

Antiwar and Anti-Imperialist Feminist Activism: the Seattle Story

The women's liberation movement in the United States played a prominent, if unacknowledged, role in the inextricably interconnected global movements opposing the US war in Vietnam and supporting anticolonial and anti-imperialist struggles. In the nineteen sixties left feminists looked to anti-imperialist women freedom fighters as models of revolutionary womanhood as they attempted to create peace and a sense of a global sisterhood. They challenged the white and male leadership of the US antiwar and peace movements, questioned the prevailing maternalistic approaches to women's peace activism, decentered the west and began to develop a new gendered analysis of war, peace and anti-imperialism.¹

Historically, women and especially feminists have been associated with pacifism. A centuries-old essentialist argument used by feminists and antifeminists alike contends that women's reproductive capacities and their experiences in bearing and nurturing sons and taking care of fathers and husbands make them more compassionate than men, and therefore naturally opposed to violence and war. In the nineteenth century, most feminists opposed wars, at least in theory. Nearly all US women who advocated the ending of enslavement and equal rights had been pacifists; many came out of the Quaker tradition. However, most supported the Union's military efforts in the US Civil War. These women realized only armed conflict could destroy the enslavement system in the southern states. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century European and American pacifist feminists, overwhelmingly white and middle-class attempted to organize an international sisterhood. However, they were never anti-racist or anti colonialist. In the context of white European and US domination their efforts often amounted to "women's orientalism" or "imperial feminism." When World War I broke out in 1914 in Europe and after the US joined the allies in 1917, feminist pacifists abandoned their anti-war and sisterhood principles to support their own national ruling class against "sisters" of other nations. ²

The generation of left feminist activists who were involved in the first women's liberation organizations had been active in a range of antiracist and labor struggles, as well as opposition to the US war in Vietnam. The war and the civil rights movement were pivotal events in their lives, and as their feminism developed so did their gender, class, and race-based critique of war and imperialism. Only men were subject to the draft and could serve in combat. The overwhelming majority of women in the military were volunteers, and most worked as nurses, then a female profession. Men fought; women cared. The racism and socioeconomic inequality of American society was apparent in the military, as the fighting forces in Vietnam included a disproportionate number of African Americans and Latinos, who were more vulnerable to the draft largely because few were in college and eligible for deferments. As with all US wars, working class men bore the brunt of the fighting. Privileged white men—Donald Trump with his bone spurs, George W. Bush's vacation in the Texas Air National Guard, and Bill Clinton's college deferment—avoided military service and combat.

The story of anti-imperialist, antiwar left feminism in Seattle is a story worth telling for a number of reasons. Very little is written about and known about left feminist struggles in general, in the Pacific Northwest. – even though the region played a central role in the US war economy. The Boeing Corporation, centered in Seattle was the Pacific Northwest's largest employer and built most of the aircraft used for war. The Seattle/Tacoma airport (Sea Tac) was the second largest disembarkation point for Vietnam. Activists regularly leafletted Sea Tac with anti-war materials. Some fifty miles Southwest of Seattle were two huge military bases, McChord Air Force base, and the Fort Lewis Army Base. The University of Washington, the second largest employer in the state provided intellectual as well as technical support, information and personnel for arms production. Clark Hall housed the Applied Physics Laboratory which produced classified research for the building of under water nuclear weaponry as well as the Naval and Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). “Money for Day Care, not Warfare” was a popular slogan, as feminists demanded that Clark Hall be transformed into a day care center.³

