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"It provoked the question: Did women do anything for peace *before*?": Historical Amnesia and the Disappearing Memory of Women's Antinuclear Activism

by

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Amidst a rise in global conflict, the endurance of women's peace and antinuclear activism becomes apparent. The strength of ongoing campaigns is exemplified directly by the recent 2024 Feminist Peace Summit, but can also be seen through women's leadership of initiatives such as the International Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (ICAN). The foremost antinuclear initiative of the 21st century, ICAN received the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize under the feminist leadership of Beatrice Finn, Setsuko Thurlow, and Melissa Parke[1]. Meanwhile, recent flowering of student peace encampments raising opposition to ongoing violence in Palestine followed the example set by women at the famed peace encampments of Greenham Common and Seneca, New York, in the 1980s. Truly, as the Feminist Peace Summit declared, it is "more urgent than ever to gather our social movements to call for genuine human security grounded in peace, justice, and ecological sustainability"[2].

Women carry a long, often unacknowledged legacy of antinuclear activism. Peace featured as crucial component of women's progressive causes stretching back to the 19th century, working in tandem with equality and anti-poverty initiatives. Yet the dawn of the atomic age instilled unprecedented urgency during the Cold War, as activists deployed renewed gender-based opposition to nuclear weapons. Hundreds of thousands of women became politicised by fear of nuclear conflict, mobilized by organizations of the 1960s such as Women Strike for Peace (WSP); inspired by national leaders like Randall Forsberg and Helen Caldicott in the 1970s; and

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[1] Press Release, *The Nobel Peace Prize 2017: International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*, The Nobel Prize, 6 October 2017. https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2017/press-release/ Last accessed 24th May 2024.

[2] Feminist Peace Summit 2024. https://www.feministpeacesummit.org/ Last accessed 24th May 2024.

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transformed by experiences among the sprawling women's peace camp movement of the 1980s. Despite this storied past, the distinguishing feature of women's antinuclear activities is, as historian and antinuclear leader Amy Swerdlow termed, "historical amnesia"[3]. Commonly, social movements produce a folklore and collective memory through which activists gain identity, affinity, and knowledge of the cause towards which they work. As historian of social memory Geoffrey Cubbitt argues, familiarity with an agreed version of events "is part of what is involved in becoming, in the fullest sense, a member of the group in question"[4]. Lara Leigh Kelland similarly depicted the widespread practice of history-creation among social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, revealing the power of narrative and memory for the development of activist identity and legitimization of present actions by acknowledging their place in an activist lineage[5]. In contrast, antinuclear activists and women's movement supporters have rarely celebrated, nor even shown awareness for, the antinuclear efforts of women that preceded them. As women responded to the blight of atmospheric nuclear testing in the early 1960s, they eschewed their forerunners to declare that they "saw ourselves as new"[6]. Assembling at women's peace camps to resist the imposition of Cruise missiles into Europe during the early 1980s, activists again demonstrated their historical amnesia. As activist and historian Jill Liddington observed, "it provoked the question: did women do anything for peace *before*?" She asked, "why had all this been forgotten?"[7]

This article explores the history and memory of American women's antinuclear activism, illuminating its curious location on the peripheries of historical scholarship and activist reminiscence. Neither a part of the feminist and women's movement, nor strictly the peace and antinuclear movement, women antinuclear activists have persistently struggled to fix themselves within social movement history. Indeed, the

[3] The term "historical amnesia" is applied here in the way history professor and peace activist Amy Swerdlow used it to describe the lack of scholarly interest provided her former organization Women Strike for Peace. See, for example, Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the* 1960s, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1993, p. 12; Amy Swerdlow, *Ladies' Day at the Capitol: Women Strike for Peace Versus HUAC*, in "Feminist Studies", 8, 3, 1982, p. 493.

[4] Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 2007, p. 135.

[5] Lara Leigh Kelland, *Clio's Foot Soldiers: Twentieth-Century U.S. Social Movements and Collective Memory*, University of Massachusetts, Amherst 2018, p. 6; 71. There are defined and identifiable memories within the antiwar and antinuclear movements (Penny Lewis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013); Robert D. Benford, *Controlling Narratives and Narratives as Control within Social Movements*, in *Stories of Change: Narrative and Social Movements*, edited by Joseph E. Davis, State University Press of New York, Albany 2002, p. 57, the civil rights movement Leigh Raiford and Romano (eds.), *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*, University of Georgia Press, Athens 2006; Cheryl Lynn Greenberg (ed.), *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick 1998, the LGBT+ movement (Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Suzanna M. Crage, *Movements and memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth*, In "American Sociological Review", Vol. 71, 5, 2006, pp. 724-751; and the women's movement: Kelland's *Clio's Footsoldiers*; Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848-1898*, The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill 2014.

[6] Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, cit., p. 10.

[7] Liddington, *The Road to Greenham Common*, cit., p. 2.

variable memory of women's past antinuclear exploits is contingent on it being acknowledged as a legitimate focus of women's organizing; on continuing uncertainty about whether peace should be classed, as many women antinuclear activists affirmed, as a "woman's issue"[8]. Rather than exploring the presence or legitimacy of feminist identities among women antinuclear activists, this article instead defers to activists' own historicism[9]. In doing so it uncovers how women antinuclear activists have themselves demonstrated an inability, and indeed unwillingness, to align themselves with their predecessors. This encouraged the "amnesia" identified by historian and peace activist Amy Swerdlow. The article highlights two separate, but related examples of antinuclear women's historicism to demonstrate this; one from the antinuclear group Women Strike for Peace, and the other from participants to the 1980s American women's peace camp movement. Combining a historiographical overview with an analysis of activists' own historicism, this article reasserts the unique methodological value of memory as an analytical lens for determining the character of social movement communities[10].

Women and Peace in Social Movement History

In the US, efforts towards peace paralleled advocacy for women's rights in the 19th and early 20th century and the women's movement grew in tandem with causes such as abolitionism and anti-militarism. As suffragists perceived violence and militarism as obstacles to women's equality, many of those advocating for voting rights entwined their struggle with pacifist ideals during World War I. This sentiment persisted during the interwar period, exemplified by the establishment, growth, and influence of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). WILPF's American leaders, Jane Addams and Emily Greene Balch both received the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts. As atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to close World War II, American women "were faced with a whole new international trauma"[11]. Civil defense programs expanded to respond to the threat of intercontinental ballistic missiles, emphasizing women's traditional domestic role in preparing homes and families for potential attacks. This focus on women's protective

[8] For example, Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Peace As a Woman's Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse 1993; Ethel Taylor, *We Made a Difference: My Personal Journey with Women Strike for Peace*, Camino Books, Philadelphia 1998, p. 111.

[9] Most of the major works in women's peace and antinuclear history have been produced by those who had been major contributors to the activist initiatives on which they write. As such, for this article, select pieces of scholarship constitute archival resources and I analyse them as such.

