the idea of the “new black woman,” African Americans debunked the stereotypes of white American beauty in the late 1960s. Unlike the white Miss Americas, Williams had become more political and aware of women’s rights through her experiences of racial discrimination. When Miss America Judith Ann Ford had a question about the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, she avoided answering: “That’s controversial,” she said...“I hate to talk about this. It’s so controversial.”³⁷ By wearing a natural hairdo and participating in the black beauty pageant, Williams showed pride in her black skin and body, and followed the popular slogan of Black Power, “Black is Beautiful,” which also reflected the nonviolent and virtuous mission of the pageant.³⁸ However, the news coverage of the Miss Black America pageant was placed next to news about the Black Panthers’ armed self-defense and battles with local police in such publications as *The New York Times*.³⁹ The newspaper may or may not have had a deliberate intention to associate the black beauty pageant with militant and violent Black Panther stories; however, the overlap of the Miss Black America pageant and the Black Panthers in the media created an association for the

³⁶ Kreydatus, “Confronting the “Bra-Burners.”

³⁷ Curtis, “Along With Miss America.”

³⁸ On the comparison between Miss America and Miss Black America, see Klemesrud, *ibid.*; and Judy Nichaelson, “Two Misses America,” *New York Post*, September 14, 1968.

³⁹ *The New York Times* issued on the same page “Bullet Evidence in Panther Trial: Court Told Slain Policemen Had Special Ammunition” by Wallace Turner and “Negro Girls Sought To Enter Contests For Miss America” by the editorial on August 15, 1968.

public of images of the militancy of black liberation movements of the late 1960s, inextricably linked with the natural Afro hairdo.

Contemporary feminists and scholars, especially participants in the protest, worked hard to correct the misconception of bra burning as a violent action; however, they never changed the public's perception. On the day following the pageant, Robin Morgan declared in an interview with *The New York Times* that her group did not want to encourage "another Chicago," but was creating "just a symbolic bra-burning."⁴⁰ Morgan constantly corrected the media's interpretation in her articles and her own books: "Bra-burning was a whole-cloth invention of the media."⁴¹ Carol Hanisch, who first proposed the idea of the protest against the Miss America pageant, has been publicly self-critical of their actions, and notes that the "girdle-burners" may have had more supporters among American women in general.⁴² Alix Kates Shulman, who purchased tickets to attend the Miss America pageant, commented that the idea of the Women's Liberation Movement

⁴⁰ Curtis, "Miss America Pageant Is Picketed by 100 Women." Echols credits Morgan with giving a hint to the media with the term "bra-burning." See Echols, *Daring*, 94. Despite criticism that Morgan appeared in the media too much, she was in fact in charge of "press release" along with Judith Duffet for the protest as they planned. "Projects," Robin Morgan Papers.

⁴¹ Morgan, "Women Disrupt the Miss America Pageant," *Going Too Far*, 65. This article was originally written for *Rat* in October 1968, and reprinted by New Left publisher *Liberation News Service*. See also Robin Morgan, ed., "No More Miss America!" *Sisterhood is Powerful*, 521n. Another key organizer of the protest Kathie Sarachild also declares the media's "bra-burning invention." Kathie Sarachild, "The Power of History," in *Feminist Revolution: An Abridged Edition with Additional Writings*, ed., Redstockings (New York: Random House, 1978), 30.

⁴² Carol Hanisch assesses the protest as a failure, in terms of their goal to enlighten women to their own oppression and to found a sisterhood with other not-yet-feminist women. For her self-criticism on the protest, see Hanisch, "A Critique of the Miss America Protest." Also see Carol Hanisch, interview by Fran Luck, *Joy of Resistance*, WBAI, July 2003, <http://carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/MissACritique.html> (accessed July 15, 2015). On the website, you can also find her original critique of the Miss America pageant protest under "What Can Be Learned." In an interview for the 40th anniversary of the protest in 2008, host of the NPR radio program, *Echoes of 1968*, Steve Inskeep clarifies that the media's label of feminists as bra burners was wrong. NPR's Nell Greenfieldboyce interviewed three feminists who participated in the protest, Alix Kates Shulman, Carol Hanisch, and Kathie Sarachild, and Miss America Debra Barnes Snodgrass. Greenfieldboyce, "Pageant Protest Sparked Bra-Burning."

was so “unthinkable” in the late 1960s, that it was easy for people to misunderstand feminists as “crazy bra burners.”⁴³ Despite the clarification by many participants and original reporter Van Gelder about the media’s fabrication of the bra-burners myth, feminist history after the pageant in 1968 has been particularly “haunted” by the negative image of the “bra-burners,” as scholar Bonnie J. Dow also indicates.⁴⁴ Although scholars and feminists appreciate the protest against the pageant as the outburst of second-wave feminist activism, and as a way to facilitate the publicity of the Women’s Liberation Movement for the public, at the same time, they reject the myth because of the inevitable negative images it cast on the women’s movements. The mass media’s link of the feminists’ spectacular actions to other leftist, male-dominant armed resistant activism like draft-card burning led future feminist movements to be wary of associating themselves with masculine and violent actions.

Although many feminists and scholars focus on demythologizing the image of bra burning, they seem to ignore the fact that the group originally planned to include a burning of sorts as part of their protest. On a leaflet advertising the demonstration, the organizers asked all participants to bring old bras, girdles, high-heeled shoes, women’s magazines, curlers, and so forth—items they called “instruments of female torture”—without any reference to burning them.⁴⁵ However, “bonfire” had been typed and crossed out on another note under the title “Atlantic City,” indicating that there may have been a

⁴³ Alix Kates Shulman, “Sex and Power: Sexual Bases of Radical Feminism,” *Signs* 5, no. 4 (1980): 595; and Echols, *Daring*, 94.

⁴⁴ Dow, “Feminism, Miss America, and Media Mythology,” 130.

⁴⁵ On a leaflet advertising the demonstration all over the country, “Women’s Liberation: No More Miss America!” Robin Morgan Papers.

change to the original plan.⁴⁶ Instead of a bonfire, they put a ‘Freedom Trash Can’ out on the boardwalk the day of the pageant in which to simply discard, rather than burn, the “instruments” (see illustration 24).

Morgan explained that they changed the plan in order to comply with Atlantic City ordinances. In the correspondence between Robin Morgan and Atlantic City mayor Richard S. Jackson, the NYRW women promised to conduct a law-abiding demonstration, continuously repeating the word “orderly,” and changing their original idea from burning to discarding.⁴⁷ The media’s cameras recorded most of their actions, especially those of a woman, who was shaking her bra and throwing it into the can, which became the most notorious action of the pageant protest. But, as Echols clearly indicates, the protest organizer’s original plan was to burn “instruments of female torture.” Therefore, feminists “who sanctimoniously disavowed the bra-burning as a media fabrication were either misinformed or disingenuous,” states Echols.⁴⁸ Even though “burning bras” was not solely the media’s invention, the feminists felt that they needed to stress the fact that no burning actually happened during the protest in 1968 in order to

⁴⁶ “Atlantic City,” Robin Morgan Papers.

⁴⁷ On August 29, 1968, a week before the pageant, Morgan sent a letter to mayor Jackson requesting permit for their demonstration, which was necessary to avoid trouble with the city police. The protesters in Chicago were unable to get a permit for their demonstration, which meant that all their actions were regarded as illegal, and they were treated terribly by the police. In her letter, which was cosigned by Judith Duffett, another member of the NYRW, Morgan was very careful to abide by the law and receive authorization from the city before the demonstration. A week later on September 4th, Jackson gave her the permit under the condition that the demonstration should be “orderly” in a “lawful and peaceful manner,” reiterating Morgan’s letter. Robin Morgan to Atlantic City Mayor Richard Jackson, August 29, 1968, Robin Morgan Papers; and Richard S. Jackson to Robin Morgan, September 4, 1968, Robin Morgan Papers.

⁴⁸ Echols, *Daring*, 94.

construct a positive image for their movement, and to correct the historical error of the myth.⁴⁹

Regardless of the feminist's original intentions or what actually took place during the 1968 pageant protest, the issue of the bra burning and these dialogues between the feminists and the media deeply influenced the evolution of the American Women's Liberation Movement. The creation of the myth of the bra-burners was representative of the image of armed resistance associated with "burning" things, and reminiscent of intimidating actions like burning draft-cards and bombings.⁵⁰ The feminist protesters did not want to be associated with the masculine-style actions that they all observed from the Chicago demonstration and throughout the late 1960s. Therefore, second-wave feminism was not simply haunted by the images of bra-burners, but also by the militancy of the era that the bra burning myth both alludes to and echoes.

Violence in the Women's Liberation Movement

From its inception to the Sixties era, the burgeoning feminist movement had to engage with the discourse of violence. Historically, American feminists had generally concurred with the concept of women's nature as peaceful and women as victims of men's violence against women, and with the concept of men as the ones who fight in wars and are involved in political armed struggle. Political women involved in such

⁴⁹ The group's decision for which actions to carry out during the demonstration did not always coincide with each personal action, as Carol Hanisch criticized after the event. Hanisch, "A Critique," 86-88, Women's History Collection from the International Women's History Archives, Berkeley, CA, Microfilm. It is reprinted in *Dear Sisters*, 185-187. Judith Duffett, "WLM Vs. Miss America: Atlantic City Is a Town with Class They Raise Your Morals While They Judge Your Ass," *Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement* (October 1968).

⁵⁰ Due to the issue of burning bras in 1968, even though it never happened, the court in Atlantic City prohibited beforehand similar actions for the Miss America pageant in 1969. Joseph Modzelewski, "Court Forbids Bra Burning At Miss America Pageant," *Daily News* (September 5, 1969), 4, Robin Morgan Papers.

violent incidents as assassinations and bombings were considered exceptional during the first half of the 20th century. However, feminists in the late 1960s earnestly began to reconsider the topic of armed resistance. Even though second-wave feminists generally ignored anarchist Emma Goldman's belief in armed self-defense, as well as her belief in inevitable revolutionary violence, radical feminist Alix Kates Shulman notes Goldman's reemergence in radical feminism: "EG [Emma Goldman] is now clearly one of the heroes of the women's movement, enshrined as a militant feminist foremother."⁵¹

More notoriously, when radical feminist Valerie Solanas attempted to assassinate pop artist Andy Warhol in his studio in New York City on June 3, 1968, she became a "cause célèbre" for women's liberation among some radical feminists.⁵² Solanas published the *SCUM (Society for Cutting up Men) Manifesto* in 1967, in which she proclaimed man's biological inferiority rather than male superiority.⁵³ She declared violent solutions to liberate women from patriarchal society by forming a symbolic SCUM army "to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and destroy the male sex."⁵⁴ As an extremely radical and revolutionary idea, Solanas explained that not the female but the male gene is

⁵¹ Alix Kate Shulman, "Dancing in the Revolution: Emma Goldman's Feminism," in *Feminist Interpretations of Emma Goldman*, eds., Penny A. Weiss and Loretta Kensinger (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 242.

⁵² Echols, *Daring*, 105; and Dana Heller, "Shooting Solanas: Radical Feminist History and the Technology of Failure," in *Feminist Time against Nation Time: Gender, Politics, and the Nation-State in an Age of Permanent War*, eds., Victoria Hesford and Lisa Diedrich (London and New York: Lexington Books, 2010), 160.

⁵³ Heller, "Shooting Solanas," 151-168; Breanne Fahs, "The Radical Possibilities of Valerie Solanas," *Feminist Studies* 34, no. 3 (2008): 591-617; James M. Harding, "The Simplest Surrealist Act: Valerie Solanas and the (Re)Assertion of Avantgarde Priorities," *TDR* 45, no. 4 (2001): 142-162; and Amanda Third, "Shooting from the Hip': Valerie Solanas, Scum and the Apocalyptic Politics of Radical Feminism," *Hecate* 32, no. 2 (2006): 104-132.

⁵⁴ Valeria Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto* (New York: Verso, 2004), 35.

“incomplete” and “deficient.”⁵⁵ Solanas’s understanding of the relationship between the two sexes shocked many feminists, but at the same time provided alternative ways through which to analyze women’s oppression and advocate liberation, as well as to overcome essentialist concepts of femininity. Solanas’s act, however, also had a negative influence on some radical feminist ideas on armed resistance. Her shooting, like the bra burning, may have made radical feminists wary of embracing violence other than for self-defense.⁵⁶ Valerie Solanas’s ideas and actions also inspired radical feminists. Black radical feminist and early member of the NOW Flo Kennedy acclaimed Solanas as the “most important spokeswomen of the feminist movement” and Ti-Grace Atkinson also supported Solanas as the “first outstanding champion of women’s rights.”⁵⁷ The Boston-based feminist group, Cell 16, formed by Roxanne Dunbar, was also influenced by Solanas and they published the feminist journal *No More Fun and Games*.⁵⁸

The participation of women in clandestine groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s, like the BPP and its extremist faction the BLA, and WU, raised serious questions about what women’s liberation meant, dividing feminists over “the question of arms and violence.”⁵⁹ The violent rhetoric and activism of the Weatherwomen were in direct

⁵⁵ Solanas, *SCUM*, 35.