Seattle has a long history of feminist pacifism. During World War I Louise Olivereau, a feminist anarchist, served 28 months in prison for distributing antiwar leaflets. Women's peace activism reappeared after World War II with the development of the Cold War and the threat of nuclear war. Seattle Women Act for Peace (SWAP), the local affiliate of Women Strike for Peace (WSfP, founded in 1961), played a significant role in the protests against the Trident submarine base at Bangor, Washington. The women were moved to action by the Soviet resumption of atmospheric nuclear tests after a three-year moratorium and by the United States' declaration that it would hold its own tests in retaliation. SWAP members were mainly married with children, middle class, and politically leftwing white women. WSfP and SWAP articulated a maternalistic approach to opposing nuclear testing. SWAP emphasized that radioactive fallout from

nuclear testing was found in mothers' milk and commercially sold cows' milk. While many members were internationalists, they hoped that as white middle-class mothers speaking on behalf of children, they would be less vulnerable to the redbaiting that held radical activity in check during the McCarthy era. SWAP kept its single-issue focus and did not become involved in the women's movement until after 1970.⁴

The generation of left feminist activists in Seattle who founded the first women's organizations in the late nineteen sixties – Seattle Radical Women, the Women's Majority Union and Women's Liberation Seattle - had been active in a range of antiracist and labor struggles, as well as opposition to the US war in Vietnam.⁵ The war and the civil rights movement were pivotal events in their lives, and as their feminism developed so did their gender, class, and race-based critique of war and imperialism. Only men were subject to the draft and could serve in combat. Women in the military were overwhelmingly volunteers, and most worked as nurses, then a female profession. Men fought; women cared. The racism and socioeconomic inequality of American society was apparent in the military, as the fighting forces in Vietnam included a disproportionate number of African Americans and Latinos, who were more vulnerable to the draft largely because few were in college and eligible for deferments. As with all US wars, working class men bore the brunt of the fighting.⁶ Privileged white men—Donald Trump with his bone spurs, George W. Bush's vacation in the Texas Air National Guard, and Bill Clinton's college deferment—avoided military service and combat.

Organized opposition to the draft began with the Black Freedom struggle. Mohammed Ali refused to fight, sacrificed his title as the world champion heavyweight boxer, and became an inspiration to millions. SNCC activists popularized the slogan "No Vietcong ever called me nigger," and it was seen on placards at countless demonstrations. The draft brought the war home in a very personal way for a generation of young men. In 1967, over 10,000 marched and fought with police at the Military Induction Center in Oakland, California, as part of Stop the Draft Week. By 1969, student body presidents of 253 universities wrote to the White House to say that they personally planned to refuse induction, joining the half million others who would do so during the war. Selective Service Centers, the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), and campus and school military recruiters became targets for protest. Draft resistance was successful because there were too many people to punish or send to prison. So great were the numbers of draft resisters that in 1977 President Carter declared a general amnesty to all those who had fled abroad to escape the draft, allowing them to return to the United States. Of 209,517 accused draft offenders, fewer than 9,000 were convicted.

Seattle was one of the centers of draft resistance and GI organizing.⁷ In addition, Seattle was unique in that women brought gender issues front and center into the resistance struggle from the very beginning. Draft Resistance–Seattle (DR) was one of the more active chapters in the US, in part because of the city's strategic location. When one of DR's founders, Earnest Dudley, refused to be inducted on April 14, 1967, the

group organized a protest campaign around his trial. At both Seattle Central Community College and the University of Washington, DR organized graduating seniors and first-year graduate students whose draft status was changing to 1-A, which made them immediately available for military service. In 1967, PFC Michael Bratcher marched into the Fort Lewis office and quit complying with military orders. He was imprisoned, went on a hunger strike, was defended by the Seattle ACLU, joined DR, was arrested, court-martialed, and sentenced to four years at hard labor. Russell Wills, a graduate student and DR activist from Seattle, went to jail. Together with SDS, DR organized antiwar groups at area high schools, and in 1968 and 1969 organized Northwest Draft Resistance conferences. According to their literature, DR was successful in “delaying the induction of from 5 to 10 persons a week” by 1968, and continued its support campaigns for draft resisters, solidarity protests at the Canadian border, and marches to the Selective Service system throughout the late 1960s.