[10] Nearly a quarter of a century ago, Francesca Polletta and James Jasper noted that "we still know little about the cultural building blocks that are used to construct collective identities", asserting that "we should learn more about how nostalgia and other elements of collective memory construct a shared past for a group", Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, *Collective Identity and Social Movements*, in "Annual Review of Sociology", 27, 2001, pp. 283-305. Subsequent examinations of social movement memory shed much light on the communities that form to tackle civil rights, LGBTQ+ equality, and women's movement activism. However, the absence of memory among women's antinuclear activists suggests a distinctive fragility among this particular community.

[11] Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue*, cit., p. 156.

duties aligned with societal expectations of their maternal responsibilities, with Federal Civil Defense Administration officials like Katherine Howard and Leo A. Hoegh reinforcing this notion[12]. Yet, the same maternalist ideology used to encourage women's participation in civil defense also enabled them to become politically active against nuclear weapons in a profoundly important way. Leveraging their roles as mothers and housewives to criticize Cold War militarism, women illuminated the hypocrisy of being expected to protect their children while arms build-ups posed an existential threat to all life. This approach resonated with the public, while actions such as Dorothy Hutchinson's Mother's Day fast at the Atomic Energy Commission and Mary Sharmat's refusal to participate in New York City's civil defense drills exemplified a growing militancy[13]. The formation of Women Strike for Peace (WSP) in 1961 epitomised growing antinuclear momentum across the US and pushed women into leadership of the movement. WSP's marches, international gatherings, educational outreach, and lobbying initiatives drew significant public and media attention. As Jacqueline Castledine and Amy Schneidhorst separately find, this iteration of anti-militarism was a key activating and organizing issue that framed women's progressive activism in this era[14].

Just as the women's antinuclear movement gained ground, the multifaceted nature of progressive movements waned, leading to a fragmentation of ties between peace, feminism, and broader social justice causes. WSP dedicated themselves to a single-issue campaign against nuclear arms, effectively disentangling the immediacy of the issue from gender equality, racial justice, and poverty alleviation efforts. This disconnection became ever more pronounced in the late 1960s and 1970s, as radical feminists and women's liberationists critiqued the gender essentialism and maternal rhetoric underpinning women's existing antinuclear efforts[15]. The threat of nuclear war peaked again in the early 1980s as first the USSR and then the US developed and dispersed a new generation of short range tactical nuclear weapons throughout Europe. Initiatives such as the 1980 and 1981 Women's Pentagon Actions inspired

[12] Winzola McLendon, *Nuclear War Is But an Error or Whim Away*, "The Washington Post", 27 September 1960. See also Laura McEnaney, A*tomic Age Motherhood: Maternalism and Militarism in the 1950s*, in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, edited by inda K. Kerber and Jane Sherrow de Hart, Oxford University Press, New York 2000, pp. 449-452; 452; Dee Garrison, *Bracing for Armageddon: Why Civil Defense Never Worked*, Oxford University Press, New York 2006, p. 115.

[13] David Hostetter, *House Guest of the AEC: Dorothy Hutchinson, the 1958 Fast at the Atomic Energy Commission, and the Domestication of Protest*, in "Peace and Change", 34, 2, 2009, p. 134; Scott H. Bennet, *Radical Pacifism: The War Resisters League and Gandhian Nonviolence in America, 1915-1963*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse 2003, pp. 207-216; Garrison, *Bracing for Armageddon*, cit., p. 115.

[14] Jacqueline Castledine, *Cold War Progressives: Women's Interracial Organizing for Peace and Freedom,* University of Illinois Press, Chicago 2012; Amy C. Schneidhorst*, Building a Just and Secure World: Popular Front Women's Struggle for Peace and Justice in Chicago during the 1960s*, Bloomsbury Publishing, New York City 2011.

[15] See for example Jon Coburn, *Basically Feminist: Women Strike for Peace, Maternal Peace Activism, and Memory of the Women's Peace Movement*, in "Journal of Women's History", 33, 2, 2021, pp. 136-162; Ruth Rosen, *The Day They Buried 'Traditional Womanhood': Women and the Politics of Peace Protest*, in *The Legacy: The Vietnam War in the American Imagination*, edited by D. Michael Shafer , Beacon Press, Boston 1990, p. 238.

a global movement of women's peace encampments that spread from Greenham Common in the UK to localised efforts throughout the US, Europe, and Australia. Such encampments underscored the enduring commitment of women to peace advocacy and its integral connection to the evolution of American feminism.

The extent of this history led many to claim that they were not merely women activists taking part in antinuclear work, but that they were a part of a separate *women's antinuclear movement* distinct from either the peace or women's movements[16]. This firm assertion complicated the perception towards and historical recording of women's antinuclear activism, situating it in a third space between the more structured narratives of peace and women's movement histories[17]. In works directly concerned with peace work, such as Petra Goedde's illuminating *The Politics of Peace*, women's initiatives are confined to chapters on gender and peace activism and lack exploration of their place as a more connective part of a wider social movement landscape[18]. Other historians are somewhat more indifferent to women's contributions, notarizing myriad successes while emphasising the proclamations of maternal nurturance often found in the literature and avowals of women antinuclear protesters to ignore the complex politicism and activist lineages underpinning them[19]. Despite Marian Mollin's appeal for historians to present broader contestations of women's identities in peace and pacifist movements, the persistent depiction of the women's peace movement as one of housewives and mothers endures[20].

Narratives of the American women's movement further demonstrate the marginalization of women's antinuclear exploits. Challenges to the so-called "convention view" of feminist history have grown in recent years, with Cobble, Gordon, and Henry's enlightening *Feminism Unfinished* expanding narrow definitions of women's activism to recapture otherwise hidden elements, influenced by what historian Melissa Estes Blair identified as the historical "dominance of

[16] "Middle-Class Masses, by Eleanor Garst, from Magazine of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, September 1962," SCPC WSP Records, B1:7, Working Documents 1961-1964; Dagmar Wilson interview, April 15, 1989, *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Collection ARS.0056*, Stanford University Archive of Recorded Sound.

[17] In her totemic 1993 book *Peace as a Women's Issue*, peace historian Harriet Alonso asked "what exactly did I mean by "the women's peace movement?" Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue: A History of the US Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse 1993, p. 4.

[18] Petra Goedde, *The Politics of Peace: A Global Cold War History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2019.

[19] For examples, see Tom Wells, *The War Within: America's Battle Over Vietnam*, University of California Press, London 1994, p. 48; Lawrence S. Wittner, *Resisting the Bomb: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, 1954-1970 (Vol. 2 of The Struggle Against the Bomb)*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1997, p. 252; Gerard J. DeGroot, *The Bomb: A Life*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA 2004; Milton S. Katz, *Ban the Bomb: A History of SANE, the Committee for a SANE Nuclear Policy, 1957-1985*, Greenwood Press, Westport, CT 1986.

