Peace Bodies: Women, Encampments, and the Struggle Against Nuclear Weapons during the Cold War, 1979-1992

Janette Clay

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INTRODUCTION

The 1980s women's peace encampment movement began in September of 1981, when forty members of “Women for Life on Earth” marched from Cardiff, Wales, to Newbury, England, to protest the 1979 NATO plan to deploy cruise missiles at the Greenham Common Royal Air Force Base. When they reached their destination, the marchers requested a meeting with military authorities and invited the media to cover their conversation. After failing to receive a reply from either the base or the press, the women refused to leave and set up rustic campsites outside the main gates of the compound.¹ Their tactic worked. They gained an audience much larger than they anticipated. Before the Cold War ended, Greenham women were featured in countless newspaper articles, dozens of court rooms, several parliamentary debates, and letters and memos exchanged between prime ministers, vice presidents and cabinet members. The women had a wide audience among activists as well. Thousands of protesters joined the Greenham campers and eventually established unique camping sites which surrounded the entire nine-mile perimeter fence of the British Air Force Base. Soon the protesters’ methods spread beyond Greenham Common, and within five years, women protesting nuclear weapons and missile systems established hundreds of encampments on several continents.²


During the final decade of the Cold War, women’s peace camps spread across the world from locations in the US and Europe to regions as far afield as Japan and Australia. The camps not only manifested broad disapproval of the military, they also demonstrated a targeted peace agenda. Protesters camped in proximity to specific sites where the military and military-related industries developed, manufactured, tested, stored, transported, or deployed nuclear weapons. Some women camped in Kent, Washington, to protest in front of Boeing, the manufacturer of cruise missiles. Others bivouacked in a St. Paul, Minnesota park to protest missile guidance systems designers Sperry Univac, or braved the elements to challenge the remote missile testing grounds at Cole Bay, Saskatchewan. The peace campers were engaged in a strategic mission to locate themselves near nuclear weapons to publicize sites of production, expose the dangers of this technology, and to articulate their objections to nuclear proliferation.

This dissertation argues that by living in encampments and using them as their prime vehicle for public protests, women made political demands based on their equal rights as citizens, while at the same time utilizing their cultural identities as emancipated women. Peace-camping women worked outside of gender-normative physical and cultural spaces to attract attention to nuclear installations that national governments aimed to conceal. Camping allowed women to demonstrate countercultural and queer lifestyles that were part of their resistance to patriarchy. Their sexually segregated and protected camp spaces were intentionally, even rudely,


public. Women established encampments in public parks, common lands, and even on highway medians.

Camping women gained a measure of mainstream cultural support through the auspices of their political antinuclear mission. Their overarching political purpose allowed the peace-camping model to flourish during the height of the early-1980s antinuclear resistance movement. By placing their vulnerable bodies close to nuclear locations, peace-camping women raised public consciousness of nuclear weapons and the threats they posed, while at the same time, they exercised a gender and sexual freedom uninhibited by heterosexual norms. This approach created a dynamic much like the “combination shot” of competitive pool, where the public viewed women’s peace encampments with a combined horror and fascination that then drew their eyes to the nuclear missiles and military outposts nearby. The double-sided public attention that peace-camping women generated with their camping bodies ultimately represented an important contribution to the greater antinuclear resistance movement, which successfully raised the consciousness of Americans and Europeans to the presence and threat of nuclear weapons and promoted widespread demand for the removal of intermediate-range weapons. That collective ultimatum was met in the December 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty which abolished midrange nuclear and conventional ground-based ballistic and cruise missiles.\(^5\)

Public opposition to the growing arms race, as several historians have already documented, contributed to the conclusion of the Cold War.\(^6\)

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\(^6\) Historian Paul Rubinson argues that throughout the Cold War “millions of people around the world made it clear that nuclear weapons were not acceptable, and their actions restrained world leaders at every step.” According to Rubinson, the anti-nuclear movement “reduced radioactive fallout, limited proliferation, and restricted certain
An examination of the women’s peace camping movement reveals several cultural conflicts that arose in the last decade of the Cold War, especially in the fractured 1980s women’s movement. For feminists in that decade—those who were conscious of their status based on gender and wished to improve it—peace was a highly contested issue. Some women, particularly radical feminists, viewed peace as peripheral because it failed to center issues such as rape or women’s rights to control their own bodies. For them, the question of whether to engage in war or to condemn the development of weaponry was not about women’s lives and did not touch on their primary issues. In a 1984 position paper on the women’s peace movement, members of the Durham, North Carolina–based Radical Feminist Organizing Committee wrote, “Every year, the basic tenets of women’s liberation become more and more diluted. This has occurred for several reasons. First, we have been asked to subordinate our struggle to more ‘pressing’ concerns, such as getting rid of Reagan or fighting imperialism. This has diverted our nuclear weapons” and made the use of nuclear weapons politically "taboo." See Paul Rubinson, *Rethinking the American Antinuclear Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2018), X; Historian Lawrence Wittner argues that the INF agreement "opened the floodgates for other antinuclear measures and for the end of the Cold War." Wittner adds that the "bulk of the credit" for the shift in Soviet and United States relations that led to the end of the Cold War "lay with the nuclear disarmament campaign and the tidal wave of antinuclear sentiment that it generated." According to Wittner, the anti-nuclear movement influenced President Reagan "even before" it affected Soviet Premier Gorbachev and "set the stage for later agreements." See Lawrence S. Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb, Volume Three: Toward Nuclear Abolition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 403; Historian Mark Kramer argues that nonviolent opposition in Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R. "assisted the peaceful transition of power that took place at the end of the Cold War." Kramer highlights the role of East German churches whose members played a leading role in the Eastern European peace movement. See Adam Roberts, "An Incredible Swift Transition: Reflections on the End of the Cold War," in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *Endings, The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, volume 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 293.

Feminism has many definitions, but when pressed for a minimalist definition, sociologist Susan Archer Mann asserts that feminism is the understanding that women’s subordination is a condition that needs to end. Susan Archer Mann, *Doing Feminist Theory: From Modernity to Postmodernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4.
energies and hurt us as a movement.” For the Durham group and others like them, women would do better to stay focused on their own problems of oppression.

Some women, including strictly-equal-rights feminists who were committed to achieving women’s egalitarian footing in society, asserted that the women’s peace movement was not simply peripheral, it was toxic. They objected to traditional women’s peace discourses which were based on the idea that women were biologically predisposed to align themselves with hopes for a peaceful world, because of their physical connection to life and birth. Peace historian Harriet Hyman Alonzo asserted that the association between women’s peace activism and motherhood—an “old leftover from the Victorian era”—persisted throughout the twentieth century. Because of that connotation, some feminists believed that engaging in peace activism might enmesh women in patriarchal assumptions about biological responsibilities.

Not only were peace-camping women criticized by some feminists for taking attention away from women’s liberatory activism and condemned by others for their essentialist positions, many women who scarcely identified themselves with feminism also rejected them. Experienced peace activists who had been involved in the decades-long fight to keep the United States out of the war business, like Norma Becker, chairperson of the War Resisters League and the founder of the Fifth Avenue Vietnam Peace Parade Committee, disapproved of women’s peace camps for being women-only institutions. In a debate with Seneca encampment supporter Grace Paley, Becker warned that women-only actions conveyed an “anti-male attitude and a separatist tone”

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and threatened to define “maleness as a social evil.”\textsuperscript{10} Despite such diverse criticism, peace camping thrived and generated a robust network of activists for a brief time in the 1980s.

Peace-camping women adopted and reconstituted the gendered political demonstrations of many generations in their quest for peace, stepping into a centuries-long cultural tradition of feminine opposition to war. In Aristophanes’ comedy, \textit{Lysistrata}, a Greek woman frustrated with the Peloponnesian War gathered women “hither in a troop” to rescue Greece, and persuaded them to withhold sex until peace arrived.\textsuperscript{11} Peace campers represent a persistent trend in the history of women in the modern era as well, one in which women created and sustained political coalitions to oppose militarism. During World War I, women collaborated to support negotiations among the warring nations. The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), one such transnational institution, appeared in 1915 during the early stages of World War I and persisted into the new millennium. The networks established by World War I–era women’s peace groups led to the First International Congress of Women at The Hague in 1915, where participants offered realistic political alternatives to fighting.\textsuperscript{12} Five years after the Hague Congress, the Nineteenth Amendment granted women the right to vote and raised hopes.


\textsuperscript{12} Gertrude Carmen Bussey and Margerite Tims, \textit{Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom: A Record of Fifty Years’ Work} (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1965), 5.
that women’s newfound civic representation would change the course of international politics.\(^{13}\) In that spirit, the pacifist North American Women’s Peace Union (WPU) opened its doors with a simple goal: to make war illegal through a constitutional amendment. Working with the support of North Dakota Senator Lynn Frasier, the Union brought the amendment to the Senate floor throughout the 1920s and the 1930s, though it never came close to passing.\(^{14}\)

The possibilities for peace seemed even more remote after the devastating conclusion of World War II. On August 6, 1945, 75,000 people died immediately after the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. Two days later the U.S. dropped another bomb on Nagasaki resulting in the death of 40,000. Approximately 340,000 more people died within five years because of fallout from the bombings.\(^{15}\) The devastating violence of nuclear weapons changed the scale of warfare and transformed the ways that people imagined the threat it posed to their lives and future. This watershed event shifted the tactics of many peace activists, who thus found themselves tasked with the project of organizing opposition to unthinkable outcomes. The United States and, later, the Soviet governments did everything they could to thwart dissent by concealing the locations of these weapons.

The bodies of nuclear victims—or Hibakusha as they became known—figured centrally in the project first of comprehending and then opposing nuclear weapons. Immediately after the bombings, Japanese doctors and scientists cared for and gathered data from the wounded. By


\(^{15}\) Rubinson, *Rethinking the American Antinuclear Movement*, ix.
November of 1945, however, American forces asserted control and attempted to cover up evidence of the severe harm, taking special care to hide evidence of radiation found in the bodies of exposed victims. Survivors typically became permanently sick. In the fall of 1945, United States General Headquarters (GHQ), the command center for the occupational forces, issued a “press code” or censorship policy banning radio, newspaper, magazine, and other printed reports on atomic bomb damages, including scientific studies and news of radiation treatment. Not until the finalization of a 1952 peace treaty with Japan did the United States cease this censorship.

Despite U.S. efforts, resistance to nuclear weapons existed even before 1952. Scientists were among the earliest nuclear protesters. In January 1946, experts involved in the development of atomic weapons organized the Federation of Atomic Scientists (FAS) to decrease the numbers of atomic weapons and to protect people from their dangers. In August 1946, the New Yorker published John Hersey’s journalistic investigation Hiroshima which detailed the bomb’s devastating impact, making it far more difficult for the public to ignore. Even so, the United

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17 Diehl, Resurrecting Nagasaki, 119.


States continued atomic weapons development and testing at a rapid pace, primarily to maintain dominance over the Soviet Union after it launched its own nuclear program in 1949.

Antinuclear resistance began to take on more strength in 1954 under unfortunate circumstances when a new set of victims fell ill. Set on winning what was now a contest with the Soviet Union to create more powerful nuclear weapons, the U.S. tested Bravo, the first hydrogen bomb. The power of the explosion proved stronger than expected, and the radioactive ash it produced spread over thousands of miles. Even this tragedy might not have been publicized if not for the concerns of Japanese doctors treating the crew of a Japanese fishing boat that had ventured within the radius of the toxic ash. The nuclear-affected bodies of the fishermen catalyzed campaigns against atomic testing. By 1958, antinuclear organizations, including the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE) and the Committee for Nuclear Information (CNI), helped to secure a two-year testing pause between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

In the early 1960s, political tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States reached new heights and testing resumed with a vengeance. In 1961, the two nations detonated over 150 nuclear explosions even though the dangers of testing were well established. In 1957, scientists supported by the St. Louis–based Committee for Nuclear Information (CNI) monitored the local milk supply for strontium-90, a radioactive isotope produced by hydrogen bomb

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22 Rubinson, *Rethinking the American Antinuclear Movement*, 58.


explosions.\footnote{Boyer reports that a 1959 Columbia University study of children under four showed that the level of strontium-90 in their bones doubled between 1957 and 1959. See Paul Boyer, \textit{By the Bomb’s Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age}. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 83. The published results of the test report that the test was conducted in response to increasing concerns about exposure to radiation, due to expanded use of nuclear energy and from “testing programs of several nations.” See J. E. Campbell et al., “The Occurrence of Strontium-90, Iodine-131, and Other Radionuclides in Milk—May, 1957, Through April, 1958,” \textit{American Journal of Public Health and the Nation’s Health} 49, no. 2 (February 1959): 225–35, 225.} The scientists found traces of the radioactive element in the milk and the CNI publicized the information. St. Louis groups, including the local Parent–Teacher Association (PTA), organized volunteers and funding which led to more investigation. After surveying infant teeth, scientists found traces of strontium-90 in human bones.\footnote{Rubinson, \textit{Rethinking the American Antinuclear Movement}, 55, 56.}

Fear of radiation from atomic testing prompted members of Women Strike for Peace (WSP) to organize a strike. In 1961, thousands of women, mostly white middle-class housewives, “walked out of their kitchens, and off their jobs” to express their concern and anger over testing and the threats of poisoning from radioactive fallout. Fifty thousand women signed a petition addressed to President Kennedy to “[e]nd the arms race, not the human race.”\footnote{Amy Swerdlow, \textit{Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 15, 1.} The WSP, asserting that resisting nuclear weapons was a mother’s issue, centered their activism not only on immediate issues of reproductive care but also on broader existential issues of the reproductive viability of the human race. Their actions presaged the 1980s women’s peace camping movement, because members of the WSP used their “maternal” platform as threatened mothers of vulnerable children to broadcast nuclear dangers.

The late 1950s and early 1960s marked a heightened cultural awareness of nuclear threats. Authors published books that depicted apocalyptic post-nuclear war worlds, some of
which were made into feature films, like Nevil Shute’s 1959 *On the Beach*. The public’s attention wandered away from nuclear concerns, however, as American anti-war activists turned their attention to the more tangible problems of the Vietnam War. Nuclear resistance did not disappear altogether, but it would be decades before it regained its early-1960s vibrancy. The struggle against the Vietnam War created new forms of nonviolent protest that would later influence the 1980s antinuclear movement. The new forms were driven by necessity. By 1970, continual nonviolent demonstrations and marches, even though they were supported by more than half of the American student population, had failed to end the war. Violent actions against the war, like those of the Weather Underground, were not successful either. In that climate, some war resisters turned to a more disruptive form of nonviolent direct action. Groups like the Washington D.C.–area May Day Tribe used their bodies to block intersections and snarl capital traffic. Their motto was: “If the government won’t stop the war, we’ll stop the government.”

After the conclusion of the Vietnam War, some peace activists, including brothers Phillip and Daniel Berrigan, used their anti-war civil disobedience and direct-action tactics to protest atomic weapons production. In 1977, a new organization, Mobilization for Survival (MFS), modeled itself on the Vietnam-era National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (MOBE). Their motto was: “Ban nuclear power; Reverse the arms race; Meet human needs.”

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The work of the Berrigan brothers’ Plowshares movement and MFS updated the Vietnam-era action templates and organizational knowledge for the next generation, contributing to the strength of the early 1980s antinuclear movement.

The 1970s oil crisis created another problem to which activists needed to turn their attention: nuclear power plants. In 1978, one such organization, the Rocky Flats Action Group, focused their protests mainly on weapons production but also tried to shut down a plutonium trigger production plant near Denver, Colorado.32 Nuclear waste resulting from nuclear power plants became a vital concern for environmentalists over the next few decades.

Two organizations that were vital to the peace camping movement, Women’s Pentagon Action (WPA) and Women for Life on Earth (WLOE), trace their roots to the 1970s environmental movement and resistance to nuclear power. In 1976, environmentalists from several major New England towns and cities formed a direct-action group called the Clamshell Alliance. The Alliance objected to the construction of a nuclear power plant in the coastal town of Seabrook, New Hampshire. Clamshell groups introduced forms of direct action that included camping, blockades, and protest performance. Writer Grace Paley, counted among the “Clam” founders, participated in the WPA and later became a keen supporter of women’s peace camps.33 Ynestra King, also an ardent nuclear power resister, pioneered a new movement linking femininity to nature known as “ecofeminism.” She co-founded the WLOE, which became a prime mover behind the first peace camp established at Greenham Common Air Force Base in

32 Kleidman, *Organizing for Peace*, 136.

33 Rubinson, *Rethinking the American Antinuclear Movement*, 88.
Peace was at one time rarely studied outside of the history of war. In the past five decades, however, scholars have considered peace efforts on their own terms and in relationship to quests for reconciliation and alternative ways of living. The literature on peace has moved from a narrow focus on resistance and anti-war activism to include studies of aspiration and movements to promote a peaceful society. This dissertation will build on several waves of scholarship which represent that change. In the 1960s and 1970s, scholars concentrated on peace as a counter-movement to the state. In the eighties, with the rise of scholarship on women, historians recognized that peace was a consistent platform for politically active women in the twentieth century. In the nineties, in the wake of Joan Scott’s theoretical breakthrough on gender, the scholarship on women and peace slowed in the wake of vibrant scholarship on women, gender, and political activism. Most recent historians of peace have focused on the intellectual foundations of peace ideologies which have generated social action.

As historian Merle Curti has noted, peace scholarship is thus a relatively young field emerging from obscurity in the 1960s after the assassination of President Kennedy.

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discipline’s earliest scholars from the 1960s era analyzed peace as a response to the actions of the state. In the first survey of late-twentieth-century peace history, Lawrence Wittner argued that after World War II, peace activists changed the way that policy makers analyzed global conflicts. Wittner portrayed peace activists as shrewd and prescient political analysts who left an indelible mark on politics.\(^\text{37}\)

Not all peace scholars shared Wittner’s triumphant view of peace reformers’ influence. A consensus developed among some scholars that an essential part of the peace movement—the antinuclear movement—lost its footing for decades. Charles DeBenedetti argued that during World War II and the Cold War, national security, in the form of a strong military abroad, became the new American ideal.\(^\text{38}\) Therefore, with the rise of the national security state, the government branded peace reformers as subversive, just as they had been during World War I. Paul Boyer probed the notion of “seditious” peace further in his research on the culture of the Cold War.\(^\text{39}\) He argued that from 1963 through 1980, the U.S. government redirected the public’s attention away from the destructive power of nuclear weapons and toward their “positive” security role as benevolent instruments of defense against the Soviet threat. This public relations

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\(^37\) Wittner backs up his claim of anti-nuclear activists’ prescience by asserting that they rightly predicted that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki would lead to an arms race. See Lawrence S. Wittner, *Rebels against War: the American Peace Movement, 1941-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 301, 305; In his 2018 assessment of the anti-nuclear movement, Paul Rubinson asserts that Wittner’s analysis of the peace movement’s power of persuasion is no longer in operation. Anti-nuclear peace activism has taken a back seat to multiple overriding social concerns, including racism, income inequality, and most of all climate change, because of the conflation of anti-nuclear power and anti-nuclear weapons activism. See Rubinson, 148.


campaign defanged the antinuclear peace movement until the 1980s, when rapid military expansion sparked global protest.\textsuperscript{40}

The rising of the sixties generation into academe, the emergence of new sources, and the women’s movement together provided impetus for fresh and sophisticated examinations of women and peace politics. The 1980s opened with a collection of essays inspired by scholars who investigated women, war, and violence. In one essay, historian Jo Vellacott drew an important link between the birth of the organized women’s peace movement during World War I and suffrage activism, when, for a brief period, women felt that they had a unique opportunity to change the way that political power was wielded. To Vellacott, women’s peace activism provided historians with a vehicle for investigating women’s fluctuating relationship to the modern state.\textsuperscript{41}

Scholars Bernice A. Carroll and Johanna Alberti complicated Vellacott’s assertions regarding the link between suffrage and peace activism during World War I by demonstrating that peace was a bitterly divisive issue for suffrage women. Carroll explored the debates for and against the support of World War I among women in the British suffrage movement by reporting on the 30,000-strong, government financed “Right to Serve” demonstration led by militant suffragist Emmeline Pankhurst, who was adamant in her support of the war. Carroll contrasted that with the records of the East London Federation of Suffragists who maintained a unified

\textsuperscript{40} Boyer, “From Activism to Apathy,” 842, 844.

opposition to the war. Alberti had similar findings in her study of two suffrage societies, the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Society and the International Women’s Suffrage Association. Alberti asserted that peace activism during World War I was a bitterly divisive issue for suffrage women. She concluded that both pro-war and pro-peace suffragists put aside suffrage concerns for World War I. For one side, suffrage was less urgent than the pursuit of war, for the other, voting rights were less urgent than the pursuit of peace.

In the 1980s, historian Harriet Hyman Alonzo also studied the Progressive Era women’s peace movement beyond the context of suffrage societies. Alonzo analyzed the non-resistance activism of the radical absolute pacifist group, the American Women’s Peace Union (WPU) which formed after World War I. The WPU had the sole mission of inserting an amendment to outlaw war into the constitution as well as into the League of Nations’ charter. Alonzo wrote that the women of the WPU believed in non-resistance ideology and non-violent action and upheld a utopian feminist vision which asserted that, “women can never have true freedom or equality with men in a society dominated by force.” Perhaps Alonzo’s synopsis of the WPU’s activist ideology influenced the feminist peace discourse of her own era, because records show that members of the 1980s women’s peace movement shared the same analysis.

In 1989, Joan Wallach Scott wrote a pathbreaking essay on gender—the cultural and social knowledge of sexual difference—which opened up the field to include gender as a mark of

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44 Hyman Alonzo, The Women’s Peace Union, 12.
women’s position in the world. Scott argued that gender is the “source of feminism’s most creative interventions” and stressed that it was vital for historians to continue to uncover the historical implications of different cultural meanings of “man” and “woman.” This opened up the field enormously. Before Scott’s theory, historians of women frequently sought out peace activist women for their subjects because it was an arena in which women had a public voice and therefore featured a pool of significant political events and “great women.” After the advent of gender analysis, scholarship on peace and women was no longer of such importance. This is partially responsible for the lack of historical scholarship featuring the 1980s women’s peace camping movement. This dissertation revisits peace and women while fully acknowledging that the history of women need not be limited to the study of great women or women-only political actions.

In addition to peace scholarship, a rich literature on the history of twentieth-century feminism and women’s political activism informs this study. In her biography of early twentieth-century social reformer Jane Addams, Jean Bethke Elshtain contended that Addams had a radical vision of feminine politics that was not dependent on control or violence for its power. According to Elshtain, Adam’s organizing vision was favoring nurture over force. In a very different study, Jennifer Guglielmo examined two generations of Italian immigrant women

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46 Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, xiii, xi.


48 Historian Barbara Steinson underscores Elshtain’s assertions when she asserts that the organization that Addams co-founded, the Women’s Peace Party (WPP), recruited members to the peace movement under the assumption that women deserved a public political presence based on the preservative value of maternal responsibility. See Barbara Steinson, *American Women’s Activism in World War I* (New York: Garland Publishing , 1982), 44.
through the World War II era. Guglielmo contended that the women adapted their resistance to exploitation, inequality, and “coercive authority” so that it would function within the confines of their traditional gender roles.\(^4\) The women sought their own pathways to justice through mutual aid and direct action.\(^5\) In her 1993 examination of the 1960s anti-nuclear organization Women Strike for Peace (WSP), Amy Swerdlow demonstrated the persistence of female exceptionalism in peace politics. Swerdlow argued that WSP members asserted feminine nurturing values while striving for equality.\(^6\) Elshtain, Guglielmo, and Swerdlow explored the ways that women have wielded gendered nurturing traditions to serve multiple political agendas throughout the twentieth century.

Because of the growing field of religious history at the turn of the twenty-first century, religious ideology has been the driving force behind the most recent wave of peace scholarship. Historians have examined the conceptual foundations that have supported peace activism in the twentieth century. Leilah Danielson’s examination of labor leader, social gospel minister, and radical peace activist A.J. Muste represents a clear example of this pathway for peace scholarship. Muste provides Danielson with a lens for investigating Vietnam War protests in the context of religious radicalism. Through his work for the Committee for Non-Violent Action (CNVA), Muste helped activists to implement a unique blend of Gandhian resistance (satyagraha) and Christian religious zealotry in what Danielson called the “Hebrew prophetic


tradition.”

Danielson portrayed Muste as a man who practiced a paradoxical blend of millenarianism and pragmatism, wherein he imagined a peaceable world and made it clear through his protest actions just how different reality was from his visions.

The War in Vietnam is a substantial weight on the scale of peace scholarship. Historian David Cortright contextualized the 1960s anti-war movement against a broad background of peace actions throughout the twentieth century. He called the massive resistance to the Vietnam War “one of the largest and most intensive peace campaigns in history.” Cortright asserted that the scale of the war, the draft, and its fundamental injustice engendered its own dissent.

Cortright sought to determine the roots of that opposition in religious pacifist traditions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity. Joseph Kip Kosek built on Cortright’s study of religion. For Kosek the refusal to use deadly force is a “virtuoso” performance of principle and pacifism that is the most effective means for communicating religious convictions in the modern world.

Scott Bennett would agree with Cortright and Kosek in their assessment of the effectiveness of radical pacifism, but diverged from their contention that it grew from religious roots. Bennet argued that the War Resisters League (WRL), a secular radical pacifist organization, was at the heart of “peace culture.” Using League records spanning from 1915

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54 Cortright, Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas, 155.

through 1963, Bennet asserted that the WRL inspired civil rights activism and popularized massive resistance to the Vietnam War. In the 1980s, the WRL’s New York headquarters housed peace groups who were instrumental in the 1980s antinuclear movement, including Women’s Pentagon Action, Catholic Peace Fellowship, the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, and the New York Antinuclear Group. The listing of religious activist organizations that shared real estate with the WRL undercuts Bennet’s own argument for the primarily secular foundations of peace activism and serves to demonstrate that both secular and religious institutional forces lay behind peace activism and reform.

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This dissertation on the women’s peace camping movement contributes to the literature on women and American politics during the second half of the twentieth century by documenting the transnational feminist anti-nuclear resistance movement, which started in the early 1980s and lasted roughly a decade. Recently, scholars, including Rachel Woodward and Daniel Immerwahr, have researched the expansion of U.S. political power through the production and deployment of sophisticated nuclear weapons in undisclosed military sites, but without probing the important opposition work of women. I hope to build on this research by showing how peace-camping women resisted this U.S. military expansion by using their bodies to mark militarized locations, thereby exposing them to public scrutiny.


This study builds on research surrounding the history of the body. Philosophers Allison Jaggar and Susan Bordo asserted that it is through our bodies, or more specifically, “the regulated habits of our bodies” that we live out our politics and our relationships. For Jaggar and Bordo, bodies articulate beliefs.\(^{58}\) That assertion is applicable for this dissertation because the women’s encampment movement was a self-consciously embodied one where camping women performed protests with physical rituals like keening, parades, body barricades, and dance. Utilizing body history for this research is also applicable in other less overt ways. Kathleen Canning claimed that there are different ways of using bodies for understanding history, and one of those ways is by viewing them as “sites of experience.”\(^{59}\) Canning’s “experiential body vision” reveals more than one insight about the peace campers. Records of encampments show that camping women responded primarily to the threat of nuclear weapons. However, they also addressed an additional menace: a cultural one, that of the “discipline and normalization” of the female body.\(^{60}\) By stationing themselves near nuclear weapons sites, camping women used their bodies as their primary means of protest. They positioned themselves near sites to publicize locations of design, production, and deployment, and thereby galvanized popular antinuclear sentiment. Moreover, through their dress, grooming habits, and daily routines, many campers eschewed cultural trappings that could be used to impose normative feminine standards on their


\(^{59}\) Kathleen Canning, Gender History in Practice: Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class & Citizenship (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 169.

\(^{60}\) In her analysis of anorexia, agoraphobia, and hysteria, philosopher Susan Bordo discusses the forms of social control implicated in mid-twentieth century female body standards imposed on women in such multiple cultural forms as beauty pageants, girdles, and makeup. See Susan Bordo, “The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity: A Feminist Appropriation of Foucault” in Gender/Body/Knowledge, 14, 16.
bodies. For these reasons, using the body as a category of analysis, particularly as it applies to gender, is essential for this project.

Recently, scholars have investigated the role of the body in civil disobedience and nonviolent protests. Judith Butler examined the ways that embodied protests force audiences to reckon with questions about who and what is valued in society. Butler asserted that in protests, activists use their bodies performatively to illustrate those values by showing the ways that some bodies are “tenaciously defended” and others are considered expendable.\(^1\) In their study of civil disobedience and the quest for public accountability, Isabelle Sommier, Graeme Hayes, and Sylvie Ollitrault add another dimension to Butler’s analysis by asserting that embodied mass protests, including demonstrations, marches, and occupations, alerted the government and the general public to urgent crises that otherwise might have been ignored.\(^2\) In their recent examination of nonviolent civil disobedience, Neve Gordon and Nicola Perugini focused on the practice of using the body as a human shield against an array of ills, including militarism, imperialism, racism, sexism, and environmental exploitation. They argued that human shields work in two ways: first as a “screen” of protection from harm, and also as a television-like screen that draws eyes to the institutions of power that created the threats in the first place. Gordon and Perugini asserted that Gandhi developed the human shielding approach to civil disobedience in the early twentieth century, and the strategy has continued to evolve into the twenty-first century in the protests against the Keystone pipeline at Standing Rock and the Black Lives Matter


actions in 2016. Analyzing the ways that peace-camping women have occupied territories near nuclear sites represents an important chapter in the history of embodied civil disobedience. Because of the power of the weapons, camping women were not an effective shield against nuclear dangers. Despite this, camping women drew attention to nuclear sites and set the stage for public debates about the risks the weapons posed and the value of the bodies they threatened.

This dissertation also contributes to the historical literature documenting the end of the Cold War. Some scholars, including Archie Brown, emphasize the role Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev played with his rational decision making process in the Soviet Union’s dissolution, the breakup of the Warsaw Pact, and the cooling of the nuclear arms race. Others, namely Beth Fisher and John Lewis Gaddis, cite the political savvy of U.S. President Ronald Reagan, whose policies led to a massive U.S. arms buildup and initiated the development of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). This dissertation advances an alternative explanation that elaborates on the arguments of Paul Rubinson and Lawrence Wittner, who underscored the importance of antinuclear resistance in the early 1980s. The Cold War came to its conclusion shortly after a 1987 INF treaty that led to the elimination of intermediate range nuclear forces, the very nuclear missiles that women’s peace camps were organized to prevent.


64 Historian John Lewis Gaddis asserts that ultimately the Cold War ended because President Ronald Reagan recognized the need to negotiate with Mikhail Gorbachev. See John Lewis Gaddis, The United States and the End of the Cold War: Implications, Reconsiderations, Provocations, Oxford Paperbacks History (New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), 1.


66 Wittner, The Struggle Against the Bomb, Volume Three: Toward Nuclear Abolition; Rubinson, Rethinking the American Antinuclear Movement.
The records of women’s peace camp aspirations, organization, execution, and experiences as circulated through personal letters, meeting minutes, flyers, petitions, newsletters, video footage, and handbooks provide the foundational source material for this dissertation. This study also relies on feminist newsletters and journals that reveal feminist conceptions of peace and the discourse that surrounded women’s peace activism.