Seattle Radical Women members joined Draft Resistance from its inception. Opposing Joan Baez’s flippant, sexist, but popular slogan “girls say yes to boys who say no,” women in DR sought to integrate feminism into the movement. In a 1968 position paper, “Women and Draft Resistance: Revolution in the Revolution,” Jill Severn of Radical Women connected the oppression of women with that of African Americans as well as the people of Vietnam. Making the argument for women’s leadership in the draft resistance movement, she began by acknowledging, “There are those inside and outside the anti-draft movement who would deny women full participation in this movement on the grounds that since we aren’t directly confronting ‘the man,’ we are not entitled to leadership in the anti-draft movement.” But, she argued, the “exclusion of women from the military is no less and no more than a denial of women’s equality at a time when refusal of induction is one of the few potent forms of protest and resistance to American imperialism.” Although women did not want to be in the military to fight against the Vietnamese, “draft exemption means a denial of full participation in the struggle against the military at a time when that struggle is one of the most important things happening.” She pointed out that exemption was not a privilege: African American men had historically been excluded from the military. Exempting women only perpetuated the idea of women’s weakness and dependence on men. She concluded by declaring that solidarity and unity necessitate the full participation of women in draft resistance.⁸ In 1968, at its first Fourth of July rally, picnic and “be-in,” a member of Radical Women was a featured speaker, and unlike feminist speakers in other cities, she was not booed or heckled.

In the first issue of the feminist journal *Lilith*, Judith Bissel, a member of the Women’s Majority Union, declared that “civil rights laws, police brutality, the draft, the war in Vietnam... are women’s issues. In short, any example of social injustice can and should be seen as a woman’s issue.”⁹

Along with Seattle DR, the main antiwar organization was the University of Washington Committee to End the War in Vietnam, replaced in 1969 by the Student Mobilization Committee Against the War (SMC). The UW Vietnam Committee was led by men, but Stephanie Coontz led the SMC and became the most prominent spokesperson of the antiwar movement in Seattle. The SMC was the largest antiwar group on the UW campus and involved members of the Young Socialist Alliance, the youth wing of the Socialist Workers' Party. Coontz believes that the SMC "had a higher percentage of female leaders than most antiwar movements around the county."¹⁰ In addition, a student-soldier antiwar group, the GI-Civilian Alliance for Peace (GI-CAP), put out an underground newspaper for soldiers called *Counterpoint*, held citywide antiwar conferences and marches, and even staged a maritime "invasion" of Fort Lewis to "liberate soldiers" from the military. GI-CAP was one of the first organizations in the country to form links between civilians and antiwar soldiers and inspired similar organizing elsewhere in the country. After 1970, GIs and veterans led antiwar demonstrations. To counter the often-repeated canard, the antiwar movement did not hate GIs or spit on them but rather supported their resistance to the draft and the war.

In the fall of 1968, the SMC announced that it was going to send 'girls' into GI dances as a way to organize against the war. There was an immediate uproar from the Women's Liberation Seattle and Radical Women. No doubt some of the objections reflected sectarian politics, but the fundamental problem was the plan's sexual objectification of women. For antiwar feminist activists, talking with young male soldiers was a challenge. Should women use their sexuality to attract soldiers to antiwar activities? How could women develop political relationships with young soldiers, mostly draftees, who were isolated from civilians and women, without replicating the gendered notion of woman as sex object? At a packed meeting called to debate the issue, the SMC and GI-CAP defended their plan, arguing that getting GIs to oppose the war was paramount. Some even asked members of WL-S what was wrong with being attractive! The most effective speakers against sending women into GI dances were male veterans, members of SDS, and the Peace and Freedom Party. After an intense debate, the meeting overwhelmingly condemned the plan. Stephanie Coontz and other SMC members changed their approach to women and GI organizing: "When people proposed sending women into coffee houses to dance with them... I was personally repelled, for reasons that were probably similar to those of women's liberation. But I think I learned a lot from the force of that debate and why I should oppose it for much more deep and much more strong reasons."¹¹