[20] Marian Mollin, *Women's Struggles within the American Radical Pacifist Movement*, in "History Compass", 7/3, 2009, pp. 1064-1090.

radical feminism"[21]. New scholarship sheds light on previously overlooked features of women's movement organizing, encouraging new connections between different phases of women's organizing by including, for example, the struggle for fair labor laws and consumer rights activism[22]. Despite frequent retellings of the womens movement's postwar resurgence, women's antinuclear activism remains notably absent from these narratives[23]. Estes Blair, for instance, concludes that "by the end of the 1980s, much of the forward momentum of the women's movement had stalled" throughout the US. In doing so, they discount the global resurgence in antinuclear activism spearheaded by women such as Helen Caldicott and Randall Forsberg, led by organizations such as WAND, based in thriving women's peace camp communities from Seattle to New York[24]. While urging against narrow "conventional" histories of women's activism, Cobble, Gordon, and Henry similarly omit peace organizing which would reveal "no period when women were not campaigning" for an end to militarism[25]. Even in scholarship specifically addressing women's contributions as peace activists, the histories of antinuclear initiatives like WSP and women's peace encampments throughout the US are siphoned into distinct segments that prevents consideration of women's peace activism as a connective part of the wider social movement landscape[26]. Peace, it seems, remains on the periphery of studies on women's Cold War-era activism.

Efforts to recapture women's antinuclear history largely fell to women peace activists themselves. Sybil Oldfield wrote in 1989 that, despite their important contribution to the 20th century peace movement, women were "hardly heard" within pacifist discourse as history circles continued to ignore their influence[27]. In 1993, esteemed peace historian Harriet Hyman Alonso framed her expansive study of the women's peace movement with the proclamation that it represented "the introductory overview" that had not been available to her when teaching courses on the subject[28]. In the early 1990s, British academic and activist Jill Liddington similarly decried the lack of knowledge "about the story of the magnificent fight" by earlier generations of women's peace activists, lamenting that "there was no one

[21] Dorothy Sue Cobble, Linda Gordon, and Astrid Henry, *Feminism Unfinished: A Short, Surprising History of American Women's Movements,* Liveright Publishing Corporation, New York 2014, p. xiv; Melissa Estes Blair, *Revolutionizing Expectations: Women's Organizations, Feminism, and American Politics, 1965-1980*, University of Georgia Press, Athens 2014, p. 2.

[22] Francesca Polletta, *Freedom is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements*, Chicago University Press, Chicago 2002, p. 154; Sara M. Evans, *Beyond Declension: Feminist Radicalism in the 1970s and 1980s*, in *The World the Sixties Made: Politics and Culture in Recent America*, ed. Van Gosse, Temple University Press, Philadelphia 2003, pp. 52-66.

[23] Victoria Hesford, *Feeling Women's Liberation*, Duke University Press, London 2013, p. 8.

[24] Estes Blair, *Revolutionizing Expectations*, cit., p. 147.

[25] Cobble, Gordon, and Henry, *Feminism Unfinished*, cit., p. xiv.

[26] Goedde, *The Politics of Peace*, cit.

[27] Sybil Oldfield, *Women Against the Iron Fist*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1989, p. i.

[28] Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Peace As a Woman's Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse 1993, p. 4.

accessible account" to which an interested party could turn[29]. Former antinuclear leader and women's history professor Amy Swerdlow spent her academic life diligently correcting the "historical amnesia" afforded her organization, Women Strike for Peace. Swerdlow described her historical motivation as correcting her former organization's status as "ignored or misrepresented"[30]. She wrote that "I recognize that my purpose was not only to add the story of WSP to the historical record but also to make certain that the middle-aged women of WSP are recognized as significant actors"[31]. A later spark of academic interest produced glowing material on women, peace, and the Vietnam War, but a noticeable lack of historical consciousness exists towards antinuclear activism specifically[32]. In 2023, Niamh Moore, a participant to the Friends of Clayoquot Sound ecofeminist peace camp that formed thirty years prior, explained that the camp "offered a profound contrast with dominant narratives of the end of feminism at the time"[33]. But with this acknowledgment entails recognition that such stories of women's peace camps are not remembered in the 21st century. "By now, shouldn't I be bored by endless familiar tales of Greenham, of Greenham hagiography, rather than still hungry for every crumb?" writes Moore. "In a book on feminist peace camps, Greenham *is* a touchstone – but it is necessary to make the point here about how unusual this is"[34]. This suggests a fragility in women's antinuclear history – a fractured lineage with lost stories, fragmented communities, and a disappearing memory.

The Disappearing Memory of Women's Antinuclear Protest

Historiographical moves partly explain this community's fragmented history. First, female participation in social movement activism was overwritten by "male-led movement stories" of the peace and antinuclear movement, a premise that motivated Amy Swerdlow's absorbing history of WSP[35]. Similarly, historians such as Francisca de Haan argue that McCarthyist Cold War paradigms carried over into historical assessments of women's antinuclear groups[36]. De Haan notes that organisations like the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) and

[29] Jill Liddington, *The Women's Peace Crusade: The History of a Forgotten Campaign*, in *Over Our Dead Bodies: Women Against the Bomb*, edited by Dorothy Thompson, Virago Press, London 1983, p. 198; Liddington, *The Road to Greenham Common*, cit. p. 4.

[30] Swerdlow, *Ladies' Day at the Capitol*, cit., p. 493.

[31] Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, cit., p. 12.

[32] Notable among them are Jessica M. Frazier, *Women's Antiwar Diplomacy During the Vietnam War Era*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 2017, Amy Schneidhorst's *Building a Just and Secure World*, cit.

[33] Niamh Moore, *Remembering an Eco/Feminist Peace Camp*, in *Feminism and Protest Camps: Entanglements, Critiques and Re-Imaginings*, edited by Catherine Eschle and Alison Bartlett (Bristol University Press, Bristol 2023, p. 237.

[34] Moore, *Remembering an Eco/Feminist Peace Camp*, cit., p. 237.

[35] Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, cit., p.12.

[36] Francisca de Haan, *Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: the Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)*, in "Women's History Review", 19, 4, 2010, pp. 547-573.

the Congress of American Women (CAW) were devalued at the time of their operations because of their connections with Russian women. They subsequently became devalued historically, contributing to what De Haan terms simply "not knowing" about the past[37]. Women's movement historian Sara Evans observed similar phenomena affected women's rights histories[38].

Another factor is the cyclical nature of antinuclear protest. Sustaining interest in peace protest, and more importantly cultivating a consistent and reliable supply of activists, is a difficult task. Antinuclear activism occurs in reaction to external events. There are periods of intense angst, often arising from international events, or changes in governmental policy, which eventually subsides once the issue falls from public attention. Nuclear historian Paul Boyer noted this with particular reference to the antinuclear community, noting that the fear of nuclear weapons appeared absent from 1963, after the Cuban Missile Crisis and agreement of the Partial Test Ban Treaty, through 1980, with the election of President Ronald Reagan[39]. This affects the retention of historical knowledge. Writing about the missing history of women's antimilitarism before Greenham Common, Jill Liddington opined "Why had all this been forgotten? Partly because a women's peace movement has had a highly cyclical history…*particularly* marked by peaks and troughs" with popular support suddenly rising up and then dropping away. When younger women asked the question: 'did women do anything for peace *before* Greenham?', few could remember the answer. A living oral tradition had grown rusty"[40].