This research examines the women’s peace camping movement in five chapters organized by chronology and location, starting with the development of feminist peace ideologies and peace camping practice. “Chapter One: Becoming Greenham Women” provides an overview of the activist discourse and practices developed by peace camping forebears the Washington D.C. lesbian separatist Furies Collective (est. 1972), the East Coast–based direct action group Women’s Pentagon Action (est. 1980), and the American and British ecofeminist organization Women for Life on Earth (est. 1980). Each group published original theories or established protest strategies which peace campers utilized in their unity statements and in their activist language and practice. In addition, this chapter examines the influence of Furies member Charlotte Bunch, WPA organizer Grace Paley, and WLOE founder Ynestra King, who were vital to the establishment of peace camps in the United States and Britain. This chapter reveals how 1970s emancipatory movements including lesbian separatism, radical feminism, and ecofeminism influenced peace activism and initiated the construction of the feminist form of nonviolent civil disobedience in the years leading up to the formation of a global network of women’s peace camps.
“Chapter Two: Performing Peace Bodies: Seneca Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice” concentrates on the Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice (WEFPJ) in Romulus, New York, and explores the ways that the presence of nuclear weapons in the world impacted their activist performances and their daily lives. By examining Seneca protesters’ language in their signs, songs, performances, letters, and handbooks, this chapter seeks to comprehend the ways that the nuclear weapons shaped their fears and ambitions and shook their faith in authority. This chapter demonstrates how the Seneca peace-camping women’s sensibilities of nuclear dangers and bodily precarity informed their activism and compounded their powers of persuasion.

“Chapter Three: Political Peace Bodies: Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp” examines the women’s encampment at Greenham Common, adjacent to the Greenham Common Air Force Base in Berkshire, England. The chapter investigates the ways in which camping women used their bodies to manipulate British politics. The women of Greenham Common made sophisticated use of their ability to generate publicity through their outlandish activist performances and their countercultural lifestyles to showcase their proximity to the American military base and the weapons it hosted. The Greenham women did not limit their fight to the British political arena. They carried their politics across the Atlantic to bring suit against the United States for endangerment by deploying nuclear missiles in their proximity. This chapter demonstrates that peace-camping women were effective political actors who used their bodies to protest nuclear weapons.

“Chapter Four: The Limits of Peace Bodies: American Women’s Peace Camps” documents the rise and fall of three peace camps in Kent, Washington, St. Paul, Minnesota, and
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in order to explore how their physical circumstances enhanced or limited their activism. We see how the difficulties of locating and maintaining funds, land, shelter, food, and adequate care hampered organization. The primarily white, middle-class women of the Philadelphia Women’s Peace Encampment struggled with a different set of challenges. By camping, the Philadelphia women disavowed their most immediate physical comforts but retained their systemic advantages. When viewed against the urban background where many residents were threatened with immediate bodily precarity, rather than the potential threat of nuclear weapons, peace camping became a painful picture of economic and racial privilege. By examining built environments and camping women’s struggles over where, when, and how to make camp in three very different locations, this chapter reveals the limits of peace camping as an activist model.

“Chapter Five: Organized Peace Bodies: Frauen für den Frieden and Peace Camps on the European Continent” examines the role that the Berlin peace group Frauen für den Frieden played in the creation of a pair of peace camps in Europe. This chapter reveals the transnational networks established by peace-camping women and how they created a lexicon of feminist direct action that was passed hand to hand from Britain to the United States, to Germany and Switzerland. This chapter demonstrates the ways that women’s peace networks and the mobilization of peace-camping bodies contributed to the overall antinuclear movement by shedding light on the United States’ military and nuclear presence on the European continent.

From 1981 through 1985, in hundreds of instances, across the Western world, women moved outside and set themselves next to nuclear locations. This dissertation takes a close look at seven of them. The seven encampments were chosen for this study because their locations in
Great Britain, the Eastern, Midwestern and Western United States and continent of Europe represent the geographical reach the peace camping movement. The camps included in this study also reveal the different agendas of peace camping women. Some settled by military locations, others by defense corporations, and still others in an urban center. Each camp had a duration of at least one year, created founding mission statements, and most importantly, left a discernable record of their existence. Though each of the seven encampments had different beginning and ending points, they all coexisted in 1983. That year takes center stage in each of their stories. In 1983 camping women were not alone in their protests. Millions of citizens joined them in a collective expression of outrage at the rapidly expanding armory of nuclear weapons. But encampment women identified the target of their fury differently. In most recorded instances, whether in their banners, songs, speeches, performances, or unity statements, camping women blamed the weapons they feared and protested on patriarchal systems that used violence to wield power. It is no surprise that their point of view coalesced on the heels of the civil rights movement, the antiwar movement, and the women’s liberation movement. The stories of these peace camps reveal a historical moment when women used their bodies collectively to respond to a system they viewed through those lenses to express their own encampment-sized versions of a society free of violence.
CHAPTER ONE

BECOMING GREENHAM WOMEN

*Greenham Common Women against Cruise Missiles*

On November 9, 1983, thirteen British women from the Greenham Common peace camp brought suit in the United States Federal District Court in Southern New York against President Ronald Reagan. The women hoped to stop the deployment of cruise missiles at the Greenham Common Air Force Base in Berkshire County, England. The women argued that the deployment violated their human rights guaranteed under international law and the United States Constitution.¹ Their battle started in August of 1981, when women made camp by the main gates of the nine-mile fence surrounding the Air Force base, the proposed site for ninety-six ground-launched cruise missiles. The type of cruise missile set for deployment at Greenham and several other bases in Europe was a new and compact delivery system for nuclear weapons, nearly undetectable from satellites because its mobile launchers so closely resembled flatbed trucks. The missiles had a range of 1,500 miles and flew at very low altitudes, just above treetops to avoid radar detection.²

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On the night before the thirteen Greenham women filed suit in the federal court in New York City, thousands of anti-nuclear activists gathered to show their support. Irish, English, Welsh, and Scottish protesters followed the Greenham model by setting up camps on land near each of the 102 U.S. military installations and bases in Britain. The temporary camps represented a wide variety of British nuclear resisters including students, village peace groups, supporters of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), Labor Party members, and Scottish nationalists. These activists bivouacked at military bases from Inverness, Scotland, to the village of Penzance on the Cornish coast of southwest England. Most of the temporary encampments sent telegrams to the Greenham women in New York City expressing their support. In East Surrey, women from the village of Brighten joined with the East Surrey CND to show solidarity with the suit against Reagan by leafletting local towns. They finished their evening by burning a mock cruise missile in effigy in front of the local American military base. At a micro-communications link station at Barkway in Hertfordshire, campers sent the Greenham litigators this pithy telegram report: “Camp established, peace kites flying, and area leafletted.” The Benson Peace Camp in Oxfordshire painted a less frenetic picture: “We are sitting by the main road on a beautiful warm evening, our fire is burning brightly, and the visitors are streaming in, passing cars are hooting for peace and the atmosphere is very friendly.”

The flush of encampments sprouting in November of 1983 alongside military barracks, bases, microwave communication towers, and embassies in the United Kingdom represented the apogee of the peace camping movement. Each

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3 Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles Collection, Folder, Telegrams of Support, 1983, Swarthmore Peace Collection.
A political event, the 1979 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) decision to place nuclear-weapons-bearing missiles on land in Europe, catalyzed the peace camping movement across national borders. That monumental agreement among policymakers animated a popular reaction in both the United States and Europe, where millions of citizens participated in political campaigns, demonstrations, and marches against nuclear weapons. The popular movement against nuclear weapons expressed a collective physical fear that spread as weapons proliferated. Feminist activists, who had been raising each others’ consciousness for a decade, were, by then, primed to respond to those fears. Protecting bodies from violence had, after all, been fundamental to the feminist movement. The Furies, a lesbian separatist feminist collective that proposed anti-militaristic theories, proved especially influential to the emerging peace camp movement. Their work directly impacted two groups: the Women’s Pentagon Action (WPA), a feminist nonviolent action group, and Women for Life on Earth (WLOE), a small band of environmental “ecofeminist” theorists. WPA and WLOE developed the modes of action and founding principles that inspired the peace camping movement around shared commitments to anti-militarism, nonviolence, and civil disobedience.

The 1979 NATO Double-Track Decision

On December 12, 1979, NATO announced that they intended to implement “two parallel and complementary approaches of Theater Nuclear Forces (TNF) modernization and arms control,” otherwise known as the “two-track decision.”4 The second track, arms control, outlined

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4 “Press Communique M2 (79)22,” December 12, 1979, NATO Archives Online, NATO Archives, 1.
NATO’s hope to engage with the Warsaw Pact to negotiate limitations on U.S. and Soviet land-based nuclear missile systems. Paradoxically, the first track, modernization, ran counter to the second, though they were supposed to parallel and complement each other. Even as they extended an invitation to the Warsaw Pact to engage in a new series of arms control negotiations, NATO declared a startling arms build-up, and outlined their intent to develop, test, and deploy a new set of weapons: the Pershing II and cruise missiles. These ground-launched missiles stood as central elements of a new weapons system based in key locations, namely West Germany, Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Italy. The NATO two-track decision was highly profitable for weapons manufacturers. The decision generated a range of responses from peace groups, environmentalists, and local governments. NATO’s decision also resurrected dormant anti-nuclear activist groups such as the European Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), and a movement that would sweep American politics: the Nuclear Freeze Campaign.

The women’s peace camps that appeared in the wake of the NATO decision were a part of that large wave of dissent. Peace-camping women aimed to go beyond marching and demonstrations by requiring participants to make homes for themselves. Their makeshift and temporary structures allowed women to live their protest rather than simply proclaim it. By working, cooking, eating, and sleeping in the open—near nuclear weapons or sites related to their design and manufacture—peace-camping women demonstrated their human frailty through their quotidian routines. They also transformed their traditional roles as homemakers into a queer performance, stripped of the niceties of gendered consumerist culture, in a public space for all.

5 “Press Communique M2 (79)22,” 2.
eyes to see. Peace-camping women adopted a kaleidoscope of dissent from the increasingly popular anti-nuclear movement as well as radical feminists, lesbian separatists, and ecofeminists.

These activists introduced new modes of protest to anti-nuclear organizations’ efforts that had started in the 1950s. For example, the activist group Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE) had long been fighting against weapons development. In 1957, twenty-seven New Yorkers met in response to their concerns about frequent nuclear tests and formed SANE. From its inception, the group consisted of elite members who were well acquainted with working with networks of liberal institutions. In the 1970s, the group focused their attention on new proposals made by the Carter administration. The Pentagon introduced the MX, an intercontinental ballistic missile featuring multiple warheads that were positioned on moveable launchers placed on three-thousand horsepower trucks. In order to keep the missiles undetected, the administration proposed keeping the weapons in a constant circular rotation on yet-to-be-built highways reserved exclusively for the military. SANE lobbied to block the proposal, which they called “a disaster on wheels.” They also participated in a national campaign to stop the B-1 bomber, a jet that could fly at low altitudes to evade radar systems. Historian Lawrence Wittner reports that

6 The original name for the organization was the Provisional Committee to Stop Nuclear Tests, Katz, Ban the Bomb, xi.


8 Milton S. Katz, Ban the Bomb: A History of SANE, the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, 1957 - 1985, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 139; Verne Orr, “Developing Strategic Weaponry and The Political Process: The B1-B Bomber: From Drawing Board To Flight” (Claremont: Claremont Graduate University, 2005), 93; SANE's participation in successfully halting the B-1 was greatly helped by the advent of different weapons including the cruise missile, which could replace many manned bombers because it is “war-head delivery vehicle” that is pilotless and flies like an airplane. See Kosta Tsipis, “Cruise Missiles,” Scientific American 236, no. 2 (February 1977): 20–29, 20; Matthew Ambrose contends that President Jimmy Carter suspended funding for the B-1 in order to cut defense spending. He believed that it had been rendered obsolete by the cruise missile. See Matthew J. Ambrose, The Control Agenda : A History of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 117.
after constant lobbying by a coalition of thirty-seven peace groups, which included a vigil outside of President Carter’s home shortly after his election victory, President Carter shut the program in June 1977. Three years later, SANE joined their efforts with others to bring about what was arguably the most successful peace crusade in United States history: The Nuclear Freeze Campaign.

In December of 1979, in the same weeks that NATO broadcast its two-track decision, a graduate student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and former associate of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Randall Forsberg drafted “A Call to Halt the Arms Race.” Her paper outlined a strategy to freeze the development, testing, and production of nuclear weapons, and garnered attention in the peace community. Forsberg’s plan gained urgency a year later when Ronald Reagan, who had campaigned on a platform that called for a massive increase in defense spending, defeated Jimmy Carter in a landslide election. In partnership with the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Forsberg joined with a wide coalition of groups, including the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), to implement her “freeze” vision. This opposition campaign did not have a radical pacifist agenda; it did not seek a world without war, nor even a world without nuclear weapons. It aimed, instead, to realize a more modest goal: to

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11 Rochon and Meyer, Coalitions & Political Movements, 5.
halt the escalation of weapons build-up right where it was.\textsuperscript{12} Since Forsberg’s vision for a freeze seemed reasonable to a wide swath of the American public, her efforts gained political traction over the next few years. By January 1982, more than three hundred New England towns and six New England state legislatures had passed freeze resolutions. By November, eight states had passed freeze referendums.\textsuperscript{13} The Freeze campaign generated an enormous output of activist energy including marches, discussion groups, and petitions signed by millions.\textsuperscript{14} In 1982, backed by this groundswell of popular support, Forsberg testified on Capitol Hill, prompting Congress to pass a Freeze resolution. Three weeks later, the same Congress nevertheless signaled its conflicted agenda by voting to once again fund the MX missile.\textsuperscript{15}

The revival of American anti-nuclear activism in the 1980s was not simply a widespread expression of intellectual opposition to the NATO double-track decision and the breakdown of arms control negotiations. The rise in anti-nuclear action was directly related to physical fear. The Australian physician, president of Physicians for Social Responsibility, and founder of Women Action for Nuclear Disarmament (WAND) Dr. Helen Caldicott expressed this fear: “We are killing ourselves to make bombs to kill ourselves better.”\textsuperscript{16} Caldicott was right; certainly Western weapons experts were devising better bombs to counter the Soviets’ midrange missiles,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Hogan, \textit{The Nuclear Freeze Campaign}, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Rochon and Meyer, \textit{Coalitions & Political Movements}, 8.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Chomsky said of the American nuclear freeze movement, " [It] was the most successful campaign ever carried out by the U.S. peace movement." But "it had zero impact on U.S. politics." See Richard Seymour, \textit{American Insurgents: A Brief History of American Anti-Imperialism} (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012), 141.
\end{itemize}
the SS20 Pioneers.\textsuperscript{17} NATO announced the exact quantities of the weapons it needed—108 Pershing IIs and 464 ground-launched cruise missiles—and where it wanted them located.\textsuperscript{18} The UK and Italy had recently signed on as missile hosts, with Belgium and the Netherlands still undecided.\textsuperscript{19} Anti-nuclear resistance erupted most vehemently in these proposed locations.

In April 1980, four months after the NATO decision, labor activist and historian E.P. Thompon joined Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation director Ken Coates and disarmament researcher Mary Kaldo in authoring a European Nuclear Disarmament (END) Appeal, which they released in a statement before the British House of Commons.\textsuperscript{20} Starting with a dire warning, “We are entering the most dangerous decade in history,” the document made the case that inequality, economic crises, and “third world” wars led to an arms race in which, “even more deadly nuclear weapons are appearing.”\textsuperscript{21} The document noted the worrisome fact that more new and different weapons were in development in addition to those already in production. These “more usable” models heightened the threat of nuclear war.\textsuperscript{22} The authors warned, “We are now in great danger,” and noted that political institutions could not be trusted to deliver a workable solution. Kaldo, Thompson, and Coates urged people “of every faith and persuasions”

\textsuperscript{17} David Hoffman asserts that NATO issued its double-track decision in direct response to the Soviet deployment of SS20 Pioneers. See David E. Hoffman, \textit{The Dead Hand: Reagan, Gorbachev and the Untold Story of the Cold War Arms Race} (London: Icon Books, 2011), 22.


\textsuperscript{21} E.P. Thompson, Ken Coates, and Mary Kaldo, “No Cruise Missiles, No SS20s: European Nuclear Disarmament” (Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, 1980), 1, Wilson Center Digital Archive.

\textsuperscript{22} E.P. Thompson, Ken Coates, and Mary Kaldo, 1.
to “free the entire territory of Europe, from Poland to Portugal, from nuclear weapons, air and submarine bases, and all institutions engaged in research into or manufacture of nuclear weapons.” As their appeal gained wide circulation, it set an agenda for multiple peace campaigns in Europe and the United States. It moreover generated a wide range of activities from demonstrations, petitions, and long-distance marches to peace camps and guerilla street theater.

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) also played a crucial role in animating this anti-nuclear activism when it experienced a revival in the mid-1970s. This British organization found new life in the campaign against the neutron bomb, or “clean bombs”—a weapon featuring “enhanced radiation” with minimal blast effects and little to no long-lasting radioactive residues. These “mini-hydrogen bombs” targeted soldiers in tanks because their steel-penetrating radiation rendered them lethal to humans. The neutron bomb thus represented more than a deterrence strategy with its focused technology. The “clean bombs” generated only a limited amount of controversy in the United States, in contrast to Europe, where they would likely be deployed. The CND published and distributed information that proved influential in resistance to the neutron bomb. Historian Lawrence Wittner reports that by 1978, seventy-two percent of the British public opposed the weapon. The rest of Europe shared those sentiments. In the late seventies, after the advent of the neutron bomb, anti-nuclear activism grew in West

23 E.P. Thompson, Ken Coates, and Mary Kaldo, 2.
Germany, the Netherlands, and in Scandinavia.\textsuperscript{26} By the time the NATO double-track decision was announced, political ground had been readied for a new generation of protests.

NATO deputy director Jamie Shea reflected on those protests and the state of nuclear fear that existed in Europe during the early 1980s. He began his long career with NATO immediately after the announcement of the double-track decision. Shea held that, “By the early 1980s NATO was facing an existential crisis. Hundreds of thousands of people [were] demonstrating on the streets; NATO governments [were] at the brink of resignation over the decision to install cruise and Pershing weapons.”\textsuperscript{27} Reagan’s election the following year would prove to be a tipping point. Reagan and his team changed the tone of nuclear rhetoric, giving the frightening impression that they believed that nuclear war could be waged in Europe and it could be a conflict that was “winnable.”\textsuperscript{28} This perception fueled the West European peace movement. Their protest was not merely a political movement against an abstract nuclear policy; it was tied to bodily safety. After Eva Quistorp, founder of the European peace group Frauen für den Frieden, heard about the cruise missiles set to arrive in Europe, she knew that she was not alone in her response to the news. She read about a petition to stop the arms race that was brought before the World Women’s Conference in Copenhagen in 1980 and decided to draft another one in West Berlin that expressed the same sentiments. It read, “We say WE ARE DESPERATE. We

\textsuperscript{26} Wittner, \textit{The Struggle against the Bomb, Volume Three: Toward Nuclear Abolition}, 22, 23.

\textsuperscript{27} Shea, Jamie, “1979: The Soviet Union Deploys Its SS20 Missiles and NATO Responds.”

\textsuperscript{28} One example of this kind of heightened rhetoric can be seen in the coverage of Reagan’s statement issued at a conference on developing nations in Cancun, Mexico: ”European concerns and protests had intensified as a result of what an official said were ‘inflated accounts of Reagan’s own impromptu remarks last week about the possibility of limiting a nuclear war to Europe.’” See Bernard Gwertzman, “Reagan Clarifies His Statement on Nuclear War,” \textit{New York Times}, October 22, 1981, sec. A.
realize that more and more women in the world are frightened for the future and are asking, ‘do our children have any future?’”

The European anti-nuclear effort was a collective expression of physical fear.

*Feminist Opposition to Deployment:*

In the early 1980s, feminist peace protesters were already in the habit of organizing collectively for their bodily safety. By 1979, radical feminists had focused on the threats of sexual violence by creating and sponsoring rape crisis centers and battered women’s shelters in multiple U.S. and European cities. Women’s equality, a foundational feminist mission, was not simply a matter of granting women equal access to voting, education, and commensurate pay, but also included protection from the violence perpetrated by men, in homes as well as on the streets. Peace-camping women built their resistance to militarism and nuclear weapons on the foundation of radical feminism’s opposition to sexist violence and oppression. In a testimonial featured in the handbook for the Seneca Women’s Encampment, one camper wrote, “I’ve chosen to work with women because for me personally everything I’ve struggled against, every form of exploitation and oppression I’ve experienced in my life has been because of male creations, male values, and male realities. And I believe in working with women, we can bring about the new values, the new ways…a complete alternative to the patriarchal system.”

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liberty, the central goal of mainstream feminism, was not enough to achieve women’s equality in the eyes of radical feminists. Full equality required a more revolutionary stance, since sexism was woven into the fabric of society. The unequal status of women, as Alice Echols stated, lay “embedded in law, tradition, economics, religion, language, mass media, sexual morality, child rearing, and the division of labor.” Some radical feminists, like the New York City collective the Redstockings, declared, “Women are an oppressed class. Our oppression is total, affecting every facet of our lives. We are exploited sex objects, breeders, domestic servants, and cheap labor.” In acknowledging women’s position in the world, the Redstockings, and feminists like them, did not merely wish to free themselves from sexist constraints, or even to gain full equality—they questioned the value of such endeavors. For them, the entire system was tainted by long traditions of male domination. Some female revolutionaries aimed to transform society entirely.

_The Furies Collective_

In 1970, Ginny Berson and five feminist friends who had been involved in a Washington D.C.–area women’s center moved in together to form an intentionally feminist “women’s house.” According to Berson, because they were the only “all women’s house” in the city, the

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32 Alice Echols, _Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975_ (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1989), ix.


34 Essayist Ellen Willis asserts that radical feminists made a good start in ushering in their “revolution.” She claims that the energy of the radical feminist movement moved NOW to the left and sparked the political will to legalize abortion in 1972. See Ellen Willis, “Radical Feminism and Feminist Radicalism,” _Social Text_ 9/10 (Spring/Summer 1984): 91–118, 91.

35 Certainly, Berson’s was not the only home occupied entirely by women. It is likely that by referring to her former home as a "women's house" she was referring to an intentionally feminist "women's house" in keeping with urban
half-dozen friends hosted “every traveling feminist who came through.” Over time, conflicts arose between gay and straight members of the household and they decided to part ways. Several other D.C.-area lesbian friends joined Berson and her roommates, and together they formed a more focused twelve-member collective. They called themselves the Furies in honor of “the angry one”—Greek goddesses who battled domination and represented the “supremacy of women and the primacy of mother right.” The Furies Collective was organized around the idea that lesbianism was not simply a sexual preference, it was a powerful marker of identity and a deliberate political choice to reject male supremacy.


Two things made the Furies unique: their political ideas and the short-lived *Furies* newspaper they published for one and a half years from January of 1972 until June of 1973. Most of the twelve women who formed the Furies were experienced activists who were used to having political opinions, letting them be known, and then, if possible, taking action. Furies members Charlotte Bunch and Nancy Myron were involved in the Civil Rights Movement, and several others, including Ginny Berson, worked in anti–Vietnam War efforts. The Furies formulated and reevaluated their own brand of lesbian feminist politics in long household discussions. They applied those politics in their own lives by formulating household principles which governed the

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ways they shared their money and household labor. They allocated their money on a percentage system based on class, background, education, and age. The Furies even decided that a member’s “former heterosexual privilege” should be factored into the division of their household accounts. Sometimes they labored over a single issue for several weeks. The Furies developed their theories based on experiences that could be worked out in their daily lives.

The collective left a record of their household discussions and the ways they applied them in their newspaper, *The Furies*. The paper gave the women a forum where they could state their lesbian feminist politics clearly. In a set of short *Furies* features, member Coletta Reid offered readers the group’s roadmap from sexist tyranny to lesbian liberation: “Stopped doing dope, began doing Karate, and formed study groups.” The Furies’ intent to lead a separate “women-centered” life shaped their approach to all problems in society, ranging from the Vietnam War, to drug culture, to violence against women.

Charlotte Bunch, perhaps the most politically adept Furies member, linked her lesbian separatist politics to her own life experiences. Raised in New Mexico, Bunch grew up in a churchgoing family. As a child, she read about women who took responsibility for civic affairs, like Jane Addams, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Susan B. Anthony. In 1962, Bunch carried her civic ethos with her to Durham, North Carolina, where as a student at Duke she got involved in the

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42 Berson, “Only By Association.”

43 Reid, “Details,” 7.

Civil Rights Movement through her local church. In 1965, as president of the National Student Christian Leadership Council, Bunch took a week off from her studies to go to Montgomery, Alabama, to organize housing for the Selma protest marchers. Bunch called that experience a watershed moment in her life where she began to truly understand the workings of racist oppression.\textsuperscript{45} After she graduated, Bunch was hired by the Washington D.C. left-leaning think tank the Institute for Policy Studies. While there, Bunch felt invisible in the organization’s mostly male environment, and she became an active feminist.\textsuperscript{46} In 1970, shortly before becoming a Fury, Bunch went to North Vietnam with the National Committee to End the War (MOBE) as a representative of the women’s movement.\textsuperscript{47} Bunch’s work in the Civil Rights Movement and her anti-Vietnam work informed her \textit{Furies} essays.

Bunch returned from her trip with fresh insight about the relationship between war and oppression. In her 1972 \textit{Furies} essay, Bunch asserted that war was “the original imperialism” and it was a staging ground for the domination of men over women.\textsuperscript{48} She wanted to build a movement that was strong enough to challenge all imperialisms, however ending oppression under male supremacy had to be feminists’ first priority. Bunch likened women’s dilemma to that of Black nationalists, who struggled to balance the fight against racism with protest against the Vietnam War. Bunch asserted that despite the fact that both racism and imperialism existed,

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\textsuperscript{45} Stephen McKiernan, Charlotte Bunch Oral History, Digital Format, January 15, 2015, Special Collections Binghamton University Libraries Binghamton University, State University of New York, https://omeka.binghamton.edu/omeka/items/show/866, 8:00, 20:00.
\textsuperscript{46} McKiernan, Charlotte Bunch Oral History, 20:00.
\textsuperscript{47} McKiernan, Charlotte Bunch Oral History, 1:21.
\textsuperscript{48} Charlotte Bunch, “Out Now!” \textit{The Furies} 1, no. 5 June-July 1972, 12.
\end{flushleft}
Black freedom fighters had to prioritize “the fight to liberate Black people.” In a 2015 interview, Bunch asserted that Virginia Woolf’s ideas on the position of women was influential in her thinking. In *Three Guineas*, a book-length essay written in 1938, shortly before World War II, Woolf posed a question: “What does our country mean to me, an outsider?” Instead of addressing the question directly, Woolf outlined the mental calculations necessary for an outsider, such as herself, to determine an answer:

To decide this, she will analyze the meaning of patriotism in her own case. She will inform herself of the position of her sex and her class in the past. She will inform herself of the amount of land, wealth, and property in possession of her own sex and class in the present – how much of England in fact belongs to her. From the same sources she will inform herself of the legal protection which the law has given her in the past and now gives her. And if he adds that he is fighting to protect her body, she will reflect upon the degree of physical protection that she now enjoys when the words “Air Raid Precaution” are written on blank walls.

Woolf then delivered her answer to the question of the personal meaning of “country”:

Therefore, if you insist upon fighting to protect me, or ‘our’ country, let it be understood, soberly and rationally between us, that you are fighting to gratify a sex instinct which I cannot share; to procure benefits which I have not shared and probably will not share; but not to gratify my instincts, or to protect either myself or my country. “For,” the outsider will say, “in fact, as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world.”

Former anti-war protester and Fury member Ginny Berson agreed with Bunch’s Woolf-inspired thinking and claimed, “We [The Furies] came from the Civil Rights Movement, the Women’s Liberation Movement, the male left, the mixed Gay Movement…We fought war, capitalism,


racism, and sexism. We were tired of inserting feminist consciousness into anti-war marches. We had to develop an analysis of power that came from our own oppression.”

Some Furies disagreed with Bunch and Berson. Members Lee Schwing and Susan Hathaway asserted that feminist and anti-war protest were compatible. For one thing, Schwing and Hathaway refused to conflate peacekeeping with feminine natures and war-like behavior with masculine tendencies. In addition, their arguments against war extended beyond Woolf’s position of disinterest because of women’s “outsider” status. Schwing and Hathaway believed that an anti-war stance was vital for feminists, because they placed the blame for militarism and war-making on the material conditions of a male-dominated world. Schwing and Hathaway adapted an early twentieth-century Marxist model of dissent which placed the central imperative for war not on national identity, but on the profits from military spending. They noted that male-dominated societies depended on war technology for establishing dominance—tools ranging across a spectrum from hammers to plutonium. By setting the feminist argument for peace in the atomic age within a materialist framework, the Furies developed an anti-military feminist analysis for women that was not limited to the notion of “true womanhood,” or the essential purity of female natures. Marxist interpretations established new pathways for a radical feminist argument for peace, which would build over the course of the decade.

The separatist practices of the Furies also proved influential among radical feminists. The collective started several practical ventures for building women’s skills in the D.C. area. Even if they had to go to the library to get books to learn the skills themselves first, Furies members


conducted workshops to train women for traditional men’s work. They held courses featuring auto repair, plumbing, and electrical wiring.\textsuperscript{54} Even after the household broke apart in 1973, Furies members went on to create several feminist ventures. Furies members Reid, Schwing, and Tasha Peterson joined the D.C.-area collective that produced the radical feminist magazine \textit{Off Our Backs}. In 1974, Bunch and fellow Fury Rita Mae Brown went on to create the feminist quarterly journal \textit{Quest}, and Fury member Joan Biren created the media company Moonface Media, a feminist film distributor.\textsuperscript{55}

\textit{Lesbian Separatist Opposition}

The Furies were one of several separatist groups who influenced the women’s peace camping movement. In some cases, separatism began with discontent over ostracism within the women’s movement. In 1970, a group of women forced themselves onto a stage in front of a Greenwich Village feminist working conference, the Second Congress to Unite Women. Once there, the group “zapped” or deflected the attentions of the conference attendees. The zappers wore T-shirts scrawled with the words “Lavender Menace” to showcase their scorn for the bigotry of Betty Friedan, feminist founder of the National Organization for Women (NOW). Friedan used the term “lavender menace” as an epithet to express her fears that lesbians might “destroy the women’s movement.” The confrontation at the Second Congress catalyzed lesbian feminists. Several congress attendees in the audience stormed the stage to join the self-proclaimed Lavender Menace “zapping” crew. The Lavender Menace group formed a collective

\textsuperscript{54} leslie smith and toni white, “‘ourstory/Herstory’: The Washington, d.c. Feminist Community from 1969 to 1979.”

called the Radicalesbians which released a manifesto, “Women Identified Women” outlining the
tenets of lesbian separatism.56

The declaration proclaimed that “[a] lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to a
point of explosion.” Like the Furies, the Radicalesbian Collective asserted that lesbianism was
political. Lesbianism was the logical consequence of recognizing male oppression and claiming
loyalty to one’s fellow victims: women. More than changing allegiances, it meant finding a new
lifestyle among “women identified women” where one had to “evolve her own life pattern.”57
Rita Mae Brown—poet, novelist, and lavender menace, Radicalesbian cofounder, and later, one
of the twelve Furies—asserted that lesbians, more than heterosexual women, did not “make men
the center of their lives.”58 Bunch clarified that position later in the Furies, where she stated that,
“to be a lesbian is to love oneself, to define oneself in terms of women, and reject male
definitions of how she should look, act, feel and live.”59 A letter writer in the feminist news-
journal Off Our Backs put it more baldly: “leave men, including your male children, become a
lesbian, live with women, preferably in a women’s commune, understand that sexism is the root
of all the world’s ills, and the hope of the planet is a women’s revolution, and devote all your
energies to women, in an extreme form, to lesbians alone.”60 Radical feminist collectives like the
Radicalesbians and the Furies decided that they would not fight men’s fights. They also

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concluded that in the main, they would not devote their energies towards protesting men’s fights either—like the Vietnam War.