In 1968, antiwar activists and veterans organized the Shelter Half, a GI coffee house in Tacoma, Washington. A shelter half is a three-by-five-foot piece of sticky canvas issued to every soldier in the field: one shelter half is useless, but when two are joined together it creates a comfortable two-person tent. Tacoma's coffeehouse was conceived to serve the same purpose: getting people together to construct something

useful. Most of the personnel at the Shelter Half were men. Megan Cornish was a full-time volunteer, who tried to raise feminist politics as part of a larger understanding of war and peace. Women's liberation activists distributed feminist antiwar information to Ft. Lewis GI's when possible. Cornish later moved to Seattle, joined Radical Women and the Freedom Socialist Party, and has remained a committed member of both organizations.¹²

In May 1971, the Jane Fonda "FTA" show came to a park on the outskirts of Tacoma. Other participants were Donald Sutherland, Ben Vereen and Holly Near.¹³ A group from Women's Liberation Seattle approached Fonda and showed her their writings on behalf of women and war. She spoke with a member of WL-S at a rally defending GIs who were incarcerated in the McNeil federal penitentiary in Tacoma because of their anti-war activities. Fonda spoke about GI organizing and indigenous peoples' rights; the WL-s member spoke about women's liberation, racism, and incarceration. Fonda also met with women working at the Shelter Half and was supportive of their work.

As the women's liberation movement grew and as the Vietnam War ground on, feminists began writing about the interconnections among war, racism, peace, and gender. Jill Severn's piece on draft resistance was one of the first. Articles concerning women and war, connecting sexism, racism and imperialism began appearing in the UW student newspaper, *The Daily*.

By 1970, women's liberation groups began to make feminist as well as antiracist and anti-imperialist demands on existing antiwar organizations. For example, during the student strikes over the invasion of Cambodia and the murders of protestors at Kent State and Jackson State, Radical Women demanded that a plank on women's rights be included in the strike's manifesto. The group also insisted that women, especially welfare mothers, African American women, and working-class women, be given leadership roles and speaking positions at all antiwar activities.¹⁴ At the October 1970 Moratorium antiwar march, a contingent called the Women's Liberation Brigade brought the various women's groups together for the first time. Members of the Anna Louise Strong Brigade, Radical Women, Women's Liberation-Seattle, the Women's Caucus of the Seattle Liberation Front signed a statement announcing that the brigade was organized in opposition to the sexism of the march organizers. Originally no women were scheduled to speak, and when the organizers finally relented, the Brigade's representative was low on the list of speakers. When the march organizers issued a press release proudly announcing participation of "new sectors of the community," they did not mention of any women's organizations. Finally, the women's liberation groups and activists opposed the 'single-issue' politics of the march, demanding that race, class, gender and anti-imperialist analyses and demands be added. Their leaflet, with the headline "OPPOSE THE WARMAKERS, OPPOSE THE WAR ON WOMEN," read: "We therefore support and solidarize with all our sisters and brothers of the 'third world.' We

pledge ourselves to the liberation of third world people because we recognize the common source of our degradation and because as women, we feel it is our duty to work for the most oppressed of our sex: black and brown women of America and the colonial world.” The leaflet concluded by connecting oppressions based on class, race, and gender with colonialism and imperialism: “We believe that a movement calling for peace must demand a just peace: for an end to war and violence, not only in Vietnam, but an end to America’s war on women—a war which leaves us dead from criminal abortions, that has murdered, raped, jailed and worked to death countless numbers of women, and which doubly brutalizes and exploits our black and brown sisters. ¹⁵Women’s contingents marched in subsequent antiwar demonstrations.

As the women’s liberation movement began to change the antiwar movement, radical feminists looked to the women of Vietnam as role models. On Memorial Day 1968, members of Radical Women tried to emulate Vietnamese women freedom fighters whom they regarded as their sisters by putting on black pajamas and demonstrating their support at an antiwar veterans’ rally in the Seattle Civic Center. Women’s Liberation–Seattle produced the first women’s liberation button with the image of a Vietnamese woman carrying a gun and a baby. When Nguyễn Thị Bình, Central Committee member of the National Liberation Front, vice-chairperson of the South Vietnamese Women’s Liberation Association, and in 1969 the foreign minister of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam, represented Vietnam at the Paris Peace Treaty negotiations, left feminists were ecstatic. The contrast could not have been starker. The US delegation was all white and male; a woman led the Vietnamese delegation. Many on the left believed that the Vietnamese had a greater commitment to women’s equality than the US government. A popular song, ‘*Mme Binh Round*,’ sung to the tune of “Hey, Ho, Nobody’s Home” at International Women’s Day celebrations went: “Live like her, Mme. Binh. Dare to struggle, dare to win. Dien Bien Phu will come again. Live like her, Mme. Binh.”¹⁶