Women Strike for Peace

The most telling and consequential explanation for historical amnesia rests in the inability, and indeed occasional unwillingness, of antinuclear activists to firmly and consistently relate themselves to history. Two examples of activists' struggle to historicise their efforts demonstrate the significance of this phenomenon. First, the experience of Women Strike for Peace, a maternal women's peace organization formed in response to atmospheric weapons testing in 1961. WSP grew from modest beginnings at a Washington, DC, cocktail party to become one of the most effective peace groups in American history. It drew tens of thousands of self-described "housewives and mothers" across the United States to its first "strike for peace," evolving from a one-off demonstration into an effective operation renowned for spontaneous action, autonomous campaign groups, and maternalist expressions of concern for life on earth. WSP's fingerprints can be found on most of the major arms control treaties and successful antiwar efforts of the Cold War. It single-handedly dismantled the McCarthyite House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), catalysed public support for the 1963 Nuclear Weapons Test Ban Treaty, brokered transnational exchanges between American and Vietnamese women during the

[37] De Haan, *Continuing Cold War Paradigms*, cit., p. 547.

[38] Evans, *Beyond Declension*, cit., p. 55.

[39] Paul Boyer, *From Activism to Apathy: The American People and Nuclear Weapons, 1963-1980*, in "The Journal of American History", 70, 4,1984, pp. 821-844.

[40] Liddington, *The Road to Greenham Common*, cit., pp. 2-3.

Vietnam War, all while receiving glowing praise from political leaders compelled to "listen to mother"[41]. As historian Petra Goedde argues, WSP's "even handed display of common sense" rehabilitated the politics of peace amidst the absurdity of Cold War nuclear strategy and a turbulent social movement landscape[42].

WSP's extensive roots and its connection to the existing social movement formations, highlighted by Lara Track, points to its significance as a bridge between generations of women activists[43]. Yet, WSP's leaders took their group out of the social movement landscape by declaring their ambivalence for feminist causes, reluctance to support civil rights campaigns, and railing even against the contemporary antinuclear movement of which they were a part[44]. In the immediate aftermath of its founding, the group's founders basked in glowing news headlines that fed into a perception that WSP "seemed to have emerged from nowhere"[45]. Historian Petra Goedde explained that this reflected an effort, common among postwar activist organizations, to "to portray itself as the true representative and unifying force of all 'democratic' women", which entailed an attack of others that "tried to claim for themselves the mantle of peace advocacy"[46].

WSP's distancing from mainstream feminism went a step further, reflecting instead a desire to separate its antinuclear cause from the women's movement almost entirely. Historian Catherine Foster explains that WSP's women refrained from declaring themselves as a part of a feminist movement[47]. When speaking to the press, WSP participants declared that, once they had achieved their aims, they would happily return to their "pots-and-pans and PTAs and all the duties and pleasures that we have since neglected"[48]. Historian Amy Swerdlow noted WSP leader Dagmar

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[41] Amy Swerdlow, *Ladies' Day at the Capitol: Women Strike for Peace Versus HUAC*, in "Feminist Studies", 8, 3, 1982, pp. 493-520; Ruth Rosen, *Next Time, Listen to Mother*, "Los Angeles Times", 7 August 1997.

[42] Goedde, *The Politics of Peace*, cit., pp. 1-11. See also Thomas Raymond Wellock, *Opposition to Nuclear Power in California, 1958-1978*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 1998. Wellock notes that maternal protesters fundamentally broadened the appeal of the antinuclear movement by expanding its critique to include moral questions.

[43] Lara Track, *Frieden und Frauenrechte im Kalten Krieg: Women Strike for Peace und die amerikanische Frauenrechtsbewegung im Spiegel transnationaler Kooperationen, 1961-1990*, Transcript Publishing, Bielefeld, 2024. See also Schneidhorst, *Building a Just and Secure World*.

[44] "Letter from Kay Hardman to Homer Jack, January 6, 1963," SCPC WSP Archives, ACC 92A-118, Box 1, British Peace Groups. See also Andrew J. Ross, *Preemptive Strikes: Women Strike for Peace, Antinuclear Activism, and the Movement for a Biological Democracy, 1961-1963*, in "Peace and Change", 46, 2021, pp. 161-182.

[45] Swerdlow, *Ladies' Day at the Capitol*, cit., p. 494. This story The story of WSP's emergence epitomizes what historian Verta Taylor termed the "immaculate conception view" of 1960 social movement origins in which organizations "seemingly emerged out of nowhere and represented a sudden shift from the quiescent 1940s and 1950s". Verta Taylor, *Social Movement Continuity: The Women's Movement in Abeyance*, in "American Sociological Review", 54, 1989, p. 761.

[46] Goedde, *The Politics of Peace*, cit. p. 144.

[47] Andrea Estepa, *Taking the White Gloves Off: Women Strike for Peace and the Transformation of Women's Activist Identities in the United States, 1961-1980*, (PhD diss., Rutgers University, May 2012), 65.

[48] Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, cit. p. 22.

Wilson's comments to the press explaining "our organization has no resemblance to the Lysistrata theme, or even the suffragettes. We are not striking against our husbands. It is my guess that we will make the soup that they will ladle out to the children on Wednesday". Leading figures frequently gave contra-feminist pronouncements, revealing a virulent dislike for women's liberation. In June 1970, Anne Eaton, who had so impactfully organized WSP efforts in Cleveland, Ohio, its first few years, denounced the "militants of the Women's Lib" in a commencement address for Hathaway Brown School. Referring to her audience as "mother-variables", Eaton declared that the women's liberation movement had "done for true feminism what the Boston Strangler did for door-to-door salesmen. We must be kind to these people – they all need mothering – but not take them seriously"[49].

Neither a part of the women's movement, nor willingly a part of the antinuclear movement, WSPers disrupted traditional social movement analysis[50]. But they also fractured their connection to history[51]. Amy Swerdlow recalled the group's lack of recognition for previous activists' work and a desire to separate entirely from any previous efforts. She offered a revealing lament of her own attitude towards peace and women's history in *Women Strike for Peace*. She recounted meeting WILPF's international secretary Gertrude Baer at the Seventeen-Nation Disarmament Conference in Geneva in 1962 and opined that she had not given her "the respect and admiration I have since come to feel for her important role in women's peace history". Initially dismissing Baer as "an opinionated old woman", Swerdlow's later studies enlightened her to such events as the 1915 International Congress of Women at the Hague and WILPF's 1932 Geneva conference, in which Baer played a significant role. She used this incident to explain WSPers' attitude towards activist history, one in which her own "ignorance" continued to cause her "shame and pain"[52]. There was more to this attitude than just a lack of historical knowledge. WSPers were aware of the past; they understood their place in a lineage of women's

[49] Anne Eaton, Hathaway Brown School Commencement Address, June 12, 1970. SCPC WSP Records, ACC 2013-050:15, Women Strike for Peace History.

[50] Wherein a social *movement* is defined as a broad "set of opinions and beliefs in a population," and a social movement *organization* is a smaller, focused group "which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement and attempts to implement those goals," John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, *Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory*, in "American Journal of Sociology", 82, 6, 1977, pp. 1217-1218.