Even with such concentrated devotion, practicing lesbian separatism in its purest form proved to be challenging. Many women did try, and those efforts worked themselves out in a spate of creative outlets. Some feminist lesbian separatists took an entrepreneurial approach. Furies members Lee Schwing and Helaine Harris believed that women should build their own feminist institutions, particularly in media, television, records, and publishing. They put their ideas into practice by joining members of the Radicalesbian collective to establish the women-owned and operated Olivia Records, a highly successful lesbian record label.61 Such institutions would give women a stage from which to generate political support and to garner funds to support women’s needs in women’s health clinics, rape crisis centers, and self-defense programs.62 Other separatists took a different approach and chose to drop out of urban society altogether by purchasing or renting rural properties on which to make new women’s-only spaces. The female-only “back to the land” movement was a form of territorial separatism which would afford lesbian feminists with the space to create their own culture.63


63 Scott Herring complicates the aims of the lesbian “back to the land” movement by asserting that lesbian separatists not only wished to break free from the male-dominated culture and the broader women’s movement, they also wished to extricate themselves from the gay liberation movement which many thought of as a “gay male ruling culture” which marginalized lesbians. See Scott Herring, “Out of the Closets, into the Woods: ‘RFD’, ‘Country Women’, and the Post-Stonewall Emergence of Queer Anti-Urbanism,” *American Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (2007): 341–72, 355.
Because women’s peace camps were female-only spaces, they would become a draw for 1970s-era separatist lesbian feminists. Greenham Common women’s peace camp began as a “mixed” venture but became a single-sex site within five months, allowing men day-visiting privileges only. The visitors handbook for the Seneca Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice (WEFPJ) invited women to camp on the land, but restricted men to the reception area only. Camper Joan Durant expressed her relief at being among women who were “by ourselves without men’s voices to blur the issues.” Camp organizer Barbara Reale called their women’s-only action a “role reversal” where women would not be “relegated to the background merely maintaining life support systems for active, change-making men.”

Ecofeminist Opposition

Ynestra King was in graduate school when she began to develop the ideas that led to the spread of the American ecofeminist movement. On March 28, 1979, while King was writing an essay on feminist theory for her comprehensive exams, a reactor core partially melted down at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. As the news broke, King alternated between writing and watching news coverage of the event. She started

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66 Léonie Caldecott and Stephanie Leland, eds., Reclaim the Earth: Women Speak out for Life on Earth (London: Women’s Press, 1983), 10; The basic hypothesis that ecofeminists agree upon is the notion that oppressions based on class, sex, and race are inherently connected to the domination of nature. See Greta Claire Gaard, Ecological Politics: Ecofeminists and the Greens (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 1; The term for ecofeminism was first used by Francoise d’Eubonne in 1974. See Douglas A. Vakoch, Ecofeminism in Dialogue: Ecocritical Theory and Practice (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), 78.

connecting what she was writing about in her essays—women’s oppression—with the environmental disaster she was witnessing on television. She was outraged by the Three Mile Island spokesperson’s sexist rhetoric, who—when describing attempts to control the crisis—used phrases like “cooling her down” and “slamming rods into her core.”\(^{68}\) Watching the events unfold at Three Mile Island linked King’s two greatest concerns: the environment and women’s status. She was not the only one making those connections. In the following months, King had long discussions with her friends about whether the environment and women’s issues were related. After a time, King expanded her discussions beyond her own circle and began to network with women from the Boston and New York metro areas, who wanted to organize ways to apply feminist ideology to a greater consciousness of the environment and act on their findings.\(^{69}\)

Nearly one year later, on March 20, 1980, more than seven hundred women joined King in Amherst, Massachusetts, for the first American ecofeminist conference, a three-day gathering called Women and Life on Earth (WLOE). Speakers with experience in a variety of environmental causes joined the conference. Lois Gibbs, leader of the Love Canal Homeowners Association, spoke about the group’s struggle against the Hooker Chemical Company for polluting their working-class Love Canal neighborhood in Niagara Falls, New York. In addition to environmental concerns, the conference program underscored anti-militarism as its central theme. Nuclear resisters, including Randall Forsberg of the Nuclear Freeze Campaign and Amy Swerdlow of Women Strike for Peace (WSP), addressed the conference about the importance of


disarmament during the height of the race for the presidency between Jimmy Carter and the hawkish Ronald Reagan.\textsuperscript{70}

The addition of militarism to environmental and feminist issues was in keeping with the ecofeminist perspective. Ecofeminists often describe their philosophy as a web, or a system of ideas that connect. Ecofeminism draws from a variety of ideologies fusing feminism, socialism, environmentalism, and the peace movement. As an amalgam of interests, the ideology does battle with interlocking violations against women, communities, animals, lands, and seas. Early ecofeminist and scholar Greta Gaard asserted that ecofeminists strove to build a “global analysis of oppression.”\textsuperscript{71} Within this wide scope, the ideology linked two primary ideas: the domination of women and the domination of nature.\textsuperscript{72} For ecofeminists, the oppression of women and the environment mutually reinforced each other and demanded that both be “liberated together.”\textsuperscript{73} King and other anti-nuclear ecofeminists opposed nuclear weapons such as the neutron bomb, the MX missile, and cruise missile systems, because they represented the logical outcome of


\textsuperscript{72} Charis Thompson, “Back to Nature?” \textit{Isis} 97, no. 3 (September 2006): 505–12, 509.

patriarchal rule.\textsuperscript{74} King drew nuclear technology into the ideology’s algorithm of oppression by asserting that it was “a product of the male mind.”\textsuperscript{75}

Some ecofeminists were aware of the pitfalls of making such a gendered claim. They knew that by coupling men with warfare or women with the natural environment they risked building a biological box for themselves. By stating that women were “closer to nature” they might be forced to accept the limitations that this position might require, particularly that of accepting the traditional female role as makers and tenders of babies. Conference organizer and moderator Grace Paley rejected the boundaries that sympathy implied.\textsuperscript{76} In the ecofeminist manifesto she co-authored, Paley asserted women’s right to eschew traditional roles, their “right to have or not to have children,” and their freedom to “love whomever they might choose.”\textsuperscript{77}

Like Paley, ecofeminist scholar Carolyn Merchant acknowledged the essentialist traps that identification with the earth carried and made a materialist argument for ecofeminism. Merchant argued that women were not biologically closer to nature than men, but that women’s cultural roles in society kept them outside the inner circle of producers in the realm of Western

\textsuperscript{74} Carolyn Merchant argues that the environmental movement and feminism are linked in their mutual support of the idea of the cosmos as a living system which was undermined by the scientific revolution and the rise of modern-era market-driven culture where the “cosmos” was reimagined as a machine rather than as an organic body. See Carolyn Merchant, \textit{Ecological Revolutions Nature, Gender, and Science in New England} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), xvi.

\textsuperscript{75} Gaard, \textit{Ecological Politics}, 31.

\textsuperscript{76} Grace Paley, Ynestra King, and other ecofeminists composed a unity statement for the group Women’s Pentagon Action which outlined the politics of the eco-feminist movement. Léonie Caldecott and Stephanie Leland, eds., \textit{Reclaim the Earth: Women Speak out for Life on Earth} (London: Women’s Press, 1983), 15.

\textsuperscript{77} Caldecott and Leland, \textit{Reclaim the Earth}, 19.
industrial capitalism. She believed that women were more in sympathy with the natural world than those who remained in the industrial inner circle: men.\(^{78}\)

Ecofeminist claims regarding women’s “ways” also created essentialist snares. The “ethics of care” was an especially abiding and contentious ecofeminist doctrine. Care, or the business of giving preferential attention to the health and preservation of existing things, whether animal, vegetable or mineral, did not, on its own, cause contention. Environmentalists, feminist or not, asserted that humans needed to change their relationship with nature from that of exploitation to nurture, in order to save the planet from ruin.\(^{79}\) However, radical feminists bridled at any hint of relegating women to their traditional role as caregivers.

Ecofeminism both as a practice as well as an ideology centered around women’s experiences, and tended to involve caregiving of some kind. American ecofeminists emulated women from India and Africa who resisted the destruction of trees on which their livelihoods depended. In 1977, women in the Uttarkind region of Uttar Pradesh, India placed their bodies between the trees that provided them with fuel, fodder for their animals, and medicine for their families, and the loggers who attempted to fell them. The women hugged the trees and that action, translated into Hindi, was called “Chipco.” Chipco methods spread to other regions of India, including the village of Kemar, where women marched long distances to save more than 2,500 trees.\(^{80}\) Also in 1977, Kenyan woman Wangaari Maathai founded the Greenbelt


Movement, a tree planting crusade responsible for planting more than seven million trees within a decade, helping women to access drinking water and wood for fuel through conservation and “sustainable development.”

King and many of her WLOE conference colleagues followed the template that ecofeminist women in India and Kenya provided and acted on their ideas.

*Women’s Pentagon Action*

Women for Life on Earth attendees represented a broad coalition of pacifists, environmentalists, feminists, and lesbians. Many of them wanted to act on their respective concerns and were determined to work in concert, so they created a large direct-action group, calling it Women’s Pentagon Action. As a poet and experienced anti-war activist, the high-profile member Grace Paley wrote the group’s founding declaration, or unity statement, through a painstaking process of consensus, waged through meetings, companionable subway rides, and phone calls.

Paley was fifty-nine years old when she wrote the WPA declaration and the many years she spent advocating for feminist, anti-war, and environmentalist causes suited her for the task. She was also an accomplished poet and essayist and an acclaimed author of short stories. Her long-time War Resisters League (WRL) colleague Judith Mahoney Pasternack said of Paley, “In the canon of literature, no writer has ever risen so high while compiling such a long and

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82 Ynestra King and Adrienne Harris, *Rocking the Ship of State: Toward a Feminist Peace Politics*, 283-284.


84 King and Harris, *Rocking the Ship of State*, 283.
honorable arrest record in the cause of peace.”

Paley, who described herself as “neurotically anti-authoritarian,” was used to speaking out. In 1954, she participated in one of the first New York City demonstrations for abortion rights. In 1961, not long after she published her first collection of short stories, Paley persuaded the Parent–Teacher Association of her children’s public school to protest against atomic testing. Paley co-founded the Greenwich Village Peace Center in 1963, and every weekend for the next eight years Paley and her friends picketed draft boards and courthouses, handing out leaflets against the Vietnam War to New Yorkers passing by. In 1969, as a member of the American Peace Brigade delegation, Paley visited North Vietnam to escort three American prisoners of war back to the United States. In the 1970s, Paley joined the environmentalist anti-nuclear Clamshell Alliance in their protests against the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant in New Hampshire. By the early 1980s, when she joined her new activist venture, the WPA, Paley described herself as “salted by ecological education [and] connection” and ready once again for action.

The WPA attracted women like Paley—left-leaning, educated, experienced activists—from groups dotted along the Eastern Seaboard. Women from organizations as varied as Artists for Survival, the Coalition for a People’s Alternative, Lesbians Rising, Mobilization for Survival, and others were united.

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90 Oates, “Soft-Speaking Tough Souls.”
Spiderworts, Women of All Red Nations, Women for Racial and Economic Equality, and Women Strike for Peace all gathered under the WPA umbrella.⁹¹ As a coalition of diverse communities, the WPA’s unity statement strove to express a single purpose even though it addressed a wide variety of subjects. The statement named dangers that ranged from those touching all of planetary life to those of women in city streets. It bundled the threats into one charge and placed them at the door of the Pentagon, “the workplace… that threatens us all.”⁹² Paley and her retinue of more than two hundred “unity statement collaborators” incorporated broad political realities of militarism, represented by the Pentagon, into the daily forms of misogyny they confronted in their personal lives.⁹³ By doing that, they particularized the nuclear threat and underscored its resonance. They portrayed the nuclear arms race as a threat to their work, studies, food, houses, children, lovers, and water, as well as the global world order.

The WPA’s most memorable—even defining—actions took place in 1980 and 1981. WPA member Felice Yeskal described the first of the actions as a “transforming historical event” that they vowed to repeat one year later.⁹⁴ Thousands of women marched, handed out unity statements, and performed what King called “visible acts of public interventions” to “interrupt, disrupt, and to surprise audiences.”⁹⁵ The activists shocked their audience, but that was not their

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⁹³ Marianne Hirsch, “‘What We Need Right Now Is to Imagine the Real’: Grace Paley Writing against War,” PMLA 124, no. 5 (October 2009): 1768–77, 1769.


⁹⁵ Hirsch, "What We Need Right Now Is to Imagine the Real,” 1769.
only goal. In her retrospective on Grace Paley’s writing against the war, literary scholar Marianne Hirsch asserts that as the WPA’s writer “in residence,” Paley aimed to help audiences who lived far away from war zones to “imagine the real.” That imagined reality included lives lived in war, as well as anyone who endured violence and poverty. The challenge Paley offered to readers was to build that empathetic and creative repertoire while walking on a peaceful city street surrounded by well-stocked grocery stores and restaurants. This goal required disruption. For example, during the 1980 and 1981 WPA actions, protesters unsettled the solemn line of grave markers at Arlington National Cemetery by placing thousands of handwritten cardboard tombstones nearby. The handmade headstones marked the passage of “unknown” and unremembered women who died by acts of violence and war. While a drum beat a slow time, WPA protesters called out the circumstances of the remembered dead.

The women of the WPA also aimed to expand their audience’s perspective by performing “every day” domestic scenarios publicly, outside their usual “inside-the-home” venue. One homemaking art that featured prominently in their Pentagon protests was breadmaking, which was, the women were careful to point out, a benign alternative to one of the Pentagon’s primary tasks: bombmaking. One flyer that the WPA passed around outside of the Pentagon was in the form of a clip-out recipe that might be found in any number of 1980s “women’s” magazines or newspapers. The side-banner read, “Bread Not Bombs,” next to a simple whole wheat bread

96 Hirsch, “What We Need Right Now Is to Imagine the Real,” 1768.


recipe. Underneath the directions, given in a series of steps, the flyer urged bakers to “confront your feelings of powerlessness and despair and realize you can make a difference” and “organize a group to work on an issue that affects your community.”

The WPA’s first national exercise in delivering collective “acts of the imagination” took place over November 17–18, 1980, a scant two weeks after the election of Ronald Reagan and just short of one year after NATO’s double-track decision. The day unfolded as a play with four acts: mourning, rage, empowerment, and defiance. Each act was led by a 14-foot-high puppet created by the Vermont-based Bread and Puppet Theater, who had honed their skills performing in anti-Vietnam War demonstrations a decade before. The first act, “mourning,” featured a puppet draped in black “widow’s weeds,” which led the trek through Arlington National Cemetery where the women placed their faux tombstones. After setting them, the women, some in black cloaks and veils, shouted and wailed in a deliberate outpouring of emotion stark contrasting with the solemn military rituals normally conducted in the national cemetery. Moving from the cemetery to the Pentagon gates, the women chanted “We won’t take it,” starting the second act of their performance. A large red puppet, symbolizing rage, stepped forward, and led a chant with the repeated refrain, “We are angry.” Women, shaking coffee cans filled with stones, began to surround the five-sided building.

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101 ‘Talk of the Town,’ The New Yorker, November 24, 1980,” 43.

102 ‘Talk of the Town,’ The New Yorker, 44.
The demonstrators completed their action by weaving. After reading the unity statement, some protesters made for the doors of the Pentagon and enacted the familiar civil disobedience tactic of a sit-in, blocking three of the four building entrances. Other protesters wove the doorways shut near a banner reading, “We will weave a world web to entangle the powers that bury our children.”103 The protesters wove their webs while Pentagon workers made their way into and out of the building. To exit the river entrance to the building, a lieutenant colonel, a major, and a two-star general had to hop off of the top step of the exit and take a side route out.104

By utilizing a traditionally feminine action such as weaving to protest, WPA members transformed it from a task of drudgery into a sharpened form of female criticism. It took domestic work out of the home and into the public, on the steps of the Pentagon, allowing the women to ennoble the action on their terms. WPA leader Ynestra King described those terms as a complex balance between “valuing the traditional lives and work of women and drawing on our feminist analysis and politics.”105

The protesters paid for their obstruction. WPA member and staff worker at the War Resisters League Susan Pines was arrested by security guards at the doorway to the Pentagon. They shackled her wrists, waist, and ankles with thirty-four others and sentenced them to thirty days at Alderson Women’s Prison, three hundred miles away in rural West Virginia. While behind bars together, the incarcerated WPA members developed

104 ‘Talk of the Town,’ *The New Yorker*, 44.
105 King and Harris, *Rocking the Ship of State*, 287.
relationships with other prisoners and as a result widened the scope of the already long list of WPA concerns to include the support of women in prison.106

A year later, on November 15, 1981, a coalition of three thousand WPA women from more than fifty different organizations and from as far away as California, Wisconsin, and Colorado gathered in Washington, D.C., for another two-day action. Journalist and peace activist Ann Morrissett Davidon described day two as “winding up the Pentagon.” This time the women made their webs from string, yarn, and rags that circled the entire building, blocking the entrances and exits for several hours.107 Protester Megan McLemore, who was arrested that day, described “interfering with Pentagon business,” as “banging your fist on the table and saying, ‘No! You can’t do that!’”108 The weaving was meant to “strangle the spirit of the Pentagon.” In their rally scenario for civil disobedience, WPA members directed weavers to form a continuous woven braid around the building and to give it “substance and meaning” by knotting in objects including old bones and grandmother’s scarves”109


Figure 2. Web Blocking Pentagon Entrance, November 16, 1981
The labor of web-making was difficult to interrupt. Police and security officials could not 
penetrate the web because it was slightly less than body high. To pass, they had to scoot under or 
float over the nest of yarn and string. The web could only be penetrated by cutting strings, an 
arduous task that required something that the police did not normally carry: household scissors or 
a pocket knife.\(^\text{110}\) Additionally, as soon as the strings were cut, busy protesters rewove them.

WPA weaver Mina Hamilton reported that the first year’s web was hip-high, and to weave, protesters had to crawl underneath the mass. Protesters scooted from side to side with red, yellow, and orange yarn balls gripped and passed from person to person, under and over the walkway railings where they would “make a loop, push the yarn through, move crabwise along the steps, scoot to a fellow weaver and exchange” thread and continue. Mina had a weaving mantra: “Be quick. Be calm.” The web did not simply visually represent connectivity, its making was a collective effort. While the weavers themselves remained calm and busy, they were surrounded by others, some of them resting weavers, who expressed the rage that the engrossed workers could not. Journalist Judith Valente captured the emotional timbreer in her descriptions of protesters waving clenched fists at uniformed servicemen, as they walked in and out of the building, all the while shouting “Shame, shame, shame!” and “What about the children!”

*The June 1982 UN Special Session for Disarmament Rally*

Six months after their Pentagon protest, the WPA joined other peace groups in a rally at the United Nations in New York City. The UN Special Session for Disarmament met in June 1982 and included U.S. President Reagan, West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who addressed the five-week conference. The tone was apocalyptic, not only in radical “peacenik” circles, but even among the political elite. The United Nations’ appointed rapporteur for the session Omar Ersun opened by asserting that they had


convened in response to “a growing public concern among the peoples of the world that the arms race, especially, the nuclear arms race, represented ever-increasing threats to human well-being and even the survival of mankind.”

Ersun concluded by acknowledging failures in disarmament efforts: “The nuclear arms race has assumed more dangerous proportions and global military expenditures have increased sharply.”

The U.N. Secretary General Mr. Perez de Cuèler’s written session statement elaborated on the dangerous nuclear paradigm in which the conference convened: “Unfortunately the international climate since 1978 has not been conducive to the increased confidence required for disarmament. The arms race has continued to spread and intensify. Weapons of even more destructiveness continue to be piled up. New weapons even more horrifying in their implications are being planned and developed.”

Danger, horror, and destruction were key words among the official speechmakers and decision-makers at the UN conference for those five weeks.

On June 12, 1982, outside the U.N. building in Midtown Manhattan and stretching north to Central Park, those key words found amplification in banners, songs, and shouts by more than 700,000 anti-nuclear protesters rallying to add urgency and offer their support for the UN disarmament mission.

One banner read “Don’t Blow It: A Good Planet is Hard to Find.”

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Marchers, all in white, carried signs with images of sunrises and sunsets painted on them. The marchers’ distinct color contrast from the posters they carried heightened the images’ beauty and fragility. A “parade drama” staged by the Bread and Puppet theater revealed a religious urgency and a sly feminist commentary. The performance featured “nuclear” puppet monsters, dragons, and skeletons followed by twelve-foot-tall stilted washer-women called the “forces of salvation,” cleaning up their demonic atomic mess.\textsuperscript{118}

Former Furies member Charlotte Bunch, representing the Gay and Lesbian Task Force, was one of the main speakers at the rally. Her speech elaborated on a theme she had introduced a decade before: the politics of domination. This time, however, because of the urgency of nuclear escalation, she turned her attention back to protesting the military. Bunch asserted that because the gay and lesbian community had made their voices heard, they could now enter the public world with their identities intact. They now had the space to turn their attention to other pressing causes, and to be “a proud and open part of the struggle.”\textsuperscript{119} Bunch announced that “[t]oday we bring the energies released by our movement of love for ourselves to join in this demand to stop the nuclear arms race.” Echoing the WPA’s unity statement, Bunch linked the quest for military dominance through nuclear weapons with the drive for social dominance through “prejudice and greed.” Both pursuits denied “all love, all justice, all freedom, indeed all life on earth.”\textsuperscript{120} She urged the demonstrators to “act,” acknowledging that they had all “come too far—out of closets,

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{119} Charlotte Bunch, “June 12th Disarmament Rally Speech, New York, New York, June 12, 1982,” June 12, 1982, Box 17 Charlotte Bunch Additional Papers Folder 6 Charlotte Bunch Demonstration Rally for Disarmament 1982, Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, 1.
\item\textsuperscript{120} Bunch, "June 12th Disarmament Rally Speech," 1.
\end{footnotes}
kitchens, ghettos and out of... isolated fears about the nuclear age—to allow this madness to destroy us all.”

A strong contingent of anti-nuclear feminists from several continents gathered to attend the rally that day. Several hundred feminists and lesbian feminist activists, including the WPA, organized a “feminist walk” which rallied with a larger group called “the Women’s Contingent.” The assembled women took advantage of their proximity and met across town one day before the mass demonstration, to plan for carrying out a specifically feminist agenda for the anti-nuclear cause. They called their gathering the Global Feminist Disarmament Conference.

Global Feminist Disarmament Conference

Assembling women from across the United States and eleven other countries, the conference represented a meeting of two feminist worlds. The link between radical feminists and their more conservative counterparts proved vital in both the creation of and the eventual work of peace camps. That energy was apparent at the Global Feminist Disarmament Conference. Organizers Linda Bullard and Mary Noland, representing the mainstream peace organization the American branch of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), were the primary organizers of the conference. One month before the massive demonstration in support of the UN Special Session was due to convene, Bullard and Noland

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121 Bunch, "June 12th Disarmament Rally Speech," 2.

122 “A Feminist World Is a Nuclear Free Zone” (Womennews, June 1982), Box W: Women’s Pentagon Action, Folder: WPA Media Coverage, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, 5.

noted that none of the activities planned were “specifically geared toward feminists.”¹²⁴ In a letter, Noland and Bullard invited women who explicitly identified themselves as feminists to join. But they were careful to note that the conference would not be a “consciousness raising session,” and instead it would be a day to explore the mutually reinforcing relationship of militaries and sexism in maintaining the arms race.”¹²⁵

Though the conference was not hosted by Bullard and Noland’s parent organization, the WILPF, it did revive a goal that the group formulated when it was established in 1915. They sought to seek disarmament and support social and economic justice.¹²⁶ Though stated more briefly than in the manifesto of more radical colleagues at the WPA, the WILPF also sought women’s equality and agency. Their feminist aims were clearly outlined five years before the conference in 1975, in a booklet called *Listen to the Women*. The booklet was published in honor of the WILPF’s sixtieth anniversary. The group’s president, Kay Camp, compiled a collection of fifty reflections by feminist and anti-war activists from around the globe which explored the meaning of “feminist peace.”¹²⁷

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¹²⁵ “Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom Informational Letter Regarding the International Feminist Disarmament Meeting.”


¹²⁷ Catia Cecilia Confortini uses the term "feminist peace" to describe WILPF members’ “theoretical struggles” over peace and feminism which she argues resulted in a feminist theory of emancipatory social change in *Intelligent Compassion: Feminist Critical Methodology in the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom*, Oxford Studies in Gender and International Relations (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 5.
Of the forty-nine women contributors, less than half were from Europe or North America. The authors tended to be elite and professional. They were judges, ministers, members of parliament, wives of presidents, and entertainers.128 All were self-proclaimed feminists. As contributor Francoise Giroud, France’s minister for women, explained, “Women want to exist for all society—not just a single-family unit.”129 Another writer, Ghanaian judge Anni Jiaoge, asserted that a “truly liberated women’s vision is clear for all injustice.”130 Charlotte Meachum, the Singapore branch co-director of the American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker peace group, stated that the greatest cause of injustice was the unequal distribution of the world’s resources and urged all women to use their international movement or “women’s rebellion” to “reorder the world’s priorities.”131 In her analysis of the WILPF of that era, Catia Confortini described the group as an instrumental actor in developing an “explicitly feminist analysis of international politics” in which “NGOs and leaders from the global South identified intersecting oppressions that obstructed peace-making.132 Camp’s WILPF document reflected that bold global feminist sentiment.133

Disarmament Rally speaker Bunch delivered the conference’s opening address. WPA members were at the conference as well. WPA member Lynne Jones traveled to the


132 Confortini, Intelligent Compassion, 122.

133 Confortini, 123.
Disarmament Rally and conference after having spent the winter and spring at the Greenham Common peace camp. At the conference, Jones told her story. Some of her friends were among the few who made the initial trek from Cardiff, Wales, to the Greenham Common Royal Air Force Base to protest the cruise missiles. Jones reported that law enforcement evicted her and fellow campers from the “commons,” or the community property adjacent to the Royal Air Force base. However, contrary to some reports, the women did not leave as a result. They simply moved from one “little bit of land” to make their camp on another bit, not far away.\textsuperscript{134} Jones reported that camping was cold and rainy, unpleasant, and relentless. She and her fellow campers remained determined, nevertheless, to do the work “by a feminist process,” in order to “make a feminist community that gets right up face to face with the state and won’t go away.”\textsuperscript{135}

An afternoon conference session formulated a plan in response to Jones’ Greenham Common report. Former president and, at the time of the conference, coordinator of the WILPF disarmament program Kay Camp told the group that the Seneca Army Base in Romulus, New York was a storage and transporting station for the nuclear weapons that were to be delivered to Greenham Common and other locations in Europe. She informed the attendees that in May there had been a demonstration there, where activists handed out leaflets and talked to members of the local community about the purpose of the base. Camp then proposed that the Seneca Army Base

\textsuperscript{134} “Statement by Lynn Jones, Greenham Common Woman,” June 12, 1982, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, 18.

\textsuperscript{135} “Statement by Lynn Jones, Greenham Common Woman,” 18.
might be a good site for an American women’s peace camp, similar to the one at Greenham Common.\textsuperscript{136}

*The Seneca Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice*

Within one year, the idea born at the conference came to fruition when the women’s peace camp at the Seneca Army Depot opened. The plans had traction in great part due to the sponsorship of the WILPF, which later issued a press release for the Seneca camp naming itself the “founding mothers, supporters, and sustainers” of the encampment.\textsuperscript{137} Another group called the Upstate Feminist Alliance supported the camp as well.\textsuperscript{138} They hoped that the New York encampment would be a sister camp to Greenham Common because both camps would protest the same missiles in different places. Seneca would object to cruise missiles while they remained in storage at the Seneca Army Depot, while the Greenham women would protest the missiles in anticipation of their arrival at the Greenham Common Air Force Base. The two groups were quite different from one another, however. Greenham Common women started their camp without forethought. Ann Pettit and her Cardiff, Wales comrades arrived at the Royal Air Force Base, parked themselves, and began to camp in frustration. The women who formed the Seneca camp planned their encampment carefully.


\textsuperscript{138} “Join Women’s Peace Encampment,” 1982 or 1983, Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice Collection, Box 6, Folder 196 Form Letters Sent Out about the Encampment, Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study.
Women who aligned themselves with a wide variety of organizations, including the WILPF and the regional Upstate Feminist Peace Alliance (UFPA), arranged the Seneca camp and they did not always see eye to eye. In an October 1982 strategy meeting, a woman speaking for the WILPF believed that the goal for creating the Seneca camp fit into their group’s general mission of mobilizing women for peace, because of the Seneca Army Depot’s role as a transport point for weapons destined for Europe. The location was ideal because it would allow peace groups to “seize the opportunity” to maintain a “strong connection” to the camp at Greenham Common. The connection with the increasingly popular “Greenham” effort would marshal greater support and thus “mobilize” more women. WILPF member Wilma believed that Seneca organizers should not “drag their feet over safety concerns,” because people wanted to see action happen quickly. In response, a UFPA representative who had more local knowledge expressed concerns about community hostility. Locals relied on the army depot for jobs. Their economic dependency would make nuclear disarmament a contentious issue and lead to potential anger or perhaps even violence toward the campers.\footnote{Ethel’s Notes, Box 1, Folder 29, Women’s Encampment for Freedom, Peace, and Justice Papers, Radcliffe College Schlesinger Library, Harvard, University Libraries, Cambridge, Mass., n.d., Women’s Encampment for Freedom, Peace, and Justice Papers, Box 1, Folder 29, Radcliffe College Schlesinger Library, Harvard, University Libraries, Cambridge, Mass.} Thus, because of potential safety concerns for the camping women, she felt that it might be “too soon for SAD [the Seneca Army Depot].”\footnote{WILPF and UFPA Meeting 10/9/82, October 9, 1982, Philadelphia Women’s Peace Camp Global Feminist Disarmament Meeting 1, Swarthmore College Peace Collection.} The UFPA member’s predictions did come to pass at the WEFPJ. In 1984, during the peace camp’s second year, campers described direct encounters with sometimes violent townsfolk who
opposed their message, their way of delivering it, and perhaps most acutely, their lifestyle. Ethel, a camper, remembered one such potentially violent encounter in 1984:

Our strength, our security is in our numbers. This was the motto that carried us through the hours of fear about the 150 men drinking in a bar who were coming after dark to our camp and “kick ass.” As I heard the rumor, I felt fear wash over me…I went to the farm house two tenths of a mile away. I saw women settling into their sleeping bags on the lawn. A car came by and threw firecrackers across the field as though the 150 men were advancing.

Throughout the summer of 1984, Seneca campers guarded each other and held security watches throughout the night. In the end, the WILPF and the UFPA compromised by acknowledging the economic dependency that the local community in Romulus, New York had on the depot. The groups decided to incorporate a peace camp plan that stressed the need to encourage “conversion” efforts that would help community members employed by the military to find civilian jobs and by extension perhaps quell local hostility.\textsuperscript{141}

Along with the WILPF and the UFPA, the WPA worked hard to create the camp as well. Their support for the Seneca camp was evident well before it opened. In April 1983, the New York City WPA held a women-only benefit showcasing future plans for the women’s peace camp at Seneca Army Depot and featuring speakers from Greenham Common.\textsuperscript{142} A flyer advertising the camp’s first summer of action distributed by the group highlighted the camp’s


“women only” status. The “women’s community of resistance” marked missile locations and supported “lesbian and heterosexual women working in an all-women’s environment.”

The WPA joined in with “peace camping” as well. In June of 1983, before the Seneca camp was set to begin, the WPA camped in New York City’s Bryant Park to “spread the word about the camp’s opening.” The group adapted their practice of imaginative action to the camping model. Planners asked those who wished to join them to bring “mementos, photos, sticks, and rags” to build a “life monument.” The women intended to leave a trace of their presence, a feminist mark, to join the patriarchal statues of William Cullen Bryant and Johann Wolfgang Goethe in the midtown park. The urban campers completed their Bryant Park camp by singing, performing, and dancing all night to celebrate the summer solstice in an act of sisterhood with peace camps in Berlin, Toronto, Comiso, and Greenham Common and the global defiance of women against militarism.