A letter to the *Seattle Times* coauthored by Janet Hews of the Women’s Majority Union and Barbara Winslow of Women’s liberation-Seattle illustrates their appreciation for Vietnamese women freedom fighters as well as the somewhat naïve belief in women’s equality in North Vietnam:

The political cartoon that appeared in last Friday’s (November 15th) editorial page of the Times could only appear in a country that regarded women as second-class citizens. I am referring to the cartoon that depicted Madame Binh, a delegate from the National Liberation Front to the Paris Peace talks, as only interested in the haute couture of Paris. The National Liberation Front does not regard women as merely sexual objects or mass consumers, desiring only hand creams, lipsticks, and better laundry detergents. Unlike the United States of America, there is

*complete social, political and economic equality for women in the National Liberation Front. Perhaps this is but another reason why the NLF is defeating the United States Army.*¹⁷

Leftwing women, including women's liberation activists, not only admired Vietnamese women but wished to make formal and informal contacts with them. A few women, most famously (or notoriously) Jane Fonda and Angela Davis, travelled to North Vietnam to meet them. It was easier for US women to meet with Vietnamese women in Canada. In 1971, the University of British Columbia in Vancouver hosted a conference organized by the Canadian Voice of Women (VOW) and the US organization Women Strike for Peace (WSfP). The conference had to be held in Canada because people from North Vietnam were prohibited from entering the US. The organizers brought six women from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam to "meet and talk in order to set up a better understanding and to strengthen our solidarity so as to give information to Canadian and US friends on the situation in IndoChina."¹⁸ Because of the large numbers of attendees from the US and western Canada with differing agendas and interests, the Indochinese women first met for two days with women from VOW and WSfP. Then Third World women (who today would be described as women of color) met with them for two days. Women's liberation activists met with them on the last two days.

Rather than promoting unity, as the organizers had hoped, the conference was fraught with dissension, infighting, and conflicts between sectarian factions from the moment the planning began. VOW and WSfP wanted to control the North American agenda; the Southeast Asian women had their own agenda. Canadians were appalled at what they believed was the great power chauvinism of the US delegates and declared themselves colonized. This description did not sit well with the delegates of color, who regarded their own peoples as living under the domination of the US and Canadian white colonial settler states.

Contention raged around such issues as whether the conference would be open or closed. Should those who attended be delegates and, if so, what groups would be invited to send representatives? Should issues of women's oppression be on the agenda? Should lesbian oppression be on the agenda? One Canadian group protested the presence of US women's liberation activists:

Women's Liberation, although somewhat diverse, does not [as] of now speak to many of the important oppressions of women in North America and many therefore cannot work within it. The error comes from an arrogance that what we define as the political and social oppression of women applies to all women similarly. WL, both the anti-imperialist wing and the feminist wing tend to do this—the worst manifestation of this being racist. Having assumed that, we go on to presume that we can make a conference without including women outside of WL in the central

planning and policy making decisions. The Indochinese had explicitly asked to meet with many women outside of WL—‘Third’ world women, welfare women, GI wives and women doing GI organizing work. This meant that the conference could not be described as a WL one and that should have been the a priori assumption from the beginning. As it was, other non-WL white women from oppressed groups and ‘third’ world women were ‘added on’ rather than being part of the conference decision-making bodies.¹⁹