[51] This prevented historians from situating WSP in broader social movement landscapes and, especially, from acknowledging just how closely connected WSP was to other women's peace organizations such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Andrew J. Ross, for example, follows WSP participants' descriptions to depict WSP as the "Women Strike for Peace movement", (Ross, *Preemptive Strikes*, cit. pp. 161-182). WILPF historian Catherine Foster applied WSP's impressions to historicize that a "small handful of housewives in Washington DC founded a *movement* called Women Strike for Peace", indicating it as significantly separate from groups like SANE and WILPF that essentially birthed WSP, Catherine Foster, *Women for All Seasons: The Story of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom*, University of Georgia Press, Athens 1989, p. 27. Peace historian Harriet Alonso in particular takes issue with this characterization, importantly observing that WSP represented one organization *within* a broader movement, Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Review*, review *of Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s*, by Amy Swerdlow, in "The American Historical Review", 99, 5, 1994, pp. 1773-1774.

[52] Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, cit. p. 9.

peace activism. However, "we regarded history as irrelevant", explained Swerdlow[53]. This was, after all, not only a history that WSP activists were aware of but a history to which they had actively contributed[54]. Partly a response to McCarthyist paranoia of the previous decade, and partly an avowal of unique organizational identity, WSP masked the continuities and links between itself and other phases of American social movement activism[55]. As Petra Goedde explained, the work that other women's organizations had performed towards peace and antinuclear issues "was of little interest to WSP members"[56].

As the women's liberation movement crested over the US towards the end of the 1960s radical feminists attacked the maternal identity underpinning WSP's antinuclear stance. New York Radical Women directly confronted the group at the 1968 Jeanette Rankin Brigade demonstration, declaring that maternal antinuclear activism "condoned and even enforced the gender hierarchy in which men made war and women wept" while staging a mock burial of "traditional womanhood"[57]. These attacks were a watershed moment in WSP history. Activists began reconsidering their relationship to ideas of women's liberation and took a warmer approach to the feminist movement generally. They advertised their 1970 national conference as "a women's conference" instead of a "strictly WSP conference", started contributing publicly to women's rights demonstrations such as the Women's Strike for Equality and the National Women's Conference, and emphasised among themselves that "we want to be a women's movement"[58]. In 1973, starting her academic historical research into the group, Amy Swerdlow described WSP as "basically a feminist organization"[59].

However, WSP's earlier distancing from the feminist movement wrought havoc on the group's attempts to historicise its activities. WSP leaders now had to maintain two conflicting historical narratives. On the one hand, that they had emerged in 1961 "from nowhere", as a group of politically-inexperienced, non-feminist "housewives and mothers", spurred to activism for the first time only by their domestic duty to save their families from the nuclear crisis. On the other, that their early 1960s example had carried the lineage of the American women's movement through the McCarthy-era, that they had always been feminist, and that their example inspired the development of the women's liberation movement in the US. The impact of this

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[53] Amy Swerdlow interview, September 25, 1987, ARS.0056

[54] For example, "Role of San Francisco Women for Peace in the US War Against Vietnam – Hazel Grossman's response to letter from Vietnamese Women's Union," University of California, Berkeley (UCB) WFP Records, 1;8, Historical Information for Vietnam Women's Association, 1984.

[55] Andrea Estepa, *Taking the White Gloves Off: Women Strike for Peace and 'the Movement*, *1967-73*, in *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States*, edited by Stephanie Gilmore, University of Illinois Press, Chicago 2008, pp. 84-112.

[56] Goedde, *Politics of Peace*, cit. p. 149.

[57] Coburn*, Basically Feminist*, cit. pp. 136-162; Rosen, *The Day They Buried 'Traditional Womanhood'*, cit. p. 238.

[58] "National Conference Planning Committee, 17 September 1970," SCPC WSP Records, A1:1, Misc Minutes; Coburn, "Basically Feminist," 141.

[59] "Progress Report on WSP Research," Swarthmore College (SCPC) WSP Records, C1:3, Research on WSP by Amy Swerdlow.

is evident in the autobiographical renderings produced by former WSP leaders. Former National Coordinator Ethel Taylor published her autobiography in 1997. Emphatically titled *We Made a Difference*, Taylor explained that, "in retrospect", WSP women "were the harbingers of the women's liberation movement"[60]. Yet, in the same book, Taylor also recalled that she "had not actually been involved, except peripherally, in the women's movement"[61]. In a 1989 oral history interview, Dagmar Wilson proudly identified herself as a feminist and evoked her family's close ties to suffrage activism. She declared that she would have taken part in the first-wave of women's rights activism. But she also explained that WSP was "not a women's movement", but a "peace movement activated by women", emphasizing that "there's a difference in that". Wilson claimed to have "never been in any way politically active before in my whole life" before she began WSP, describing herself firmly as a "mere housewife"[62]. She underlined her belief that "we were not a feminist movement. We were simply women working for the good of humanity"[63].

Even Amy Swerdlow's own impression of WSP's past differed over time. Her initial research report in 1973 contended that WSP "was basically a feminist movement, though many of its present day leaders would deny this"[64]. She provided a more emphatic opinion for WSP's eighteenth anniversary Commemorative Journal six years later, claiming that "WSP policy throughout" the 1960s was "fiercely autonomist and feminist"[65]. But she moderated later expressions. In a 1989 chapter for the influenced women's peace anthology *Rocking the Ship of State*, she explained that WSP had "accepted for itself a secondary, supportive, helping, and enabling role" among anti-war protesters, rather than engaging with attitudes towards women's liberation[66]. In the publication of Women Strike for Peace in 1993, Swerdlow again defended the political identity of "traditional" motherhood. "We were middle-class housewives working from Christmas card lists and church rosters," she explained, "we were the lady next door, we were concerned about our children, not political power"[67]. This reflects the difficulty of reconciling WSP's ambiguous stance towards women's liberation with some activists' perceptions that they were, and always had been, feminist agitators. Given the significance of WSP activists' historicism to both the rise and continued analysis of women's peace

[60] Taylor, *We Made a Difference*, cit. p. 2.

[61] Taylor, *We Made a Difference*, cit. p. 111.

[62] Dagmar Wilson, *Tainting the Antinuclear Movement: HUAC and the irrepressible Women Strike for Peace*, in *The Price of Dissent: Testimonies to Political Repression in America*, edited by Bud Schultz and Ruth Schultz, University of California Press, Berkeley 2001, p. 284.

[63] Dagmar Wilson interview, April 15, 1989, ARS.0056.

[64] "Progress Report on WSP Research," SCPC WSP Records, C1:3, Research on WSP by Amy Swerdlow.

[65] "WSP Commemorative Journal, 1961-1979," SCPC WSP Records, A1:2, Documents Describing WSP History.

[66] Amy Swerdlow, *'Pure Milk, Not Poison': Women Strike for Peace and the Test Ban Treaty of 1963*, in *Rocking the Ship of State: Toward a Feminist Peace Politics*, edited by Adrienne Harries and Ynestra King, Westview Press, Boulder 1989, p. 227.

[67] Nadine Brozan, *Chronicle: Looking Back at a Spontaneous Moment in the History of Women*, "New York Times", December 6, 1993.

history, these uncertain determinations affected the development of women's antinuclear memory[68].