⁵⁶ Hilary E. Davis, “Guerrilla Theory and the Origins of the Second Wave: FBI and Cia Harassment of Second-Wave Radical Feminists in the 1960s and 1970s,” in *Ideas under Fire: Historical Studies of Philosophy and Science in Adversity*, ed., Louis Groarke Jonathan Lavery, and William Sweet (Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013).

⁵⁷ Avital Ronell, introduction to *SCUM Manifesto* (New York: Verso, 2004), 10.

⁵⁸ The members of Cell 16 were Dana Densmore, Jeanne Lafferty, Lisa Leghorn, Abby Rockefeller, Betsy Warrior, and Jayne West. Echols, *Daring*, 158. For Dunbar’s “warfare (guerrilla style),” see Echols, *Daring*, 159. Roxanne Dunbar, “Female Liberation as the Basis for Social Revolution” (Boston: Southern Student Organizing Committee/New England Free Press, 1974).

⁵⁹ Roxanne Dunbar, “Women, War, and Revolution,” *Women's Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 3/4 (1995): 183-184.

conflict with the nonviolent and pacifistic rhetoric of the movements for women's liberation, particularly radical feminism. Radical women had worked together for anti-racism and anti-war during the 1960s, and together experienced indisputable sexism within male-controlled movements; however, Weatherwomen, like many militant women, kept their loyalty to anti-racist and anti-imperialist movements, unlike the feminists who inevitably separated from the male-dominated movements in the late 1960s.⁶⁰ Feminists, who were branded by the image of burning bras by the media's desire to vilify women's political activism, abhorred any association of a movement for women's liberation with destructive events, which were perceived as misguided and male-identified.⁶¹ For the separatist feminists, the Women's Liberation Movement was a different style of activism: distinctly for women—particularly American women—and purposefully pacifistic, as sociologist Gilda Zwerman observed.⁶²

While they were generally against the use of aggressive and violent actions to intimidate the state, because women were frequently victims of physical violence, such as rape and battery, feminists concluded that self-defense was a necessary tactic. Therefore, they agreed with and supported the idea of training in self-defense methods without arms, like karate and taekwondo. The topic of defensive violence as a necessary tactic for women's liberation was always controversial and contradictory, similar to the debates between nonviolence and violence in the Civil Rights Movement.

⁶⁰ For the emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement, see Evans, *Personal*; Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*; Rosen, *The World Split Open*; and Davis, *Moving the Mountain*.

⁶¹ Robin Morgan, "Goodbye to All That," in *Going Too Far*.

⁶² Zwerman, "Mothering on the Lam," 35-36.

Self-defense tactics were advocated by several feminists, such as Rebecca Moon, Leslie Tanner and Susan Pascale, who outlined their position in their essay “Karate as Self Defense for Women.”⁶³ Although historians have cited Robin Morgan as representative of pacifistic feminists who refused violent political actions for women’s liberation and bitterly condemned women in armed resistance, she did support women’s armed self-defensive violence in the early 1970s.⁶⁴ In a paper titled “On Violence and Feminist Basic Training” presented in 1971, Morgan asserted that women “need to use violence” as an “extended self-defense” in the women’s revolution.⁶⁵ In her writings about violence by women, Morgan agreed with women’s use of violence as self-defense, yet disagreed with women’s armed resistance in male-dominated political activism. In September 1970, the Revolutionary People’s Constitutional Convention, organized by the Black Panthers and the women’s and gay liberation movements gathered in Philadelphia to rewrite the U.S. Constitution as well. During the convention, for which 6,000 people were registered, the women’s group advocated women’s self-defense and their “right to bear arms.”⁶⁶ They demanded women to be “fully trained and educated in the art of self-defense and the defense of the people’s nation...our duty to defend all oppressed peoples.”⁶⁷ In the same way that the BPP promoted armed self-defense to protect

⁶³ Lindsey Churchill, “Exploring Feminism’s Complex Relationship with Political Violence: An Analysis of the Weathermen, Radical Feminism and the New Left,” *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal* 16 (2007): 28-43; and Dunbar, “Women, war, and revolution,” 184.

⁶⁴ Echols, *Daring*, 264.

⁶⁵ Robin Morgan, “On Violence and Feminist Basic Training,” *Going Too Far*, 131-140. The paper was originally presented at the Radical Feminist Conference in Detroit in 1971.

⁶⁶ “Demands of the Workshop on Self-Determination of Women,” under Revolutionary People’s Constitutional Convention, *off our backs*, September 30, 1970, 4.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

themselves from racist violence, the feminists felt the need to advocate self-defense against violence against women.

Engaged in the dialogue on women's militant actions and tactics of self-defense, radical feminists were aware of the necessity of self-defense for women's liberation, yet they loathed what they perceived to be the masculine style of women who participated in armed resistance. As Alice Echols clarifies, feminists disapproved of the "machismo"—masculine and male-identified style, which coexisted with leftist movement militancy.⁶⁸ Weatherwomen's masculine style of armed resistance received the harshest criticism from feminists, like the women of Bread and Roses, and New York radical feminist Robin Morgan—the main organizer of the 1968 anti-Miss America Pageant protest.⁶⁹ In her famous and influential writing, "Goodbye to All That," published in 1970 in the alternative newspaper *Rat*, Morgan openly criticized Weatherwomen for embracing "the machismo style and the gratuitous violence" as merely a ploy for "male approval."⁷⁰ In Victoria Hesford's analysis, Morgan's expression of "anger" in the writing was primarily directed at New Left men, who generally objectified women, belittled feminists and broke women's hearts, and exhibited straightforward 'heterosexist' attitudes, rhetoric, and actions.⁷¹ Because Morgan explicitly felt women should liberate themselves from the men in the movements in order to escape the inevitably 'heterosexist' and hetero-

⁶⁸ Echols, *Daring*, 132.

⁶⁹ Jacobs, *Weatherman*, 305-306; and Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 135-136.

⁷⁰ Robin Morgan, "Goodbye to All That," in *Dear Sisters: Dispatches from the Women's Liberation*, eds., Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 53-54; and Hesford, *Feeling Women's Liberation*, 96. For the account of Morgan on violence, also see Gilda Zwerman, "Mothering on the Lam: Politics, Gender Fantasies and Maternal Thinking in Women Associated with Armed, Clandestine Organizations in the United States," *Feminist Review* 47 (Summer 1994): 34-35.

⁷¹ Hesford, *Feeling Women's Liberation*, 96-97.

patriarchal atmosphere; she viewed women who worked with men, like the Weatherwomen, as more or less ‘sleeping with the enemy.’ In Morgan’s understanding of women’s liberation, militant women like “Weather Sisters,” as she called them, were only appreciated in their relation to men and not fully comprehended as individuals in their own right, as most radical feminists tried to identify themselves. Morgan further insisted that militant women who participated in male-dominated groups that engaged in political violence were ‘demon lovers,’ dancing themselves “toward the false liberation of death.”⁷² In her anti-violent critique of the Weatherman, militant women like the Weatherwomen were misguided and manipulated victims of sexist and male-supremacist leftist men.⁷³ This feminist victimization of women in the contemporary social movements constructed the images and stereotypes of leftist women, especially Weatherwomen, as victims of men. Morgan’s critique of the Weatherwomen, not considering them as autonomous activists, but making them passive and exploited by the Weathermen, made it difficult for both the women in the feminist organizations and those in the WU to reconcile with and understand each other, especially amidst the fragmentation of all the social movements in the late 1960s.

Another feminist who publicly denounced violence by the Weatherwomen was Susan Brownmiller, a Civil Rights activist and member of the NYRW and New York Radical Feminists (NYRF). In April 1971, Brownmiller wrote a review for *The New York Times* of a book on Diana Oughton, the Weatherwoman who had been found dead in the

⁷² Robin Morgan, *The Demon Lover: The Roots of Terrorism* (New York: W.W.Norton, 1989), 214.

⁷³ Morgan, *The Demon Lover*, 214.

townhouse explosion.⁷⁴ In the bitter critique, Brownmiller denounces the Weatherpeople as “sons and daughters of affluence,” who desired to be “heroes,” which is an “arrogant wish born [of] privilege.”⁷⁵ She pays special attention to Oughton’s transition to “armed struggle,” after her appearance of wearing a “helmet, heavy boots and leather jacket” at the Chicago Democratic National Convention.⁷⁶ Brownmiller wrote another review of a book on Weatherwoman Kathy Boudin, who was involved in the Brinks robbery in 1981. In the review, she criticizes the Weatherwomen’s violent tendencies and argues that they totally disregarded women’s liberation. Brownmiller, like most feminists, tends to put women’s armed resistance in the same category as men’s aggressive power over women in instances like rape, harassment, and battery.⁷⁷

Even though most feminist groups opposed the increase in the violent and hyper-masculine patterns of movements, there were a few feminists who seriously regarded armed struggle as necessary for a revolution. One was Ti-Grace Atkinson. Radical feminist Ti-Grace Atkinson disagreed with Brownmiller’s opinion on violence and feminism by calling her out for her “feminist privilege,” recalling Brownmiller’s

⁷⁴ For the Townhouse explosion, see Chapter on the Weatherman. Susan Brownmiller, review of *Diana: The Making of a Terrorist*, by Thomas Power, *The New York Times*, April 11, 1971.

⁷⁵ Brownmiller, *ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Susan Brownmiller, “Radical Royalty,” *The Women's Review of Books* 21, no. 2 (November 2003): 9. To some degree, Brownmiller put a contradictory point on the two reviews of the books on the Weatherwomen. She refers to Weatherwomen’s violent actions as their own style of women’s liberation in the review from 1971 and to missing it at all in the review of 2003. Common to both reviews, however, is her dismissal of violence by the political women in general, and her consideration of those movements that promote it as anti-feminist movements. Brownmiller seems to have been caught in the issue of violence against women, especially rape, as shown in her fascinating book *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*, published in 1975. However, it’s significant to note Angela Davis’s criticism of Brownmiller’s book in terms on black men’s sexual violence. Davis considers Brownmiller’s analysis of Emmett Till as black youth sexist attitude on white woman Carolyn Bryant *is* a racist idea. See Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race and Class*, 178-179.

comment on the Weatherman.”⁷⁸ A former president of the New York branch of the NOW, Atkinson left the NOW to found the October 17th Movement in 1968, which was formerly The Feminists. She was also a member of the Daughter of Bilitis (DOB), and an advocate for “political lesbianism.”

Those radical feminists, like Atkinson and Solanas, did not limit their ideas of changing society for women’s liberation to solely “feminine” activities, but thought far more fundamentally to break the gendered stereotypes of women’s activism, adopting armed resistance as necessary and inevitable. Atkinson asserted that violence was a “tactic of the Women’s Movement” in a paper she presented for a panel on “Violence in the Women’s Movement” in New York City on August 4, 1971. At that time, Atkinson was involved in the Italian-American Civil Rights League, founded by mafia leader Joseph Colombo who was shot on June 8, 1971.⁷⁹ For Atkinson, “Sister Joseph Colombo”—as she referred to him, “to make him an honorary sister”—was a revolutionary who dedicated himself to a working-class movement, even though he was a former criminal, like Eldridge Cleaver and Malcolm X.⁸⁰ The Weatherman was the “one leftist group Atkinson singled out for praise in her speech,” as Alice Echols states.⁸¹ However, Atkinson’s audience, mostly feminists, was disgusted by her talk, which started with the picture of Colombo’s wounded face. Atkinson’s urge for armed resistance, and her support for the masculine style of activism did not receive feminist espousal in

⁷⁸ Ti-Grace Atkinson, “On ‘Violence in the Women's Movement,’” Kate Millett Papers. This paper is published in *Amazon Odyssey* (New York: Links Books, 1974), 199-211.

⁷⁹ Echols, *Daring*, 184. Colombo survived the assassination attempt and died in 1978.

⁸⁰ Jurate Kazickas, “For Stronger Sisterhood: Radical Feminist Sought Pointers From the Mafia,” *The Lweiston Daily Sun*, August 22, 1974; and Ti-Grace Atkinson, “Self-Deception,” *Amazon Odyssey*, 213-221.