Such comments by Canadian feminists were echoed in part by some of their US counterparts. Washington State was allotted twenty-three delegates, with eight from Seattle. Elaine Schroeder, a member of WL-S, pointed out that “considering the number of Women’s Liberation groups (over ten) and independent feminists, a democratic selection of eight delegates was virtually impossible.” Women from WL-S also felt that the conference organizers downplayed the intersection of class, race, gender, sexuality and imperialism and did not allow left feminists to talk with their Southeast Asian sisters about “the connections between male supremacy and imperialism and how the war affects the lives of North American poor and working women.”²⁰ Teresa Williams angrily described the conference leaderships as elitists who did not allow poor women, feminists, and lesbians to speak by claiming they were not anti-imperialist enough. She was appalled at the factionalism, lesbian-baiting, and attacks on Trotskyist groups (the SWP and YSA). In contrast, she found a great deal of sisterhood in the Seattle delegation.

Delegations from Ellensburg and Pullman, cities in Eastern Washington, wrote a scathing critique of exclusion and elitism entitled “They’re all Fuckin’ Trots.”

The leadership-dominated agenda was almost entirely lacking in consciousness of sex and class oppression in America. Instead of recognizing that exploitation, racism and sexism are everywhere linked, those in control considered it “selfish” in the presence of the IndoChinese, for women to give expression to the deep oppression that the vast majority suffer in North America. We are sure that our Third World sisters at the conference were not told that their struggle was secondary to support for the IndoChinese struggle. In short, we faced the same hostility at this conference that we have faced from the male dominated left since the inception of our movement: the struggle of women for liberation from their sex and class oppression is not legitimate, rather women must subordinate that struggle to the “more important” struggles of other people.²¹

All participants praised the Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian women, were moved by their presentations and inclusiveness, and, despite the conference's disunity and disorganization, vowed to renew their commitment to fighting US and Western imperialism.

An appraisal of the conference by Liz Briemburg, an English-born activist who had lived both in California and in Vancouver, provides insight into the political problems facing left feminists then and later. Before the concept of intersectionality was theorized by Kimberlé Crenshaw, bell hooks, and other feminist of color, the women from Vancouver, Seattle and Ellensburg were struggling with the impact of interlocking systems of power on those who are most marginalized in society. In order to bring about women's liberation, feminists must overcome divisions based upon race, class, gender, abilities, age, religion, nationality, and citizenship status. But most of the attendees were new to leftwing politics, and few had any experience with coalitions.

Briemburg's reflections put the divisions that so troubled the conference in perspective. "We are very divided amongst ourselves," she began. "Racism, US chauvinism, sectarianism, and so on all divide us. I am not suggesting we pretend those divisions do not exist. It was the recognition of these divisions which seems the most healthy outcome of the conference in addition, of course, to the inestimable benefits we all received from listening to the lives and steadfast determination of the Indochinese women." Acknowledging differences that arose from women's diverse experiences and differing positions in society, she suggested that "instead of a definition of sisterhood based on one's sexual preference" or any other dimension of identity, "we may be able to strive for a genuine, authentic sisterhood based on understanding and support between us for our respective struggles. The way those divisions were dealt with at the conference was very bad and many women who could not accept the extreme hostility between different groups just left the conference... There was little self-discipline apparent." Although "we all came out of the conference feeling tired and confused" because "our encounters with women in our own movement left many of us despairing and angry," "two weeks later I feel quite differently. I think the WL movement has to do a lot of hard political thinking and exploring; it has to recognize that a Sisterhood based on gender alone is nonsense; the divisions between women are wide and deep and based on much more fundamental conditions than competitiveness—conditions such as class, race, lesbianism, age, and chauvinism."²²

The conflicts that arose over organizing feminist and women's support for women in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in 1971 reflected and presaged past and future debates and struggles over the problematic faith in and search for that "universal we." Was it possible to guarantee sisterhood and solidarity among all women across the myriad divisions of unequal power and difference? These debates continue today.