The Women's Peace Encampment Movement

A different exigency affected the memory of women's antinuclear work in the 1980s. As Cold War tensions reached their apogee, the greatest mobilization of women for antinuclear causes in history occurred as thousands descended on women's peace encampments, notably in Seneca, NY, at Puget Sound, WA, and in Minneapolis, MN. Such sites created prefigurative communities and permanent peace presences at key locations of the nuclear weapons industry. It followed the example set by British antinuclear activists at the Greenham Common Peace Camp, at which women staged a years-long presence at an American-ran RAF base to protest the stationing of cruise missiles in Europe. Women chained themselves to the perimeter fence, blockaded deliveries, and infiltrated the base to make a stand. Greenham's 1982 Embrace the Base demonstration drew 30,000 from around the world to blockade the base's gates. Its activists sued the Reagan administration in 1983 for the imposition of Cruise. Although Greenham has historically been considered in isolation, the significance of the peace camp movement rests in the multitude of local activist sites that were connected in what activists described as a "web"[69].

The significance of this new phase of women's peace activism rested not just in numbers, but in its determined ideological analysis of the intersections of feminism and pacifism. The peace camp movement identified structural patriarchal violence of the nuclear arms race manifesting, physically, in weapons facilities, but also socially in domestic abuse. Alongside its antinuclear challenge, the Puget Sound Women's Peace Camp in Seattle demanded better police protection for women, undertook anti-pornography campaigns, and supported initiatives to help find the Green River Killer, the most prolific serial killer in America history who operated in the Seattle/Tacoma area of Washington State in the mid-1980s. The Philadelphia Women's Peace Encampment explained that "the same respect for machismo that

[68] Jon Coburn, *Basically Feminist*, cit.

[69] The Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp emerged from a demonstrative walk from Wales to RAF Greenham Common in Newbury, England called March for Life. After being unable to secure a meeting with the Minister of Defence the walkers decided to remain at Greenham and stage a permanent peace presence. Ann Pettit, one of the organizers, explained that the idea for the famed Embrace the Base demonstration grew from women's experiences of the Women's Pentagon Actions in 1980 and 1981 (Ann Pettit, *Walking to Greenham?* There were at least twenty-eight locations that hosted an ongoing peace presence defined as an "encampment", the majority of which emerged in the United States from 1983 until 1986. There were a cluster throughout Europe – at least six in the UK, one in Comiso, Italy – and at least two in Australia. They tended to be installed around the sites of military bases, nuclear weapons storage facilities, nuclear weapons manufacturing plants, or, in some cases, places with a more tangential link to the US military such as surveillance and radar stations. See, for example, Mima Cataldo et al., *The Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia 1987, p. 3; Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice, *Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice: Resource Handbook*, Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice, New York 1983.

breeds wars also encourages rape, pornography, and the battering of women. There can be no peace while one race dominates another, or one people, one nation, one sex despises another"[70]. Explaining their reason for being, the Minnesota Women's Camp for Peace and Justice affirmed that "women also know that the American culture participants in the violation of the Earth and her inhabitants. This culture breeds fear of the beauty and strength of human diversity. This fear breeds violence in many forms: war, militarism, cultural and economic imperialism, sexism, rape, incest, battering, racism, anti-Jewish oppression, homophobia"[71]. Women at the Ann Arbor Women's Peace Camp similarly declared that "War means violence and women are the victims of violence on many levels: personal, in the form of rape, incest and assault; institutional, in the form of poverty; and global, in the form of imperialism…we want to demonstrate the link between feminism and non-violence"[72]. Levelling a critique at the peace movement writ large, Ann Arbor further explained in their October 1983 resource handbook that "we have also increasingly felt that the peace movement is relegating 'women's issues' to consideration after the weapons issues. This is not good enough"[73].

With this came immediate efforts to assert peace camps' place in history as organizers, contrasting previous women's antinuclear efforts, asserted their pride in previous efforts as a way of justifying their protests to the wider public. In Minneapolis, women answered the question "Why a Minnesota Women's Peace Camp" by asserting that "Women have always organized against the violence of war. In recent times the horror of nuclear weapons fuels our sense of urgency"[74]. Philadelphia women similarly explained that "We are part of a global tradition of feminist anti-militarist organizing"[75]. Perhaps the most clear assertion of historic lineage came from the women at Seneca. On the cover page of its resource handbook, the Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice cited its place among 500 years of local women's resistance. "1590 – Women of the Hotinon Sionme Iroquois Confederacy gather at Seneca to demand an end to War among the nations; 1800s – Abolitionists make Seneca County a major stop on the underground railroad with Harriet Tubman's house near the present day army depot; 1848 – Early feminists hold first women's rights convention at Seneca Falls to call for suffrage and equal participation in all other areas of life; Today – Urban and rural women join together in Seneca County to challenge the nuclear threat to life itself. We focus on

[70] Phila. Women's Peace Encampment, SCPC Philadelphia Women's Encampment, Box 1, Outreach and Coalition Work.

[71] "Why a Minnesota Women's Peace Camp?, 1983?" SCPC Minnesota Women's Camp for Peace and Justice.

[72] "Ann Arbor Women's Peace Camp Flier," SCPC Ann Arbor Women's Peace Camp, Oct 1983.

[73] Ann Arbor Women's Peace Camp Resource Handbook, October 1983, SCPC Ann Arbor Women's Peace Camp, Oct 1983.

[74] "Why a Minnesota Women's Peace Camp? 1983" SCPC Minnesota Women's Camp for Peace and Justice.

[75] "Phila. Women's Peace Encampment," SCPC Philadelphia Women's Encampment, Box 1, Outreach and Coalition Work.

the weapons at the Seneca Army Depot to prevent deployment of NATO missiles in solidarity with the European peace movement"[76].

Activists' historicising was not just a PR exercise. Significant work went into raising the historical consciousness of camp attendees by recapturing women's antinuclear history. Writing about her experiences at the Greenham Common peace camp in the UK, Sasha Roseneil explained that "memory practices" were enacted by camp goers to instill "collective identity" and "resistance against the hegemonic history of the powerful"[77]. At the Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice, organizers arranged weekly educational sessions, the first of which they titled "History/The History of Our Lives in Resistance". The Seneca encampment's organizers wished to discuss "our personal histories as well as that history specific to the base and our struggle with the weapons. For many of us, this was an easy theme to imagine working on". But the proposal deliberately included further consideration of the "history of nonviolence", the history of "women who have resisted," and the "History of Women's Peace Encampments"[78]. The camp's resource handbook asserted that "for the last 10,000 or so years, women have generally served society as peacemakers". It provided a detailed illumination of American women's peace efforts since the 19th century, drawing particular attention to antinuclear activists' stoic work since WWII. The Seneca camp's orientation materials and its organized activities illuminated women's antinuclear history to an extent not seen before.