⁸¹ Echols, *Daring*, 185.

general; however, some radical feminists, like Kate Millett, thought of Atkinson as “brilliant” for asking feminists the hard question: is the mafia any less human than women?⁸² Nonetheless, Atkinson did not withdraw her ideas about armed resistance for women’s liberation, despite the feminists’ howls of derision. In an interview in 1974, she developed her belief that the women’s movement needed to learn from the Mafia’s idea of brotherhood and treating the members as a “family” in order to make the sisterhood stronger.⁸³ Atkinson supported revolutionaries like the Black Panthers and the Weatherman, “excoriating women's liberationists for failing to ‘pick up the gun,’” says Echols.⁸⁴

FBI’s Infiltration into the Women’s Liberation Movement

While all these debates were going on within, the women’s movement continued to be under state surveillance. Feminists might dispute the fine points of violence, separatism, and other forms of revolutionary resistance, but in the eyes of the FBI, the whole movement was complicit in domestic subversion. Along with the Black Panther Party and the Weather Underground, radical feminists were also objects of state surveillance and manipulation.

As the Church Committee revealed in 1976, the FBI, along with the CIA, hired women informers to watch, report on, and disrupt feminist practices, similar to their

⁸² On August 6, after her speech, Atkinson wrote a statement “Self-Deception,” published in *Amazon Odyssey*. About the speech, see Kate Millett, *Flying* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 510.

⁸³ Kazickas, “For Stronger Sisterhood.”

⁸⁴ Echols, *Daring*, 185.

infiltration of the BPP and WU.⁸⁵ Founding editor of *Ms.* magazine Letty Cottin Pogrebin analyzed the FBI's file on the Women's Liberation Movement and described its point of view as twofold: the FBI considered the movement dangerous and threatening to American values and the status quo, but it found the women's movement not so violent in itself but useful for locating female fugitives and for eroding other revolutionary movements. The conflicts both within the feminist groups, and between feminists and leftist women, provided a new tactic for the governmental agencies through which to approach fugitives.

J. Edgar Hoover believed that the women's liberation groups were dangerous to the nation for several reasons. First, the FBI considered the women's liberation a catalyst for a "real revolution."⁸⁶ Second, the feminist questioning of issues concerning women and their lifestyles, such as women's centers providing abortion clinics, all seemed to be eroding the prevailing moral value of the country in the bureau's point of view. For the FBI, the feminists' attack on women's roles and femininity was an "attack on the American way of life."⁸⁷ Hoover also linked the threat to American values to un-American and communist ideologies, regardless of the reality of the matter. For instance, Hoover targeted women who were involved in antiwar movements in particular because mothers' objections to war seemed the most influential on sons and soldiers during the

⁸⁵ Leon Friedman, "How To Get Your File," *Ms.*, June 1977, 42. For a short history of the FBI's activities on the "domestic subversives," see Roberta Salper, "U.S. Government Surveillance and the Women's Liberation Movement, 1968-1973: A Case Study," *Feminist Studies* 34, no. 3 (2008): 435. The CIA also infiltrated into the women's movement according to the Rockefeller Commission Report. For the Rockefeller Commission Report, http://www.aarclibrary.org/publib/contents/church/contents_church_reports_rockcomm.htm (accessed March 28, 2013). See Janis Kelly, "War Games," 1.

⁸⁶ Pogrebin, "The FBI Was Watching You," 41-42.

⁸⁷ Pogrebin, 43.

Vietnam War era.⁸⁸ Finally, the bureau's biggest fear involved the feminists' association with the black and antiwar movements, especially "subversive" groups, like the BPP and WU, that they believed would incorporate the women's movement to "attract converts and advance their revolutionary aims." As Hoover stated on May 7, 1970: "Interwoven with WLM [Women's Liberation Movement] goals for equal rights for women is the advocacy for militancy and violence in achieving those goals. The WLM has also demonstrated its readiness to support or accept support from other extremist or revolutionary type organizations."⁸⁹ The bureau was afraid of feminists merging into other movements. The FBI particularly targeted the bimonthly magazine *Off Our Backs*—founded in by a women's liberationist group based in Washington D.C., which included Marilyn Webb—as "armed and dangerous—extreme" like their definition of many radical women like Angela Davis and Bernardine Dohrn.⁹⁰

On the other hand, the FBI also thought of the women's movement as a tool for chasing fugitives and diminishing other revolutionary movements.⁹¹ The bureau suspected that female fugitives, such as Susan Saxe and Katherine Power, found shelter within women's groups, explicitly in lesbian communities. The FBI's main target was, of course, the Weatherwomen, who were implicated in bombings and other violent acts, and women who were on the FBI's Most Wanted List, such as Jane Alpert. After Alpert's

⁸⁸ Ruth Rosen, "When Women Spied on Women: The FBI Paid Dozens of Informants to Infiltrate the Feminist Movement," *The Nation* (September 4, 2000): 18.

⁸⁹ Pogrebin, 42. In FBI's conspiracy theory of "Exploitation of Women's Movement by Socialist Workers Party in April 1972, the Socialist Workers Party used and manipulated the Women's Liberation Movement to advocate their propaganda. Pogrebin, 43-44.

⁹⁰ For the FBI's infiltration into the magazine and Marilyn Webb's memory about it, see Rosen, "When Women Spied on Women," 18.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

letter to Weatherwomen was released, the FBI assumed that women underground melted into feminist and lesbian groups.⁹²

However, while the bureau inspected the fugitives' whereabouts, they also believed that the feminist movement was a "wedge that would splinter the antiwar movement" as historian Ruth Rosen states.⁹³ A memorandum by the San Francisco office reported on August 11, 1969: "The Women's Liberation Movement may be considered as subversive to the New Left and revolutionary movements as they have proven to be a divisive and factionalizing factor...It could well be recommended as a counter-intelligence movement to weaken the revolutionary movement."⁹⁴ In this memo the FBI had a sense that the Women's Liberation Movement was different from other movements in its organization, leadership, and so on. Letty Cottin Pogrebin thought that the FBI's view of the women's movement was similar to the "complaints of the male left."⁹⁵ For her, both the FBI and male left saw the women's movement as weakening and fragmenting more serious movements by its separatism and condemnation of male dominance.

Even though the FBI considered the women's movements anti-revolutionary as well as usable to collapse revolutionary movements, it continued to spy on them to prove that the Women's Liberation Movement was as much a threat to the country as other revolutionary movements. Notwithstanding, the FBI did not have absolute evidence of *how* the women's movement was dangerous and threatening. In a report, the bureau was

⁹² See Jane Alpert, "Jane Alpert on Feminism."

⁹³ Rosen, "When Women Spied on Women."

⁹⁴ Pogrebin, 38; and Kempster, 8.

⁹⁵ Pogrebin, 38.

not sure of the militancy of the women's movement, but was obsessed with its "mission...to discover violence in the women's movement" despite the reports of feminist demonstrations as "orderly," without any criminal act like an injury, incident, fire or damage to property and arrests.⁹⁶ The FBI's New York office further reported in 1969: "According to the informant, women at the meeting on DELETED [19] 69 state they are not revolutionaries and would not help anyone in a revolution until the oppression of women was solved first and completely."⁹⁷ According to Ruth Rosen, the FBI agents and informers did not have a system of how to infiltrate women's movements because the women's movement had "no leaders, dues or organizations," so that agents struggled with identifying each group.⁹⁸ Women's movements, in general, were too new to grasp who the feminists were and what their ideas and styles of actions for the majority of male agents who should give female informants the distinct direction to spy on. In this report, the FBI's definition of the "domestic subversive" was blurry, yet it continued to view the women's liberation as a revolutionary movement for its own expedient purposes. The lack of specificity of a target allowed the FBI to accuse whoever they considered to be subversives.

Most informants and local offices did not find their infiltration into the women's movement justifiable, and many suggested its discontinuation. In late 1969, several field offices—San Francisco and Chicago in particular—requested Hoover's permission to close the case to investigate the Women's Liberation Movement. However, he rejected it and responded to them:

⁹⁶ Pogrein, 38-39.

⁹⁷ Rosen, "When Women Spied on Women."

⁹⁸ Rosen, "When Women Spied on Women."

“...it is absolutely essential that we conduct sufficient investigation to clearly establish subversive ramifications of the WLM and to determine the *potential for violence* presented by the various groups connected with this movement as well as *any possible threat* they may represent to the internal security of the United States.”⁹⁹ Hoover clearly looked for the possibility of a threat and potential violence by women in feminist groups despite the lack of evidence of armed actions.

No matter how little evidence the infiltrators found regarding the women’s movement’s involvement in violent acts or association with communists, Hoover kept seeking the connection to armed resistance and communism. Women who were spied on by the FBI also discovered how its infiltration was arbitrary in terms of determining if a feminist should be considered dangerous to the country’s security. Roberta Salper, who became the first full-time faculty member in the first Women’s Studies Program in the country at San Diego State in 1970, claims the bureau was unclear in its method and procedure by which to inspect feminists who were “subversive.”¹⁰⁰ In her article, the FBI, which Salper called a “surveillance machine,” did not identify her activities in the Women’s Liberation Movement with socialism while she was in Pittsburgh, although they started to consider her a “security risk” only because she participated in the New University Conference and visited Cuba in late 1969 and early 1970.¹⁰¹ However, after leaving Pittsburgh to work in San Diego, she publicized her identity as a feminist and declared her belief that socialism would make women’s liberation possible, which

⁹⁹ Emphasis added. Pogrebin, 38-39; and Kempster, *ibid*.

¹⁰⁰ Salper, “U.S. Government Surveillance,” 443.

¹⁰¹ The New University Conference was a “post-student progressive organization” formed in Chicago in spring 1968 and had the Women’s Caucus devised by Naomi Weisstein and Marlene Dixon.

resulted in the FBI's verification of her as a "domestic subversive."¹⁰² In her file, the criteria for those considered to be subversives does not seem very coherent: anyone related to socialism, communism, or communist countries seemed dangerous to the FBI. In Salper's understanding, it seemed the FBI did not consider the women's movement as a whole to be subversive, but rather used the group to track down individuals with ties to revolutionary activities.¹⁰³ While the FBI, in the case studies by Pogrebin and Salper, conveniently defined women's liberationists as either revolutionaries or anti-revolutionaries in relation to traditional revolutionary movements like communism, and for its own purpose to capture activists in the movements, feminists experimented with their ways of constructing women's political subjectivity that was different from and alternative to the traditional revolution of violent insurrection, masculine and heterosexist.

Feminist Fugitives

Feminists in general, especially radical feminists like Morgan, were reluctant to engage in masculine activism and kept their distance from armed resistance for women's liberation, yet there were a few women who engaged in underground and violent actions, like robberies and bombings. Those women further evoked feminist debates on the relation of women to resistant violence, and at the same time challenged the very idea of women's nature as pacifistic. The conflicts and debates between radical feminists and clandestine women surfaced with the very question of sisterhood in the early 1970s. Jane

¹⁰² Salper, "U.S. Government Surveillance," 444.

¹⁰³ The FBI files on the Women's Liberation Movement provide demographical records on feminists who were hardly included in feminist history because of their organizational nature as leaderless, unformulated, and so on, and presents visible documents on how the bureau considered the Women's Movement to be different from the other movements in the Sixties. Salper, 452n-453n,

Alpert was a former armed underground activist who was involved in bombings, and ultimately converted to radical feminism in 1973. Alpert became one of the “first radical fugitives” who was charged for planting dynamite in National Guard trucks and surrendered to the FBI after four and a half years of being underground, shocked other feminists by her collaboration with the State.¹⁰⁴ U.S. Attorney Paul Curren announced that Alpert “cooperated fully” with the government, as indicated by the subsequent arrests following her surrender of her comrades Cameron Bishop, Pat Swinton, and Susan Saxe.¹⁰⁵

Jane Alpert’s “Mother Rights: A New Feminist Theory” appeared in *Ms.* magazine in August 1973, and was attached to her open letter to the women in the Weather Underground, titled “To the Sisters in the Weather Underground.”¹⁰⁶ The letter ignited new debates on women in violent activism. Alpert supported the assumption that women’s armed resistance was the result of being brainwashed and sexually abused by men.¹⁰⁷ Greatly influenced by Robin Morgan and her writing “Goodbye to All That,” which also condemned Weatherwomen, Alpert signaled the increased cultural feminist tendency, as Alice Echols asserts, which would become the dominant women’s movement within a couple of years.¹⁰⁸ According to Echols, cultural feminism

¹⁰⁴ Echols, 257.