The WPA women who danced, sang, camped, and defied during their Manhattan vigil were answering a call delivered to them a year earlier. Lynn Jones completed her Global Feminist Disarmament presentation by urging the women to become “Greenham Common women.” Jones was not making a typical political appeal; she was not requesting votes, signatures, or protest marches. Jones was challenging women to go to military zones and “not go

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away.” Jones was calling for an extended occupation. Peace camping is quite different from most other forms of camping. Camping is a brief habitation, and “going away” is precisely the point. A typical camper might hunker down for a night or two while passing through, or they might make camp to get away from home for rest and relaxation. A camper might even find themselves temporarily homeless because of poverty or political pressures, but their bivouac, even if among others in equally constricting circumstances, must be movable according to necessity. If a camper builds a structure that is immovable, they become a “dweller” who has made themselves a home. According to Jones, a peace camper, however, was a stayer. Endurance was a great part of the mission. To be a “Greenham woman” was to be one who would remain.

Enduring, for Greenham women, was a challenge indeed. At first, Greenham women slept in “benders,” tents contrived from sticks and branches covered with cloth or tarp. After repeated evictions, they began using more easily transported tents. They slept on land adjacent to the air force base gates, and because of constant surveillance and policing, their endurance was played out in “wack-a-mole” style where they might be evicted at any moment. Greenham women learned to move quickly from one “little bit of land” to another, and because of that they slept rough, in hastily made camps under the constant threat of banishment. The Greenham women persevered. They persisted for nearly twenty years. Peter Joyce and Neil Wain call the Greenham women’s camping venture outside the air force base, “a nearly twenty year-long

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sustained vigil.” In many ways, it was Greenham women’s tenacious temporary status that captured the imaginations of anti-nuclear resisters across England. By December 1982, six months after Jones’ call to the women assembled in New York, thirty thousand protesters had joined the Greenham women, and in an echo of the WPA’s encirclement of the Pentagon a year earlier, the enormous crowd linked arms and encircled the base’s entire nine-mile perimeter fence. Theirs were peace bodies, reckoning with the weapons of war.

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CHAPTER TWO

PERFORMING PEACE BODIES: SENECA WOMEN’S ENCAMPMENT FOR A FUTURE OF PEACE AND JUSTICE, SUMMER 1983

Introduction

In the spring of 1983, Donna Cooper, Betty Schulman, and Michelle Crone drove down State Highway 96 between Seneca and Cayuga Lake, the first two of upstate New York’s eleven Finger Lakes that hung lengthwise beneath Lake Ontario. They were hunting for a suitable piece of land for summer camping. When they arrived at the small farm in Romulus, New York, they must have doubted its suitability. Even walking from their car to the farmhouse’s front porch left deep footprints in the soggy ground. Nonetheless, they phoned their friends at the Rochester Women’s Action for Peace (RWAP) and made their recommendation.1 Despite its poorly drained soil, the clapboard house and its fifty-three acres perfectly suited their needs. The fields behind the Romulus farmstead bordered a patch of trees that screened the 11,000-acre military armory that stored Pershing II and cruise missiles. By midnight, RWAP members decided to start negotiations to buy the land with funds collected from local, regional, and international peace groups, including the Upstate Feminist Peace Alliance, Women’s Pentagon Action, and the

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Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. The farm would serve as a base for a women’s peace camp. Cooper, the national program director for the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom explained the reason for the purchase: “We’re going right where the missiles are.”

Cooper and her companions believed that missiles at the Seneca Army Depot were stored and ready for transport to multiple European locations, including the Greenham Common Air Force Base in Britain. Though the United States Department of Defense (DOD) did not divulge the locations of its nuclear weapons arsenals, the women had evidence to support their assumptions. The depot began storing nuclear materials in 1944. By 1961, the military assigned the compound to hold special weapons. Base structures, including more than fifty reinforced earth-covered bunkers and a massive 28,000-square-foot temperature-controlled plutonium storage building, were well equipped to house nuclear materials. The upstate activists, and as

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2 “WEFPJ Handbook,” Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice Herstory Digital Archive, Summer 1983. [https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2gP3BpuQxH2UnVOOFk3dmRhY3c/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2gP3BpuQxH2UnVOOFk3dmRhY3c/view)


4 WEFPJ Handbook, 2.


6 The WEFPJ based their assumptions about the role of the Seneca Army Depot on research. One important research group, the Finger Lakes Peace Alliance, formed in 1981 to examine the role of the Depot as a storage facility for cruise and Pershing II missiles. See Finger Lakes Peace Alliance, “Seneca Army Depot Fact Sheet,” 1985, WEFPJ Box 40 Folder 40.12 WEFPJ Seneca Army Depot Fact Sheet Draft Text and Pamphlet, Impact Survey 1985 n.d., Women’s Encampment for Freedom, Peace, and Justice Papers, Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study; Starting in 1975, key researchers William Arkin and Richard W. Fieldhouse, also examined the
many women as they could muster, aimed to create a women-only camp in solidarity with the women’s encampment at Greenham Common. Bivouacked on their fifty-three-acre farmstead on Highway 96, the Seneca women would be the missiles’ constant neighbors until soldiers loaded them on planes for their transatlantic flight. When the missiles landed, Greenham women would mark their arrival.

What motivated this trans-Atlantic anti-nuclear effort? Why would women gather at the Seneca Army Depot to challenge a weapons system that their mayors, representatives, senators, and president deemed to be the safest path toward security in a nuclear world? Did the weapons present a new kind of danger, a uniquely nuclear one? Certainly, the peace campers thought so. “Atomic” fear was an abiding theme in their pamphlets, handbooks, letters, plans, signs, songs, and actions. This chapter examines the Seneca Women’s Peace Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice (WEFPJ) during its first summer in 1983 to reveal the ways that nuclear weapons, including those stored at the Seneca Army Depot, shaped campers’ fears and ambitions and shook their faith in authority. The Seneca peace-camping women’s sensibilities of nuclear dangers and bodily precarity provided the central motivation for the protests they undertook. By reckoning with nuclear weapons every day, both as a part of their daily routine and in special protest actions, they constructed a unique embodied critique of American politics in the late Cold War.

role of the Depot. Arkin and Fieldhouse, both researchers for the progressive think tank the Institute for Policy Studies, undertook a decade long study of global nuclear weapons facilities, or what they called the “nuclear infrastructure.” Arkin and Fieldhouse claimed that the Seneca Army Depot was the largest nuclear storage facility in the world and stored 1,900 nuclear warheads. The Depot provided nuclear maintenance and supported East Coast nuclear units and European deployments. See Arkin, William and Richard Fieldhouse, Nuclear Battlefields: Global Links in the Arms Race (Cambridge, Mass: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1985), xiii, 201, 202.
The idea for an encampment near the Seneca Army Depot germinated at the June 1982 New York City Global Feminist Disarmament Conference. Immediately after the conference, a coalition of upstate New York activists formed the Upstate Women’s Peace Alliance. They partnered with the national women’s peace group the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and started planning for a women’s encampment the following summer. From its inception, the Seneca camp aligned themselves with the women at Greenham Common and echoed their protest methods. However, the Seneca encampment distinguished itself from its British partner because of their level of preparation—from the purchase of farmland to house the campers, to the workshops, lectures, and mini-courses that served to educate them. For months before its opening, Seneca planners kept upstate New York and New England–area mails busy delivering informational letters and fundraising flyers generated by women’s organizations letting their supporters know about preparations for the camp.
The fall before the camp opened, several other peace groups joined the Upstate Feminist Peace Alliance to help plan, publicize, and then operate the Seneca encampment. Women from Rochester, New York, an hour’s drive from the Seneca depot, established the Rochester Women’s Action for Peace (RWAP). The group printed flyers, made phone calls, and met bi-
weekly to strategize different ways to provide funds and galvanize local support for the camp. After the land purchase, another group in the region, the Albany Women’s Encampment Committee, sent work crews to repair the farm’s barn and dig ditches. The Albany women even organized an encampment food bank which sent produce from upstate area gardeners to the camp with each of the regions’ many busloads of summer visitors. East Coast organizations, including Women’s Pentagon Action (WPA), also drew in supporters from Boston, New York, and Philadelphia through special events. The New York WPA held a two-day New York City women’s peace camp of their own in New York City’s Bryant Park to spread the word about the Seneca camp.

The core group of peace women who proposed the camp and prepared for its actions were young, white, well educated, and identified themselves as feminists. The Seneca WEFPJ handbook, sent out to prospective campers before opening day, claimed that camp planners upheld a feminist value system. War Resisters League staff member and camp handbook contributor Helen Michalowski urged campers to link their feminist ideology with their vision for peace. She proposed that traditional forms of masculine power were predicated on the control


8 “Albany Regional Group Newsletter,” May 1983, MC938, WEFPJ Box 37, Folder 37.1 Leaflets and Literature from other Cities, #5624-5633, Women’s Encampment for Freedom, Peace, and Justice Papers, Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study; “Albany Regional Group Newsletter,” June 1983, MC938, WEFPJ Box 37, Folder 37.1 Leaflets and Literature from other Cities, #5624-5633, Women’s Encampment for Freedom, Peace, and Justice Papers, Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study


of others, while feminine power found its basis in self-control. Michalowski claimed that patriarchal systems could be understood as “the power to do to” and feminine systems were rooted in the “power to do.”\textsuperscript{11}

Peace camp planners attempted to put feminist principles into practice by developing guidelines on consensus decision making. In a 1983 interview with the Albany Gazette, Albany organizers discussed their methods. Bette Schulman claimed that the camp had no “official decision-making body.” Her colleague Mary Pendergast defined the camp as a “leaderless movement that worked through consensus.”\textsuperscript{12} The collaborative method contributed to a distinctly anarchic atmosphere at the camp where members sometimes enacted conflicting agendas. The leaderless method made it difficult for the Depot base and local officials to communicate effectively with the encampment.\textsuperscript{13} The Army Depot’s Public Affairs Officer, civilian Robert Zemanek expressed his frustration: “One of the difficulties with the encampment is that they have no leaders. They tell us a protest is going to be non-violent—and that’s somewhat reassuring, but when depot officials ask how things will be handled if 10,000 people

\textsuperscript{11} The Seneca Camp founders’ power analyses echoed other feminist theorists, such as scholar Gayle Rubin who espoused “Radical Libertarian Feminism.” This theoretical framework proposed that the patriarchy equated biology with gender and therefore asserted that women were “affectionate, obedient, [and] responsive to sympathy” and men were tenacious, aggressive, curious, [and] ambitious.” Rubin declared that men utilized these assumptions to assert their power and that women were “no more passive than men.” See Rosemary Tong, Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction, Fourth Edition (Boulder: Westview Press, 2014), 53


\textsuperscript{13} Historian Barbara Epstein investigates the tensions that have arisen among those who uphold consensus ideology, or “radical egalitarianism” while undertaking direct nonviolent action in her examination of the 1970s Clamshell Alliance protests against nuclear power. Epstein notes that the organization ultimately fell apart due to unresolved disagreements about nonviolent principles and protests. She asserts that the alliance’s antagonism caused many to question whether consensus and nonviolent action were compatible. See. Barbara Epstein, Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 58, 59.
show up, they don’t really know how either.”

Despite their readiness to eschew leadership because of their principles, camp planners like local peace activist Barbara Reale made the decisions necessary to host a multitude of campers and prepare locals for their arrival. Before the first activist set foot on the Seneca Encampment land, Reale took charge of coordinating public relations, reaching out to peace groups in New York State to ask them for support with funds, outreach, and construction help. Reale—who lived a short six miles north of the encampment in Geneva, New York—also anticipated the impact that the camp might have on local residents. In the handbook, Reale reminded campers that they would be leaving an impression on area residents with every trip “to the laundromat, grocery store, post office, and gas station.” She urged campers to respect the differences between themselves and the local community, and to remember that any hope for solving international conflicts required that camping women practice “resolving conflicts in our own back yard.” She concluded by acknowledging the summer of hard work that lay ahead.

In the spring of 1983, a pre-encampment committee put together a list of jobs that revealed the kinds of labor camping women undertook. Staff members and volunteers ensured that each camper had sufficient food, clean water, proper plumbing, and sanitation. Other workers greeted visitors, oversaw camping children, assisted mentally and physically challenged

campers, and tended to any health emergencies or illness that might arise.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{Figure 5.} View of the WEFPJ Farmhouse from the Front Lawn, 1983  

Because of the risks inherent in camping, the pre-encampment planners took the safety and security of each visitor seriously. However, they had more to reckon with than hazards from exposure. Peace camping left participants vulnerable to government and military authorities, and many women were not shy about provoking them. Nine hundred fifty campers were apprehended

and arrested over the course of the 1983 summer. Encampment planners attempted to make sure that Seneca campers were prepared for their potential journey from action to arrest to jail by requiring nonviolence training for anyone participating in camp-sponsored civil disobedience. Peacekeeping materials from the 1981 Women’s Pentagon Action augmented camp training. Participants were encouraged to defend one another’s civic rights by becoming acquainted with five or six protesting partners. They learned one another’s names and formulated specified descriptions of one another’s bodies in case of arrest. The training required that each protestor carry, on their person, a list with specific data about each of their fellows—including their plans for cooperation or non-cooperation with authorities and the names of their peace partners’ potential contacts. Trained campers held money for one another’s bail and legal identification for those who chose not to reveal their names. Protesters learned to protect one another by keeping close tabs on each other’s locations and to follow police wagons in case of any arrests. If arrests took place, each camper learned to observe the treatment their fellow activists received, and to take note of police or any arresting authorities’ identification numbers. In spite of the camp leaders’ hesitance to formulate or impose rules for one another, when it came to active protesters,

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20 The WEFPJ handbook stated, "All participants in civil disobedience at the Depot are asked to participate in a non-violence preparation session." See “WEFPJ Handbook,” 39.


they enforced one foundational principle: the protection of and responsibility for one another’s bodies.

Figure 6. Daily Life, September 1983
Source: Nancy Clover, HerStory WEFPJ Collection, Video Archive, and Database

Encampment Logistics

Throughout the summer of 1983, camping women articulated the founders’ feminist peace vision with their bodies in protest actions, by marching, singing, holding signs, and climbing military fences. But the campers did not merely “act”—they also lived. Camp visitor and author Grace Paley asserted that the Seneca encampment provided a space “where bathing, cooking, clothes changing, sleeping, meeting, baby care took place—where all the women were welcome, and a safe place maintained for them.”23 In living, campers enriched their protest performances. Seneca camping women transformed the traditional domain of the home into a camp on the doorstep of the military base to achieve two goals: to advertise the location of

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nuclear missiles, and to reveal their target: their own eating, sleeping, working, and playing bodies.

In the summer of 1983, twelve thousand women came to the encampment. All of them had to eat. Campers dined on “simple vegetarian meals” in accordance with their feminist peace principles. They procured food donations, purchased as little as possible, and cooked over open fires for large numbers of people. The images of the camp at the height of its activity in the summer of 1983 show women cooking at a massive outdoor kitchen, which included several sets of three-by-eight-foot wood-fire trenches covered by metal grates resembling discarded screen doors. The camp defied the ideal 1980s American kitchen. Rather than dressed with flowers or matching flatware and dishes, the dining tables held gallon bottles of water, industrial-sized jars of cooking oil, tin cookware, and buckets. One ungenerous observer called the kitchen a

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25 “WEFPJ Handbook,” 2; “Dinner Preparation,” MC938, WEFPJ, Box 6, Folder 186, Women’s Encampment for Freedom, Peace, and Justice Papers, Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Cambridge, Mass.; Feminist philosopher Rosemarie Tong describes the moral vegetarianism of many feminists, including the WEFPJ organizers, as a consequence of their “ethics of care,” which would apply the normative human sympathy for pets to all animals. In addition, according to Tong, some ecofeminists view the livestock industry as a contributor to the destruction of the environment. Tong cites philosopher Martha Nussbaum’s theory of vegetarian ecofeminism which asserts that animals are “entitled to a dignified existence.” In Rosemary Tong, Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2014), 283, 284, 285.

26 “WEFPJ Pre-encampment Committee List,” 1983, MC938, WEFPJ, Box 1, Folder 19, Women’s Encampment for Freedom, Peace, and Justice Papers, Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Cambridge, Mass; A 1984 plan for a seventy-foot-by-twenty-foot summer garden bed at the encampment attests to the fact that some campers aimed to grow vegetables on the farmland. See "Land Work Projects, 1984," MC938, WEFPJ, Box 7, Folder 224, Women’s Encampment for Freedom, Peace, and Justice Papers, Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Cambridge, Mass.; The campers desire for simplicity was in keeping with Dana Shugar’s assessment of separatist women’s theory which required women to live and work in collectives in order to fulfill their political goals of gaining self-sufficiency and independence from patriarchal economic systems. See Dana R. Shugar, Separatism and Women’s Community (U of Nebraska Press, 1995), 57.
“pigpen,” because at first glance it appeared haphazard and poorly organized.27

Close inspection, however, reveals the women’s intention behind their makeshift camp. Their rude hardware, illustrated by their screen-door grills is a small sampling of the campers’ practice that ecofeminist scholars Vandana Shiva and Maria Meis call “voluntary simplicity.”28 The campers’ cobbled kitchen revealed their environmentalism. The campers attempted, with varying degrees of success, to align their project with ecologically responsible practices.29 In a July 16, 1983 interview featuring camp volunteers, one camping woman boasted of the outdoor kitchen’s multiple buckets for recycling, “This morning we collected glass and metal for recycling and put the garbage in a bag to use for the garden. We want to be environmentally sound.”30 Environmental practices extended beyond the kitchen spaces as well. In the encampment handbook, the organizers revealed that they were aware that their numbers could degrade the farm’s soil and they wished to prevent it. To counter soil compaction, the campers designated one thousand feet of land along the roadside for parking and public reception, and attempted to create a barrier to protect the fields between that space and the camping spaces


which were located at the back of the property. The women also built a long wooden ramp to bridge the farmland and provide safe passage for crowds while they navigated from the front to the back of the land.³¹


Figure 7. The Site, WEFPJ Handbook 1983
Source: Digital Library of Nonviolence
The wooden ramp protected more than soil; it also provided an exclusive entryway to the camp’s women-only areas. The WEFPJ was a women-only camp. Encampment founders consciously chose to align it with the other already-existing women-only peace camp, Greenham Common. Men, confined to the public area that lined the road, could not use the wooden walkway behind the small farmhouse. An abandoned railroad track provided an additional barrier and formed a line across the property between the fields and the deepest end of the acreage. The women slept behind the tracks in two tree-lined meadows nestled against a small forest. In addition to their deliberate barrier in the front, the campers were protected by a thick band of trees and a small drainage ditch which provided a natural border between their ground and the adjacent army depot’s outer edge. The land itself thus provided multiple levels of security. The highway-facing front yard barricaded the encampment’s interior; its outer borders functioned as a skin for the world to see. The campers placed themselves as far within the land’s confines as possible, enveloped by forest, behind the house, and beyond the fields, the ditch and the railroad tracks. Just as their individual dwellings sheltered the women from the wind and rain, their location shielded their collective bodies from men and from the militarism which the campers identified with the male world.

While the campers intentionally adopted a rustic lifestyle, they did not pretend it was comfortable. Camper Myke O.J. wrote, “It’s hard to explain our daily lives. We are camping. Through the summer, we live in tents or benders, structures made from trees and tarps in our woods.” The encampment handbook warned campers that their greatest challenge would be the

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33 "WEFPJ Handbook," 36.
rain and not the cold, and cautioned them not to place their beds directly on the ground but to use balsam or hemlock leaves for a mattress to shield their bodies from the hard dirt. Some women missed the comforts they abandoned. A long-term camper wrote, “We have no way to take a warm bath or a shower or flush a toilet. All summer we have not had an indoor kitchen and sink. We still don’t… I am very cold these days. I think about my warm kitchen with rocking chair, music, and wood cook stove. I cannot find a comfortable, clean, warm spot in which to think or relax. The outhouses stink- I long for a flush toilet.” Other women, however, embraced their privations. Enduring the hardships of camping allowed some women to fully experience their break from their former lives. For them, the pain of camping provided a visceral “certainty” that comes with experiential knowledge. Their suffering allowed them to feel their bodies in full measure. One camper, Ethel, described a woman she met at the camp, Rose, who at age seventy-five “endured the rough life and difficulties of a demonstration against military authority.” Some women, like Laurie Jetter, who called herself Twilight, remained committed to the rigors of encampment life for years. She came to the camp in the early months of 1983 and stayed, with breaks from time to time, through 1986. During the camp’s first winter, Twilight and long-time encampment residents Andrea Doremus and Anne Willard wrote a letter to


supporters explaining that even though the camp had officially closed, the three of them stayed on and hosted “a continual stream of visitors” and would “not be moved from our commitment to deter the weapons of death.”

Because of the rigors of camping and temporary living conditions, planners like Twilight concerned themselves with women’s health. When preparing for the first summer at Seneca, the planning committee prioritized their search for a health coordinator. She would have to be “familiar with both main-stream and holistic healing.” When seeking health care, the women of the camp took advantage of both physician-based or “mainstream” medical treatments and alternative medical practices. Healing rooms, herbal remedies, therapeutic ointments, and insecticides made from natural substances like clay were thought to be preferable to products created in concert with the professional medical industry. Such a detailed level of preparation


39 Our Bodies, Ourselves, a feminist medical manual written and widely distributed by the Boston Women’s Collective, would almost certainly have been known by the women of the camp. It was widely distributed among feminist groups before 1983 and the women’s practices at the camp echo the book’s central thesis. Our Bodies, Ourselves asserted that women, “were capable of collecting, understanding, and evaluating” medical information. The collective’s goal was not so much to eclipse the medical profession as to wrest its power over women’s bodies and for women to regain “an honest, humane, and powerful way of thinking about themselves.” See Boston Women’s Health Book Collective, Our Bodies, Ourselves (Simon and Schuster, 1973), 12; The campers’ use of herbs and natural healing in addition to doctor’s treatments illustrates gender scholar Kathy Davis’s contention that feminism “is an epistemological project that generates knowledge” that empowers women. The kind of knowledge Our Bodies Ourselves imparted was in evidence at the camp, in particular the collective’s specific advice on blending traditional and alternative medical treatments. The authors did not recommend a blind adherence to homeopathy or herbal remedies or doctor’s advice, but rather encouraged women to examine their own bodies before consulting a physician. The practice of preemptive self-examination would ameliorate the strong possibility of prejudicial medical misunderstanding and misdiagnosis. See Kathy Davis, The Making of Our Bodies, Ourselves: How Feminism Travels across Borders (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 8.

reflects the planners’ anticipation that the encampment would potentially be physically costly to the women involved.

Twilight became camp health coordinator one month before opening day. She knew that many women were expected to arrive and was shocked to discover that the camp had only gathered one “shoebox” of equipment to take care of medical emergencies. In an interview, Twilight reported that she “got sparked about it” and visited health food stores and co-ops in Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse, gathering donations of herbal remedies. She also contacted nurses and collected equipment for “every kind of medical process you might need.” Twilight arranged a healing room for sick or injured campers, and appointed people to maintain it. According to her account, she made sure that members of the medical profession, both doctors and nurses, were available at various times. Twilight reported, “During the opening ceremony, [I] was making clay while people were speaking. Wanted clay for [insect or snake] bites. The English women would get huge welts because they didn’t have mosquitos in England. Made a green tea clay. Busy from morning to midnight every day.” Campers complained about the arduous protest walks and often grumbled about their length and difficulty. Additionally, despite the attempts to protect the land from crowds, the terrain of the camp became increasingly rugged and torn, and Twilight recalled, “the healing room needed crutches because they had a

42 “Twilight,” 3:00.
43 “Twilight,” 4:00.
pasture full of huge ruts...within a three-week period had three breaks and three to five sprained ankles.” The care Twilight delivered with herbal and conventional medicines and the healing room she arranged improved the campers’ day to day lives. It also made an impression on the community. In her interview, Twilight recollected that even the depot itself recognized the medical help she and the encampment volunteers dispensed, because at least on one occasion, base soldiers dropped a woman off at the camp who needed medical attention.45

Figure 8. Opening Day Crowd, July 4, 1983

45 “Twilight,” 6:00.
Opening Day: July 4, 1983

The Seneca Encampment’s July 4, 1983 opening weekend proved to be an unsettling spectacle for the community. Hundreds of peace women arrived, joining the few campers already established at the farm. Some arrivals like Mandy Carter and her War Resisters League colleagues walked 600 miles from Durham, North Carolina, to join the protest. Marching and long walks featured heavily in the daily life of the camp. Women marched from the encampment to the Depot almost daily throughout the first summer. The one-and-a-half-mile walk became an essential ingredient in the campers’ collective actions, because it required little training or planning. This was important because many of the women who gathered at the encampment did not stay on the grounds for any extended length of time. Some used their vacation time from jobs, others were self-employed, and some even commuted from as far as Boston, New York City, Rochester, and Ithaca each week to join the campers.

The encampment’s opening day started like many other holiday weekends celebrated in communities across the United States. The women began with a rally on the farm’s front lawn—the roadside public space. After a short opening speech, the camping women sang.

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48 Correspondence from Berta and Dolph Unger to the Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice, August 14, 1983, MC-938, WEPFJ, Box 4, Folder, 130, Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice Papers, Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Cambridge, Mass.

49 Like many Americans in 1983, the campers created home video footage to record their special day. The events described in this paper were taken from their unedited video recordings which are preserved in the encampment’s digital archive, Herstory: The Digital Archive of the Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice.
Instead of the usual July Fourth patriotic anthem, they chanted, “We shall not be moved.” During the repeated refrain, two young women in makeshift dresses of white fabric wrapped around their bodies emerged from the crowd looking, like a homespun double Lady Liberty. They planted a fruit tree in the yard in a groundbreaking ceremony to commemorate the camp’s official opening.\textsuperscript{50} Afterwards, campers made the first of what would become daily marches throughout the summer, down their frontage road, Highway 96, toward the Seneca Army Depot next door. Unlike an ordinary Independence Day parade, such as you might see on main street in American towns, featuring marching bands and floats on wagons filled with town officials, the peace camp women walked with exaggerated motions and sang “Give Peace a Chance.” Some marchers among the crowd began to bend low and rise high, swooping and moving in tandem, in a slow-motion dance to the song. Starting from the back of the crowd and weaving towards the front, the march-dancers touched one another’s hands briefly. Small exchanges of seeds, soil, and bits of ribbon passed hand to hand at each dancer’s touch. Ultimately, the women at the very front of the parade were laden with small objects which they carried to the wire gates of the Depot. Along with the passed objects, other women arrived at the gate carrying loaves of bread and a large white rosebush which they intended to plant in a small patch of grass in front of the Depot.\textsuperscript{51}

An audience lined the highway that stretched between the farm and the Depot. Townspeople from nearby Waterloo, Seneca, and Romulus congregated to witness the gathering.


They were seated in lawn chairs, perched on motorcycles, or on the hoods of their parked cars, watching in Independence Day style and waving small American stick-flags. A controversy had been brewing in the local papers about whether the campers would display an American flag, a neighbor’s gift, for the holiday. After much deliberation, the campers decided by consensus not to fly the flag in the farm’s front yard, and instead created their own with doves and olive branches, “to express their own loyalties.”

After the marchers arrived at the Depot gate, a circle of women rose their hands high in unison and continued singing while others planted the rosebush. At the same time, another small group of women clustered by the base entrance busily twisted pink fabric around their necks and shoulders and fixed their bodies to the gate. Then, with their arms slung over each other’s backs, they joined in a collective howl. While slowly gyrating their bodies, the women reared their heads back and roared without words for a full two minutes.

The women on parade that day were young, fit, nourished, and well shod, and the day was bright and warm. The fence-bound performers suffered from no apparent pain. Through their collective howl, they engaged in a peace camp tradition, an established performance of

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52 In her analysis of the tensions between the women of the Seneca Peace Encampment and surrounding communities during the summer of 1983, anthropologist Louise Krasniewicz asserts that Romulus, New York locals were curious about the campers and flocked to witness their protests, while at the same time, they considered them to be dangerous. The townspeople believed that the campers held communist beliefs that influenced their peace advocacy—an advocacy which could potentially weaken the United States. See Louise Krasniewicz, *Nuclear Summer: The Clash of Communities at the Seneca Women’s Peace Encampment* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), 96.


what the WEFPJ handbook called creative civil disobedience.\footnote{WEFPJ Handbook, 40.} These imaginative exercises featured protesters using their bodies to illustrate a political injustice or dramatize their cause. In this case, the campers adopted a protest strategy from their sisters at Greenham Common: keening, a traditional Irish lament for the dead.\footnote{Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition, Oxford University Press, accessed June 17, 2019, \url{https://www-oed-com.flagship.luc.edu/search?searchType=dictionary&q=keen&_searchBtn=Search}.} In her analysis of the various protest strategies employed by the women of Greenham Common, sociologist Margaret LaWare asserted that through keening, campers expressed grief as “bridges between the living and the dead.”\footnote{LaWare, Margaret, “Circling the Missiles and Staining the Red Feminist Rhetorical Invention and Strategies of Resistance at the Greenham Common Peace Camp at Greenham Common,” \textit{NWSA Journal} 16, no. 3 (Autumn 2004): 18–41, 34; With keening, the campers were not necessarily falling way outside of the bounds of social convention. The goal of their exercise, public grieving for past or potential victims of nuclear weapons, was officially encouraged by the Catholic Church. In Michael Perlman’s study of the psychological impact of the literary and visual images of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he cites the 1983 Catholic Bishops’ Pastoral Letter on \textit{The Challenge of Peace}, which states that in order to “repudiate” nuclear weapons, our country must, “express profound sorrow over the atomic bombing in 1945.” See Michael Perlman, \textit{Imaginal Memory and the Place of Hiroshima} (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 3.} At the fence that day, the howling women staged a performative emotional response to overwhelming nuclear violence.

Through keening, the campers attempted to respond to the scale of atomic carnage, and in so doing, they took on an almost impossible task. Even directly after the bombings, before memoirs of the destruction had any chance to fade, Americans did not reckon with the violence of nuclear weapons. Within days of the 1945 bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the human cost of the detonation remained unclear. Instead, reporters concentrated on what could be perceived from a distance: the blast itself. A photo spread featuring images of the explosions appeared in \textit{Life} magazine just days after the blast.\footnote{In his examination of the cultural history of the bomb, Paul Boyer discusses the impact of the \textit{Life} magazine images in \textit{By the Bomb’s Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age}. (Chapel Hill:}
massive mushroom clouds, the explosion’s circle of destruction, and its industrial targets. Officials did not estimate the wounded and dead until a year later in June of 1946, when U.S. President Harry Truman received a rough survey of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki victims. The study reported that after the bomb struck, a “fire wind” burned a four-mile circle and seventy to eighty thousand residents were killed. The survey reported that when bombers hit Nagasaki days later, the city’s hilly terrain and the bomb’s “point of fall” increased the scale of destruction. Within one kilometer of the explosion’s ground zero, blast pressure and heat killed humans and animals instantly. The survey states that Nagasaki victims’ bodies were often burned in patterns that corresponded to the light’s angle. What could be made of these shattering experiences that only a few “Hibakusha,” or bomb-affected people, could describe? The peace campers approximated an emotional response by keening at the depot fence. For them, the bomb needed to be understood and displayed, not just as a weapon of great power and a political tool in the Cold War, but as a weapon aimed at victims who suffered.


59 War’s Ending,” *LIFE* 19, no.8 (1945), 25, 26, 27.


After two full minutes, the keening stopped. In the sudden quiet, a camper stepped forward with a letter in her hand and faced several Depot military personnel who were congregated behind the wire. She read, “Commander of the Depot, the Secretary of the Department of Defense, and the President of the United States, we express the hopes and fears of women across the world... We demand to know what weapons are stored at the Depot, and to know what dangerous substances are transported through this community.” She continued by demanding that the weapons at the Depot be dismantled, and called for an immediate nuclear weapons freeze. In her conclusion, the reader noted, “We will continue to act, at Seneca and around the world until we are answered.” She rolled the letter and passed it through into a service woman’s hand while several campers tied ribbons to the wire of the fence. Typically, crowds remember the victorious American outcome of the Revolutionary War on Independence Day. Fife and drum quartets parade in battered three-cornered hats and torn costume-shop uniforms that dramatize the scrappy battles that ended that war. The camping women remembered a different, but also victorious war that day, and used their own traditionally female ritual to mourn the outsize scale of death that ended World War II.