Anti-imperialist feminism was profoundly shaped by the US war in Vietnam, but women's liberation groups also supported anti-imperialist struggles in Algeria, Angola,

China, Cuba, Mozambique, Palestine, South Africa, Central and South America. Three of the left feminist groups in Seattle were named in honor of anti-imperialist struggles. By choosing the name FanShen, the women who condemned the sexism of New Left men identified themselves with women in the Chinese Revolution. Another short-lived group named itself the Sisters of Than Hoa, referring to a Vietnamese city that was stronghold of the Viet Minh and the National Liberation Front. During the Vietnam War, US strategic bombing destroyed much of the buildings and infrastructure. Since then, the city has been totally rebuilt. The Anna Louise Strong Brigade was named for the socialist feminist activist who had become an anti-imperialist and Maoist.²³

Along with these three groups, all the left feminist groups spoke publicly, organized public meetings, wrote op-eds for the *UW Daily* or for their newsletters, and had study groups on anti-imperialist issues. They researched and discussed the Russian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Algerian and Cuban revolutions; read Lenin and Stalin on imperialism in relation to capitalism; Franz Fanon on colonialism, violence and racism and considered the connections between Third World or ‘colonized’ people of color in the US and those in regions that were emerging from colonialism and struggling against imperialism and underdevelopment. For some left women, being anti-imperialist was a central political commitment that they privileged over gender. All the groups celebrated International Women’s Day, always spoke out against the war in Vietnam and found ways to express solidarity with women of color and women involved in revolutionary and anticolonial struggles. Seattle’s activists laid the groundwork for the theory and action developed by the next generation, which aimed to decenter the West and forge postcolonial, transnational feminism. Fifty years later, left feminism is inextricably interconnected with peace and anti-imperialist activism – in theory and practice.

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Author’s note: Much of the materials I used for this article came from my own personal archive. In 2023 I gave the superb University of Washington Archives and Special Collections four boxes of archival materials, including, handwritten minutes, letters, leaflets, dittoed and mimeo’d (remember them?) letters, comments, leaflets

minutes, newsletters, journals, buttons, taped and transcribed interviews, and never seen before photographs. At the time of writing I have not been provided with an Index, and live in New York, I refer here to them as “Archives and Special Collections at the UW.”

Notes

¹ Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism and Feminism During the Vietnam Era* (Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). On imperial feminism see Antionette Burton and “Race, Empire and the Making of Western Feminism,” *Routledge History of Feminism*, at <https://www.routledgehistoricalresources.com/feminism/essays/race-empire-and-the-making-of-western-feminism> Accessed December 15, 2024.

² The few exceptions included Sylvia Pankhurst in England, Rosa Luxembourg (her feminism was iffy), Clara Zetkin, Germany, Alexandra Kollontai, Russia, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Rose Pastor Stokes, Dr. Marie Equi, US; Perhaps the most notable feminist pacifist who held true to her convictions was Jeannette Rankin, the first woman elected to the US Congress from the state of Montana. She voted against the US entry into WWI and was then voted out of office. To her utter shame, Carrie Chapman Catt, the president of the largest women’s suffrage organization, who professed pacifism, actively campaigned against the man running against Rankin. Rankin was re-elected in 1940, only to cast the sole vote against the US entry into WWII. Once again, she lost her seat again. A portrait of Jeannette Rankin hangs in the office of US representative and former Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi.

³ Barbara Winslow, *Revolutionary Feminism: The Women’s Liberation Movement in Seattle* (Duke University Press, 2023), 106.

⁴ Swerdlow, Amy, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993; Alonso, Harriet Hyman, *Peace as a Women’s Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women’s Rights* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993).

⁵ For a full discussion of Seattle left feminism see Winslow, *Revolutionary Feminism: The Women’s Liberation Movement in Seattle*, as above.