Peace camp activists historicised their own experiences with ambitious projects, writing autobiographies, academic histories, and traveling exhibits. In 2005, former residents at the Seneca Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice founded the Peace Encampment Herstory Project. The project arose partly in response to the deaths of peace camp activists, sparking a desire to "collect and make accessible the words, artwork, and photographs" of those whose life's work may otherwise go unnoticed. Organizers explained that the project "recognizes that as a singularly important phenomenon in the history of feminist and antinuclear activism in the United States, Seneca's story must not be left to a handful of "experts" or traditional history in which the contributions of women in general, and lesbians in particular, are distorted, diminished, or nonexistent"[79]. "Together we'll make Herstory!" declared a flier appealing for contributors[80]. The Peace Encampment

[76] "Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice Resource Handbook," SCPC Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice, General Information.

[77] Sasha Roseneil explains that truth was not as important as the felt connections to the past and that "because these connections were felt to be real, they were real." Sasha Roseneil, *Common Women, Uncommon Practices: Common Women, Uncommon Practices: The Queer Feminisms of Greenham*, Cassell Publishing, London 2000, pp. 1-16.

[78] "Minutes from April 6 Meeting, Geneva 1983," SL WEPFJ 1.2 Minutes, agendas, etc., 1982 - July 1983.

[79] "What is the Peace Encampment Herstory Project?", Schlesinger Library, Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice Records, 64.8, [PEHP] Mailings, Documents, Blog, Brochures, etc. ca 2008.

[80] "We WaNT YouR SToRY!", Schlesinger Library, Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice Records, 64.8, [PEHP] Mailings, Documents, Blog, Brochures, etc. ca 2008.

Herstory Project transcribed hours of interviews with peace camp activists, collated a growing body of photographs, video, and related artefacts, and provides access to all of its material through the project's website[81]. As an activist-led historical initiative, it also serves as a continuation of the peace encampment's work. Indeed, as the project organizers explained, the Peace Camp Herstory Project was "daughter of Women's PeaceLand, granddaughter of the Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice". Part of its original intent was "to preserve and restore the land and buildings that house the encampment"[82].

Nevertheless, galvanizing the vast, diverse communities of women that contributed to peace camp life necessarily proved difficult, leading to what ethnographer and Seneca camp woman Louise Krasniewicz termed the "clash of communities". Despite the radical feminism of many attendees, peace camp organizers were not entirely comfortable by definitive associations with the mainstream women's movement. At a planning meeting for the Seneca Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice, organizers recognised the importance of cautiously tailoring their proximity to the contemporary feminist movement. Women from the WILPF reflected "concerns over the toxicity of feminism and relations with the potentially hostile local population". The Peace Camp Movement, they affirmed, "could help broaden the awareness of feminism in the peace movement," but also risked alienating potential antinuclear supporters if they advance too feminist a political message[83]. Notable divisions emerged over acceptance and acknowledgment of non-heterosexual lifestyles and the centrality of LGBT+ rights issues to broader antinuclear campaigns. In a break from more radical examples elsewhere, the Women's Peace Presence camp in rural Clam Lake, Wisconsin, believed that "too strong an emphasis on women's issues might be counterproductive". Some lesbian feminists who attended the camp "expressed great discomfort" at having to "hide who they are" while in northern Wisconsin, as attendees debated how to navigate a "balance between including mainstream women (who are more "straight") versus modifying our own behavior (whether sexual, religious, spiritual, etc.)"[84]. A June 1984 retreat for the Minnesota Women's Camp for Peace and Justice reflected that "straight wimmin talked about feeling discounted, judged as baby women, being uncomfortable, wanting to know if there is a desire to have a lesbian-feminist camp or a mixed camp. Lesbian wimmin spoke about wanting to be visibly lesbian, about judging straight women, about homophobia, about wanting to accept and work with all wimmin while remaining out as lesbians, about wanting the camp to express and create women's culture which may be strongly lesbian. We agreed the tensions are real, the feeling of betrayal and

[81] Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace & Justice, Encampment Herstory Project, https://peacecampherstory.blogspot.com/ Last accessed 24th May 2024.

[82] "Dear Ones," Schlesinger Library, Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice Records, 64.8, [PEHP] Mailings, Documents, Blog, Brochures, etc. ca 2008.

[83] "Upstate Feminist Peace Alliance Meeting, October 9, Ithaca 1982," Schlesinger Library, Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice Records, 1.2 Minutes, agendas, etc., 1982 - July 1983.

[84] Highlights from November 5-6 Minneapolis Meeting of Women's Peace Presence, SCPC Women's Peace Presence to Stop Project ELF.

the need to risk more is real, we agreed we want a welcoming camp which doesn't require dykes be closeted, and that we need to continue talking"[85]. Activists at Greenham Common believed they represented all women, and that Greenham women were "everywhere". Camp participant Sasha Roseneil's simple explanation that "there was no single experience at Greenham" nevertheless reminds us not to homogenise the history of the peace camp movement[86].

It is, perhaps, these divisions and disagreements over the form and feature of women's antinuclear feminism that prevents a determined anti-militarist memory seeping into the culture of the women's movement. Writing about the curious absence of the women's peace camp movement from contemporary history and memory of women's activism, Niamh Moore explained that the "complex web" of peace camp "was successfully reduced to less than feminism"[87]. Catherine Eschle and Alison Bartlett, in the introduction to their edited collection about feminist camps, "indeed, it can be argued that participation in protest camps has been not only underplayed in dominant stories of the history and development of feminism, but actively disavowed"[88]. Furthermore, historian Elaine Titcombe notes significant differences and "competing histories" in the renderings of Greenham Common as described in the memoirs of former participants. Titcombe describes that Greenham Common "has become synonymous with radical feminism", whereas Ann Pettit, the organizer of the initial march that birthed the camp, and significant contributor Sarah Hipperson both "made attempts to realign the Greenham protest" in their autobiographical accounts of the protest. "Their attempt", explains Titcombe, "was not to disprove the radical feminist account or to claim that it did not exist, but rather to shift the emphasis to other, less prominent (silent) versions"[89]. Given the competing visions of feminism that arose at the peace camps of the time, the transformations in identity that occurred over the course of their existence, and the ongoing writing of peace camp history, memory of the women's antinuclear perhaps only demonstrations "the complex nature of writing history and that different versions of any story are always possible"[90].

Additionally, establishing a memory of the peace camp movement must overcome the intensely localised formation of each camp. For example, despite the global scale of the antinuclear issue, women of the Philadelphia Women's Peace Encampment publicly rejected any contention that they reflected anything other than a local formation[91] Indeed, peace camp contributors' affiliation could be limited to

[85] "Minnesota Women's Camp for Peace & Justice Newsletter, June 1984," SCPC Minnesota Women's Camp for Peace & Justice Newsletter.

[86] Roseneil, *Common Women, Uncommon Practices*, cit. p. 88.

[87] Niamh Moore, *Remembering an Eco/Feminist Peace Camp*, cit. p. 244; 248.

[88] Catherine Eschle and Alison Bartlett, *Introduction: Feminism/ Protest Camps*, in *Feminism and Protest Camps: Entanglements, Critiques and Re-Imaginings*, edited by Catherine Eschle and Alison Bartlett, Bristol University Press, Bristol 2023, p. 4.

[89] Elaine Titcombe, *Women Activists: rewriting Greenham's history*, in "Women's History Review", 22, 2, 2013, pp. 310-329

[90] Titcombe, *Women Activists*, cit. p. 326.