Yellow Line Action: July 17, 1983

Some of the protests at the camp, including regular leafletting campaigns, community meetings, or door to door canvassing of local townsfolk, remained well within the framework of

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familiar political traditions. Other actions revealed a less buttoned-down, more chaotic side of the camp. Some campers protested in ways that deliberately violated community etiquette and pushed boundaries in ways that were in keeping with their transgressive political position: that of opposing weapons and war in a military town.

The fence at the army depot made its boundaries very clear to any campers who might approach. Authorities added another cue to their wire barrier by painting a bright yellow warning line across the width of the entry road in front of the base’s main gate. On a mid-July day shortly after the Seneca camp opened, campers gathered in the grass on either side of the entry road, adjacent to but still behind the yellow line. The women began to pace slowly in the hot sun, taking turns, two campers at a time. Hand in hand, or arm in arm, each pair walked carefully on the far side of the line, singing quietly, and moving slowly. Soon, slight transgressions began: one camper walked alone on the painted strip, balancing her body, tightrope style, another strummed a tune on a banjo while several women gathered on the line to dance along. Then, as if signaled by the music, several women tied bandannas across their faces and shook spray paint canisters. Just as they had with their walking, the painters started slowly, stenciling pink footsteps which just nicked the other side of the yellow stripe. Soon afterwards, the dancers let loose and dipped their feet in a can of red paint to scatter faux-bloody footprints around, on top, and well over the line.

Then pandemonium began. Campers dipped their hands in the paint and plastered them against the depot fence. They painted letters, symbols, and added multi-colored stripes to the

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yellow line. They drew ribbon-like strips of their own curling in every direction. After they finished their work, only a makeshift, chaotic asphalt canvas remained, a reverse image of the depot’s orderly façade. When they departed that day, the campers left behind a mess that changed the meaning of the yellow warning line for anyone entering the depot. At their first approach, the campers strictly abided by the painted border’s rules. By pacing in front of it as couples, the campers drew attention to the line’s purpose: to divide. Their affectionate strolls drew attention to the fact that abiding by the line would make such comradeship impossible for anyone standing on its opposing sides. This action echoed an important theme in the encampment handbook and in their opening day statement to the Depot Commander: their refusal to accept the bipolar political Cold War order.

Defying Cold War binaries challenged camping women. Political scientist Cynthia Enloe asserts that the Cold War “pressed people into seeing the world and their neighbors in a particular way.” According to Enloe, the Cold War delivered a “deeply militarized understanding of identity and security.” Cold War politics shaped ideas about trustworthiness and ways of thinking about how to be safe. From Truman’s 1953 State of the Union message where he referred to the “Soviet empire” to President Ronald Reagan’s escalation to “evil empire,” Cold War binaries challenged camping women.

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68 The WEFPJ Handbook section "Interventionism and the Final War," adapted from a talk by peace and security scholar Michael Klare, makes the camp’s stance against the Cold War superpower order or "bipolar world" clear. The section asserts that the conflict between the world's two "superpowers" made nuclear war "much more likely." He urged anti-nuclear activists to coalesce with other groups that opposed Cold War interventionism including the movement against U.S. intervention in El Salvador. See "WEFPJ Handbook," 29.

War presidents sketched a menacing picture of the Soviets.\textsuperscript{70} For example, in his farewell address, President Dwight Eisenhower echoed Truman’s rhetoric when he described the Soviet Union as a purveyor of “hostile ideology—global in scope, atheistic in character, ruthless in purpose, and insidious in method.”\textsuperscript{71} Eisenhower, in what John Dower would call a “torrent of war words,” laid the high stakes of the nuclear arms race.\textsuperscript{72} Ironically, in a speech that is broadly understood as a national warning against the growing “military industrial complex,” Eisenhower portrayed the Soviet Union in ways that justified a heavy nuclear investment.\textsuperscript{73}

Nuclear weapons that could destroy cities within a short space of time changed the way that Americans perceived threats. It dawned on people that the forces of nuclear destruction threatened them, no matter where they lived. World War II ensured that Americans were recently well-acquainted with a divided world with clear enemies. The bomb shifted that divisive understanding in more than one way. In the nuclear age, instead of Axis and Allied forces engaged in a total war, with mountains, rivers, and oceans marking the scope of the conflict, superpowers battled above and below those spaces with weapons not limited by geography. In a statement sent out three days after their painting action, Seneca campers articulated their

\textsuperscript{70} Albert I. Berger, \emph{Life and Times of the Atomic Bomb: Nuclear Weapons and the Transformation of Warfare} (New York: Routledge, 2016), 99.


\textsuperscript{72} Dower discussed language describing enemies in the Pacific arena of World War II. See John Dower, \emph{War without Mercy: Pacific War} (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012), X.

\textsuperscript{73} Albert Berger explains the stakes in nuclear military politics when he asserts that “the destructive power of nuclear weapons is so great that one [state] cannot tolerate not knowing what an adversary is up to.” Berger then argued that the potential destructive force of nuclear weapons means that no state can cope with any other possessing any measure of military advantage. See Berger, \emph{Life and Times of the Atomic Bomb}, 173.
thoughts on the Cold War politics of the era, “We do not want to live anymore in terror…We do not want war with our brothers and sisters in Nicaragua.” The campers’ garbled, multivalent daubs of paint inscribed over and around the Depot’s warning line displayed their refusal to accept the political map of the Cold War.

Along with transgressing political boundaries, many camping women also breached gendered limits, especially ones that confined men and women’s sexuality. From its first summer, the Seneca encampment became a link in a chain of multiple temporary and stationary collectives consisting not only of peace activists but of radical feminist and lesbian feminist women.74 The nature of those collectives is revealed in letters to the encampment from women like Vicki, an activist “traveler” who described her politically motivated journeys. In Dallas, she met with members of the West German Green Party and the California Gay and Lesbian Alliance to participate in a counterdemonstration at a government nominating convention. The activists dumped lead-contaminated soil from a poor city neighborhood in front of the convention hall to protest economic inequality and environmental degradation. Vicki went on to describe the conditions at another, earlier location she had visited, the Tucson Womyn’s Peace Camp, where several women “camped along the public roadside adjacent to a military installment gate.” She asked the Seneca campers to “keep their spirits in mind.”

Some travelers were more interested in fostering a new kind of women-centered connection than they were in political activism. Jan wrote from Minnesota where she had

74 In her study of multiple late twentieth-century women's-only spaces, anthropologist Keridwen N. Luis reported that the Seneca encampment often provided the starting point for women who subsequently made journeys from one women's-only space to another. See Keridwen N. Luis, Herlands: Exploring the Women’s Land Movement in the United States (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 25.
organized a “spiritual community for women.” Another correspondent, Amy, wrote from the Michigan Women’s Music Festival where she learned about Seneca. She described herself as involved with a small group of “intense, strong, idealistic” women and asked if the encampment might need their help in the spring. The letters from women who lived, worked, and sometimes traveled together collectively reveal that many of them were engaged in living women-centered lives. A 1985 letter to the encampment, signed Judy, reflects this trend:

I am traveling with beckie, ruth, and Lynda-lou. We left our home, [in] Gainesville, Florida three months ago. All four of us feel real deep in us right now that traveling is what we’re supposed to do—and that our personal, political work is happening as we move along. We’re connecting with lesbians—hoping to get a bit of an overview of lesbian culture—visiting lesbian communities in cities, on land, and in places in between. Hoping to gather information on how lesbians are surviving economically, emotionally, spiritually, etc.—in this woman-hating culture finding out how lesbians are living together, what works, what doesn’t—dealing with our diversity.

Activist and scholar Charlotte Bunch saw the gathering of women in multiple women-centered communities as a logical consequence of a decade of feminists reckoning with the notion that society “defines all people and institutions for the benefit of the rich, white, male.” This understanding, Bunch asserted, created a political atmosphere where lesbianism became a political choice, not a sexual one. For many, including many of the women at the encampment, the decision to live among women alone allowed them to build a life that reflected a radical feminist ideology. For the campers, the practice of separatism through the encampment’s

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76 Dana R. Shugar, *Separatism and Women’s Community* (U of Nebraska Press, 1995), xvi.

77 "Letters from Women."

wooden ramp, its railroad tracks, forest, and ditch allowed them to fight the oppression they perceived in the most practical way possible.\textsuperscript{79}

Many women chose separation from men because they simply wanted room to be alone with other women. The WEFPJ handbook contains the reflections of several women who expressed the notion that a women-only space allowed them to feel and express “a safe joyous energy.” Seneca camper Joan Durant stated that after years of being told that “she doesn’t know anything,” she found out “just how dumb and smart I can be.” She expressed the need for women to “set a different consciousness about our ties to the patriarchy that can no longer preserve life on this earth.” She stated, “we women need to be by ourselves without men’s voices to blur the issues.”\textsuperscript{80}

The WEFPJ handbook situated their women-only status as a mark of support for other “women’s-only” social efforts. They cited their peace activist contemporaries, Greenham Common, Women’s Pentagon Action, and Women Strike for Peace, and allied themselves with their missions by restating their mutual opposition to the escalation of nuclear weapons. The handbook also claimed that the camp’s separatist state symbolized alignment with women-focused efforts through a call-out to their geographical neighbors and historical forebears, the


\textsuperscript{80} “WEFPJ Handbook, 36; Gender scholar Dana Shugar asserts that in the 1960s and 1970s, many feminist women felt an urgency to bond collectively because of their heightened political consciousness. Shugar calls this collective bonding, or separatist urge, a “unique cultural phenomenon” that brought about a “change [in] what it meant to be a ‘woman’, a ‘lesbian’, and a ‘feminist.’” See Shugar, \textit{Separatism and Women’s Community}, xv.
women of Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Convention. The organizers saw their separatism as an act of “sisterhood and support.”

Some camp members saw female isolation as an act of defiance toward the heterosexual world. In her research on Greenham Common, gender scholar Sasha Roseneil claimed that Greenham women lived “outside, both literally outdoors and metaphorically outside the patterns and structures of families, households, and communities.” Some Seneca campers also saw the camp as a place to escape heteronormative restrictions and felt that the organizers at the camp failed to acknowledge it. In 1985, two years after the opening summer, a former camping woman named Judy chided the camp for hiding their sexually-marginalized fellow campers:

..A thing I do know is that no matter what its actual name, no matter what the brochures, flyers, newspaper articles say—the encampment is a lesbian community. It’s lesbians living together on land as surely as any other lesbian land is. And it became more interesting to me when I discovered that not only is it lesbian land but its lesbian land with a separatist presence…the absence of the word lesbian from the writings of the encampment in Jane Doe (the Seneca Encampment Newsletter) is terribly oppressive to lesbians—it is simply not the truth.

Judy did not merely accuse the camp of keeping the lesbians in their midst in the closet, she asserted that by doing so, the camp ignored its central mission.

The campers sought to address what they determined to be a central cause of violence: the patriarchy. By logical extension, many campers identified heterosexuality as the patriarchy’s primary enabler. They signaled their opposition to it by exploring and practicing lesbianism. One

81 "WEFPJ Handbook," 36.


group of WEFPJ campers who called themselves the “Temporarily Singles Club” were frank in their assessment that for some campers the territory outside of heterosexual boundaries might be new and unsettling. To help those who might be socially confused or uncomfortable, the club formed some guidelines for interpreting one another’s social and sexual cues within their camping environment. The “camping cues” included a new definition of a date that did not follow common social patterns, such as dinner and dancing or a movie at the local cinema. The club defined new dating criteria at the camp broadly by asserting that it might consist of two or more women who got together for either working, a drive to town, or simply to huddle together out of the rain. The guide also proposed different meetings to encourage openness among various groups of women identified as “WWWDWW,” womyn who want dates with womyn, or as SWWWWDWW, shy womyn who want dates with womyn, or WWWDWSW, womyn who want dates with shy womyn, or finally, WWWWDWOWW, wild womyn who want dates with other wild womyn. Each group had an assigned meeting place. Some gathered at the firepit, others met “wherever they can.” The Temporarily Singles Club had a lighthearted tone which masked their serious overriding aim. The women at the camp aimed for an expansive vision of the world that started with their own bodies. The Temporarily Singles Club allowed women to imagine a space for themselves outside of the heterosexual domain.

Waterloo 54: July 30, 1983

In late July 1983, less than a month after the opening of the encampment, poet and peace activist Barbara Deming arrived in Seneca Falls, New York, for a fourteen-mile walk to the

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84 Temporarily Singles Club, 86 MC938, WEFPJ Box 1, Folder, 36, Women’s Encampment for Freedom, Peace, and Justice Papers, Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Cambridge, Mass.
encampment. On her hike, she aimed to talk to passersby and to pass out leaflets and flyers making a case against the missiles awaiting transport at the depot. Seventy-five women from New York City Women’s Pentagon Action (WPA) joined Deming on her hike.

Deming knew how to use peace walks to spread a political message. Born in New York City in 1917, Deming, who described herself as “the daughter of a well to do Republican lawyer,” had long experience in activism. She became involved in anti-nuclear protests in 1959 when she joined the Committee for Non-Violent Action (CNVA) in their actions against atomic testing. In 1964, Deming marched with CNVA colleagues on a 1,750-mile trek from Quebec City to Guantanamo to protest the United States’ policy toward Cuba. The walk stalled in Albany, Georgia, when the activists were instructed to segregate their Black and white members while marching through their city. The marchers refused, and consequently, city officials arrested and jailed them. The group responded with acts of nonviolent civil disobedience including noncompliance and fasting. Two months later, after a wave of publicity, negotiations with CNVA leaders A.J. Muste and David Dellinger, and the loud objections by the British House of Commons over the treatment of a jailed British marcher, the group completed their now-integrated march through town.85

After that march, Deming continued her involvement with the Civil Rights campaign and protested the Vietnam War. In a letter to her friend, peace activist Norma Becker, who participated in many of those campaigns with her, Deming wrote that during those years, she

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“shared much” with her activist colleagues, but a great deal “was left unshared.” She never told them that she was a lesbian. Deming claimed that her “experience as a member of a despised group” led her to take part in sixties activism in the first place. Nevertheless, she remained silent about her sexuality in the 1960s because she feared that if she spoke the truth, she would become separated from her colleagues—whom she joined “precisely” because of “that unmentionable state.”

In her memoir Deming discussed both walks, one that came at the beginning of her activist life and the other at the end. She felt proud to have taken part in the sixties actions and valued her comrades, but even so, she was not fully herself with them. Later in her life, by the time she joined the walk to the Seneca Encampment, she freely identified herself as a lesbian activist amongst others who did the same. Reflecting on her Seneca experiences, Deming wrote, “[w]e share with each other thoughts that would usually be guarded, feelings that would usually be guarded—even from ourselves.” That openness and freedom of expression, Deming claimed, owed much to the earlier Civil Rights Movement.

In her July 1983 walk towards the Seneca encampment, Deming used skills she had honed decades earlier. In her memoir, Deming explained how Americans who endorsed the nuclear paradigm struggled with accepting her form of resistance. I’d been taking pleasure in my leafletting—recovering the art I’d learned years ago from walks through the South, art of finding within myself just the attitude of friendliness and expectancy that could sometimes move a person who was about to

refuse a leaflet, to take it after all. But I stopped handing out the leaflets now…Glancing into their [the townsfolk’s] faces I saw a look that told me, Better not—a rigor in each face, a rigor in each stiff body, that told me that the gesture would be taken as provocation. So I pulled the batch of leaflets to my chest. That look which had made me pull back—a look of fixity—was the look of people who are not quite there within their bodies, not quite able to accept things on their own. They seem to have given up mind and impulse to some large Mind—or Non-Mind, larger Presence that waited up ahead.90

Deming felt that presence in a mob of two or three hundred that met the Seneca-bound pamphleteers at a bridge in the town of Waterloo. They screamed epithets like “Go Home Commies!” and carried banners that stated, “Nuke ‘em till they glow!”91 WPA members Quinn Dilkes and Rosalie Regal, who were at the bridge with Deming that July day, reported that they saw threatening signs like, “Nuke the Jews from New York.”92 Many of the marchers wore pillowcases with their own, less threatening, slogans, flung over their torsos like vests with slits for their arms and heads to poke through. Women’s support or “affinity” groups donated the cases that the walkers wore. The garments were meant to show that the campers did not “sleep so well anymore and that they needed to deliver their dreams of peace.” The “pillowcase protest” had its own short anti-nuclear history. In their first protest appearance, pillowcases were used to hold soil gathered from various Strategic Air Command (SAC) bases. Activists then carried the dirt-filled cases and dumped them in front of the United Nations building in New York City at the vast anti-nuclear rally in June 1982. Later, the soiled pillowcases were washed and hung on

90 Deming, Prisons That Could Not Hold, 211.

91 Deming, Prisons That Could Not Hold, 211-212; The nuclear terms in the invective addressed to Deming and her peers are evidence for the notion that the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki became a symbol of American “righteous vengeance.” See Michael J. Hogan, ed., Hiroshima in History and Memory (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 9.

makeshift laundry lines starting just outside of the U.N. building in a “giant UN women’s wash” that stretched a full block along 47th street.93 On the Seneca walk, Deming’s vest proclaimed, “Weapons that can destroy all life, cannot defend us” on one side and on the other, “Nonviolent struggle is the only realism.”94 With her shirt, Deming challenged the fable of bodily security that nuclear weapons offered. Deming and her fellow walkers hoped to counter the assumption that Americans could guarantee their safety by maintaining a robust nuclear arsenal.

Figure 9. Incident at Waterloo, July 30, 1983
Source: Catherine Allport, HerStory WEFPJ Collection, Video Archive, and Database


94 Deming, Prisons That Could Not Hold, 197.
Deming and her colleagues never made it to the encampment that evening. The mob on the bridge blocked them from passing, and in response, the seventy-five hikers stopped their trek and sat in a circle on the ground to calm the atmosphere and to “insist on their constitutional right to pass.” Ultimately, local sheriffs arrested fifty-four of the peace-walkers, charged them with disorderly conduct, and took them to the Seneca County Jail. Then, after an overnight stay in jail, authorities moved the prisoners to the cafeteria of the local region’s Interlaken Junior High School, because of their numbers. Dubbing themselves the “Waterloo Fifty-Four,” the women released a statement from their schoolroom jail. They denied the charges of disorderly conduct against them, and claimed that the local police “excited tensions” and left them vulnerable to mob-violence and in fear for their lives.

In their statement, the fifty-four walkers made a collective guess at the root of the fear and rage they faced that day by acknowledging their difference from local community members: “The taunts from the crowd were, ‘Nuke the Lezzies,’ ‘Go home commies,’ ‘Kill the Jews,’ and ‘Throw them off the bridge, let’s see some blood.’ Among us are lesbians. There are Jewish women. Almost all of us would call ourselves feminists. Most of us have various beliefs in economic or social change that people label communist, socialist, anarchist.”

Deming reflected on the mob’s motivation, “Their fear of us

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97 "Statement of the Waterloo Fifty-Four."

Jerry McKenna, a Waterloo native and a disabled Vietnam veteran, had his own explanation: “They’ve brought lesbianism, they’ve brought violence, they’ve brought witchcraft and voodooism…I feel like they’re making a mockery of me and all veterans. It’s disgraceful… They look like animals.” For McKenna, camping women were violent and disruptive, not the weapons at the base. The military reinforced McKenna’s sense of safety and order—even with its reliance on weapons—because, unlike the campers with their counter-cultural strangeness, it presented no immediate threat.

*Seneca Day of Action: August 1, 1983*

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Two days after the Seneca-bound hikers were arrested, the peace camp hosted its largest event for the summer, the Seneca Day of Action. Thousands of women traveled to the encampment to participate. Like most events at the encampment, the day featured a parade to the Depot. Several bands of marchers prepared colorful banners displaying messages they wished to deliver. One group carried a sheet decorated with cookie cutter shapes stenciled in primary colors. The bright kindergarten innocence of the design belied the nightmarish scenario it portrayed. Blue children ran, surrender-style with lifted arms, along the width of the sheet. Dark red diving birds, falling rabbits and sheep, and green tilting trees surrounded the fleeing toddlers. The tiny red pinwheels that nipped the tree roots and tugged at the children’s arms and legs depicted the source of their distress. The marcher’s message, “Let’s Live,” stretched above the image.¹⁰¹

The tiny red pinwheels represented fallout or radioactive particles drifting in the air after a nuclear explosion. The initial reports of people dying from fallout came to light shortly after the World War II bombings. In 1947, the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission reported on radiation’s long-term effects, measured in body sizes or life spans, miscarriage, stillbirths, and live births with “gross abnormalities.”¹⁰² Women’s bodies revealed many of the most immediate impacts of radiation exposure from atomic weapons. On those grounds, that exposure became a women’s issue. In 1961, women organized Women Strike for Peace (WSP) and fifty thousand


went on strike to express their fear and anger over poisoning from radioactive fallout.\textsuperscript{103}

The Seneca camping women viewed the work of the WSP as an indelible part of their legacy. In a brief history of the women’s peace movement included in the WEFPJ handbook, camp organizers recounted the WSP mission and the Strontium-90 found in breast milk and babies’ bones that spurred them to action.\textsuperscript{104} However, a closer reading of the handbook suggests that the campers were careful to distinguish their own peace ideology from the “mothering for peace” work associated with the WSP. In a nod to the feminist movement, the handbook asserted that “in a rightful quest for liberation from the limits and restrictions imposed on them by the stereotypical roles assigned them throughout most of history, women sometimes ignore the significance of their noble peacemaking tradition.” Objecting to fallout, with its direct connection to “women as mothers” or the arbiters of “life” put the campers in a feminist bind.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{banners_in_the_barn_august_1_1983}
\caption{Banners in the Barn, August 1, 1983}
\end{figure}

\textit{Source: Ruth Putter, HerStory WEFPJ Collection, Video Archive, and Database}


\textsuperscript{104} “WEFPJ Handbook,” 30.
That bind is clear in another set of banners also included in the August 1, 1983 day of action at the camp. The banners served as a backdrop behind several dozen women who sat in a wide circle on the dirt floor. The first poster, depicting a tree with children dancing in a circle around it, filled more than half the length of the wall. The image’s caption read, “Women Celebrate Life!” A smaller, less decorative banner hung next to the larger one, reading, “Coalition for Abortion Rights.” The women at the camp walked the line between the two opposing positions implied in the signs. From their earliest stages of planning, camp organizers knew the pitfalls of that space.

Discussions among the women who inspired the peace camp idea at the June 1982 Global Feminist Disarmament Conference at Barnard College reveal the ways that planners intended to navigate the conflicts that the question of “life” posed for anti-nuclear feminists.105 The women at the conference held a meeting that directly addressed the question of abortion and reproductive rights. One attendee advocated a slogan borrowed from a previous wrangle among peace activists regarding the draft and support for the Equal Rights Amendment: “Our bodies, our lives, our right to decide.” The minutes of the conference small groups noted that the motto “applied equally to the draft and to abortion.”106 A small group formulated plans to make sure that a feminist perspective on female body sovereignty would infuse their future peace actions. They pledged to cosponsor events with reproductive rights activists and to establish feminist caucuses in other large peace organizations, such as the Nuclear Freeze campaign.

The chair of the Chicago North Shore branch of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Louise Barry, revealed another conflict brewing among peace women at the August 1, 1983 event. After attending the Day of Action, she wrote a letter to the camp expressing her disappointment in the event. Barry felt that encampment demonstrators did not communicate their message clearly. Nor did they convey any notion of what could be done practically to ameliorate the nuclear arms race. For Barry, the protesters limited themselves by leaving a negative message.107 Certainly, the events themselves were not entirely benign. By day’s end, of the two thousand protesters that participated, more than ten percent of them climbed over the depot fence and were apprehended by military police.108

Many of the campers’ most dramatic acts of civil disobedience focused on the Seneca Army Depot fence. Like keening, breaching the fence had a Greenham Common history that predated the campers’ actions at the Depot. Both encampments butted up against miles of fencing. The barriers were their raison d’etre; the fences served as Seneca and Greenham activists’ center stage. Greenham women established this tradition well before the Seneca women opened their camp. They clasped hands and surrounded it, bolted themselves to it, decorated it with symbols and photos, wove webs through its links, and climbed over the fence’s sharp top rails with regularity. Greenham women also infiltrated the base, found fences inside, and breached those as well. A pair of Greenham campers, Bee and Ceri, who jumped the base’s


fences and reached missile silos inside, described their experience: “Nearly the whole area around the silos is encircled by row upon row of barbed wire fence, apart from one small stretch where there was just one fence. Standing before the fence we would need to be so quick.” The campers laid two ladders against the wire barrier and scaled the circular fences that surrounded several missile silos on the base. Bee and Ceri recalled, “The atmosphere was frantic as we clambered over—headlights were driving towards us while it seemed an endless stream of women were crossing the barriers of destruction, bringing new life and hope…I remember feeling ecstatic and overjoyed that we had successfully planted our statement for peace and life while standing on the top of what threatens the existence of our planet.” Campers knew that climbing the fence would elicit a response which would likely lead to arrest and perhaps jail time. Bee and Ceri called the fence “a barrier of destruction” and scaling it represented their stand against nuclear catastrophe.


Figure 12. Civil Disobedience, August 1, 1983
Source: Nancy Clover, Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice Oral Herstory Digital Archive

The August 1, 1983 march to the Seneca Depot began with a rally, continued with a march from the encampment to the Depot along Highway 96, and finished with civil
disobedience at the base’s main gate. Nearly 250 women climbed the fence surrounding the Depot that day. They did not infiltrate the base, because when the peace activists arrived at the fence, they were immediately greeted by local and military police. The police outside the base stood guard over the base, but they also shielded the campers from militant townsfolk who lined the highway across from the base. The locals waved American flags and chanted choruses of “nuke ‘em till they glow!” and “go home!” while campers pressed against the depot fence and hung their signs along it—transforming it into an extended peace billboard. The fence crossings started slowly, while all the campers joined to moan their other-worldly, two-minute-long, collective keen. At first, one athletic camper flung herself easily over the fence top, and with raised hands, made it through the barrier and onto the depot grounds. Many women followed, pressed against the fence, and crossed six at a time. At one point, a resourceful camper threw a blanket over the sharp metal barbs, easing the treacherous crossing, and made way for dozens more. As soon as the women hiked themselves to the Depot side, they were approached by military police, who tied their hands and dragged the prisoners to a nearby army bus. The women crossed the fence so that they would be seen and heard. After the public “howl” that began their action, their cohorts, who sang a chorus repeating the words “The Whole World is Watching,” encouraged the steady stream of hoppers. By clambering over the fence top, the Seneca campers marked a missile location with their bodies and gave themselves a perch to


http://peacecampherstory.blogspot.com/2015/01/wvc-014-civil-disobedience.html.
announce the apocalyptic threat the missiles posed.

_Hiroshima and Nagasaki Day: August 6-9, 1983_

On August 6, 1983, hundreds of women visited the camp to remember the bombing victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. During daylight, they marched slowly up the highway to the Depot, accompanied by the slow drumbeat of Buddhist monks. When they reached the Depot, the campers gathered in front of its main gates. Three dozen women formed a circle, linked arms, sat cross legged, and held a funeral wake featuring a patchwork quilt of diverse religious practices. Their vigil began with a Christian hymn for the suffering Christ, revised to mourn Hiroshima victims. One seated woman emulated Native American prayers and invoked Eastern, Northern, and Southern spiritual powers to remember Hiroshima. Another camper joined the prayer by singing a summons to “animal spirits” to join them all. The vigil wound down with a contemporary gospel-folk song, “Let there be Peace on Earth and Let it Begin with Me.”112 The circled women enacted Christian, natural, and pagan tributes with poster-sized photographs of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki dead: reminders of the damages and injuries they chose not to forget.

Three days later, on August 9, 1983—the anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombing of Nagasaki—another crowd left the encampment and marched to the Depot’s main gate to memorialize the bombing victims. A troupe of street performers with white painted faces and blackened eyes and mouths led the parade. All but one woman wore long black gowns covered with white hoods. The performers sang while they sat clustered near the depot fence. After a

break in a chorus of “Women Weaving the Web of Life,” a woman stood above the circle and announced, “I am reading a statement of the Japanese Confederation of Atomic and Hydrogen Bomb Sufferers at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.” She continued, “When WWII was coming to a close on the sixth and ninth of August, the United States used atomic bombs to destroy the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. With that first atomic blast used in war, Hiroshima ceased to exist and three days later, Nagasaki suffered the same fate. This was the start of nuclear war.” A camping woman joined in and read, “The sudden intense heat of a thousand suns, the blast and atomic radiation struck down men, women, and children, the aged, and the infants…penetrating bones, glands, lungs, hearts, and brains.” She concluded her recitation by calling for the support of the 400,000 nuclear victims or Hibakusha who suffered “delayed after-effects.” While she read the statement, the seated circle of campers moaned with each mention of the Hibakusha’s bodily sufferings.

Several of the encampment women were familiar with the history of the Hibakusha because teacher, anti-nuclear activist, and film producer Yoko Kitaura of Osaka, Japan visited the camp that summer to lead workshops. Kitaura shared photographs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki after the bombings. During the Nagasaki Day commemoration after the recitation, campers carried Kitaura’s searing photographic record to the depot fence. Camper Laura Eaton explained the purpose of their display: “the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki serves as a grim reminder of the realities of the risk of nuclear holocaust. The risk is greatly increased by the

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threatened deployment of Cruise and Pershing Missiles in Western Europe.” Each image the campers held had a different story to tell. Some were clinical, like one image featuring keloid scars on a victim’s burned back. Others were emotionally charged, veering into voyeuristic focus, like the image of a frightened victim’s eyes. Some zoomed out and showed a sense of space and community, such as the image of a group of people carrying a body over their shoulders, seemingly headed for relief in a building.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki scholar and interviewer Robert Jay Lifton claimed that the Hibakusha constituted a new exclusive group of people whose members had unique bodies. Lifton asserted that the Hibakusha felt compelled to take on a “a special category of existence by which they felt permanently bound.” That nuclear distinction also extended to the Hibakusha who did not survive. Lifton reports that Hiroshima became a “vast open-air crematorium” in which victims’ bodies were said to have burned with a “blue phosphorescent flame.” Some were thought to have disappeared instantly in the blast, with traces that only remained in photographic “shadows” or outlines burned on the ground. Therefore, the impact of some of the


116 Hibakusha Yoshito Matsushige, the photographer who took the last of the displayed photographs, hid it from occupational forces who outlawed all images and negatives featuring atomic victims for nearly a decade. Scholar Barbara Marcón asserts that the damage done to Matsushige’s negatives lends his images a “multidimensional” role as historic evidence of the atomic bombings because their damage from having been hidden provides a material sign of “US occupational policy.” See Barbara Marcón, “Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the Eye of the Camera,” Third Text 25, no. 6 (November 2011), 791, 792.


118 Lifton, Death in Life, 66.
Hiroshima and Nagasaki photographs were powerful because of what they did not depict—the missing persons casting what Hiroshima scholar Barbara Marcón calls “shadows of the atomic blast.”

The powerful image of “disappeared” Hiroshima and Nagasaki bodies influenced the campers’ protests at the Seneca depot. In a staff memo about a 1983 action at the Depot’s airfield, one camper wrote, “While we know our bodies may be taken away, we leave behind our shadows in memory and defiance of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a genocidal explosion that left mere shadows of tens of thousands of productive innocent people.”

Camper Andrea Doremus reflected on disappearance when she recollected the camp’s march led by the troupe of street performers on Nagasaki Day. For Doremus, the players enacted “a ritual death [in] memory of the thousands who were erased.” The power of erasure, a kind of double death, required a unique mourning ritual from the campers—the collective march and the photographic display gave weight to the memory of what had been and then suddenly disappeared.