¹⁰⁵ Janis Kelly, “War Games,” *off our backs*, May 31, 1975, 1.

¹⁰⁶ Echols, *Daring*, 199; and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *Outlaw Woman: A Memoir of the War Years, 1960-1975*, Revised ed., (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 367. For the earliest cultural feminist document “The Fourth World Manifesto,” see *Daring*, 245-247.

¹⁰⁷ Alpert especially pointed out leader Mark Rudd as sexist. See Jane Alpert, *Growing Up Underground* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1981), 329-330. For Mark Rudd’s response to her letter and his complain about Weatherwomen’s lack of defense for Rudd in his opinion, see Rudd, *Underground*, 266-267.

¹⁰⁸ Jane Alpert, “Jane Alpert on Feminism,” *Off Our Backs* 3, no. 9 (1973); and Morgan, *Going Too Far*, 222-223; and Echols, *Daring*, 243.

emphasized “female counterculture and its essentialist arguments about female sexuality.”¹⁰⁹ In this view, cultural feminists’ stance on women was singular and unified so that the rise of cultural feminism further strengthened the feminist tendency to reject violent actions as certainly masculine and not effective for women’s liberation.¹¹⁰ Both Morgan and Alpert represented and promoted a separatist, anti-left-men movement, because they thought of men as the enemy and wanted to focus instead on the assets and strengths of women from a woman-centric viewpoint. They argued that the Weatherwomen’s masculinity or gender transgression went against women’s inherently anti-violent nature in the violation of an accepted gender binary.

After her letter “Mother Rights” to mark her conversion to radical-cultural feminism, Alpert’s cooperation with the government troubled many leftists and feminists who were still underground. The Weatherwomen were disappointed by her collaboration. Although about a hundred women, including Weatherwomen, supported and worked for a petition to set Alpert free, they also thought of Alpert as an informant.¹¹¹ Ti-Grace Atkinson publicly condemned Alpert for her open letter to the Weatherwomen, her public denunciation of the Left’s sexism, and her collaboration with the FBI.¹¹²

In contrast to Alpert’s betrayal of the WU, there were a few feminists who supported and worked with the Weatherwomen. Susan Edith Saxe and Katherine Ann Power, former members of the SDS, were arrested in Philadelphia on March 27, 1975,

¹⁰⁹ Echols, *Daring*, 241.

¹¹⁰ On the relationship between cultural feminism and ecofeminism, see Sara M. Evans, *Tidal Wave*, 208-210.

¹¹¹ Echols, 257-258. Personal file of the Weather Underground, “Circle of Support for Jane Alpert” circulated by a support group organized by Robin Morgan in the fall of 1975.

¹¹² Ti-Grace Atkinson, Florynce Kennedy, Susan Sherman, and Joan Hamilton, “The Crisis in Feminism,” *Majority Report*, March 8, 1975.

after spending time underground following a Boston bank robbery that resulted in the killing of a guard in October 1970. Both were on the FBI's Most Wanted List for four and a half years, and charged with robbery and murder in 1970.¹¹³ Saxe and Power were the first self-identified lesbian feminists who were pursued by the FBI, leading to the consideration of gay women as a threat, according to Janis Kelly of the quarterly newspaper, *Off Our Backs*.¹¹⁴

Power and Saxe first published their open letter to women, especially to Bernardine Dohrn of the Weather Underground, in *Off Our Backs* in 1971.¹¹⁵ Making public their participation in both the women's liberation and "military action" for anti-war, they called themselves revolutionaries and expressed their high commitment to the Third World liberationist movements against the U.S. For Power and Saxe, their "revolutionary duty" was not only armed struggle, but "every kind of resistance":

Every area of our life presents a new frontier for making revolution—our personal relationships with our friends, our communal activities, the families we create, the good things we provide for people, the way we educate our children, the way we dress and grow our hair, the way we react to what the pigs do to us and our sisters and brothers... Our culture is big enough and strong enough to sustain us in any kind of struggle. Everyone should be into all kinds of resistance—self-defense, alternate institutions, fucking the system as a way of life. *To a revolutionary, everything is a revolutionary front—a clinic, a day care center, a street fight, a bombing, a commune, a demonstration, a rock festival.* If we fight with the pipe as well as the gun, we cannot lose! We have a revolution to make...¹¹⁶

¹¹³ "Susan Saxe Arrested In Philly," *Ann Arbor Sun*, April 11, 1975.

¹¹⁴ Kelly, "War Games," 1.

¹¹⁵ Katherine Power and Susan Saxe, "Underground in America," *Off Our Backs*, April 15, 1971, 3.

¹¹⁶ Emphasis added. Power and Saxe, "Underground in America," 3.

This very first letter from underground lesbian feminists attempted to reconcile the views of feminists who denounced armed actions, and fugitive women who thought of feminist pacifism as less revolutionary. Although Saxe and Power disclosed their positions in between the two movements, they could not harmonize them. In her letter to the feminist and leftist movements in 1976, Susan Saxe, as a lesbian feminist who also worked for the Left, condemned Jane Alpert's "anti-leftist ideology."¹¹⁷ Saxe did not want to simply regard women in leftist movements as victims of manipulation by the "male left," as Alpert asserted in her "Mother Rights."¹¹⁸ She especially interpreted Alpert's "Mother Rights" as promoting "the liberation of women by the elimination of maleness; matriarchy" as a solution for patriarchy, and she regarded the "pro-woman line" as "profoundly anti-human, anti-change, and counter-revolutionary."¹¹⁹ Even though she supported feminist actions as being "profoundly revolutionary," Saxe urged feminists, especially lesbian feminists, to also apply leftist analyses and theories that were anti-racist and anti-imperialist.¹²⁰ By opposing the heterosexual woman-centered, anti-leftist and anti-male tendencies of feminists like Alpert and Morgan, as well as the ignorance of feminism by leftist women like the Weatherwomen, Saxe attempted to connect both the ideas and actions of feminists with those of the other social movements. Lesbian feminists like Saxe shook the fundamental assumption that women were to avoid aggressive, militant and violent actions, which were all extremely masculine values and qualities in the early 1970s. They rather presented a new idea of radical feminism as

¹¹⁷ Susan Saxe, "Susan Saxe: Letter to the Movement," *Off Our Backs*, Mar 31, 1976, 22.

¹¹⁸ Saxe, "Letter to the Movement," 22.

¹¹⁹ Saxe, "Letter," 22.

¹²⁰ Saxe, 22.

requiring violent resistance, and their violent actions and clandestine life style as revolutionary women dismantled the accepted idea of radical feminists as pacifistic and nonviolent.

Fashioning Lesbian Feminists

In the early years of the second-wave, radical feminists became divided during the feminist split of gay and straight, with growing debates on the value of feminine qualities in the early 1970s. Lesbian feminists became dominated the ways in which radical feminists came to fashion themselves. Lesbian separatism posed an alternative to militancy as too “macho,” and became identified with fashion statements that refused hetero-normative values. This style of lesbian separatist feminist’s activism and self-presentation represented a radical alternative to revolutionary violence and armed resistance.

Liberal feminist and president of NOW, Betty Friedan called the issue of lesbianism in the women’s movement the “Lavender Menace,” and NOW excluded lesbians—including the New York chapter of the DOB—from the list of the sponsors of the First Congress to Unite Women in November 1969.¹²¹ The Congress originally initiated by the NOW was held in New York City to unite liberal and radical feminists, but instead revealed the homophobic tendency of most feminists, especially the NOW members. In response to Friedan’s remarks and the exclusion of a lesbian sponsorship, a group of twenty women, wearing violet-colored T-shirts with the silkscreened words

¹²¹ Eight lesbians—four couples including Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon—founded the DOB in San Francisco, California, in 1955 as an alternative place to male-centered gay bars and the first lesbian civil and political rights organization. The DOB published the first nation-wide publication *The Ladder* from 1956 and it lasted until 1972. Brownmiller, *In Our Time*, 265; and Karla Jay, *Tales of the Lavender Menace: A Memoir of Liberation* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 137.

“Lavender Menace,” appeared at the Second Congress to Unite Women in New York City on May 1, 1970 to protest the exclusion of lesbians from the women’s movement. They theorized lesbianism as a “political choice” rather than a sexual choice, eliminating “sexuality” from the concept of lesbianism in their manifesto “The Woman-Identified Woman,” presented in the Congress.¹²² The group later called themselves the Radicalesbians.¹²³ By early 1971, there were several separatist lesbian feminist groups like The Furies, based in Washington, D.C. The group published its newspaper *The Furies* in 1972 and became a well-known lesbian separatist feminist collective, including Charlotte Bunch, Rita Mae Brown, Coletta Reid, Helaine Harris, Ginny Berson, Joan Biren, Sharon Deevey, Tasha Peterson, Susan Hathaway, Nancy Myron, Jennifer Woodul, and Lee Schwing. The Furies led the gay-straight split and challenged heterosexual feminists’ homophobia while heterosexual and non-lesbian feminists felt the lesbian chauvinism.¹²⁴ The Furies was short-lived and dissolved in April 1972.

Feminists’ self-fashioning of their political identities was characteristically anti-heterosexual in their attitudes towards men and political activism, in contrast to the style of the Weatherwomen and Black Panther women, who exceeded the heterosexual macho style. FBI informants from San Francisco described the appearance of women in feminist, hippies, and other militant groups as follows:

¹²² The manifesto was signed by Artemis March, Barbara Love, Ellen Shumsky, Synthia Funk, Rita Mae Brown, Lois Hart, and Barbara Gladstone. Brownmiller, *In Our Time*, 97; Radicalesbians, “The Woman-Identified Woman,” in *Dear Sisters*, 107-109; and Hesford, *Feeling*, 150.

¹²³ Jay, *Tales of the Lavender Menace*, 145.

¹²⁴ Echols, *Daring*, 231; Hesford, *Feeling*, 94-95; and Nancy Myron and Charlotte Bunch, eds., *Lesbianism and the Women’s Movement* (Baltimore: Diana Press, 1975), 10-13.

Most of them were very colorfully dressed, but the majority wore faded blue jeans. Most seemed to be making a real attempt to be *unattractive*.... One of the interesting aspects about other delegates' dress was the extreme *fuzzy* appearance of their *hair*.... Some said this...was gotten by braiding and leaving it that way while it was wet until it dried. Then they would take out the braid. From the looks of their hair, they apparently really didn't bother to try and comb it out afterward.¹²⁵

In this description, the “unattractive” style represented women in feminist groups, counterculture, and other activist groups: “fuzzy” hair and blue jeans. Like black militant women wearing natural curly hair, these radical feminist women refused to make their hair straight and neatly combed. Law enforcement agencies like the FBI, as well as the mainstream media regarded all these groups of women in the same light, regardless of the different ideas held by each group.

Radical feminists shared the counterculture ideas regarding a rejection of all oppressions of race, class, and gender: they wore natural and androgynous styles, although these were not necessarily a feminist uniform. There are, however, significant differences between the styles of radical feminists in general (and lesbian feminists in particular) and those of the women in the BPP and WU. Black Panther women adopted their men's fashion style and items like leather jackets but in a feminine way by wearing a miniskirt and high-heeled boots. Weatherwomen also followed the Black Panther women's style to support the Black Power Movement. Both Panther women and Weatherwomen appropriated men's fashion and style for their revolutionary femininity.¹²⁶ Weatherwomen and Black Panther women generally displayed their heterosexual identity through the mix of the hyper-feminine mini skirt and the hyper-

¹²⁵ Emphases added. Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 247.

¹²⁶ Minh-Ha T. Pham, “If The Clothes Fit: A Feminist Takes on Fashion,” *Ms.* 21, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 40.

masculine leather jacket. Both Weatherwomen and Black Panther women displayed powerful, provocative, and unconventional takes on “womanliness” with their fashion, showing their heterosexual attractiveness; while they adopted some masculine forms of dress, they did not intend to be solely masculine. Although there were also significant numbers of lesbians in both groups, they were neither the majority, nor did they control the self-presentation of the group, which made the women in those groups distinctive from most feminists, especially lesbian feminists, in terms of fashioning their political subjectivities.

The issue of feminist self-fashioning has been a problematic issue throughout history. As interdisciplinary scholar Minh-Ha T. Pham points out regarding the fraught relationship between fashion and feminism, women’s rights activists struggled with having too much attention given to women’s appearance and clothing in demonstrations in the long history of feminist activism for freedom and equality.¹²⁷ In the early 1850s, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, foremothers of the women’s movement, had adopted the “loose, comfortable bloomer outfit,” which divided women’s undergarments to give unrestricted movements.¹²⁸ The bloomer was the earliest form of women’s pants. At that time, women’s skirts were too long and heavy to freely walk and move, dragging on the floor, and accompanied by tightly fitting corsets and stiffened petticoats to make women’s waists look thin and long. The women’s rights advocates became known as “bloomers,” as they promoted the style to allow women’s physical freedom. The bloomer style, however, was short-lived, and advocates of women’s rights

¹²⁷ Pham, “If The Clothes Fit: A Feminist Takes on Fashion,” 39.