[91] Philadelphia women's encampment.

particular parts of a single camp, such as the various coloured gates surrounding Greenham Common[92]. Camps identified first and foremost with their locality, while nevertheless expression global concerns. As Niamh Moore explains, "the tendency to refer to camps through their locations – Greenham, Seneca, Puget Sound – might best be understood as synecdoche, where the site of the camp is but one knot in an extended campaign web that traces and ties a range of places, politics and issues together"[93]. The interconnected locality of peace camps is, therefore, crucial to acknowledge in descriptions of their character and the form of the peace camp movement requires new terminology to accurately capture the resolutely local but globally connected *web* that peace camps represented. Recent scholarship on activism and the Cold War deploys an unwieldy lexicon to describe its myriad geographic manifestations – Frederik Logevall and Campbell Craig's "intermestic" Cold War, the "glocal" aspects of ecofeminist activism, Dario Fazzi's description of "translocal" protest against Ocean burning – none of which appropriate suit peace camps[94]. Instead, their "web" reflects an *interlocal* movement, one grounded in steadfast local identity that did not transcend those boundaries, but that found meaning in connecting these nodes across an international web. This is difficult to capture in memory. Despite its size, The Peace Camp Herstory Project largely historicised the Seneca encampment only. This is not to criticise the initiative – the project arose from Seneca women, about Seneca women's experiences. It nevertheless speaks to the localised, fragmented nature of an otherwise sprawling national movement. The same can, of course, be said about attempts to record the experiences of Greenham Common – the camp was surely the largest, most influential, most consequential. It was nevertheless one camp among a self-professed "web" of many.

Conclusion

The fragmented history and memory of women's antinuclear work make attempts to define an ongoing, and separately definable *women's antinuclear movement* challenging. Nevertheless, this article demonstrates how greater study of historical consciousness and memory practice among activists can reveal the character of social movement communities in ways not otherwise apparent. We find women antinuclear activists determined to strike out on their own and not be subsumed into an adjunct of peace or women's movement history. This in turn forces historians of the peace, antinuclear, and women's movements to reconsider where they draw boundaries around such work, and how women's antinuclear activism fits in their own narratives. It also provides greater insight into perceptions of social activist

[92] Roseneil, *Common Women, Uncommon Practices*, cit.

[93] Moore, *Remembering an Eco/Feminist Peace Camp*, cit. p. 244.

[94] Fredrik Logevall and Campbell Craig, *America's Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 2009, pp. 10-12; Lara Stevens, Peta Tait, and Denise Varney (eds.), *Feminist Ecologies: Changing Environments in the Anthropocene*, Palgrave Macmillan, London 2018, p. 8; Dario Fazzi, *Smoke on the Water: Incineration at Sea and the Birth of a Transatlantic Environmental Movement*, Columbia University Press, New York 2023.

identity. WSP and the peace camp movement showed the difficulty of identifying peace work as a feminist enterprise, despite declarations by some that peace was "a woman's issue".

Similarly, it is through memory that social movement historians can better determine notions of success. Describing the women's peace encampment at Greenham Common, historian Gerard DeGroot explained that journalists "took sinister delight in reporting about activists who thought that the way to get rid of Cruise was to knit a long scarf around the missile base and hang tampons on the fence". Observing that the press was "undoubtedly unfair", DeGroot describes that "the antics of the Greenham women seemed weird even to lifelong supporters of CND (the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament)"[95]. He uses this characterisation of the peace camp movement to claim that the antinuclear movement of the 1980s "had little effect" on Cold War politics, since decisions towards arms control agreements were made at a high-profile diplomatic level. However, DeGroot appeared particularly derisive in his approach towards the women of Greenham Common, writing that "when the missiles were removed they congratulated themselves on their achievement, rather like the lunatic who thinks the sun rises because he wakes up in the morning". He continues, writing that "the women stayed until 2000, though no one quite knows why"[96].

On the one hand, this characterisation wilfully overlooks the community organizing, education, lobbying, and consciousness-raising initiatives performed by the camps. But an analysis of activists' historicism shows an altogether different rendering of achievement. WSP National Coordinator Ethel Taylor devoted her entire life to antinuclear activism. Recounting her involvement in a 1987 historical interview, she expressed dismay at not having achieved the ultimate aim of nuclear disarmament, saying that "to work for something or to have a job and rarely have a real success, never see the light, you can really go nuts"[97]. Taylor added to these sentiments in her autobiography, published in 1998. "When I started", she wrote, "there were two nuclear bombs and they were both ours – by the 1980s, there were 50,000 all over the world"[98]. This lament, appearing on the book's penultimate page, would appear to support DeGroot's interpretation of women's antinuclear history. However, Taylor's memoirs are, in contrast, emphatically titled *We Made a Difference!*. The closing lines urge activists to consider the radical achievements women's antinuclear activists had secured, reminding the reader that "the beat goes on"[99]. For Taylor, as with many antinuclear activists, success cannot be defined by the ambitious target of total disarmament, but by the consciousness-raising involved in political organizing; by the minor victories; by the transformation endured by previously apolitical people; and by the life-affirming experiences associated with protest. This perspective of protest can only be accrued by historians when they take heed of the perspectives activists themselves offer. These perspectives, in turn, are

[95] Gerard DeGroot, *The Bomb: A Life*, Jonathan Cape, London 2004, p. 322.

[96] DeGroot, *The Bomb: A Life*, cit. p. 323; 326.

[97] Ethel Taylor interview, 5 October 1987, *ARS.0056*.

[98] Taylor, *We Made a Difference*, cit. p. 154.

[99] *Ivi*, p. 155.

only projected when activists take heed of the history of their movement. Involvement in the peace movement has long provided a space in which women can exercise their political agency. Exposing this history validates the experiences of the people involved. In a 2010 study, social scientist Susan McKevitt observed the frustrations of women who had managed to sustain their political activism over a long period of time[100]. McKevitt wanted to discover what kept long-term activists committed to their work and concluded that being aware of a social movement's long history comforted the activists she interviewed. McKevitt claimed that within any form of political activism, managing impatience and urgency for success would be "wise counsel for future generations of activists"[101]. The women in her study managed to maintain their commitment by viewing small steps as part of a steady road towards justice that could only be properly understood by knowing the efforts of thousands of women over hundreds of years. McKevitt's respondents suggest that awareness of the past fosters a cultural memory and community spirit that encourages sustained involvement – prevents losing morale. Words of one activist, named Anna, remain compelling. "Your actions may seem small, but it's really great; the ripple effect touches many people and generations…you have to tell stories otherwise people will forget; obtain a sense of history and that what you are doing is something that eventually will end up in some museum or somebody's book"[102]. In this sense, activists' historical consciousness within any movement is integral to the sustenance of efforts, and ultimately, to their success.

[100] Susan McKevitt, *What Keeps Them Going: Factors That Sustain U.S. Women's Life-Long Peace and Social Justice Activism*, Ph.D. Thesis, Antioch University, August 2010.

[101] McKevitt, *What Keeps Them Going*, cit. p. 192.

[102] *Ivi*, p. 201.