Members of the Buddhist community attended the Hiroshima and Nagasaki commemorations. They joined the troupe of robed performers in the solemn march from the camp to the depot, and their slow drumbeats heighted the experience of the campers’ Nagasaki

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prayers.\textsuperscript{122} Many of the women who marched to the Depot gate and led prayers on Hiroshima and Nagasaki Day were members of various religious affiliations, including Catholics against Nuclear Arms.\textsuperscript{123} Despite their resistance to the government authorities who supported the nuclear mission of the army depot, the Catholic mourners participating that day did not act in defiance of their church. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops supported the mission of the campers’ vigil. The Conference issued a book-length pastoral letter, “Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response,” during a plenary assembly in Chicago on May 3, 1983, three months before the Hiroshima Day vigil at the depot.\textsuperscript{124} The dire language in the campers’ mourning practices aligned with the pastoral letter, which warned of the scale of catastrophe that nuclear weapons posed: “In the past it was possible to destroy a village, a town, a region, even a country. Now it is the planet that has come under threat.” The bishops went on to relay the existential consequences of that nuclear reality: “We live today, therefore, in the midst of a cosmic drama; we possess a power which should never be used, but which might be used if we do not reverse our direction. We live with nuclear weapons knowing we cannot afford to make a serious mistake. This fact dramatizes the precariousness of our position, politically, morally, and spiritually.”\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{122}“Handwritten Notes for Camp Actions, August, 1983,” MC938, WEFPJ, Folder 32.1, Box 32, Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice Papers, Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Cambridge, Mass.


\textsuperscript{124}National Conference of Catholic Bishops, \textit{The Challenge of Peace: God’s Promise and Our Response} (United States Catholic Conference, 1983), No. 122, 124.

\textsuperscript{125}National Conference of Catholic Bishops.
During their Hiroshima and Nagasaki memorials, peace camping women echoed the Catholic Bishops’ sense of nuclear precarity in their songs and prayers. Along with secular protest songs such as “We are Singing for our Lives” and “Give Peace a Chance,” they adapted hymns from Protestant and Catholic songbooks such as “Were You There When They Crucified My Lord,” a song which had originated as an African American spiritual and could be found in mid-twentieth-century mainline Protestant hymnals. The original hymn mourned the suffering body of Christ with the refrain, “Were you there when they crucified my Lord?” The circle of campers adapted the lyrics and sang, “Were you there when the people burned and died?” The Hiroshima Day singing circle consisted of pagans, spiritualists, and members of the Catholic church, traditional peace churches, and Protestant denominations, most of whom were represented in the ecumenical interfaith organizations that actively supported the encampment. By setting Hiroshima victims in the place of the Christ figure, the singers redirected the cultural power of Christian mourning towards nuclear victims. All gathered to mourn the profound losses that Nagasaki and Hiroshima represented.

Conclusion


In the summer of 1983, Seneca campers underwent metamorphosis through the food they ate, the shelters they slept in, and the land they worked on. The campers’ transformative quotidian practices were augmented by their personal knowledge won through protecting one another’s bodies, undergoing conscious separation, and exploring new forms of sexual experiences. Everyday practices and transformative material knowledge enabled the campers to break from their pasts and inhabit new territories that allowed them to find novel forms of activist expression.

The campers’ actions, whether they were carefully planned civil disobedience campaigns or spontaneous gestures, used their bodies to give utterance to the realities of the nuclear world. The campers strained to defy abstraction when they appeared on the border of the Seneca Army Depot. Dozens of peace walks from every direction, anywhere from fifteen to three thousand miles long, arrived at the encampment during the month of July. In August, the camp was a site for mass demonstrations, fence crossings, depot breaches, and hundreds of arrests. The campers’ every appearance at the Depot’s gates announced the physical presence of its nuclear contents. The campers crossed boundaries and through artful performances and painted lines complicated the divided politics that nuclear weapons promoted. By climbing the depot fences and openly defying the United States military, campers revealed the gravity of their mission. Finally, by remembering and grieving the Hiroshima and Nagasaki dead, Seneca camping women spoke out loud what had previously been limited to whispers: American sorrow for the 1945 atomic bombings and the firm acknowledgement of the hidden violence of the nuclear world order that followed.
CHAPTER THREE

POLITICAL PEACE BODIES: GREENHAM COMMON WOMEN’S PEACE CAMP

Introduction

Seneca camping woman Leeann Irwin and her colleagues Ginny Mackey and the Rev. Kathy Madison were in a quandary. They knew that one Catholic bishop would not suffice for the event they were planning—the October 23, 1983 Seneca Day of Action. If Albany’s Bishop Hubbard was to be included, then Rochester’s Bishop Clark and Bishop Costello of Syracuse must be invited as well. In the end, the organizers sent invitations to each bishop, along with clergy from Church Women United, the Council of Jewish Women and the interfaith organizations of Geneva, Ithaca, Rochester, and Syracuse. The Seneca Day of Action’s Sunday interfaith religious service signaled the upstate area’s spiritual solidarity in opposition to the Seneca Army Depot, which stored nuclear-weapons-bearing cruise and Pershing II missiles bound for Europe.¹ On the day after Sunday’s services, area protesters intended to block the entry and exit gates at the Seneca base. Planners Irwin, Mackey, and Madison encouraged all Day of Action supporters in the upstate New York area to flood their local papers with letters announcing their intentions to join in the depot blockade.² In a press release, local demonstrator


² “Civil Disobedience Community Meeting Minutes, October 9, 1983 for October 22, 1983 Blockade,” October 1983, WEFPJ Box 33, Folder 33.23 Actions, Events, Workshops Schedules and Press Releases 1983, Women’s
Jan Peterson proclaimed that she would be attending the demonstration and summarized her reasons for taking part: “I must put my body on the line to try and stop the deployment of the cruise and Pershing II missiles. It is the only way I can insure a future for my children.”

**European Missile Deployments**

The day of protest’s upstate interfaith religious service convened two weeks before the November 1983 initial deployments of what would eventually total one hundred and sixty missiles in Great Britain, one hundred and twelve in Italy, and ninety-six in West Germany. The parliaments of Belgium and the Netherlands were still debating whether they would host the forty-eight missiles each that NATO had proposed. Activists in Western Europe echoed Peterson’s urgency and fear for the future because the missiles would soon be stationed near towns and cities on their soil. Greenham women anticipated that urgency early on. In 1981, shortly after hearing that NATO named the Greenham Common Air Force Base in Berkshire County, England as its first site for deployment, peace activist women set up camp on grounds nearby and remained there until well after the weapons’ removal almost two decades later.

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The impending crisis brought renewed attention to the peace camps. Speaking before a crowd in London’s Hyde Park, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) leader Monsignor Bruce Kent rebuked the government’s intransigence regarding the missile deployment and noted that peace organizations, including his own, faced a great challenge in resisting their plans. Peace groups would need to stop relying on mass demonstrations and literature campaigns and adopt direct action strategies to oppose the government’s stubborn adherence to deployment. They would need to emulate the tactics of Greenham women who, by camping adjacent to the Greenham Common base, placed a spotlight on what NATO allied governments hoped to hide: the moment of the missiles’ arrival. Because of Greenham Common, camping bodies throughout Britain would clearly mark the earliest nuclear maneuvers on the Western European front in the escalating arms race.

In October 1983, shortly before the Seneca Day of Action, Greenham woman Simone Wilkinson and several of her colleagues from the British peace camp sent a letter to the New York organizers, asking them to deliver a statement from the event’s podium. Activists at similar demonstrations taking place across the United States also presented their message, which read:

We have come to your country from Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp to seek an injunction in your Courts against the U.S. government’s decision to unlawfully site Cruise missiles on our soil. We are bringing the case with the Center for Constitutional Rights and the Lawyer’s Committee on Nuclear Policy, New York. Women have camped outside the gates of USAF base Greenham Common since the Women for Life on Earth Peace March arrived over two years ago. This base is just one of the 103 U.S. military installations in Britain… We are desperate. We are frightened for our lives, for the lives of our children and for the future of our planet. We believe that this is our last chance to halt the arms race

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which will inevitably destroy us all. On ninth November we are filing our lawsuit in a city on the [U.S.] East Coast. Meanwhile in Britain at the 103 U.S. bases, peace camps will be formed, and telegrams sent to the courthouse here in the United States.\(^7\)

Many Europeans joined the Greenham women in their fear of the arriving missiles. On the continent, anticipation of the American weapons generated enough public anxiety to create a unique political climate, named by journalists as the peace movement’s “hot autumn.”\(^8\)

Arguably, the highest temperature registered on October 23, 1983, when over two million Europeans demonstrated against the missiles in Brussels, Rome, Paris, London, and Berlin. Near Bonn, West Germany, protesters arranged themselves into a sixty-seven-mile chain that connected an American military training area and barracks in Neu-Ulm to military buildings in Stuttgart.\(^9\)

Concerns other than missiles contributed to the heightening “peace” temperature in Europe as well. Since taking office, President Reagan raised American military defense spending to levels not seen since the Korean War, representing seven percent of the nation’s GDP.\(^10\)

Reagan resurrected the B-1 bomber and introduced a new iteration of the MX missile called the

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\(^7\) “GWACM Statement for October 22, 1983 Rallies,” 1983, GWACM Box 1, Folder GWACM General, Women's Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.


\(^9\) Brown and Cook, “Millions in Europe March,” 28; Lawrence Wittner asserts that political leaders in NATO countries were shocked at the power of the anti-nuclear movement at this time. Wittner, *The Struggle against the Bomb, Volume Three: Toward Nuclear Abolition*, 293; NATO expert Daniel Charles reports that the virulence of European popular resistance to Reagan’s plans for upgrading nuclear armaments on their soil came about due to their feeling that the U.S. remained somewhat removed from the direct effects of limited nuclear use, and [the U.S.] could turn out to be more trigger happy than they might wish. In Daniel Charles, *Nuclear Planning in NATO: Pitfalls of First Use* (Cambridge, Mass: Ballinger Pub. Co, 1987), 114.

Peacekeeper. The new rapid and easily hidden cruise and Pershing II missiles constituted the most visible and frightening indication of the rapidly warming Cold War.

The deployment galvanized activists in the European and American peace movement, who were frustrated by the failure of NATO, the U.S., and the Soviet Union to slow the arms race. Despite demonstrations in London, Rome, Hamburg, Vienna, Paris, Stockholm, and Madrid, the cruise missiles remained ready for deployment. In Germany, the Bundestag vigorously debated whether they would host the Pershing II missiles set for entry in the coming

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11 The MX missile, a new four-stage intercontinental ballistic missile capable of carrying ten warheads, was significantly larger than its predecessor, the Minuteman III, which could carry three warheads. The military scheduled the MX to begin flight testing in January 1983. (ICBM) In Department of Defense: Office of Technology Assessment OTA, “MX Missile Basing,” September 1981, OTA Reports, 1, 328.

months. The issue threatened the country’s long-time support for NATO. In 1982, West Germany’s Social Democratic Party (SPD) broke ranks with NATO over the missiles—a move that destroyed decades-long bipartisan support that NATO had enjoyed since its 1951 inception.

Belgium and the Netherlands, which remained deadlocked regarding the installations, postponed their decision over whether to allow them until the summer of 1984. The USSR meanwhile threatened to walk out of arms negotiations in Geneva. The U.S. Congress, including powerful senators Mark Hatfield (R-OR) and Edward Kennedy (D-MA), showed support for the growing resistance against nuclear escalation. In Great Britain, almost half the public opposed the presence of U.S. missiles on their soil. NATO heeded none of these objections, however. The plan to send cruise missiles to Greenham Common Air Force Base in November remained on course.

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Peace campers resided near Greenham Common for a few years before public support brought them into the limelight. They had occupied a wooded public park dotted with green fields adjacent to the base since 1981. The forty-year-old military installation belonged to the

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13 Brown and Cook, 28.
16 William M. Knoblauch, Nuclear Freeze in a Cold War: The Reagan Administration, Cultural Activism, and the Race to End the Arms Race, Culture and Politics in the Cold War and Beyond. (University of Massachusetts Press, 2017), 1.
Royal Air Force, which acquired the land in 1939 when the European powers were deep into the hostilities of World War II. Though the land returned to its original community-held status, the British government reaffirmed its ownership in 1951 for lease to the United States as an airfield. By 1953, the American Air Force had built a 10,000-foot runway and established a base capable of storing nuclear weapons. In 1960, the state officially revoked all British common rights to the base’s land. In June of 1980, six months after the NATO two-track decision, the British Defense Minister, Francis Pym, announced that Greenham Common would house ninety-six American Cruise missiles, which would be guarded by 1,300 American soldiers and 900 British guards.

Some members of the British public responded with alarm when they learned about the missiles’ impending arrival. When Welsh environmental activist and mother of two Ann Pettitt read an article in *Peace News* about a women’s peace march from Copenhagen to Paris, she thought that she and her small circle of friends could organize one of their own. She gathered comrades from the environmentalist feminist group Women for Life on Earth (WLOE), and on August 26, 1981, they began their one-hundred-mile walk from Cardiff, Wales to Berkshire County, fifty miles west of London. Forty-four-year-old nurse and midwife Helen John recalled, “I read about it [the Cardiff to Greenham walk] in Labor Weekly and decided I would take part in it. I did some rapid logistical preparations. It changed my life,” John claimed. “I

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19 “Memo on Greenham Common History,” n.d., Box 1 Folder GWACM General, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.


could not narrowly look at my own family, I had to look after others in a broader sense.”

John, who brought the youngest of her five children with her, walked with forty others, mostly women and children who ranged in age from infants to teenagers with a few men, to the Greenham Common Air Force Base, the future home of the American cruise missiles.

When the walkers arrived, they demanded to see the base commander to deliver an open letter protesting the decision to host cruise missiles without popular consent. “The British people,” the letter declared, “have never been consulted about our government’s nuclear defense policy.” They also reminded the base commander that “the arrival of these hideous weapons at the base will place our entire country in the position of a frontline target in any confrontation between the two super-powers, Russia and the United States of America. We in Europe will not accept the sacrificial role offered us by our NATO allies.” After delivering their message, the group tied themselves to the front gate of the base and demanded a televised debate with the Minister of Defense. John recollected that the group bound themselves to the base entry because they wished to take “an example from the suffragette movement.”

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authorities, and the media ignored the protesters entirely, prompting the women to pitch camp while waiting for a response.\textsuperscript{26}

Five months later, in February 1982, the campers, both men and women, were still there. After the District Council of Newbury, the base’s nearby village, delivered an eviction order, the campers decided that men would no longer be welcome to bivouac for the night with the women.\textsuperscript{27} Even though Greenham campers enforced their “women-only” policy immediately after the first evacuation notice, they did not make the move simply to avoid removal. One camper reported that the decision to exclude men took weeks and came about because of internal struggles between feminists and male campers. Some of the women felt that men would “inevitably take over and find it difficult to behave non-violently.”\textsuperscript{28} The eviction merely created an occasion for the women to make a final decision and implement their female-only policy.

In May 1982, the High Court followed through with their threat and ordered an eviction which touched off a two-week blockade by the activists of the base’s main gate. John wondered why it took so long for the first evictions to occur: “I still don’t know why they didn’t throw us out the first day we arrived here. I do have my suspicions, I think the authorities thought we would go away by ourselves, that the lack of publicity would drain our energy.” John concluded, “We’ve always been honest with the council saying we would be here until we were promised

\textsuperscript{26} Peter Osnos, “At Women’s Peace Camp British Antinuclear Fervor” (Washington Post Services, 1983), CDGB Box: Great Britain, Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp, Folder: Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp Clippings, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

\textsuperscript{27} The Greenham Factor, 2.

\textsuperscript{28} This was asserted by a female camper who remained nameless in “Camping against the Cruise,” Clipping, June 11, 1982, 28, Box 1, Folder: General, Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
that the missiles would not be put in here. They didn’t believe us."  

The authorities realized that the Greenham women would not leave of their own accord, and on May 27, 1982, they demolished a pavilion the campers had erected at the base’s main gate. This gate stood as the only camping site for Greenham women’s first sixteen months of occupation, from September 1981 until January 1983, until a small band of women began to shelter in a more private location in the woods near the base’s green gate.

Three months later in August, the Ministry of Transportation (MOT) added its own eviction order to those of the local village and the High Court. When campers, who until this time had been sleeping in tents and even caravans, heard the news, they “cheerfully and calmly” packed up their things—saucers, silverware, cash, tents and bedding—and hid them. They knew that they were entering a new phase in their Greenham experience; now they would have to “maintain their presence without shelter.” The MOT then lifted the campers’ seven caravans with cranes onto semi trucks and transported them to a compound ten miles away. Shortly afterward, ministry laborers dumped thousands of rocks over the protester’s campsites to prevent the women from sleeping there, whether in or out of shelters, again. The women simply moved to another section of land nearby, and no major evictions would follow until the next spring.

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29 “Camping against the Cruise,” 28.

30 “Camping against the Cruise,” 28.


In the fall of 1982, Greenham women sent one thousand invitations to an action marking three years since the NATO two-track decision. The women requested that each invitee ask ten other women to join them for the anniversary. On a cold and rainy December 12, 1982, thirty thousand women, bundled in coats and boots, converged at the Common and, taking hands, made a ring around the base’s entire perimeter fence. Dorothy McDowell from Liverpool remembered “30,000 pairs of eyes looking through the wire fence at a few huts, a man with a dog, and a police car now and then,” asking herself, “Is this our enemy?” As if to differentiate their own world from the one they viewed across the wire, women hung pictures of their children, “nappies” or diapers, baby booties, and skeins of wool. In a 1983 newsletter another participant named Sue reflected on her mixed feelings during her long day and night embracing the base. She felt that journalists tried to “trivialize the sentimental nature of the decorated fence…Of course not many newspapers reported that tampons also hung on the fence—a not so respectable image of femininity…[We] were talking about our right to live.”

That night, three thousand women remained at Greenham, dispersing to make temporary camp near several different areas of the perimeter fence. The next day, each group formed a blockade at each of the base’s gates. A camping woman named Toni and several other Greenham

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33 The two-track decision was made on December 12, 1979 by NATO countries to deploy cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe while at the same time conducting arms reduction talks with the Soviet Union. A NATO communique summarized the plan as “pursuing two parallel and complementary approaches of TNF (Theater Nuclear Forces) modernization and arms control. Schwartz, NATO’s Nuclear Dilemmas, 239.

34 Peter Osnos, “At Women’s Peace Camp British Antinuclear Fervor.


women who were stationed at the main gate woke up and exited their makeshift “pyramid” tent for a cheerful breakfast. Toni recollected that they guarded the entry “in a picnic mood” with little trouble for the entire cloudless day. By midday, reports began trickling in from the other groups of women situated in spots less visible to the public on the base’s perimeter. There, police forcibly removed hundreds of women who blocked supply entry gates. Though the reports were troubling, there were no such incidents at the main gate. Toni described a quiet afternoon of shifting between gate-guarding, crosswords, and reading. Several hours later, however, dozens of overcoated police with concealed identification numbers took advantage of the approaching darkness. They exited a building on the base and drew near the women from the base side of the closed main gate. From the other direction, near the highway, “a huge crowd of police” in Toni’s words, also approached the seated women. “Then we were completely surrounded,” she recalled. “I was very very afraid, and I could feel the fear from the others.” The officers near the highway paused to tear apart the women’s makeshift tent. Their first impulse was not to remove the women from the gate; instead they destroyed their shelter. The officers did not object to the presence of camping women, so much as their intention to remain. In the meantime, the officers inside the base pushed at the closed gate, prompting Toni and her fellow campers to rise and push back to keep it closed. “When it gave, it opened quickly,” Toni reported. “The face of the woman on my right was twisted with pain as one of the bars on the gate ground into her back…The police in front [of the gate] began to pick women up and drag them roughly away.”

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37 Toni, “December 13th” Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp, Spring, 1983, 8 BCRW Box G, Folder Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp and Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles, Feminist Ephemera Collection, Barnard College Archives and Special Collections, Barnard College.
A new pattern at Greenham Common thus emerged from this first “Embrace the Base” Action that involved constant pressure on law enforcement to remove an unending stream of campers.

On January 1, 1983, several Greenham women, emboldened by successfully circling the base, celebrated New Year’s Day by gathering just outside the far northwest corner of the base at the blue gate, which was closest to the location of the base’s six hardened bunkers that would, in less than a year’s time, serve as silos storing cruise missiles. The women carried several ladders, hidden in blankets and branches, and made their way to a spot where only one fence, rather than the usual three, barred the hill-like bunkers. As the last two women climbed the ladders and clambered over the fence, military police appeared. Greenham woman Bee claimed that she and her comrades “began singing, walking quickly, almost at a run, towards the silos. Our hearts
were beating...We scrambled up the mud-drenched slopes to the top of the silos. Unbelieving—but knowing—we cheered, waved, jumped up and down.” Bee continued, “For almost an hour we danced, sang, and made women’s peace symbols with the stones that lay on the surface. We saw police and American military busses arriving.” Police pulled the women off their bunker-top perch and charged them with breaching the peace.  

![Figure 15. Greenham Common Women Dancing on Silos 1983](image)

Source: Raissa Paige, Barnard Center for Research on Women

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38 Bee, “January First- Silos,” 1983, BCRW02, Barnard Center for Research on Women Feminist Ephemera Collection, Box G, Folder Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp and Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles Feminist Ephemera Collection, Barnard Archives and Special Collections, 8.
Greenham women were well acquainted with the process of arrest and imprisonment. Over the course of 1983, Greenham women would undergo several series of actions, arrests, trials, and imprisonments. In the spring of 1983, Greenham women joined with the CND to form a 70,000-person human chain through what the activists called Britain’s nuclear valley in Berkshire County. The chain joined the base at Greenham Common with a Royal Ordnance Factory in Burghfield, fourteen miles away, to protest the coming cruise missiles. The Atomic Weapons Research Establishment in Aldermaston was between the two outposts. At the first link in the chain, 187 women climbed the Greenham Common fence and were taken into custody by military police.

With their wealth of experience with arrests, Greenham women grew skilled at using the courts to showcase their protests. On August 27, 1983, police arrested eighteen campers, including Rebecca Johnson and Simone Wilkinson, for breaking into the Air Force Base’s sentry box and occupying it for several hours while busying themselves with answering phone calls and drawing graffiti on secure documents. At their trial in November, the women performed a courtroom reversal and testified, not about their own crimes, but rather the crimes perpetrated by

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39 Actions that led to arrests, trials, and sometimes imprisonment between September 1982 and February 1983 are as follows: October 3, 1982, seventeen women were arrested, and later tried and imprisoned for blockading work on sewer drainage ditches by lying down in the trenches and weaving webs over themselves. On October 29, 234 women were arrested for cutting the base fence with bolt cutters. On December 13, over one hundred women were arrested for blockading several gates of the base. On January 1, 1983, forty-four women breached the base fence and climbed on top of several silos that would contain the cruise missiles. Thirty-six of the women were jailed. On January 22, three women were arrested for pitching a tent at the base’s blue gate. Two days later, fifteen campers were arrested for blockading the base’s green gate. By the end of February, 1983 all of the cases were tried in local court. See Barbara Harford and Sarah Hopkins, *Greenham Common: Women at the Wire*, i.


41 November Trials’ (Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp, Spring, 1983), 5, Box G, Folder Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp and Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles, Feminist Ephemera Collection, Barnard College Archives and Special Collections, Barnard College, New York City.
the USAF base. Johnson, a student of Japanese foreign relations, drew on her own scholarship to defend her actions in the sentry box. While on the stand, she recalled that on a recent visit to Hiroshima she repeated to herself, “It won’t happen [again].” But ultimately, Johnson believed that though she wanted that outcome, her research suggested otherwise—nuclear deterrence would not keep disaster at bay. She concluded, “I realized I couldn’t be an academic ostrich.”

In her testimony, Johnson’s co-defendant, Wilkinson, justified her infraction by asserting that she entered the sentry base to protest a larger offense: “On August 27th, I walked onto the base because I knew a crime was being committed…the presence of nuclear weapons on our soil is causing serious mental harm to many people…women are afraid of having more children.”

Johnson and Wilkinson argued that what might be conceived of as an extreme and even irrational act—their occupation of the base’s sentry box—was in fact a reasonable response to the dangerous weapons that it guarded.

No stranger to drastic measures, Isle of Wight housewife Wilkinson first came to Greenham Common with the same thought process in mind. She joined the encampment after watching a civil defense television program, “Protect and Survive.” She recollected the show’s instructions in case of nuclear catastrophe: “Take off four doors from inside our house and lean them in against an inside wall in case the outside ones are missing…cover them with cushions, and inside…put two weeks supply of lighting, heating, cooking, utensils, toilet facilities, washing facilities, water, food, etc…” After watching, Wilkinson realized that the program

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42 “Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles Information Sheet,” n.d., Box 1, Folder: GWACM General, Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania; “‘November Trials’ (Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp, Spring, 1983), 5.

43 “‘November Trials’ in Women’s Peace Camp, February 1983.”
offered no plausible safety measures for nuclear victims. She concluded, “I didn’t bring children into the world to push them under a door and watch them die.” Wilkinson became depressed and recalled her husband saying, “Look, this is ridiculous, constantly weeping over this isn’t doing anything to change things. And if you feel that strongly, you ought to go out and join a peace group.” Wilkinson confessed, “I think he meant that I would go to a meeting once a month, and I don’t think he realized quite what he was launching me off into.” Sometime after that conversation, Wilkinson read about Greenham and the campers’ need for food and supplies and decided to bring provisions. When she arrived, Wilkinson returned home and talked to her husband and two children, and after some rearranging, decided to stay at the encampment, going home on the odd weekends.

*Greenham Women on the Eve of Deployment*

By the fall of 1983, Greenham women came to realize that despite their best activist efforts, the cruise deployment remained on schedule. Due to a leak publicized by the *Guardian*, the women knew that the first missiles were due to arrive on November 1, 1983. Since the eve of the expected deployment coincided with Halloween, the protestors celebrated by donning witch’s hats, painting their faces with webs, and targeting the base’s perimeter fencing. They began in a wooded area of the Common. Late in the afternoon on Saturday, October 29th, party-

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45 “Women at Greenham Transcript, 4.”

46 Greenham women did not simply send messages, they also sent emissaries to the demonstrations, such as Welsh housewife Susan Lamb, who spoke to 250,000 London protesters. According to journalist Terry Colman, Lamb received the warmest reception of all speakers on the podium that day. See Terry Colman, “A Protest at the Concrete Personification of Death,” *The Guardian*, October 24, 1983, 11, Newspapers.com.

47 Fairhall, 1.
goers arrived by busses and carloads. These non-campers brought bolt cutters with them, tools that had been referred to as “black cardigans” on their invitations—a code name used and interpreted by word of mouth.48 The Halloween visitors met their hosts, camping women, who waited for them in the Greenham woods.49 Beforehand, the campers had divided the base’s perimeter fence into twelve sections and requested that arriving women choose a portion. By half past four, groups of “black cardigan”—carrying women hushed their party chatter to stream out of the forest to find their designated section of the fence.50 That night, more than one thousand women cut and removed between one and four miles of the base’s nine miles of perimeter fencing.51 In a letter to American peace activist and Seneca encampment veteran Barbara Deming, camp visitor Ynestra King described the preparations taking place before the action: “The women have been planning an action of cutting down the fences that surround the base. They are piling in enormous fence cutters and upping the ante, out of desperation, but I am very worried. Those fence cutters are lethal weapons and I worry that they will be used against the women.”52


51 Aileen Ballantyne and Jean Stead, “Police Arrest 187 as Greenham Women Pull Down Fences,” *The Guardian*, October 31, 2, Newspapers.com; The numbers of women and the linear amounts of cut fence is reported variably. Ballantyne and Stead’s *Guardian* report asserted that more than one thousand Greenham women gathered and cut between hundreds of meters and several miles of fence. Other reports, including the campers’ oral testimony, report that more than two thousand women gathered and cut over four miles of fencing. See Sasha Rose, *Common Women, Uncommon Practices: The Queer Feminisms of Greenham* (London: Cassell, 2000), 211.

King’s fears proved well-founded. American soldiers situated within the fence and the British police outside found themselves equally caught off guard due to the silent rush and the well-coordinated attack on the fence. Camper Jill Gillett reported, “At a prearranged time, we all took our bolt cutters out of our Wellies and from up our sleeves and started cutting.”\(^{53}\) At first, only local British police responded, because soldiers were legally barred from making arrests outside of the base. After the thousands of fence-cutting women overwhelmed the police, however, soldiers began to assist.\(^{54}\) The revelers were careful to remain on the civilian side of the fence, having agreed beforehand not to enter any spaces where the military had jurisdiction over them.\(^{55}\) Greenham woman Nina Hall, who took part in the action, reported that panicked soldiers cried, “The fucking women are cutting the fucking fence down!”\(^{56}\) Twenty-four-year-old Rowan Gwedhen who had been camping for several months reported, “The soldiers went for us with truncheons on fingers which were resting on wire and the soldiers dragged us through the gap in the fence. They went crazy.” The action became a melee, with soldiers on the base side of the fence in a tug of war with campers on the other. When and if the Greenham women prevailed, they simply carried the fencing to the Common, flattened it, stacked it, and sat down on the wire pile. They never breached the base perimeter. Though some reports called it a “good natured tug

\(^{53}\) Camper Jill Gillett recounts her experiences and asserts that two thousand women cut four and a half miles of fencing and that they surprised the police with more than silence and coordination. In Jill Gillett, Interview for Women at Greenham from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1985, Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp Collection, Folder: General, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, 19.


\(^{56}\) Liddington, The Road to Greenham Common, 271.
of war,” the skirmish seriously injured many campers and some police. Camper Carolyn Harwood landed in the hospital, reporting that a soldier “karate chopped it [her arm],” when she cut her portion of the fence, “and it went straight through to the bone.”

Ynestra King detected palpable desperation among the Greenham women. The Halloween fence-cutting represented the first time that many of them had committed criminal property damages. In the end, police and American soldiers arrested 187 women, dragging some of the women through the torn fencing onto base property. Others exited the base to assist the overwhelmed local police. Greenham camping veteran Lynne Jones acknowledged the potential of violence. “We want to expose,” she declared in a news report, “what is going on in there [inside the base] and demonstrate the reality of the situation that Americans are actually having to protect themselves heavily from the very people that they say they want to protect.”

The cruise missiles’ looming arrival heightened the violence and confusion of the night. American soldiers defended an American weapon against British women. In terms of Jones’ stated aims, the Halloween action succeeded.

The public wrangle between British women and the American soldiers revealed an uncomfortable political reality: the strong presence of the American military on British soil. One week before the Halloween action, in her speech at London’s Hyde Park for the October International Day of Protest, Welsh housewife, mother, and peace camper Susan Lamb called

57 Fairhall, Common Ground, 59.
59 Roseneil, Common Women, Uncommon Practices, 211.
60 Brown, “Cruise Base Cordon,” 1.
61 Ballantyne and Stead, “Police Arrest 187 as Greenham Women Pull Down Fences,” 2.
Britain an occupied country.\textsuperscript{62} In another section of her letter to Barbara Deming, Ynestra King supported Lamb’s statement: “It was a beautiful country, and as I was returning to London, [from Greenham Common] I passed a convoy of one hundred American tanks. The American military presence is enormous.”\textsuperscript{63} Lamb and King made astute observations of what was an expansive network of American military bases in Britain. Duncan Campbell, an investigative reporter for the British weekly \textit{New Statesman} called Britain “an unsinkable aircraft carrier for the U.S.”\textsuperscript{64} Campbell’s investigations began in June 1980, when British Minister of Defense Francis Pym made a formal statement regarding the pending arrival of ground-launched cruise missiles at two American military bases in Britain, RAF Greenham Common and RAF Molesworth. The next day, MP Bob Cryer of the Labor Party requested an accounting of each military base in Britain occupied by the United States. Pym obliged, listing one dozen bases, and referenced “a few other sites for storage, logistical support, administration, and communications.”\textsuperscript{65} After further parliamentary questioning, Pym reluctantly admitted an astonishing fifty-six U.S.-occupied bases. By October, Campbell verified more than one hundred American military bases after publishing a Soviet military map disclosing their locations.\textsuperscript{66}

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\textsuperscript{62} Colman, “A Protest at the Concrete Personification of Death,” 11.
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\textsuperscript{65} “The locations included in the original list of a dozen bases were RAF Alconbury, RAF Bentwaters, RAF Fairford, RAF Lakenheath, RAF Mildenhall, RAF Upper Heyford, and RAF Woodbridge, and standby deployment bases at RAF Greenham Common, RAF Sculthorpe, and RAF Wethersfield. The United States Navy had a base at Holy Loch. The United States forces also occupy a number of sites, including RAF Molesworth.” Found in the Hansard record of the House of Commons: “United States Bases,” June 18, 1980, HC Deb 18 June 1980 vol 986 cc587-8W, Hansard.
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As global gatekeepers for the cruise missiles, Greenham women found themselves in a sticky conflict over sovereignty between the U.S. and Britain. Within days of the Halloween action, Labor MP Roland Boyes asked the new Minister of Defense, Michael Heseltine, whether he could assure the safety of “the ladies of Greenham Common.” Heseltine answered, “I shall categorically give no such assurance. It has been the absolute duty of all governments to defend the nuclear weapons in this country as well as all the military bases of this country’s defense forces. To suggest that we should now abandon that policy is ridiculous.” The next day, reporters Ian Aitkin and David Fairhall called the exchange a “bizarre turn” that stunned even members of Heseltine’s own Tory party. That shock must have registered. In the end, the Ministry of Defense (MOD) outlined a “double ring” strategy and assigned a cordon of British soldiers to surround the American troops charged with “direct protections of the weapons,” thereby preventing American male soldiers from shooting British female civilians—a bridge too far even where nuclear weapons were concerned.