¹²⁸ Joan Cassell, “Externalities of Change: Deference and Demeanor in Contemporary Feminism,” *Human Organization* 33, no. 1 (Spring 1974): 86.

focused more on their political cause, rather than on changing the women's custom. Nonetheless, women maintained their tendency to connect their political ideas with their clothing and self-fashioning. For instance, women's suffragists wore green, white, and violet jewelry in the early 20th century. The accessories represented the initials of each color—G, W, and V—which stood for “give women votes,” a clear political statement for the women's movement for enfranchisement.¹²⁹ However, other than using accessories, women's rights activists in general did embody the style of white middle-class womanhood for their political identities.

Radical feminists in the 1960s created a distinctive style of their political subjectivity through their fashion. Liberal feminist members from the NOW kept the middle-class women's style for their political actions. According to anthropologist Joan Cassell, they wore, “cosmetics, attractively styled hair, stockings, shoes with heels.”¹³⁰ This middle-class style of political women did not aim to overthrow existing society but rather to modify it to be more gender-equal. In contrast, radical feminists directly questioned and challenged the heterosexual power relationship between the two sexes. Feminist self-fashioning in the 1968 Miss America pageant protest was largely to resist the beauty standard that came from the male-dominated and patriarchal ideas. At the protest, feminists threw the oppressive items into the trashcan to symbolize their rejection of the standard. That act clearly redefined the white beauty concept and fashion similarly to the way that black women did by wearing the natural hairstyle. New York radical feminist Susan Brownmiller described the “Women's Lib look” as “the brazen disregard

¹²⁹ Pham, “If The Clothes Fit: A Feminist Takes on Fashion,” 39.

¹³⁰ Cassell, “Externalities of Change,” 88.

for makeup and bras and a preference for jeans and long, unkempt hair that affronted Middle America.”¹³¹ This style of radical feminists in the protest as shown by Brownmiller was clearly linked to the new style of lesbian feminists who were not visible and unprecedented as political subjects in U.S. history.

As lesbian feminists emerged as leaders in the women’s movement in the early 1970s, they fashioned themselves with a lesbian-specific style in an attempt to refute the idea of all women as heterosexual. As sociologist Diana Crane stresses, “lesbian feminists were the most committed to rejecting any attempt at personal adornment or body display.”¹³² Lesbian feminists usually wore “loose-fitting jeans or baggy workmen’s denim overalls, with men’s T-shirts or work shirts and men’s work boots or sneakers, and avoided cosmetics, jewelry, or conventional haircuts.”¹³³ Many feminists in general and lesbian feminists in particular wore no bras.¹³⁴ Cassell differentiates heterosexual women’s liberationists from lesbian feminists by their effort to be “attractive.” Although both groups challenged male control over women’s bodies, lesbian feminists also rejected anything “to appeal to the opposite sex.”¹³⁵ However, heterosexual feminist women still attempted to make themselves pretty and attractive to men while wearing natural, comfortable, androgynous hairstyles and clothing. In contrast to white and women of color revolutionaries, heterosexual feminists shared the contemporary women’s feminine

¹³¹ Brownmiller, *In Our Time*, 167.

¹³² Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas*, 124.

¹³³ Cassell, “Externalities of Change,” 87.

¹³⁴ The motivation of what to wear for their political reasons was not simple in the 1960s and 1970s. It was almost impossible for political women to choose “a particular fashion...to reduce to just one factor.” Edward J. Rielly, *The 1960s: American Popular Culture Through History* (Greenwood, 2003), 85-86.

¹³⁵ Cassell, “Externalities of Change,” 88.

fashion: natural and comfortable look resisting racist and classist codes. Heterosexual feminists wore “dresses and long skirts or, at resorts, tight fitting pants and shirts,” a fashion style common among “non-feminist middle-class” women in the 1970s.¹³⁶

In the collection of articles in *Lesbianism and the Women’s Movement* edited by members of the lesbian feminist group The Furies, Joan E. Biren’s photographic portraits of lesbians are an excellent example of the lesbian look in the early 1970s.¹³⁷ Biren started taking photos of lesbians because at the time they were not visible in the mass media, which represented homosexual relationships in a heterosexual way, through stereotypical labels such as butch and femme. The media misrepresented the distinct roles of a “butch” woman dressing like a man and adopting a masculine style, and a “femme” woman looking and acting highly feminized.¹³⁸ In this view, butch and femme roles imitated heterosexual roles between a male and a female, and they presented an incorrect image of lesbians’ relationships.

These personae superficially mirrored heterosexual gender expectations, and these relationships between lesbians remain in the counter of the normalized and heterosexual relationship. Lesbian feminist scholar Judith Halberstam defines the masculine woman— butch—as a “signifier of lesbian masculinity.”¹³⁹ Halberstam argues that heterosexual female masculinity “menaces gender conformity” but often represents an acceptable

¹³⁶ Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas*, 124.

¹³⁷ Nancy Myron and Charlotte Bunch, eds., *Lesbianism and the Women’s Movement* (Baltimore: Diana Press, 1975).

¹³⁸ Ellen Carol Dubois and Lynn Dumenil, eds., *Through Women’s Eyes: An American History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2005), 677-678.

¹³⁹ Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Duke University Press, 1998; and Fifth printing, 2003), 301. Judith Halberstam is now known as Jack Halberstam.

“degree of female masculinity as compared to the excessive masculinity of the dyke.”¹⁴⁰

It seems to me that militant women like Weatherwomen and Black Panther women maintained a certain kind of masculinity, as Halberstam states, “white male middle-class maleness.”¹⁴¹ Unlike Halberstam’s claim of white and middle-class masculinity, women in the WU and BPP wore mini skirts with leather jackets and military boots, which were a blend of the Black urban fashion style and working class masculinity. Heterosexual revolutionary women continued to visualize themselves as macho, and promoted their machismo style of constructing their female political subjectivity. As also shown by Halberstam, lesbianism has long been associated with female masculinity. This tendency tends to undercut lesbians’ attempts to make lesbianism distinct from dichotomous gender roles as either men or women. However, as Biren recalls, the relation of lesbians were diverse beyond the standard of masculinized and feminized women. Biren recalls: “We were very sexual. And how [19]70s feminists get the rap for being antisexual or asexual, I have never, ever understood that, because we came, you know, straight out of the polymorphous perverse 60s into the 70s full-blast, nonmonogamous, you know. It’s a mystery to me.”¹⁴² Lesbian feminist female masculinity is neither a simple opposite identity of female femininity, nor a female version of male masculinity, but rather the “unholy union of femaleness and masculinity,” argues Halberstam.¹⁴³

Lesbian feminists’ identity threatened and complicated revolutionary women’s heterosexual subjectivity. Joan E. Biren (also known as JEB) took her first “lesbian

¹⁴⁰ Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 28.

¹⁴¹ Halberstam, 2.

¹⁴² Joan E. Biren, interview by Kelly Anderson, transcript of video recording, February 27, 2004, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, Sophia Smith Collection, pp. 72-73.

¹⁴³ Halberstam, 28.

photograph” of herself kissing her lover (see illustration 25).¹⁴⁴ Biren remembers taking the photo of herself because she wanted to *see* lesbians’ kiss, which was invisible in the public scene produced by the mass media. Biren recalls that her photographs, also published in *Eye to Eye: Portraits of Lesbians—Photographs by JEB* in 1979, were “to show the diversity of who lesbians were.”¹⁴⁵ Biren explains the selection of the photos as showing the “strength, beauty and diversity of Lesbian Womyn [women].”¹⁴⁶ Even though those photos do not display lesbian feminists’ political appearances in demonstrations, Biren’s photographed images of many lesbians do sufficiently show the way that lesbian feminists presented their personal and political identity to the public. Of particular example, Biren took a photo of herself in Dyke, Virginia, on October 1975 (see illustration 26). The photo shows Biren standing under the city sign “Dyke,” signifying the way that she identifies herself as a lesbian, while showing her pride in her identity.¹⁴⁷ Wearing her short natural hair, hooded sweatshirt, sneakers and jeans, she smiles at the camera. This particular photo shows no militant and violent presentation for her political ideas, but her very presence as a lesbian and feminist under the sign “dyke” threatened the heterosexual normality and constructed her way of self-fashioning to be revolutionary.

The JEB photographs are indicative of a self-fashioning that did not explicitly invoke resistant violence or revolutionary subjectivity like the women in the BPP and WU presented. The Furies thought, “[s]exism is the root of all other oppressions, and

¹⁴⁴ Biren, interview by Kelly Anderson, p. 70; and Joan E. Biren, *Eye to Eye: Portraits of Lesbians—Photographs by JEB* (Washington, D. C.: Glad Hag Books, 1979), 10.

¹⁴⁵ Biren, interview by Kelly Anderson, pp. 72-73.

¹⁴⁶ Biren, *Eye to Eye*, 6.

¹⁴⁷ Biren, 78.

Lesbian and woman oppression will not end by smashing capitalism, racism, and imperialism.”¹⁴⁸ In their ideas of the oppression of lesbians, anti-racist, anti-classist, and anti-imperialist movements that all other women worked for—including revolutionary women like the Black Panthers, Weatherwomen and radical feminists—could not achieve their freedom and liberation. Therefore, as member of the Furies Ginny Berson stated, “[l]esbians cannot develop a common politics with women who do not accept Lesbianism as a political issue.”¹⁴⁹ As also shown in these photos by JEB, lesbian feminists did not project their identities as overtly political; however, the writings of the Furies and other lesbian feminist political statements offered a politics of self-fashioning as anti-“sex roles” and moved the politics of feminism from actions and protests to ways of life. As prominent lesbian feminist and member of the Furies Charlotte Bunch declares: “[r]ace, class, and national oppressions came from men, serve ruling class white men’s interests, and have no place in a woman-identified revolution.”¹⁵⁰ Here, the self-fashioning of lesbian feminism is not necessarily projected within a conventionally political scene, which is an indication of how lesbian feminism did not articulate itself in terms of third world liberation movements as Black Panther women and Weatherwomen did. The style of self-fashioning of lesbian and radical feminists was also distinctive in the 1968 Miss America pageant protest—against hetero-normative sex roles and the consumer ethos attached to proper femininity.

Revolutionary fashion was frequently adopted by non-political people as well; at the same time, as soon as it became popular, the political self-fashioning of

¹⁴⁸ Ginny Berson, “The Furies,” eds., Myron and Bunch, in *Lesbianism and the Women’s Movement*, 18.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Charlotte Bunch, “Lesbians in Revolt,” in *Lesbianism and the Women’s Movement*, 33.

revolutionaries took on a meaning different from its original intent. According to Diana Crane, although initially hostile to the fashion of the lesbian-feminists in the early 1970s, the distinctive lesbian-feminist “style,” became the “typical leisure costume of young middle-class women” and middle-class women’s acceptance of wearing pants was “pioneered” particularly by lesbian feminists.¹⁵¹ On the other hand, jeans originating from the political support for the working-class became a sexy fashion item, with variations like hip-huggers, bell-bottoms, and flared legs. The blue jeans are manufactured to look worn, with “bright patches over imaginary hole,” as we see and wear them today.¹⁵²

The style of “lesbian chic” grew out of the separatist movement in that it replaced the earlier identity of radical feminists as fuzzy-headed bra burners wearing mini-skirts. Lesbian feminists developed a more radical restyling that refused hetero-normativity and its conventions, which in many ways became the “iconic” look of radical feminism. This particular lesbian feminist style as a way of self-fashioning challenged heterosexual normality and was highly revolutionary without militant and violent presentation for their political ideas of women’s liberation. Lesbian feminists suggested a political self-fashioning concerned with creating new ways of living rather than violent insurrection, and so they pointed to the future visual politics of American feminism in the late 1970s and early 1980s—what Alice Echols problematically calls “cultural feminism.”¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas*, 124.

¹⁵² Rielly, *The 1960s*, 85-86.

¹⁵³ Hesford, *Feeling*, 150.