⁶ Chris Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

⁷ For one of the best discussions of GI organizing in Seattle, see Jessie Kindig, “Draft Resistance in the Vietnam Era,” http://depts.washington.edu/antiwar/gi_timeline.shtml

⁸ Jill Severn, “Women and Draft Resistance: Revolution in the Revolution,” on behalf of Radical Women, April 1968. In the George Arthur Papers, University of Washington Manuscripts and University Archive, Accession #1619, Location C09606, Box 6, page 19. Homosexuals have historically been exempted from military service as well. Many men, both heterosexual and homosexual, claimed homosexuality as a means to avoid the draft. Severn’s article was written before the emergence of the lesbian and gay liberation movements. No doubt she would have included gays and lesbians in her critique of the draft had it been written in 1970.

⁹ *Lilith*, Fall 1968, Archives and Special Collections, University of Washington.

¹⁰ Interview with Stephanie Coontz, July 18, 1991, Archives and Special Collections, University of Washington.

¹¹ Interview with Stephanie Coontz, July 18, 1991, Archives and Special Collections, University of Washington.

¹² For more about Megan Cornish, see <http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/cornish.htm>. Accessed December 15, 2024.

¹³ This antiwar show originally toured military sites overseas. In conversation Jane Fonda told me that she was inspired by the actress Vanessa Redgrave, then an active member of the Trotskyist Workers’ Revolutionary Party in England, who put on similar theatrical shows at factory gates. The FTA title was generally understood as “Fuck the Army,” although the organizers insisted it meant “Free the Army.”

¹⁴ “Radical Women leaflet,” May 12, Archives and Special Collections, the University of Washington.

¹⁵ Mimeographed leaflet, “OPPOSE THE WAR, OPPOSE THE WARMAKERS,” handed out at the October 31, 1970, March against the US war in Vietnam in Seattle, Washington. Archives and Special Collections the University of Washington.

¹⁶ “International Women’s Day Celebration” song sheet, March 9, 1974, University of Washington Archives and Special Collections.

¹⁷ Letter dated November 17, 1968, original draft in the Archives and Special Collections, the University of Washington.

¹⁸ Indo China or Indochine was the western imperialist name for the former French colonies, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. For more information about the two IndoChinese conferences, see Judy Chu, *Radicals on the Road*, <https://www.vancouverwomenscaucus.ca/key-issues/indo-chinese-womens-conference> and <https://www.vancouverwomenscaucus.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/An-Indochinese-Conference-in-Vancouver-by-Kathleen-Aberle.pdf>. Accessed December 15, 2024.

¹⁹ For the Conference, <https://www.vancouverwomenscaucus.ca/key-issues/indo-chinese-womens-conference>. Accessed December 15, 2024.

²⁰ *And Aint I a Woman*, Vol. 1, no.5, 1970. University of Washington Archives and Special Collections.

²¹ “They’re All Fuckin’ Trots,” dittoed manuscript, 1971, Archives and Special Collections, University of Washington. For context, the Stalin-Trotsky schism culminating in 1928 represented profound differences in analyzing revolution in Russia and across the globe. When Stalin came to power he advocated “socialism in one country.” Trotsky, on the other hand, argued that the forces of capitalism were too great, and for a socialist nation to exist, there had to be socialist revolutions on a global scale. As Stalin accumulated total political control over the USSR he banned, exiled, and jailed his opponents, and had them assassinated, including Trotsky. One tragic legacy of Stalin’s violence against political opponents was carried over, although in less physical ways. Many of the organizers of these conferences unfortunately could not leave the past behind.

²² Liz Briemburg, Indo-Chinese Women’s Conference, <https://www.vancouverwomenscaucus.ca/key-issues/indo-chinese-women-conference>.

²³ Anna Louise Strong, a socialist feminist and labor journalist was one of the leaders during the 1919 Seattle General Strike. In 1921 she travelled to the Soviet Union to report on state of the Russian Revolution; in 1936 she covered the Spanish Civil War. Expelled from the Soviet Union after World War II because of her sympathies toward the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), she moved to China in 1950. Strong was the first western journalist to interview Mao Zedong who she famously quoted as describing US imperialism as a “paper tiger.” The CCP named her as an honorary member of the Red Guard. Members of the Anna Louise Strong Brigade corresponded with Strong from the late 1960s until her death in 1970.