235 women faced arrest because of the Halloween fence-cutting action. Though a notable number for one evening of action, arrests had become a regular feature of the civil disobedience at Greenham. By October of 1983, the women had established a pattern of actions, arrests, and court dates that often ended in incarceration. Most often, authorities arraigned women for trivial offenses such as breaching the peace, trespassing property, or obstructing the police. Adopting the Vietnam War-era tradition of political trials, they used their time in court to shift attention

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away from their own violations to what they deemed to be the larger one—cruise missiles. Peace camper and lawyer Gwyn Kirk reported that during the first flush of Greenham arrests, defendants embraced the irony of “breaching the peace” charges. They used their public platform before the jury and media to discuss the meaning of peace, and to declare the base guilty of violating it because it hosted nuclear missiles. Performing this pivot allowed Greenham women to showcase their protest, proclaim their innocence, and accuse the base all at once.

With their rich experience with arrests and imprisonments over the past year, the Greenham women developed a fresh tactic to shift the court’s gaze: litigation. They would sue the United States government, and transfer their legal position from that of defendants to plaintiffs. They could frame the issue of the cruise missiles in a more productive way when operating from the offensive position, by putting the weapon, rather than themselves on trial.

In the summer of 1983, the reelection of Margaret Thatcher galvanized some Greenham women to put their plan into operation and “bring the real criminals to court.”

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69 Greenham women were following a well-established tradition of using arrests and trials and even incarceration to proclaim their cause. The American nuclear resistance movement used arrests and trials effectively. One example is the Clamshell Alliance—organized in the 1970s to fight the construction of the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant in New Hampshire—which after a blockade had roughly 1,400 activists arrested in 1976. The apprehended activists stayed in armories throughout New Hampshire and garnered a great deal of publicity for the movement. See Barbara Epstein, Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 10.


72 “Information Sheet GWACM,” February 1984, Box 1 Folder GWACM General, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
firm believer in NATO's two-track decision and knew the importance of maintaining unity with her European allies while remaining in the good graces with the United States. The Greenham women did not rejoice at her reelection. English solicitor Jane Hickman, who had been representing several Greenham women in the British courts for eighteen months, decided to consult with other lawyers at the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) in New York City about how to make a case against the deployment of cruise missiles. Hickman, the CCR lawyers, and Greenham activists found their opportunity shortly before November 14, 1983, the day that the missiles were set to depart from the United States for the base at Greenham Common. Because of the looming arrival, the U.S. District Court of the Southern District of New York granted the CCR an emergency hearing. On November 9, thirteen Greenham women, on behalf of themselves and their seventeen children, filed a lawsuit against President Reagan, Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger, Secretary of the Air Force Vern Orr, and Secretary of the Army John O. Marsh. The plaintiffs were joined by two United States Congressmen, Ronald Dellums (Democrat—California) and Ted Weiss (Democrat—New York). Because of the timing, the suit appeared to some as a rushed last-ditch effort. But in fact, Greenham women and their lawyers had been planning their lawsuit and gathering the testimony of expert witnesses and briefs from friends of the court for months. Though thorough and prepared, they also felt a strong sense of


74 *The Greenham Challenge: Bringing Missiles to Trial* (Center for Constitutional Rights, 1984), Part II, 7:00, YouTube, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vEnQD3tnI4&t=47s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vEnQD3tnI4&t=47s).

75 Carrie Pester and Liz Forder, “Letter from Carrie Pester and Liz Forder Requesting Amicus Briefs, October 1983, 1, Box 1 Folder GWACM General, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
urgency. Months before the hearing, in their search for testimonies, plaintiffs Elizabeth Forder and Carrie Pester expressed frustration and desperation, “We have camped outside the United States Air Force [Base] Greenham Common for two years, appealed to the British government, demonstrated in every town and city, organized and written articles, and argued our case in meetings, on television and radio throughout Britain and overseas.” They hoped that taking the case to the U.S. courts would be their final step in their fight against the cruise missiles.

In their case, the plaintiffs charged that the deployment of the cruise and Pershing II weapons was illegal. Citing the Hague Convention of 1907, the Geneva Convention of 1948, and the Genocide Convention of 1948, Greenham women claimed that the weapons injured them. Fast and undetectable, the missiles were, moreover, first-use weapons that could be used with no warning. On that basis, the women argued, the weapons violated international law. In addition, the plaintiffs charged that the missiles violated the U.S. Constitution’s Fifth Amendment because the President’s sole authority over detonating the missiles overrode the American Congress’s responsibility to declare war. The Greenham women concluded their case by demanding that the President, his cabinet, and his generals remove their order to deliver cruise missiles to the Greenham Common Air Force Base.

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76 Carrie Pester and Liz Forder, “Letter from Carrie Pester and Liz Forder to Friends,” October 1983, 1, Box 1, Folder GWACM, General, Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

77 In her recollections of the sentry box case, Rebecca Johnson remembers that they attempted to use the Genocide Act before British magistrates unsuccessfully, but were able to “develop the argument to greater effect.” Rebecca Johnson, “Alice through the Fence: Greenham Women and the Law,” in Nuclear Weapons, the Peace Movement and the Law (London: The MacMillan Press, 1986), 162.

78 “Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Center for Constitutional Rights Legal Edition Pamphlet P17, 19” 1984, Box 1, Folder GWACM General, Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
The campers fueled their case with emotional outrage at the threat of injury and psychological fear of the future. In the court documents, each of the thirteen Greenham Common plaintiffs asserted that they were in fear of their life and that “the deployment of ground launched cruise missiles constitutes an immediate and irreparable threat to her life, liberty, and security.”\(^{79}\)

In her reflections on the case, Forder declared, “We are frightened, we are powerless, we have children that we have spent so much time in nurturing and trying to infuse them with hope in humanity...Nuclear weapons annihilate that in a stroke.”\(^{80}\)

The plaintiffs’ fears were not misty-eyed emotional responses. The court documents, including affidavits from weapons experts, members of the military, scientists, clergy, physicians, and scholars of international law, outlined a logical basis for their feelings of terror. City University of New York physics scholar Michio Kaku and Massachusetts Institute of Technology nuclear physicist Kosta Tsipis laid out the dangers of the missiles from testing challenges and hazards inherent in their physical systems. Director of the Center for Defense Information Admiral Gene La Rocque explained the ways that the missiles shifted military strategies in Europe due to improved speed and accuracy. The bishop of Salisbury, England, Father John Austin Baker, stated his ethical case against the possession and use of nuclear weapons. Dr. Robert Lifton, psychologist and intrepid anti-war activist, reported the harmful psychological effects of nuclear weapons’ very existence. Nobel Peace Prize–winning lawyer


\(^{80}\) Elizabeth Forder, “Reflections on Testimonies,” N/D, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles, Box 2, Folder: CDG-A, Lawsuit General, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, 1.
Sean McBride elucidated the case against nuclear weapons based on international law. Finally, Dr. Frank Barnaby, the director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, described the ways that the presence of land-based nuclear missiles in Western Europe would “signal the commencement” of a new arms race in Europe. Barnaby cited the warnings of Robert McNamara, the Secretary of Defense during the Vietnam War who was greatly responsible for its escalation, who outlined the destabilizing effects of introducing a new class of weapons.

Greenham women also garnered the support of United States Congressmen Ted Weiss and Ronald Dellums, both of whom strongly favored disarmament. Congressman Weiss joined the suit because he believed that nuclear weapons eroded constitutional safeguards in the United States and British sovereignty because decisions about whether to launch them rested in the hands of the U.S. President alone. Congressman Dellums, who represented Oakland and co-founded the Congressional Black Caucus, had long experience in opposing war and weapons. He began his first term in 1971 by demanding an investigation into war crimes in Vietnam. Dellums was closely involved with the Nuclear Freeze campaign, and in the early 1980s traveled extensively to work against a range of nuclear weapons, which he claimed were “an equal

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opportunity destroyer.” Dellums believed that by eliminating defense programs, the U.S. could return “scarce funding to the cities which were locked in an ever-advancing state of decline.”

Despite expert witnesses and congressional support, Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles failed. In July of 1984, justices of the New York Southern District dismissed the case and stated that the delicacy of foreign affairs weighed against intervention by the US courts and that it would have consequences in foreign relations beyond their knowledge or authority to evaluate. These factors made the case “judicially unmanageable.” In the end, Greenham women argued that the European deployment of the new American missiles would make nuclear war more likely. Attorneys representing the United States government argued that deployment would likely deter war. The court ultimately concluded that they did not have the authority to decide who was correct.

In January 1985, the Greenham women appealed their case and appeared in front of three judges from the Second Circuit U.S. District Court of Appeals. On February 8, 1985, the court denied their appeal because the time was not ripe to consider their claims. After the final rejection of their appeal, the Greenham women decided not to pursue the case and instead looked at the entire experience as a successful attempt to publicize their opposition to European deployment. The case represents the first legal challenge ever brought against nuclear weapons deployment anywhere in the world. The challenge gathered thirty expert witnesses, thirteen amicus briefs filed by 136 U.S. organizations and 52 British and European groups.

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85 Dellums and Halterman. *Lying Down with the Lions*, 115.

86 Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles, No. 83 8154 (United Stated District Court for the Southern District of New York July 1984).

The plaintiffs used their day in court as a public megaphone. On the November day they filed suit, the Greenham women, along with Congressmen Weiss and Dellums and expert witnesses nuclear physicist Dr. Michio Kaku and physician Dr. Alice Stewart, gathered for a press conference on the steps of the New York City district courthouse in Foley Square. In her prepared statement, plaintiff Forder cited a national poll which indicated that seventy-four percent of British people did not trust the United States with control of the missiles destined for deployment at Greenham Common. More than polls and statistics backed up Forder’s claims about the popularity of their cause. The evening before filing the suit, American activists held an all-night vigil at Foley Square to show their support. That same night, across the Atlantic, thousands of British nuclear resisters acted in a unified show of solidarity that mimicked the Greenham method. They gathered bedrolls, tents, and baskets of provisions and made their separate ways to each of the 102 American military installations in Britain to make camp for the night. Their collective migration and temporary encampments peppered the British landscape and revealed the extent of an American military presence that had been invisible, even to the political elites in British Parliament just eighteen months before.

Greenham Common and the Spread of British Peace Camps

When Labor MP Cryer made his inquiries in Parliament about the extent of American military presence in Britain in the summer of 1980, the Minister of Defense acknowledged only one dozen occupied bases. By following the example of Greenham Common women, and

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88 “Center for Constitutional Rights News Release,” November 2, 1983, Box 1, Folder GWACM General, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore Pennsylvania.

indeed acting in direct support of them, thousands of British people countered the minister’s statement in the most direct way possible on November 9, 1983. Journalist Dennis Johnson asserted that the temporary peace campers verified a claim that, until recently, had been known only to those who read “subversive weeklies.” The peace campers at each of the 102 military bases in Britain made the New Statesman journalist Duncan Campbell’s 1980 claim in just such a “subversive weekly,” irrefutable. Each of the American installations he uncovered, including twenty-one air bases, nine transportation terminals, seventeen weapons dumps, seven weapons storage depots, thirty-eight communications facilities, ten intelligence bases, and three sonar surveillance sites hosted a peace camp revel for at least one night and some for many more.

Though Greenham women were the catalyst for the November 9, 1983 camping spree, others also spread the practice of camping resistance. Ever since the October International Days of Protest demonstration in London, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament leader Bruce Kent and CND chairperson Joan Ruddock bemoaned the fact that political intervention could not

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adequately stop the warming Cold War. Real change would require direct action. The Greenham women’s call for a general show of support for the lawsuit at that same demonstration offered CND members a perfect opportunity to heed Kent and Ruddock’s call through camping action. Men and women from at least twenty-six local CND chapters from England and Scotland bedded down for the night near their local US military bases. Each of the campsites displayed unique sensibilities. The East Surr CND protested at Botley Hill Farm U.S.A.F. by leafletting their surrounding towns, and finished the evening by making a bonfire of a mock cruise missile. In the South of England, the Hastings CND conducted a solemn candlelit vigil in support of their local peace camps at the Swingate and Dunkirk U.S. Airfield. The Daventry CND in England’s East Midlands took a more active approach, and after they set up their peace camp outside of the Daventry U.S. Military Communications facility, they paraded through town

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92 Brown and Cook, “Millions in Europe March against the Cruise.”

93 The statement prepared by Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles read at the platforms of the October 1983 International Days of Protest Demonstrations both in Europe and in America, specifically cited the 103 American military installations in Britain. In “Statement to Be Read from Platforms at Rallies on October 22nd 1983,” October 1983.

94 Twenty-six different CND chapters signed telegrams from peace camps that were delivered to the women filing suit in New York City. It is notable that CND scholar Paul Byrne examined the CND’s 1985 member survey which revealed that the organization had an equal number of male and female members, the majority of whom were between the ages of twenty-five to forty. Paul Byrne, *The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), 57.

95 “Telegram from East Surrey Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament,” November 8, 1983, Box 1, Folder GWACM Telegrams of Support, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore Pennsylvania.

by torchlight.\footnote{“Telegram from Daventry Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament,” November 8, 1983, Box 1, Folder GWACM Telegrams of Support, Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.} All sent messages to the Greenham women in New York voicing their solidarity with the lawsuit, their rejection of U.S. military installations in Britain, and their resistance to the pending arrival of the cruise.

Meanwhile, the peace camp movement gathered momentum, because Greenham women inspired further encampment plantings within and beyond England. In as early as 1982, more than one dozen camps actively protested military installations in Britain.\footnote{Rachel Woodward, Military Geographies (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:101:1-20141010141, 140.} Some encampments only accommodated women and others hosted both men and women, including Molesworth Peace Camp in the East England county of Cambridgeshire. NATO aimed to deploy cruise missiles there in 1985. Activists established the encampment on December 28, 1981, three months after the Greenham occupation. The camp at Molesworth never grew as large as Greenham, and by the spring of 1983 they had only seven permanent campers remaining. However, Molesworth had a hefty list of sponsorships from the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Pax Christi, and the Quaker Church. In addition, the Christian arm of the CND added a well-stocked garden, and a Cambridgeshire group, Architects for Peace, constructed a frame house on the Molesworth encampment’s grounds for the campers to use as a base.

Established in 1982, Faslane Peace Camp in Glascow, Scotland also predated the flush of encampments in Autumn 1983. Like the Molesworth peace camp, the Faslane encampment included men and women who settled near the Clyde submarine base—host of the Trident II
submarine missile system.\textsuperscript{99} Also in 1982, artists inspired by nearby Greenham Common set up camp in Oxfordshire at the Welford Air Force Base, a conventional arms storage base. That same year, a local farmer in Cheshire, England, near Bartonwood Air Force Base, donated his fields and peace campers established residence there to protest.\textsuperscript{100} In 1982, there were a total of sixteen peace camps outside of different military bases in Britain.\textsuperscript{101} On November 9, 1983, eighty-six more camps formed in support of Greenham women and their lawsuit. Simply by showing up, campers marked nearly one hundred American military installations with their bodies. The Guardian’s Johnson proclaimed that peace camp demonstrators “blew the cover” off U.S. bases in Britain and “mapped the progress of [Britain’s] special relationship with the U.S.”\textsuperscript{102}

Most of the peace camps that neighbored Britain’s U.S.-occupied military bases remained after their twenty-four-hour vigils, bonfires, and parades were concluded. Because members of their local communities operated the camps, some communications facilities, air bases, and weapons dumps felt the temporary campers’ resistance for years. In Cambridgeshire, six months after the November 9, 1983 night of the telegrams, locals made two unsuccessful attempts to set up a permanent camp outside of RAF Alconbury, a projected third location for cruise missiles. Ultimately, after the protesters simply staked tents and lit a campfire on the airfield’s runway.

\textsuperscript{99} Like the cruise missiles bound for Greenham Common, the Trident II submarine missiles intended for the Clyde submarine base were an innovation in nuclear weaponry and thus raised the ante in the arms race. The Trident was more than six times more accurate than the weapon which it would replace, the Polaris submarine missile. The Faslane peace camp asserted that the Polaris was a defensive weapon whereas the newer Trident was offensive in nature. Faslane Peace Camp Members, Faslane: Diary of a Peace Camp (Edinburgh, UK: Polygon Books, 1984), 6.


\textsuperscript{101} Woodward, Military Geographies, 140.

\textsuperscript{102} Dennis, “Peace Camps Blow Cover of U.S. Bases in Britain.”
U.S. soldiers forcibly removed the campers.\textsuperscript{103} On December 28, 1985, authorities arrested fifteen Christian CND members for entering a nuclear ordnance factory at Burghfield in Warrington, England, and cutting holes through the plant’s security fencing in several locations. Speaking at a church service before the break-in, area pastor Father Ruston articulated the activists’ aims, “Plans for nuclear war are made in darkness and secrecy. We have woken to what is being done in our name.” During the same Christmas season, Glasgow nuclear resisters Mike Hutchinson, Tommy Kelly, and Jenny Mooney exposed a local “top-secret nuclear corner,” adopting the spirit of the holidays. Disguised as Santa Clauses, they climbed into the Faslane submarine base by scrambling over the oil drums and ladders that were scattered near the high security fencing. They entered the “red area” and boarded the submarine called “Conqueror” and hung up a stocking filled with fruit nearby. The Santa Surprise in Glasgow represented the robust series of actions and arrests that continued for years after the Greenham lawsuit, maintaining a nationwide show of anti-nuclear solidarity.\textsuperscript{104}

Preserving a consistent camping presence was not easy for Greenham women. From its inception in the fall of 1981 until its last camper left in 2000, Greenham Common fluctuated in size and composition. Sometimes the camp grew exponentially after actions, and the women struggled to accommodate crowds. At other times, particularly after evictions, few women

\textsuperscript{103} Jean Hutchinson, “A Report Secondhand from Greenham’s Outpost in Michigan,” March 23, 1984, Box 3, Folder Speaking Tour of Jean Hutchinson, Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

remained.\textsuperscript{105} Until late 1983, despite their fluctuating numbers, Greenham women had one abiding goal: to prevent the missiles from coming. Indeed, every British camp formed beside each of the U.S. military installations on November 8 also shared that clear message—to refuse the cruise. Despite their protests, the weapons came.

\textit{Living at Greenham Common: Embodied Resistance}

The first missile arrived at Greenham Common AFB five days after the lawsuit filing, on November 14, 1983.\textsuperscript{106} Just as the weapons reached the base, so did an influx of new activists. Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles organizer Gwyn Kirk reported that nearly one month later, almost all the plaintiffs involved in their case returned to the camp for a 40,000-strong December 11, 1983 “Embrace the Base” demonstration to mark the fourth anniversary of the 1979 NATO decision. Just as they had the previous year, women again circled the entire nine miles of the base’s perimeter fencing. After clasping hands, however, they stood in silence for thirty full minutes mourning the missile’s arrival.\textsuperscript{107} That half hour of quiet observance was one small part of a cavalcade of defiance from activists from every sector of the anti-nuclearization movement.

Resistance to ground missiles in Europe reverberated across England and Europe. Church organizations, progressive members of the SPD, trade unionists, and the Greens vigorously

\textsuperscript{105} Camper Peggy Walford, one of four women who last left Greenham Common, resided at the Main (yellow) Gate Camp for seventeen years. Walford, Sarah, “Peggy Walford Obituary,” \textit{The Guardian}, May 31, 2018, Box 1, Folder: Clippings, Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.


\textsuperscript{107} Gwyn Kirk, “Letter from Gwyn Kirk of GWACM to Friends,” December 21, 1983, Box 1, Folder General, Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
protested the deployment of “Euromissiles,” by then a fait accompli. When the coordinating committee of the West German peace movement met for a conference in Cologne in November 1983, it came to the same conclusion the CND had earlier in the fall: old forms of resistance, like mass-rallies and even blockades of military installations, no longer worked. Despite overwhelming public opposition and vigorous protests, the governments of West Germany, Great Britain, and Italy accepted the NATO mandate to host American missiles within their borders. The Cologne committee determined that actions should now instead target the West German economy and the state. They even discussed the notion of conducting an “emergency brake” action where resisters would pull handbrakes on public trains to paralyze the public transport system. The group instead settled on a less disruptive twofold plan involving a boycott of all consumer goods marketed by weapons producers and an intensification of campaigns for conscientious objection.

Like the West German peace movement, the now much-expanded peace camp at Greenham Common also adopted more radical forms of resistance after the missiles’ arrival. Soldiers responded in kind because the weapons raised the stakes for both parties. In early November, Minister of Defense Heseltine refused to assure the Greenham “ladies” safety if they interfered with the missiles in any way. Shortly afterward, he responded to popular outrage

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109 Eurolinks, “From Protest to Resistance;” Conscientious objection was an important issue, as West Germany's constitution required male citizens to serve in the military or in alternative civilian service from 1956 until 2011. Historian James J. Sheehan reports that by the 2000s more than half of those conscripted chose civilian service. Sheehan claims that the Federal Republic of Germany held on to conscription longer than many other Western nations because officials felt that without a draft, civilian institutions might suffer. See James J. Sheehan, “The Future of Conscription: Some Comparative Reflections,” Daedalus 140, no. 3 (2011): 112–21, 115.
against the missiles by appointing British soldiers to guard the arsenal, fearing a political disaster from the threatened conflict between Greenham women and American soldiers.\footnote{110}{“Cruise Missiles Discussed on the Floor of the House of Commons,” November 1, 1983, HC Deb 01 November 1983 vol 47 cc723-6724, Hansard.} Rather than guarantee the campers’ safety, however, the tactic merely changed the direction from which their harm would come. The 1983 Embrace the Base action resulted in violence and multiple arrests. After observing their thirty-minute silence along the base’s perimeter fence, several of the 40,000 visitors decided to pull it down. At the green gate, camper Jane Dennett distributed winches among the women, who loosened concrete fence posts before pushing the barriers down with their hands. Camper Sarah Hipperson noted that in the base, American soldiers handed sticks to British paratroopers who then beat protesters’ fingers while they were grasping the fence.\footnote{111}{Beth Junor, ed., \textit{Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp: A History of Non-Violent Resistance, 1984 - 1995} (London: Working Press, 1995), 16.} In their 1984 collection of interviews of their fellow Greenham women, campers Barbara Hanford and Sarah Hopkins reported beatings, broken bones, and concussions along with the arrests of that day.\footnote{112}{Harford and Hopkin’s rendition of that day is included in their dateline of Greenham Common actions that took place between 1981 through March, 1984. Harford and Hopkins, iii.}
Some major newspapers told a different story, however. At least one person on the base side of the fence sustained injuries, prompting journalistic accounts that framed the action as mass hysteria. Linda Martin of the *Guardian* observed that when women rocked an enormous concrete fence post, it fell onto police inspector Michael Page who had to be hospitalized with a concussion.\(^{113}\) Colin Pratt of the *Daily Express* reported, “The demonstrators who preach peace turned violent...30,000 women converged on Greenham Common, and 900 policemen tried to contain them.” Pratt reported that during the ruckus, a concrete fence post fell on Inspector Michael Page, knocking him unconscious. Pratt attempted to balance his story, “A lawyer for the campers, Isabella Foreshall said, “If a policeman has been injured, then all of the women deeply

regret it.” Pratt could not resist the reliable trope of estrogen-fueled insanity to color his story. Then “on the stroke of 3:00,” he wrote, “women began chanting, wailing, and beating drums and cymbals. Then the violence started. It was obviously coordinated and planned in advance…The women struck the fence in groups of several hundreds, spaced out all around the perimeter.”

In a short piece beside a quarter-page photograph of the fallen police inspector Michael Page, David Graves of the Sun called the protesters “the wild women of peace who brought mayhem to the base.” Banshee-like, yet cunning, the Greenham women of British tabloids and newspapers brought holy wrath on the police and public property.

The news reports dampened public support for the protests. Camp visitor Lesley Webster reflected on a change in the public’s perception of the camp at this time: “Large demonstrations galvanized public sentiment against deployment.” But after the missiles came, Webster asserted, “and were installed in November 1983, Greenham in a media sense became unfashionable.” Webster also observed that after the December protest, women changed their tactics and moved from “large theatrical events” toward “smaller more spontaneous actions.”

The campers made that change because they had to. Along with the darker public mood, Greenham protesters also faced new hostility from authorities who operated on heightened defenses once the missiles arrived. Soldiers at the base not only needed to protect the missiles, they also guarded everything

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that accompanied the weapons, including trucks, launching equipment, and the silos that housed them. Protection meant, first and foremost, keeping the campers out.117

Even with their loss of popular support, after the second “Embrace the Base” action, many protesters decided to stay. The new campers proved to be too many for the veteran Greenham women who stayed near the Air Force Base’s main yellow and green gates. Even the newer camps, established during the previous summer near the blue and orange gates, struggled to accommodate the new swell of activists.118 The new influx of women began to bivouac at four other gates set around the base’s northern perimeter fence. Campers named their gates for colors of the rainbow: yellow, green, blue, orange, violet, red, turquoise, and indigo.119

Over time, some of the gate camps took on unique characteristics that helped manage differences among the women themselves. For example, the new turquoise gate camp evolved into an entirely vegan zone. Campers enforced an exclusively women-only environment at the green gate. Its private setting made it far easier for campers to ban male day-visiters from its seclusion in a wooded area. The entirely female environment allowed the green gate to became a


118 Campers held the first Embrace the Base action one year earlier, in December 1982.

119 In her sociological study, former Greenham woman and scholar, Sasha Roseneil used her insider knowledge to explore the nature of Greenham campers in part to vanquish stereotypes about their characteristics, including those held among feminists. She believed that the “space occupied by Greenham in the contemporary lesbian imagination often seem to be the repository of all that is unfashionable and passé- frumpy scruffy clothing and goddess worship… Not at all lesbian chic, queer, or now. Greenham, however, was at the cutting edge of political action and cultural change. It was witty, daring, confrontational, brave and erotically charged.” Roseneil also asserted that Greenham women organized themselves socially into “gate-based networks.” See Sasha Roseneil, Common Women, Uncommon Practices: The Queer Feminisms of Greenham, 3; Geographer Rachel Woodward asserts that the Greenham women's decision to rename base gates with colors was an act of reimagining the base on their own terms. Woodward asserts that their imaginative exercise was as much a part of their nonviolent direct action strategy as weaving, living in benders, or their refusal to move on police orders. See Woodward, Military Geographies, 140.
comfortable setting for lesbian feminists and the expression of separatist political practices.\textsuperscript{120}

For camper Gillian Booth, the camp provided a safe space for a sexual freedom of expression that had been unwelcome in other places. Her story illustrated the ways in which Greenham allowed women to connect their urgency to end nuclear broad scale violence with their personal commitment to nonviolence. This commitment sometimes took unexpected turns. After exiting an unhappy marriage, Booth left the United States and, along with her lover Arlene, made her way to Greenham Common. Booth revealed that “she and Arlene left a trail of battles and skirmishes across America” and in England “I finally came to my full understanding and expression of all of the pent up violence…if there is one place on the globe where I might be healed, where I could be honest about it, this could be it.”\textsuperscript{121} She claimed that Greenham helped her to confront the persistent personal violence that had been a pattern in her own life and which she herself had perpetrated.

The segregation of the green gate allowed for a sexual openness that was revealed in Greenham music. Their songs, including “Brazen Hussies” voiced a willingness not only to violate gender norms but to celebrate while doing so.

\begin{verbatim}
We’re brazen hussies
And we don’t give a damn
We’re loud, we’re raucous
And we’re fighting for our rights
And our sex, and our need to be free.
Men call us names to be nasty and rude
Like lesbian, man hater, witch, and prostitute
What a laugh ‘cause half of it’s true.
The fragile docile image of our sex must die
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{120} Established in January 1983, the green gate camp took on an influx of new campers shortly after the first Embrace the Base action in 1982.

\textsuperscript{121} See Barbara Hanford and Sarah Hopkins, \textit{Greenham Common: Women at the Wire}, 38-39.
Through centuries of silence we are screaming into action.\textsuperscript{122}

Some campers bristled against these lyrics that so brazenly expressed a joyous acceptance of gender-queerness. Camp biographer Caroline Blackwood felt that lesbians flaunted their identity and “dressed in deliberately threatening costumes” that belied the fact that they “were not in the least ferocious.” Blackwood felt that lesbians and queer women “brought to the camp a confusion of cause.”\textsuperscript{123} Certainly, Greenham’s sexual openness and gender fluidity provided fodder for tabloid reporters in search of salacious stories.\textsuperscript{124} Consequently, the campers received the kind of heightened publicity that colored the context of the public’s understanding and its assessment of their aims. This attention, however, proved helpful to the women’s core objective—to publicize the weapons at the base next door. Moreover, Greenham women’s embrace of lesbianism, even though not universal, directly contradicted Blackwood’s assessment. Instead of confusing their cause, queerness clarified the Greenham women’s


\textsuperscript{124} Sasha Roseneil, Disarming Patriarchy: Feminism and Political Action at Greenham (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1995), 9, 75-79; Information about tabloids found in Sally Belfrage, “Down among the Women,” The Nation, June 30, 1984, 793, Box 1 Folder GWACM Publicity, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania; In their assessment of the ideology and aims of Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp, Alice Cook and Gwyn Kirk assert that the press did not show interest in Greenham women until November 1982, when twenty three women were arrested for taking over a sentry tower within the base. The press then became even more engaged after the first Embrace the Base action one month later. Cook and Kirk assert that “news and reporters scrambled over each other to catch up on some of the [Greenham Common] background.” See Alice Cook and Gwyn Kirk, Greenham Women Everywhere: Dreams, Ideas & Actions from the Women’s Peace Movement (London: South End Press, 1983), 89, 90; The Guardian journalist David Fairhall assessed British press coverage of Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp after their first mass-action, Embrace the Base, when 30,000 women joined Greenham women at the base. Some news outlets like the New Statesman stated that Greenham women had developed a political importance “that reached beyond the issue of cruise missiles” and that they presented a direct and disturbing challenge to established political conventions. Other news outlets like the Daily Express characterized the women as unpatriotic, asserting that “Russian TV cameras roll as 30,000 women ringing the base.” In Fairhall, Common Ground, 41. In either case, Greenham women accomplished what had eluded them at their inception, their ability to make themselves heard.
opposition to the military. Greenham women, especially those who were lesbian and queer, invigorated a gendered atmosphere alien to the norms governing life inside of the base. Greenham women manifested their cultural difference from the world both inside and outside the camp as clearly as its fence marked the physical distinction contained inside and outside the base.