Epilogue

1960s Revolutionary Women: Then and Now

After the Vietnam War ended in 1975, radical and militant movements seemed to fade away. In the late 1970s, many fugitive women who were in exile or underground returned to the United States and surrendered to the government. Kathleen and Eldridge Cleaver moved back to the U.S. in 1975. Some members of the Weather Underground started surfacing in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The public thought that the radical era had passed, and the now-middle-aged radicals became mellowed, and led normal ordinary adult lives. Many women in militant groups decided to turn themselves in due to their maternity. For example, Cathy Wilkerson and Bernardine Dohrn surfaced when their children needed legitimate parents who could help them have normal lives. When many of the former revolutionary women returned to public life, it was also because they had become mothers.

The Brinks armed robbery, which occurred on October 20, 1981, became the “last gasp of Vietnam-era radicalism” to the public.¹ Kathy Boudin—one of the survivors from the WU townhouse explosion, and at the time, the mother of a 14-month-old boy—caught the media’s spotlight again with her involvement in the robbery, along with other members of the WU Judith Alice Clark and David Gilbert, as well as feminist Marilyn Buck. The robbery was especially shocking to the public because it involved other revolutionary organizations, such as the Black Panther’s underground group, the BLA.

¹ Lisa W. Foderaro, “With Bouquet And a Wave, Boudin Is Free 22 Years Later,” *The New York Times*, September 18, 2003.

The faction of the WU called the May 19th Communist Movement committed a series of bombings of the U.S. Capitol buildings and military installations like the Washington Navy Yard Computing Center, between 1983 and 1985. The Weatherwomen, including Laura Whitehorn, Marilyn Buck, Susan Rosenberg, and Linda Sue Evans were arrested in 1985. After their release from prison in the late 1990s and early 2000s, they resumed their political work for liberation, focusing especially on feminist and political prisoner activism.²

Many of the militant women from the late 1960s and 70s have remained active in human rights campaigns, such as those for the freedom of political prisoners, many of whom are their former comrades; however, they have adjusted their ideas about movements and actions to fit the changing of the times. Although J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI had labeled radical men and women, from the BPP/BLA and WU to the women's movement, as armed and dangerous, many militant women transformed themselves into less radical and violent people, leaning towards more reformist and revisionist activism, for their own survival. Those with college educations became intellectuals, educators, and lawyers, like Kathleen Cleaver and Bernardine Dohrn, both of whom now hold the title of "former-radical-turned-law professor."³ Others also became professors, like Kathy Boudin. Their identities as former revolutionaries continue to help contemporary activists in addressing political issues and participating in social movements today. Some political prisoners from that era, like Weatherman David Gilbert, still remain incarcerated, and

² Katherine Power turned herself in in 1993. "Update on Katherine Ann Power," *Off Our Backs* 24, no. 7 (July 1994): 5.

³ Susan Chira, "At Home With Bernardine Dohrn: Same Passion, New Tactics," *The New York Times*, November 18 1993; and Matt Bellasai, "The Dohrn Identity," North by Northwestern posted February 29, 2012, <http://www.northbynorthwestern.com/story/the-dohrn-identity> (accessed July 15, 2015).

still believe that they are making a revolution. Many women who were involved in 1960s revolutionary movements are still active in social movements. For example, Bernardine Dohrn and Bill Ayers, like many activists from that time, supported the Occupy Wall Street demonstration in Union Square, New York in 2011. Kathleen Cleaver, wearing a hoodie as a sign of a protest against racism, also gave a speech at a rally in New Haven in 2012, to support the massive anti-racist movement after the fatal shooting of unarmed 17-year-old African American high school student, Trayvon Martin.

Many domestic and international fugitives are still state targets, such as Assata Shakur and Kathy Boudin. Assata Shakur (born Joanne D. Chesimard) is an exiled former member of the BPP and BLA. She was convicted of killing state trooper Werner Foerster with his own gun on the New Jersey Turnpike on May 2, 1973.⁴ While serving a life sentence in prison, she escaped in 1979 and has since been living in Cuba with her daughter. Shakur became the first woman to be named on the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorist List. Forty years later on May 2, 2013, the FBI announced a double increased bounty of two million dollars for Shakur's capture. In December 2014, President Barack Obama announced his decision to remove Cuba from the list of state sponsors of terror.⁵ Right after, a few politicians like Governor Chris Christie of New Jersey gave attention to American fugitives living in Cuba from the 1960s and 70s,' including Assata Shakur.⁶

⁴ For the FBI's announcement on May 2, 2013, see <http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2013/may/joanne-chesimard-first-woman-named-most-wanted-terrorists-list/joanne-chesimard-first-woman-named-to-most-wanted-terrorists-list> (accessed January 19, 2015).

⁵ The U.S. Department of State recognizes foreign countries that "repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism." Cuba had been on the list since 1982. <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/list/c14151.htm> (accessed June 18, 2015). Syria, Iran, and Sudan remain in the list.

⁶ The associated press, "Cubans to Open Talks about US Fugitives as Ties Warm," *The New York Times*, April 15, 2015; and Emma G. Fitzsimmons, "Christie Wants Obama to Push Cuba to Return New Jersey Trooper's Killer," *The New York Times*, December 21, 2014. For a short biographical essay, Robyn

Since then, the State Department seeks to open talks with the Cuban government about her extradition. In April 2013, James J. Kelly—President of the Rockland County Police Benevolent Association—sent an open letter to the president of Columbia University to call for the dismissal of adjunct professor Kathy Boudin who had been teaching human rights at the university since 2008. He contended that the school should not employ Boudin because she was a former member of the terrorist group, the WU, as well as an ex-convict indicted in the Brinks robbery in 1981.⁷

With events such as these during the last few years, law enforcement agencies like the FBI and the mainstream media reminded the public of the ongoing ‘War on Terror’ with vestiges of 1960s political violence, specifically those acts carried out by women.⁸ Neither a fugitive abroad nor a professor at home in this millennial age can escape the memory and history of the ‘Sixties,’ an epoch of political turbulence. Both Shakur and Boudin were college-educated, worked for Civil Rights throughout the 1960s, and became notorious political prisoners from the 1970s through the 1990s. They can be seen as representatives of the radicalization and militancy of many activist women, a topic that

Spencer, “Shakur, Assata (Chesimard, Joanne Deborah Bryon),” *Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History* (2006), <http://www.encyclopedia.com/article-1G2-3444701140/shakur-assata-chesimard-joanne.html> (accessed June 24, 2015).

⁷ James J. Kelly, “Open letter from Rockland PBA President James J. Kelly to Columbia President Lee C. Bollinger,” *Rockland Country Times*, April 7, 2013, <http://www.rocklandtimes.com/2013/04/07/brinks-controversy-heats-up-rockland-pba-president-asks-columbia-university-president-to-fire-kathy-boudin> (accessed January 19, 2015).

⁸ After September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush used the term “war on terror” (also known as the Global War on Terrorism), initiating U.S. international military campaigns to eliminate terrorist organizations, especially al-Qaeda, but the term also commonly refers to the state campaigns to oppress dissenters begun by the Bush Doctrine at home and abroad. Current political outlets using 1960s imagery, for example the media and Republicans (the term “war on terror” was originally used in Republican Ronald Reagan’s government in 1984) attempted to associate Michelle and Barack Obama with former Weathermen and Black Panthers—two of the most notoriously violent groups in the 1960s and 1970s—during the 2008 presidential campaign. Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Terrorized by ‘War on Terror’: How a Three-Word Mantra Has Undermined America,” *The Washington Post*, March 25, 2007.

requires new historical investigation, particularly considering the complex relationship between women and armed resistance.

The movement for political prisoners seems to unite all former revolutionaries. Kathleen Cleaver's defense of political prisoners has continued since her husband Eldridge Cleaver's exile to Algeria. After returning to the United States in the mid-1970s, she completed her education in history and law from Yale University in the late 1980s, and has continued her activism in support of human rights, primarily for political prisoners, such as former BPP members Mumia Abu Jamal and Geronimo Ji Jaga Pratt. Many radicals of the Sixties, such as Angela Davis and many women of the BPP and WU, continue their activism for political prisoners, as do many feminists, such as Yuri Kochiyama, Safiya Bukhari, Linda Evans, Laura Whitehorn, Susan Rosenberg. Drawing from their own experiences, they set examples from their successful, as well as failed, actions and ideas, and inspire younger activists and scholars to speak out for justice and social change. Their activism is not limited to the anti-war and anti-racist context of the 1960s and 1970s, but now encompasses a wide variety of causes, serving the needs not only of political prisoners and feminist organizations, but also youths and HIV patients. Working for all political prisoners as former revolutionary women, they maintain their political subjectivity as global revolutionaries.

More than Fashion

The self-presentation of 1960s revolutionary women has transformed into a certain kind of political subjectivity nowadays. For example, on the cover of the July 21, 2008 issue of the liberal magazine *The New Yorker*, artist Barry Blitt depicted Michelle Obama as a Black Panther with an Afro hairstyle and a rifle slung over her back, and

Barack Obama wearing Muslim clothing.⁹ Obama's association with former Weather Underground members Bill Ayers and his wife Bernardine Dohrn was a major issue raised in the Republican campaign. Judging by the debates during the 2008 Presidential campaign, fear of—or interest in—the violence of 1960s activist groups such as the Black Panthers and the Weather Underground remains alive today.

Some figures from the Sixties are remembered by their fashion, especially their militant style. Angela Davis recalls that her Afro hairstyle, as a symbol of her black militancy, had a great impact on sympathizers through the extensive press coverage of her trial; however, she laments that the fashion—or as she called it “revolutionary glamor”—reduced black politics to a fashion style that became ahistorical and apolitical.¹⁰ During an interview in a recent documentary about the life and activism of Yuri Kochiyama and herself, she remembers that the powerful connotations of that image made her anxious about disappointing people—about whether her actions would meet the expectations set by her appearance.¹¹ Kathleen Cleaver similarly recollects that she did not think of her fashion in terms of influencing “pop culture,” but rather saw it as “using art in a political way... to make revolution,” as her image was reproduced by supporters of the Black Panthers.¹² Ericka Huggins is even more critical of the reduction of black

⁹ Blitt attempted to satirize “the use of scare tactics and misinformation” by persistent right-wing claims of Obama as a terrorist or a terrorist friend during the 2008 Presidential election Andrew Malcolm, “Is the New Yorker's Muslim Obama cover incendiary or satire?” *Los Angeles Times*, July 13, 2008, <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/washington/2008/07/obama-muslim.html> (accessed on February 27, 2011).

¹⁰ Angela Davis, “Afro Images,” 39.

¹¹ C. A. Griffith and H. L. T. Quan, *Mountains That Take Wing—Angela Davis & Yuri Kochiyama: A Conversation on Life, Struggles and Liberation* (Quad Productions, 2010).

¹² Jonathan Fischer, a journalist and editor of Black & Proud Music-Compilations, held the interview in Berlin. Jonathan Fischer, “Black & Proud: Interview with Black Panthers Bobby Seale, Jamal Joseph, and Kathleen Cleaver,” Summer 2001, <http://www.docspopuli.org/articles/Trikont.html> (accessed March 11, 2015).

politics into a fashion trend. The media favored the “beautiful caricature of a woman that looked like a combination of Angela and Kathleen, with a gun,” referring to Huggins as “Angeleen,” the “pop culture idea of a woman.”¹³ As Huggins makes clear, only those militant and gorgeous women were visible, while ordinary black women and their political message became hidden behind the image.

Even though these women generally did not consider their fashion to be as crucial as their political statements, and thought of the reduction of politics into a cultural item as damaging the political goals of their activism, their self-presentation, particularly through fashion, I argue, was a significant source for them to construct their identities as revolutionary women. For revolutionary women, fashioning and styling their bodies in the revolutionary chic was critical to construct their political activism in the male-dominated movements. The fashion displayed their ideology, which was also tied to women’s liberation. Militant women like the Black Panther women and Weatherwomen especially refashioned their womanhood with their bodies through the image and display of potential and real violence. They had a different way of overcoming the imposition of gender inferiority on women, rejecting the 1960s mainstream idea that women are naturally weak, inactive, passive, and subordinate in their relations with men, which they reflected in their fashion with boots and leather jackets. The militant women were leaders in both groups, and their leadership alone broke a traditional gender role. However, the Weatherwomen and Black Panther women went beyond the desexualizing and defeminizing of their womanhood through the use of violent activism and revolutionary

¹³ Yuri Kochiyama, Ericka Huggins and Mary Uyematsu Kao, “‘Stirrin’ Waters’ ‘n Buildin’ Bridges: A Conversation with Ericka Huggins and Yuri Kochiyama,” *Amerasia Journal* 35, no. 1 (2009): 155.

chic fashion: overcoming passivity and inferiority, and not supporting but leading political, and even violent, actions. Their fashion, not only their dress, but also the way they thought, spoke, behaved, and acted, clearly conveyed their political statements, which broke the conventional gender norm as far as they allowed themselves to be more aggressive and violent.

The women's revolutionary chic was integrated into their activism, and they cultivated their fashion and style through their violent and militant politics. Their striking fashion became representative of women's militancy through the pervasive media images of styles like the Afro. White women were regarded as the national standard for the American woman's identity. Thus, white revolutionary women styled as militant or terrorist chic broke their own national identity through anti-American fashion as well as through their activism against racism and imperialism. Black women who had been seen as secondary-citizens also overcame their inferiority in the American standard of femininity with their creative use of the natural look of the Afro style, which also became powerful as a radical fashion for black militancy.

These women showed the difference between radical women's history and that of radical and lesbian feminists, who refused the patriarchal system in society as well as within the movement, and challenged heterosexual identities of political women for *feminism*. Lesbian feminists' style to self-fashion themselves—what I refer to as “lesbian chic”—challenged heterosexual normality in women's liberation movements. Lesbian feminists invented an alternative style to the “macho” posturing of the women's liberation movement by Weatherwomen and Black Panther women. The visual representation of a woman's physical body was a way to combine women's liberation

within the Sixties Movement with the self-expression of revolutionary and lesbian chic, more striking than male activists. They bridged the gap between women's liberation and the Third World women guerrillas, and became urban guerrillas in symbolic theatrical actions. Therefore, the militant women's fashion was a space to prove their loyalty to political activism as well as their womanhood, materially and ideologically tied to women's liberation in the 1960s and 1970s.

There have always been women who advocated or supported militant and violent tactics for political change; however in the late 1960s and 1970s, some women took their activism to new levels, creating a new social identity as revolutionaries. The new political subjectivity was multiracial, if not interracial, as well as international and global in the post World War II era. Most middle-class, educated young women in armed struggle were radical and utopian, believing that they could change the world and bring about revolution. Although women in both feminist and revolutionary organizations developed fundamentally radical ideas of American womanhood as anti-patriarchal, anti-racist, and anti-imperialist, they generally failed to cooperate with each other. Their attempts for unity and solidarity were inconsistent, and focused more on the women in the Third World, especially by Weatherwomen and Black Panther women. In the end, a global sisterhood that connected all women in the U.S and the world was tried but not achieved; however, global sisterhood has constructed a distinct political women's identity since the late 1960s. Revolutionary women's transnational perspectives contribute to the history of women in terms of multiracial feminism, contrary to the dominant accounts of second-wave feminist histories, which disregard most revolutionary women in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Illustrations



1. Rosie the Riveter was a cultural icon popularized by America's best-known illustrator, Norman Rockwell during World War II. Rosie the Riveter represented women who worked in factories that manufactured war supplies and munitions during the war, contributing to the victory of the United States on the home front, instead of fighting on the battlefield. With her iconic uniform of denim overalls, and frequently showing her muscled arm, Rosie became a strong patriotic figure, and the state promoted the strong and masculine-looking woman to help her man, family, and ultimately, her country.

Cover page of the *Saturday Evening Post* on Memorial Day, May 29, 1943.



2. Bonnie Parker, born in Rowena, Texas in 1910, became one of the most famous outlaws, with her partner Clyde Barrow, during the Great Depression in the United States. Mainstream press like *The New York Times* published extensive stories of the crimes and death of Bonnie Parker—a “cigar-smoking woman”—in May 1934. The 1967 film *Bonnie and Clyde*, starring Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty, contributed to the romanticization of militant women and popularized the “hip outlaw” image of a woman holding a rifle. Radical women like Bernardine Dohrn embodied this “Bonnie” style in the late 1960s.

Laura Browder, *Her Best Shot: Women and Guns in America*, 132.



3. This image, “New American Woman,” smiling and holding a rifle, appeared on the cover of the SDS newspaper, *New Left Notes*, to introduce a strategy panel on the “woman question” for the SDS convention on the June 27, 1967. During the convention, SDS women advanced a “Women’s Liberation Workshop,” which presented their analysis of women’s oppression and demand for women’s independence. They compared their relationship to men with that of the people of the colonized Third World to America.

Cover page of the *New Left Notes*, June 26, 1967.



4. In 1968, Kathleen Neal Cleaver, the Communications Secretary of the Black Panther Party, called reporters to come to her house and take photos of her wearing a miniskirt, natural hair and a leather jacket, and holding a 3.57 Magnum shotgun. After her own reproduction of this image, the Party also reproduced this photo, particularly when Cleaver ran for the 18th Assembly District in San Francisco. As a candidate of the Peace and Freedom Party, the full-page photo of her appeared consistently in the BPP newspaper, *The Black Panther*, from September 28 to November 2, 1968.

“Kathleen Cleaver for Assemblywoman: 18th District San Francisco, Calif.” *The Black Panther*, May 18, 1968, 18



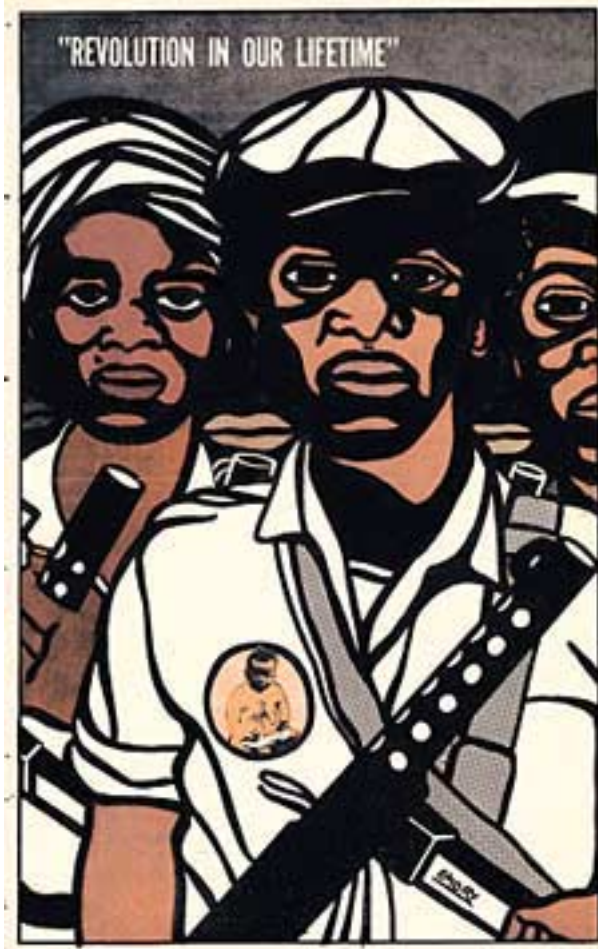
5. Black Panthers invented various verbal and visual projects to fight against law enforcement agents, whom they called “pigs.” The images, created by artist Emory Douglas, represent the local polices and officials, portrayed as “pigs” in uniforms, looking dirty, fat, greedy and cruel. In their visual politics, the Black Panthers were not afraid of assaulting and attacking local police in print. On the right corner, the caption states the identity of the pigs: “What is a pig? A low natured beast that has no regard of law, justice, or the rights of the people; a creature that bites the hand that feeds it; a foul depraved traducer, usually found masquerading as the victim of an unprovoked attack. Black communities appreciated the Black Panther’s attitude as liberating and respectful. It provided black neighborhoods a feeling of pride and strength.

The Black Panther, September 28, 1968, 4.



6. Madame Nguyen Thi Binh was the most well known Vietnamese heroine. American radical women, including feminists, Black Panther women and Weatherwomen based their concept of a revolutionary woman on women's involvement in Third World liberation fights in Cuba, China, and Vietnam. During the Vietnam War, Vietnamese women working for the Vietcong were much admired role models for American radicals. Madame Thi Binh led the Delegation at the Paris Conference on Vietnam in 1973 and signed the Paris Peace Accords that advanced the termination of the Vietnam War.

June Culberson, "The Role of the A Revolutionary Woman," *The Black Panther*, May 4, 1969, 9.



7. Unlike the portraits of police and armed forces, Emory Douglas painted Black Panthers as disciplined and tough-looking revolutionaries. This image of Black Panthers directly challenged the old stereotypes of black men as Uncle Tom, a representative figure of a black male as a passive and submissive servant from the slavery era.

Back page of *The Black Panther*, November 8, 1969.



8. The Black Panthers, led by Kathleen and Eldridge Cleaver, opened the Afro-American Center in Algiers, Algeria, that represented African American culture from the United States in the first Pan-African Cultural Festival, coordinated by the Organization of African Unity in Algiers, Algeria, in July 1969. Mohammed Ben Yaya, Minister of Information of Algeria, sanctioned the Black Panther Party for the official exhibit associated with the festival, which attracted thousands of visitors from all over the world.

Robert Wade Photography



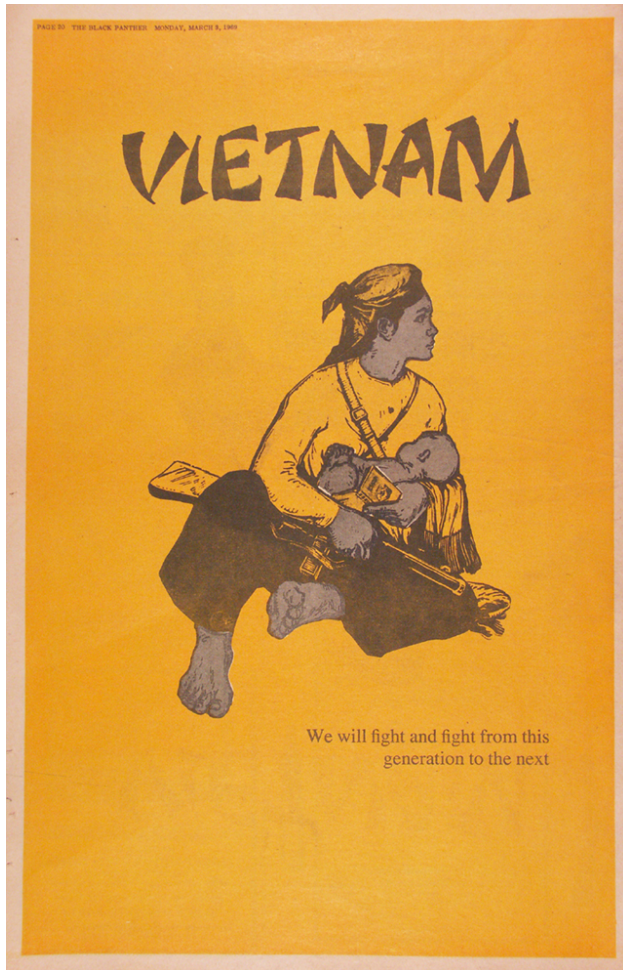
9. Inside the Afro-American Center. In the Center in Algiers, the Black Panthers exhibited photographs and pictures of African American culture, many of which were by artist Emory Douglas, Minister of Culture of the BPP. His paintings of African Americans holding guns and fighting the police represented the militant ideas of the Black Panther Party and their style, and drew fervent responses from the viewers.

Robert Wade Photography



10. Painting by Emory Douglas, revolutionary artist and Minister of Culture of the BPP. With her Afro hairdo, the black woman in this image displays her African face and body while holding a gun to show her strength and militancy for revolution as a global action. Images like this by Douglas represent Black Panther women as global revolutionary fighters, like Vietcong women. This image was originally published in the BPP newspaper as a full page on the back cover with the title "1969: Afro-American Solidarity with the Oppressed People of the World."

The Black Panther, January 4, 1969. Reworked by Chuck Sperry at Firehouse Kustom Rockart Co., (2009) <http://station4.co.uk/gallery/art/emory-douglas>.



11. This picture, depicting a Vietnamese woman holding a rifle and baby, was one of the most popular pictures circulated among radicals in the 1960s. With the caption “We will fight and fight from this generation to the next,” this woman represented a revolutionary who fought in combat while maintaining her traditional role of motherhood to produce future revolutionaries. Activists in anti-war movements, regardless of race and gender, praised female Vietcong fighters who seemed to achieve their liberation from both imperialist oppression and gender limitation. This style of picture, a mother with a gun and a baby, also frequently appeared in newspapers such as *Gidra*, an Asian American newsletter.

Back cover of the Black Panther Party newspaper, *The Black Panther*, March 3, 1969.



12. This image combined the most popular paintings by Emory Douglas: a black mother with a rifle slung over her shoulder and holding her child, and a baby holding a gun. For Black Panther women, maternity was an extremely significant part of becoming revolutionaries, so that they could produce future revolutionaries. In this painting, women in the BPP became global revolutionaries sharing commonality with Third World women in combat like Vietcong guerrilla women, playing dual roles as fighters and mothers.

Back cover of *The Black Panther*, April 6, 1969.



13. Kathleen and Eldridge Cleaver with their newborn son, Antonio Maceo, in Algeria (1969). As an ex-convict, Eldridge Cleaver was charged with attempted murder, jumped bail and fled to Cuba, and was then exiled in Algeria, where Kathleen Cleaver joined him in May 1969. They continued their political activity there, where they founded the International Section of the Black Panther Party. They posed for this photo in front of the FBI's Wanted poster of Eldridge Cleaver, which Cleaver referred to as his "passport" to travel to Third World countries during his exile, since his convict status prevented him from obtaining a valid US passport. K. Cleaver became a black revolutionary mother, the female role most celebrated by the BPP.

Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Fire* (1978)



14. Kathleen and Eldridge Cleaver at the Pan-African Cultural Festival, Algiers, Algeria (1969). Although the festival invited many African Americans like Nina Simone, Stokely Carmichael and his wife, and South African singer Miriam Makeba, the Black Panthers, as anti-racist and anti-imperialist militants, represented the radical activists from the United States. Members of the BPP's Central Committee also participated in the Festival: Chief of Staff David Hilliard, Minister of Education Raymond "Masai" Hewitt, Minister of Culture Emory Douglas, and Communications Secretary Kathleen Cleaver. The BPP's Minister of Information, Eldridge Cleaver, who was exiled to Algeria, gave a speech during the opening of the festival. With their natural hairdos, particularly Kathleen's Afro, the Cleavers' displayed a reversed cultural expression of black pride back to the African country.

Robert Wade Photography



15. Kathleen Cleaver with Kim Sung Ae and Cleaver's translator Teh (in the middle), at the guest house Zan Zee Won in North Korea (August 1970). Cleaver gave birth to a daughter (in the left corner) while staying in North Korea with her one-year-old son (in the bottom right corner) for several months. Kim Sung Ae (wife of Kim Il Sung, Prime Minister of North Korea and president of the Democratic Women's Union) gave Cleaver's daughter the name "Jojuyounggi" as a symbol of the ideology of *Juche*, which Black Panthers translated into self-reliance, and promoted in relation to their concept of self-determination. This image especially signals the Black Panther woman's symbolic encounters with women in the Third World, with Cleaver representing a black revolutionary mother.

Courtesy of Kathleen Neal Cleaver from Kathleen Neal Cleaver Photograph archive



16. Members of the U.S. Peoples' Anti-Imperialist Delegation with North Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap in North Vietnam (1970). Exiled leader of the Black Panther Party, Eldridge Cleaver (back, in the middle) led the delegation to North Korea, North Vietnam and the People's Republic of China. Of the delegation's eleven members, seven were women, such as Elaine Brown (front row, third from left) of the Black Panther Party, who would later become the only female chairperson of the group. These women in the delegation became mediators to connect women's movements in the United States to Third World countries, particularly Asia, as demonstrated by their participation in the Indochinese Women's Conferences in Canada, the first organization to bring together women from North America and Asia in 1971.

Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Fire* (1978)



17. Women's Militia at "Days of Rage" at the Weatherman's first call for a "national action" in Chicago on October 9, 1969. The Weatherwomen marched from Grant Park to the city's Armed Forces Induction Center to cease the operation of the draft board office as part of an anti-war demonstration. These women wore helmets, heavy gloves, military boots, and carried Vietcong flags. A few women also held wooden sticks and pipes to protect themselves from possible armed conflicts with local police.

Photograph by David Fenton



18. Former SDS leader of the Washington D.C. chapter, Cathy Wilkerson is shown speaking publicly in front of a crowd and wearing an over-sized leather jacket. Reflected by her dress code, Wilkerson thought that the militant and masculine style of the Weatherman empowered her to be stronger and to challenge the traditional concept of women as passive. She gained notoriety as one of the two survivors from the explosion in her father's townhouse in Greenwich Village in New York City on March 6, 1970.

Cathy Wilkerson, *Flying Close to the Sun: My Life and Times as a Weatherman* (2007)

FBI INTERSTATE FLIGHT - MOB ACTION; RIOT; CONSPIRACY
 I. O. 4364
 4-24-70

WANTED BY FBI

BERNARDINE RAE DOHRN

OTHER NAMES KNOWN BY: Marion Delgado, Bernadine Dohrn, Bernadine Rae Obrostein, H. T. Smith

FBI No. 56,360 W
 20 0 9 R 010 12
 L 17 R 010

Photographs taken 1968



Bernardine Dohrn

DESCRIPTION
 AGE: 26, born January 12, 1942, Chicago, Illinois.
 HEIGHT: 5'5" EYES: brown
 WEIGHT: 125 pounds COMPLEXION: light olive
 BUILD: medium RACE: white
 HAIR: dark brown NATIONALITY: American
 OCCUPATION: secretary
 SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER USED: 395-58-5006

CAUTION
 DOHRN REPORTEDLY MAY RESIST ARREST. HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH PERSONS WHO ADVOCATE USE OF EXPLOSIVES AND MAY HAVE ACQUIRED FIREARMS. CONSIDER DANGEROUS.

A Federal warrant was issued on March 27, 1970, at Chicago, Illinois, charging Dohrn with unlawful interstate flight to avoid prosecution for mob action (Title 18, U. S. Code, Section 1073). A Federal warrant was issued on April 2, 1970, at Chicago, Illinois, charging Dohrn with violation of Federal Antiriot Laws and conspiracy (Title 18, U. S. Code, Sections 2381 and 371).

IF YOU HAVE INFORMATION CONCERNING THIS PERSON, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL FBI OFFICE. TELEPHONE NUMBERS AND ADDRESSES OF ALL FBI OFFICES LISTED ON BACK.

Identification Order 4364
 April 24, 1970

J. Edgar Hoover
 Director
 Federal Bureau of Investigation
 Washington, D. C. 20535

19. In this photo, similar to the one by Avedon, Dohrn wears a leather jacket and denim pants, showing her rejection of conventional feminine style. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover called Dohrn “La Pasionaria of the lunatic left,” labeling her as the most dangerous woman in America. She was on the list from 1970 to 1973.

FBI’s mug shot of Bernardine Dohrn (1970)



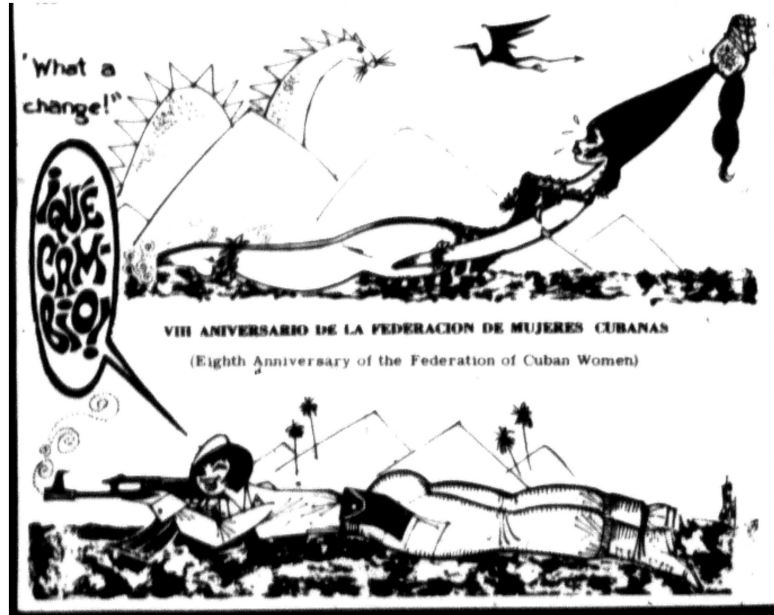
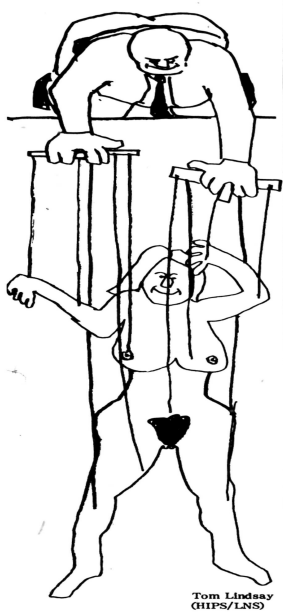
20. Bernardine Dohrn and Diana Oughton with other SDS leaders, such as Mark Rudd, at the SDS national convention in Chicago (June 18, 1969). Bernardine Dohrn (center), as the National Secretary of the SDS, announced the expulsion of the Progressive Labor Party and the takeover of the SDS by the Weatherman. Most participants like Mark Rudd (second from right) recall that Dohrn led the split of the SDS, and that she also took control of the Weatherman's decision to go underground. Since 1968, Dohrn has been the most outstanding leader and female figure in the SDS, Weatherman, and later Weather Underground. Diana Oughton (far right) was one of the victims of the explosion in Greenwich Village in 1970.

Photograph by David Fenton



21. Bernardine Dohrn was photographed by famed photographer Richard Avedon in 1969 wearing high-heeled boots, an over-sized leather jacket and a mini skirt. Although the SDS did not have a particular uniform, Dohrn referenced the Black Panther's style. She recalls agreeing to have her photograph taken at the request of the SDS National Office in exchange for funding for the group—"a few hundred dollars." This was not her everyday life attire, but Dohrn recalls that she was "wearing Black" for the photo. Interview with Bernardine Dohrn, December 16, 2014.

Bernardine Dohrn, Weatherman, New York City, November 10, 1969
Photograph by Richard Avedon © The Richard Avedon Foundation.



22. The SDS published these two cartoons for the article on the women’s liberation revolution, which was passed by the National Convention in January 1969. The cartoon on the right portrays the advance of the “women’s liberation” compared between the two Cuban women: on the top, a woman being dragged by her hair by a man, on the bottom, a revolutionary woman smiling with a rifle. However, the left cartoon—a man wearing a necktie manipulating a nude woman as a marionette—caused a backlash from many women due to its sexist imagery and ridicule of women’s liberation.

“Advance of women’s struggle,” *New Left Notes*, January 8, 1969, 8.



23. The “Motor City Nine,” nine women from the SDS/Weatherman, occupied classrooms in Macomb Community College in Detroit, Michigan, as one of their “urban guerrilla” actions in July 1969. They interrupted students’ final exams to discuss the Vietnam War, which they considered a more important issue. This kind of militant action by radical women shocked the public, especially by their “dirty language,” and their un-lady-like outfits—jeans, boots, and a cowboy hat—although note the person on far right “mixed it up” by wearing a mini-skirt.

“The Motor City 9,” *New Left Notes: The Fire Next Time*, August 1969, 8.



24. Freedom Trash Can, Miss America Protest, Atlantic City (1968). The first nationwide feminist protest at the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City, New Jersey (September 7, 1968). One woman at the center is shown throwing items that they called “instruments of torture to women,” such as bras, girdles, high-heeled shoes, and women’s magazines, into the Freedom Trash Can on the boardwalk outside of the Convention hall, where the beauty pageant was held. During their action, female reporters (on the right and left) try to interview her, holding a microphone and wearing high-heeled shoes. In the protest against the beauty contest, feminists allowed only newswomen to interview them.

Rubenstein Library, Duke Digital Collections



25. Lesbian feminist Joan E. Biren took photographs of lesbians in the early 1970s. This photo was the first “lesbian photograph” of Biren kissing her lover Sharon Deevey, both of whom were from the lesbian feminist collective, The Furies, based in Washington D.C. By taking and showing this photo, Biren wanted to make lesbians visible to the public and overcome the stereotypical relationship between two lesbians as butch and femme, a form of imitating the heterosexual roles of a woman and man.

Joan E. Biren, *Eye to Eye: Portraits of Lesbians—Photographs by JEB*, 10.



26. Joan E. Biren took this photo of herself in Dyke, Virginia, in October 1975. Under the city sign “Dyke,” Biren represents the style of a lesbian feminist, wearing her short natural hair, hooded sweatshirt, sneakers, jeans, and probably no bra. The way in which she stands and smiles at the camera signifies how she identifies herself as a lesbian and feminist, while showing her pride in her identity. Her style and portrait of herself are militant and threatening to the heterosexual normality, not restricting herself into the typical form of feminine or masculine look.

Joan E. Biren, *Eye to Eye: Portraits of Lesbians—Photographs by JEB*, 78.

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It's About Time: Black Panther Party Legacy & Alumni

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Robert Wade Photography

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Rat

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Appendix: Timeline