The new missiles shifted the calculus for the campers. The weapons drew more women and changed their objectives. Greenham activists failed in their attempts to prevent the cruise missiles’ arrival, so they adjusted and aimed to disrupt the weapons’ functionality. Since the weapons needed to be tested, military personnel had to drive the missiles off the base on flatbed trucks to secret locations.\(^{125}\) The Greenham camping women monitored the missiles’ movements into and out of the base and guarded the fences and the gates as closely and effectively as the soldiers patrolled the other side. The campers formed a new objective—to watch and wait—and with women bivouacked at every gate, they had ample opportunities to do so. As they adjusted their protest tactics, Greenham women, now more than ever, mitigated their protests through their everyday lives.\(^{126}\)

In an interview with Washington Post journalist, Peter Osnos, Bee Burgess, an art student and Greenham woman, described how camping distinguished itself from other forms of nuclear resistance, “We will remain here until we are certain that there is no cruise.” Osnos reported that “the women were unfazed by the winter conditions and the squalid discomfort. Many sleep


\(^{126}\) Belfrage, “Down among the Women,” 793.
protected only by plastic covers, and there are neither running water nor bathrooms.” Burgess and her colleagues experienced arrests, evictions, and separation from their families. Greenham Common women built fires, cooked meals, crafted benders, dug pits for waste and watched over one another. Furthermore, with the lack of permanent shelter, the threat of eviction, hostile soldiers, and hyper-vigilant policing, the Greenham notion of “home” had to be reinvented daily and maintained aggressively.

Figure 17. “Peace Campers Huddle Under Plastic in the Rain,” 1984
Source: S. Doherty, in Ann Snitow, Holding the Line at GC: Being Joyously Political in Dangerous Times, Mother Jones February, March, 1985

Greenham lawsuit plaintiff Wilkinson explained the evolution of the camp over time as more women came to the camp and the authorities responded by enforcing broader and tougher

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127 Peter Osnos, “At Women’s Peace Camp British Antinuclear Fervor.”
evictions. Now, “there’s a camp outside of each of the [base’s] gates,” she reported, “and when the women first went there, we lived just outside of what was known as the main gate.” Campers lived in the caravans that arrived, but, said Campbell, “they evict so regularly, I mean they evict at least once per day, often two or three times per day.” As the removals grew in number, the caravans disappeared, and women set up tents. After authorities banned tents, women used benders, or bent sticks to sleep under. Finally, women “don’t build any structures or benders out of sticks and sheeting like they used to anymore and they live out in the open.” The campers may “sling a piece of polythene across a string between two trees, and they sleep in Gore-Tex bags.”

Journalist Sally Belfrage visited the camp in the summer of 1984 after “a big” eviction and described the women’s attempts to make a home for themselves in the rubble left behind. Authorities surrounded the old campsite beyond the yellow gate with razor wire and partitioned it for a road expansion. Long-time Greenham woman Jane Dennett, a fifty-six-year-old grandmother of sixteen, set about camping as usual amidst the road-building rubble. Before joining the encampment, member of Greenpeace and Berkshire county local Dennett ran a local health food café. Dennett described it as a gathering place for philosophers and gurus with “a desire to change the world.” After hearing about Greenham from Helen John in the spring of 1982, Dennett visited and decided that “it was the most important protest of our time.” She sold her restaurant, stored her belongings, bought a good tent and sleeping bag, and joined the peace

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128 Simone Wilkinson, Women at Greenham from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1985, Box 1, Folder: General, Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

Dennett’s friend, veteran Greenham camper and former London magistrate Sarah Hipperson, also busied herself in the post-evacuation debris. Glasgow native and nurse midwife Hipperson described her pre-Greenham self as “the good lady wife of” a successful London realtor. She became active in the anti-nuclear movement after watching the 1980 film *Eight Minutes to Midnight*, where she remembered pediatrician Helen Caldicott claiming, “There is no sense in teaching your children to brush their teeth if there is no world for them to grow up in.” In 1982, Hipperson organized the anti-nuclear group, Catholic Peace Action, and shortly afterward, visited Greenham Common where she yearned to “live that whole experience.” After her visit, the fifty-four-year-old mother taught her teenagers “the day to day running of the home” and moved to Greenham “to do whatever it took.” The day of the eviction, Hipperson decided that what the encampment required was maneuverability, so she planted vegetables in an old baby buggy left in the wreckage. The wheels “made it easier to move.”

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130 Lyn E. Smith, *Jane Dennett*, Reel 3, 11:00.


132 Lyn E. Smith, *Sarah Hipperson*, Reel 2, 27:00.

133 Lyn E. Smith *Sarah Hipperson*, Reel 2, 26:00.

Moving from one gate camp to another required significant muscle, cooperation, and patience. The military built RAF Greenham Common around its two-mile-long airstrip which made it long and narrow. Because the women had to navigate around the base to trek from gate
to gate, they had to walk over four miles to travel from the new turquoise camp situated at the western-most edge of the base to the older orange gate encampment at the base’s far eastern side. The yellow gate camp, sandwiched between the Thornford Road, or the A339 main highway, and the USAF headquarters building at the base’s southern tip, served as both the campers’ and the military’s main entry. To get from the yellow gate encampment to its closest neighbor at the green gate required a two-mile walk. After another two-and-a-half miles, a camper reached the base’s northernmost violet gate. Resident activists and their visitors forged the paths, marking them with stone circles and peace signs. Some trails hugged the perimeter fence, while others meandered through woods and over streams. Because they were situated by base entry gates, most of the camps were accessible by road. More remote outposts situated further from roads required more effort to stock and posed more of a challenge to evacuate without detection. An ingenious camper situated at the less-accessible indigo gate invented a “mobile bender,” which rolled on eight wheels and could be loaded with gear and carted away down the path in minutes.

Once having arrived at their destination, a hiker would likely receive tea and the staple of the camp: Greenham toast, “bread smoked by fire and steamed by rain.” Campfires, a singular source of comfort, also presented problems. By 1983, women had stopped building individual

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137 Martin Wainwright, “Common Assault,” The Guardian, April 5, 1984, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles, Box 1, Folder GWACM General, Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

138 Ginna Rose, 41.
fires as a safety precaution and chose larger communal fires instead. Recollecting her 1984 green gate visit, Sally Belfrage depicted a communal fire central to the outdoor kitchen, where women warmed themselves or prepared dinner at a dugout covered by a grill filled with soot-covered kettles. “Tea and coffee were in constant preparation,” and cartons stood nearby, filled with an assortment of “odd mugs and cutlery and plates, vegetables and granola and biscuits.” The well-stocked green gate kitchen resulted from years of work, most of which took place away from the camp. Reporter Jane Shoemaker reported that a wide range of generous supporters from both Britain and the United States donated food, clothing, supplies, and money.

*The Tours*

Despite American supporters, Greenham activists found North America a harder political environment for generating consistent funding. Several intrepid Greenham women traversed the Atlantic multiple times to garner American backing for the camp. In the interests of their lawsuit, sixteen women, some of them plaintiffs, visited twenty-five states and Canada over the course of eighteen months from the suit’s first days in the fall of 1983 through February 1985, when the court denied its final appeal. At each destination, in addition to sharing multiple lunches, dinners, and speaking engagements, the women also reached out through newspapers, radio, and television interviews to explain their lawsuit. They explained the overall Greenham cause: to

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140 Belfrage, “Down among the Women,” 794.

141 *Philadelphia Inquirer* journalist Jane Shoemaker, who frequently reported on the Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp, asserted in a spring 1984 report, “Women have camped there ever since (Autumn 1981), living on money donated by supporters from around the world.” In Jane Shoemaker, “British Raze Protest Camp at Missile Base,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 5, 1984, Box 1, Folder: Clippings, Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
publicize the dangers of nuclear weapons, specifically the cruise missile, and to condemn the heightening arms race. Though the American media did not pay much attention, the women also spread the word by distributing 20,000 pamphlets titled “Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles,” and added 7000 American subscribers for their newsletter, which became an effective outlet for grassroots networking.142

Of the sixteen touring Greenham women, four proved especially effective in developing ties with peace-minded North American citizens. Plaintiffs Simone Wilkinson and Jean Hutchinson, along with suit organizer Gwyn Kirk and Greenham co-founder Helen John, traversed Canada and the United States displaying photographs, telling stories, and sometimes joining local direct actions. In March 1983, the Friend’s Peace Committee, Women Strike for Peace, WILPF, and the new organization the Cruise and Pershing II Missile Clearinghouse sponsored Wilkinson, along with fellow Greenham woman Susan Lamb, to speak in Philadelphia. The pair reminded their audience of the looming missiles and reiterated their Greenham vow to “never let them come.”143 The following autumn, Wilkinson returned to America, this time visiting Amherst, Massachusetts, where she informed her audience about actions at the camp and of her own radical conversion from “apolitical mom” to Greenham woman. Telling tales of camping at the base and personal transformation served as a running


thread throughout the tours. Despite their North American locations, the Greenham plenary spread stories that were close to home.

The Greenham tours reached beyond living rooms, town centers, and church halls, and introduced the Britons to American nuclear resisters who were attending to their own direct actions. In December 1983, during her Midwest tour, plaintiff Jean Hutchinson spoke at multiple events during a week of actions north of Detroit in Walled Lake, Michigan. The protesters, including writers, students, Catholic clergy, Quakers, and Methodist pastors, conducted civil disobedience training, vigils, and blockades. They focused their protests on the Williams International Corporation manufacturing plant which had been contracted to build up to seven thousand cruise missile turbo engines. The local sheriff’s department, which succeeded in infiltrating the activities, arrested fifty-one protesters on charges of trespassing and conspiracy. Hutchinson, who lived at Greenham Common for nearly two decades and was well acquainted with the consequences of direct action, did not take part in the blockade, and tried to avoid trouble with the police. When she heard about the arrests, she attempted to depart quietly, when some activists overheard the sheriff’s plans to find and arrest her. Hutchinson recollected, “We then went through a fumbling charade of trying to hide me in the crowd and change my clothes!...A young Quaker tried to help me by taking me to his car, but I was grabbed from behind and told I was under arrest for trespass.”

Hutchinson claimed that her charges were the result of three infractions: showing a film about Greenham Common, waving a piece of the Greenham fence while describing the October 29 Halloween action, and encouraging the Walled

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144 Jean Hutchinson, “Newsletter from Michigan, USA,” January 11, 1984, 1. Box 1, Folder: General, Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
Lake protesters. Authorities detained Hutchinson in Michigan for several months.\textsuperscript{145} She urged her fellow nuclear resisters to publicize her captivity, “because it would be a way of gathering strength in the struggle against the cruise.” In the end, law enforcement officials discharged and released her after a series of court dates that went into the following year. Hutchinson expressed gratitude for the fact that her own body, arrested and confined to Michigan, made a visceral link between the missiles in Britain and their design, manufacture, and most notably control in the U.S.\textsuperscript{146}

Activists in the United States were aware of America’s leading role in the series of events that led the Greenham women to camp at the Common. Anti-military coalitions like the Philadelphia-based Cruise and Pershing II Clearinghouse had been working on direct action in resistance to European missile deployment since 1980, well before the peace camp at Greenham Common began.\textsuperscript{147} Throughout their tour, Greenham women crossed paths with many similarly experienced groups of activists. In February, Gwyn Kirk traveled to Madison, Wisconsin, where she conducted workshops for a group called the Wisconsin Coalition to Stop the Missiles.\textsuperscript{148}

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{145} Gwyn Kirk, “Letter from Gwyn Kirk of GWACM to Friends,” December 21, 1983, 2. Box 1, Folder General, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection. Hutchinson was detained until her trial in July, 1984 where she was acquitted and allowed to return to England. Found in Carrie Pester, “Letter from Greenham Common to Friends,” September 1984, Box 1 Folder: General, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
\item\textsuperscript{146} Hutchinson, “Newsletter from Michigan, USA,” 2, 3.
\item\textsuperscript{147} Chel Avery, et al., “Campaign Handbook: Stop the Cruise and Pershing II.”
\item\textsuperscript{148} It is notable that at their initial press conference, the Madison coalition offered press packets with background information on the Greenham Common women. In “Coalition to Stop Missiles Press Conference,” January 30, 1984, Box 3 Folder: Tour of Gwyn Kirk, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania; The Wisconsin Coalition to Stop Missiles was formed one month before Kirk’s visit by at least thirty-five different Wisconsin organizations, including the American Friends Service Committee, the WILPF, and a newly formed Wisconsin-based peace camp called Women’s Peace Presence to Stop Elf. Elf was a Wisconsin based, missile guidance communications system. In “List of Endorsers for the Wisconsin Coalition to Stop Missiles,” N/D, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Box 3, Folder: GWACM Speaking Tour of Gwny Kirk, Swarthmore College Peace Collection; The broader coalition aimed to conduct workshops,
\end{itemize}
May, Wilkinson traveled to Amarillo, Texas to visit Pantex, the compound which served as the primary American facility for assembling, maintaining, and dismantling nuclear weapons. The nuclear-warhead-bearing White Train—so named because of the train cars’ painted heat-reflective surface—also began its journeys in Amarillo. Wilkinson’s schedule included a speech addressed to some members of the Agape Community network gathering three hundred different groups, who, like Greenham women, intended to use their bodies to mark the location of nuclear materials, including the White Train and the Pantex facility. Unlike Greenham women, however, Agape Community members lived miles apart. Calling their effort the “track campaign,” members resided in various locations along the White Train’s tracks, which traversed the American continent. Agape participants committed themselves to watch and wait, and if the train passed, no matter the time of day or night, they would record, report, and protest its passage.

The patience and careful observation Wilkinson witnessed in Amarillo, Texas, would prove useful in the coming months back at Greenham Common, where similar vigilance would soon be among the campers’ primary tasks.

In addition to their work with experienced activists, the touring Greenham women also aimed to enlighten and inspire other audiences. In a planned visit to Ohio, Helen John hoped to create publications, and fund the Greenham women’s lawsuit. In Ardelle Hough, “Letter from Ardelle Hough (WLPF Madison) to Carrie Pester,” January 17, 1984, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Box 3, Folder: GWACM Speaking Tour of Gwyn Kirk, Swarthmore College Peace Collection.


conduct a speaking tour. he could not travel, however. Just as Hutchinson had been detained in Michigan, John could not leave England because of an outstanding court case resulting from an October Greenham action. John had become Greenham’s most public spokesperson. She overcame criticism for choosing the encampment over her husband and five children, who, despite a public divorce, supported her decision. John was impatient with the attention on her family, and recalled that even in her earliest Greenham days, during her initial walk to the camp in 1981, “all the press would ask about was: how was our family? How were our feet? Why were we letting exhaust fumes go over our children? No one asked us about the missiles.” Over time, John had some success shifting the press’s attention away from her own family and became “the mother of the camp.” According to reporter Christine Kukka, John was even voted the “seventh most popular woman in England.” This fact registered in her favor and embassy officials “had second thoughts” about John’s detention after newspapers reported it widely. John eventually received permission from the embassy to travel to the U.S., so she completed the latter part of her tour in New England, where she spoke at local churches and village halls. In a talk with the Brunswick, Maine press, John bluntly described Greenham Common’s connection to America, “It is Americans who run NATO and run Greenham. American soldiers are not there

151 “Notes for Helen John Speaking Engagements,” March 1984, Box 3 Folder: Speaking Tour of Helen John, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

152 Helen John and Lyn E. Smith, Helen John, 10:00.


154 “Memo: Greenham Common Women against Cruise Missiles,” March 12, 1984, Box 3, Folder Greenham Women Speaking Tours General, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
to protect me, but to protect cruise missiles from the British women who want them out of the country.” She appealed to her audience’s sensibilities: “How would you feel if the British had bases in your backyard and would shoot American women on their own soil if they threatened their base?”

John and her fellow Greenham speakers offered American audiences their unique experiences as the newly deployed missiles’ nearest neighbors, and homed in on their sense of precarity.

_Cruisewatch_

The women at Greenham were the missiles’ closest civilian neighbors, but for launching, the missiles traveled to a secret location within a 100-mile perimeter. On their journey, the missiles were accompanied by a convoy of twenty-two other vehicles holding a retinue of soldiers, including the flight commander, four officers in charge of the launch, nineteen experts in missile maintenance, forty-four security guards, and in case of injuries, one doctor. Staging such a large operation required practice. Within weeks of deployment, Berkshire County activists and Greenham women targeted the convoy operations as their next project. In a press interview outside the Greenham main gate during the December Embrace the Base action, CND director Joan Ruddock reported that the organization would use their nation-wide telephone system to help Greenham protesters “frustrate efforts” to move the missiles from the base into potential launching locations in the surrounding countryside. Speaking for all of the forty thousand “Embrace the Base” demonstrators present that day, Ruddock concluded, “I think that we are

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156 Shoemaker, “If Missile Threat Goes Away, They Say They Will Too.”
more in control of the missiles than the government is.”

Greenham women, who from their encampment watched and reported on the comings and goings at each of the base’s gates, assumed most of this responsibility. “They brought the missiles in,” threatened Kirk, “but there is no way that we are going to let them truck them out.”

Figure 19. A Cruise Missile Arrives at Greenham Common 1985
Source: Gamma Liaison, Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study

The action, and perhaps Ruddock’s well-publicized words, sent a signal and the military put their plans for exercises beyond the base “on hold for now.” Jane’s Defense Weekly, a magazine that reported on weapons and military equipment, claimed, “The weapons can only be

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157 Martin Lindon, “Fifty-One Charged after Cruise Protest.”

fired from inside of the air base by the US Air Forces 501st Tactical Missile Wing. The continuing presence of peace protesters has forced the Pentagon and the UK Ministry of Defense (MOD) to wait to see if the current protests cool.” The British Ministry of Defense and the American Department of Defense were loath to admit that the protesters had any influence on their decision to pause the convoys and asserted that there “never had been a timetable for exercising missiles and crews in mobility operations.”159 Despite the hold orders and the military’s protestations, the Greenham women continued to watch.

Two months later, on March 8, 1984, the military tested their convoy maneuvers. They started with an eviction, the third in less than a week. At midnight, one hundred police surrounded women sleeping in the open at the blue gate camp. This prevented any of the campers from leaving by car, and thus prohibited them from alerting others that while the police made their move, trucks were leaving the base. One camper who noticed trucks leaving the base by the nearby gate slipped away from the area and ran barefoot by footpath to the next gate camp. There, women were able to obtain a car and they attempted to follow the trucks. In the meantime, a telephone tree had been alerted and seventy-five anti-nuclear activists from the surrounding area greeted the trucks on their return to the base. The press had been alerted as well, and in a letter to supporters, camper Gwyn Kirk claimed that the news media reported the event as “a great success for the military.”160 Jean Hutchinson, observing from her exile in


160 Gwyn Kirk, “Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Newsletter,” March 12, 1984, Box 3, Folder: Greenham Women Speaking Tours General, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania; Others joined Kirk in her objections to the assessment of the press’s response. Days after the Guardian’s March 10 report, which claimed that the “ministry outwits the cruise protest women,” Marie Knowles wrote a rejoinder to the editor, “There was nothing clever about what happened that
Michigan, contradicted the local media’s report: “This operation was described as a test. It
cannot be called that. It was an empty truck taking a short run to show they could do it. We have
them under pressure because it took 100 policemen to do this.”¹⁶¹

The military made evictions a vital piece of their strategy for enabling missile testing.
One month after the convoy’s first excursion, authorities evacuated six gate camps on the same
day. At dawn on April 4, four hundred policemen descended on the main yellow gate camp. Of
all of the one hundred or so women camped at the different gates of the base, the yellow gate
women were the least “eviction ready.” Campers at the other gates could collapse what shelters
they had and pack their belongings very quickly.¹⁶² The blue gate camp, for example, alerted by
the action at the yellow gate, stuffed all of their gear including their forest kitchen into three vans
and two cars. News of the eviction spread outside the camp, and soon four hundred women from
surrounding areas gathered at the base to support the campers. The campers also alerted the
press. In response, the consortium of local and national government officials and the Ministry of
Transportation delayed their plans. This time, however, the unprepared yellow gate campers
could not escape, and the police tore down their shelters and threw the debris into nearby trucks.

¹⁶¹ There is some fuzziness in reports regarding the number of trucks that left the base that morning. Some reports,
including Jean Hutchinson’s letter to supporters, state that just one truck left the base, while other reports, including
the official GWACM newsletter, refer to “trucks” leaving the base. In Jean Hutchinson, “A Report Secondhand from
Greenham’s Outpost in Michigan.”

¹⁶² The estimated total number of camping women that day is based on a report in the Philadelphia Inquirer by Jane
Shoemaker, “British Raze Protest Camp at Missile Base,” Philadelphia Inquirer, April 5, 1984, Box 1, Folder:
Clippings, Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection,
Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
To prevent more violation, some women set some of their shelters on fire. Before long, the press arrived and British morning newscasts featured the yellow gate mayhem.¹⁶³

For all of their short-term success, the authorities could not enforce the evictions over the long run. In order to make them permanent, the police were required to record a name and ban women individually. That task made permanent eviction impossible, because for every woman who gave her name to the police, several more stepped forward to take her place at the camp.¹⁶⁴ Several months later, Greenham woman Carrie Pester wrote to American supporters of the Greenham lawsuit and called April’s mass-eviction “wholly unsuccessful.” In the end, the Ministry of Transportation repossessed two sections of land for road-widening. Despite this, within a short time, one hundred women were once again settled in camps ringing the perimeter of the base.¹⁶⁵

After the April 1984 eviction, missile convoys left Greenham Common for several practice runs in the wee hours and engaged in secret exercises which sometimes lasted for several days.¹⁶⁶ Not until autumn, six months later, did the military gain the confidence necessary to send a large convoy out in broad daylight for the first time. Once again, the exercise began with an “unusually rough” eviction.¹⁶⁷ This time, the convoy swelled to twenty-six

¹⁶³ Shoemaker, “British Raze Protest Camp.”
¹⁶⁴ Wainwright, “Common Assault.”
¹⁶⁶ Gwyn Kirk, “Letter to Friends,” April 8, 1985, Box 1, Folder GWACM, General, Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
¹⁶⁷ David Fairhall, “Cruise on Warpath as Women Ousted,” The Guardian, October 31, 1984, Box 1, Folder: GWACM General, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
vehicles and went to the Salisbury Plain, a 91,000-acre military training area. Though Greenham women failed to interrupt the convoy, they succeeded in resisting eviction.

The Greenham women also pressed for outside assistance. Kirk and the Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles solicited help, including solicitations to their American mailing list, to assist with monitoring and publicizing the cruise convoys. A plan for “creating a functioning resistance network” thus commenced. The Greenham women would stand ready for a convoy to exit the base. At the first sign of a convoy exit, they would either telephone or radio other anti-nuclear activists from the surrounding area, who would then alert the CND’s national network, a robust group of supporters. The larger group of activists would not rush to the base, but instead block essential service routes, a network of roads earmarked for the military in case of war.

By the late winter in 1985, Greenham women and their anti-convoy cohort streamlined their new system for pursuing, blockading, and publicizing cruise movement. A new organization, Cruisewatch—a network of peace activists from South Wales and Southern England—formed to watch the convoy maneuvers. They were vital to the Greenham women

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171 “Flyer: How We Stop a Cruise Launcher,” 1984, 2, Box 1 Folder: GWACM General, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania; The flyer also notes that routes recorded by Cruisewatch were initially documented in Duncan Campbell’s *Warplan U.K.*.
with their new system. After receiving an alert from the Greenham campers, Cruisewatch followed the convoys through the British countryside and blockaded them at various intersections. However, in addition to their tracking exercises, the group published the various convoy routes, and alerted surrounding communities to the fact that nuclear weapons were regularly transported on their local roads. The government made moves to stop the resistance operation by blockading the routes surrounding roads which the convoys might follow. In Cambridgeshire, before any convoy’s departure, authorities required a police-pass to drive on the roads surrounding the USAF Molesworth base, the projected home for more cruise missiles.

During the 1985 winter, Greenham women needed help. From January through March 1985, authorities arrested nearly six hundred Greenham women, even though sometimes as few as twenty women camped near the base because of cold weather and the grind of almost daily evictions. The government also harassed members of Cruisewatch by tapping or disconnecting their phones. Despite the difficulties, Greenham women, the CND, and Cruisewatch successfully interrupted the military’s attempts to maneuver the cruise missiles. Not only did the activists disrupt the convoys’ movements, but the steep cost of policing them exceeded four million pounds, or over fourteen million in today’s U.S. dollars. General Charles Donnelly, commander of American Air Forces in Europe, admitted that, “Ground launched cruise missiles

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172 Cruisewatch was an independent group that received backing from the CND. In Byrne, The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, 161, 162.


can move for exercise in designated areas of Salisbury Plain, seventy-five percent of the optimum time. The exercises are limited to one five-day period per month because of the cost of British policing.” Cruisewatch coordinator Martin Jones estimated that early summer convoys conducted in May and June 1985 cost an estimated £60,000 each to police.175 The swelling numbers of Greenham arrests which more than doubled those of the previous months verified Jones’s numbers.176

One year after the cruise convoy operation began, Greenham women were still very active. Not only at the base marking and protesting each new deployment, they were also participating in vigils at Holloway prison, where many of their sister activists served jail sentences for their actions. Authorities continued to harass, evict, arrest, and jail women for camping at Greenham. Campers also suffered exhaustion from living in the open and under makeshift conditions. Despite these struggles, Greenham women, the CND, and Cruisewatch continued to cooperate, and “successfully disrupted” regular missile maneuvers.177

With Cruisewatch, what started in 1981 as a desperate and impromptu gesture, when four marchers chained themselves to the Greenham Common AFB main gate, became a targeted and


176 According to Guardian journalist Paul Brown, arrests of Greenham women between April 1 and June 30, 1985 rose to 1,400. In “Cheeky Campers Spend Three Days in Base.”

177 “Greenham Common: The Presence Continues” (Illinois Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign, February 1986), Box 3, Folder: Greenham Women against Cruise Missile Speaking Tours, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
calculated operation which profoundly influenced the political landscape.\textsuperscript{178} By inspiring women to join them in their long-term “camping” experiment which showcased the physical spaces of nuclear weapons, Greenham women galvanized transnational resistance to the nuclear status quo, legally challenged novel nuclear weapons systems, and disrupted military maneuvers, thereby, working towards making the world a safer place.

\textsuperscript{178} “Greenham Common: The Presence Continues” (Illinois Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign, February 1986), Box 3, Folder: Greenham Women against Cruise Missile Speaking Tours, Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles Collection, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE LIMITS OF PEACE BODIES: AMERICAN WOMEN’S PEACE CAMPS

Between 1983 and 1984, peace camping resistance grew in numbers and in complexity. What started as a small group of Welsh protesters who made an impromptu decision to camp at the gates of the Greenham Common Air Force Base changed forms of anti-nuclear protest throughout the world. Between 1983 and 1984, activists established peace camps throughout Britain, the European continent, Australia, Canada, and in cities and towns across the United States from Savannah, Georgia to Kent, Washington. Along with their rising numbers, the encampments expanded the scope of their activist missions. In addition to inhabiting spaces near military bases, new American peace campers pitched tents near weapons manufacturing corporations, design laboratories, and testing facilities. In the fall of 1983, as Greenham women conducted massive demonstrations against the arrival of cruise missiles, activists in the United States protested companies that designed, manufactured, and tested them. In the weeks before cruise missiles flew in transport carriers across the Atlantic, Americans marched, jammed gates, scrambled over fences, and lay inert on roadways to protest those who made that flight possible. Across the nation, thousands joined almost one hundred fifty rallies and gathered in city parks and roadways to link arms and protest nuclear weapons manufacturers.

In October 1983, a crowd of approximately two thousand Massachusetts protesters demonstrated in front of Draper Labs, a nuclear weapons research facility, and concluded their protest the next day in Wilmington, Massachusetts at Avco Systems, a parts manufacturer for
nuclear missiles.  

On the same day, seven hundred protesters organized by the Central Florida Nuclear Freeze Campaign marched for three and a half miles and ended their journey in a vigil outside of the Martin Marietta plant which manufactured Pershing II missiles set for deployment in Germany within the year. That same weekend, authorities arrested Erica Bouza, wife of the Minneapolis mayor, and 372 others for protesting in front of the Honeywell Corporation, the manufacturer of electronic gears vital for nuclear weapons. Also in the Midwest, thirty Illinois protesters chained themselves together and blocked the employee entrance of Motorola’s Schaumburg International Headquarters. Other demonstrators converged outside Chicago’s Litton Precision Gear, maker of the B-2 Stealth Bomber, and the military electronics specialists Gould Incorporated. On the West Coast, in El Segundo, California, three thousand people marched along the city’s “aviation corridor,” protesting aerospace plants TRW, McDonnell Douglas, Northrup, Hughes Aircraft, and Rockwell International. One hundred and fifty miles to the south, at the General Dynamics plant in San Diego, twelve demonstrators were arrested.

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4 The local anti-nuclear group, Disarm Now Action Coalition coordinated the Chicago area protests. They dispatched members downtown and in multiple suburban locations that day. See Eddy McNiel, “Thirty Arrested at Plant in Missile Protest,” Chicago Tribune, October 25, 1983, sec. 2.


6 “One Thousand Plus Arrested in Anti-Arms Protests.”
Besides being widespread, American outrage over the intensifying arms race focused on the corporations who profited from it.

This chapter examines three American women’s peace camps that represent a change in the peace camping mission. Prior to 1983, peace encampments focused on occupying spaces near military bases that housed nuclear weapons. During the summer of 1983, a new wave of American peace camps expanded that mission by selecting spaces that represented a more diverse set of nuclear foes. The Puget Sound Women’s Peace Camp in Kent, Washington, the Minnesota Women’s Camp for Peace and Justice in St. Paul, Minnesota, and the Philadelphia Women’s Peace Encampment in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania aimed to protest defense corporations and the non-military but weapons-related sites. The Puget Sound and Minnesota camps resisted overtly “industrial” targets, because peace-camping women located each adjacent to a large corporation that depended on the nuclear defense trade. In addition to camping and protesting, members of each camp communicated with factory workers and members of their local communities about the possibilities for conversion from military to civilian production. The Philadelphia camping women did not associate themselves with a single site and instead opposed systemic inequities in their city that the military and its related industries perpetuated and supported. All three encampments struggled to maintain diversity in their own ranks, and in most cases, failed to reach beyond the bounds of their own white middle-class identities. A close investigation of the encampments in Kent, Washington, St. Paul, Minnesota, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania explores the changes in women’s peace camping resistance and reveals its limits as an effective long-term protest against nuclear weapons and the social inequities sustained by their costs.
Research conducted by investigators such as the members of the Tennessee-based Highlander Center inspired the flood of protests against the defense industry and the shift in the American women’s peace camping movement towards military related industries. In 1982, Highlander researchers—dedicated to supporting workers—conducted investigations of inequities perpetrated by the rapidly expanding military–industrial complex. The group studied the local practices of three area military industries in the Southeastern United States: Virginia’s Radford Army Ammunition Plant, Tennessee’s Milan Army Ammunition Plant, and Tennessee Nuclear Specialties. The Highlander researchers determined that the three military contractors were guilty of union busting, causing area health hazards, and exacerbating local financial problems. Tom Schlesinger, John Gaventa, and Juliet Merrifield also extended invitations to other groups, including peace activists, to document the impacts of military industries in other parts of the country as well. They believed that their research led them to a conclusion that many peace activists failed to perceive—one that would have an impact on already popular debates over the “mushrooming Pentagon budget.” While they acknowledged that others had identified how the flourishing military–industrial complex caused general harm by creating nuclear weapons and diverting government money from needed social programs, the Highlander team demonstrated the specific ways the military industries hurt the very people it claimed to support—their own workers and the local communities that depended

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on them. Schlesinger, Gaventa, and Merrifield urged the anti-nuclear movement to go beyond protesting irresponsible government spending and nuclear hegemony and begin targeting military industries that perpetuated inequality by profiting from the nuclear arms build-up.

Schlesinger, moreover, expressed frustration with the notions of peace set forth by some activists and especially “peace studies” academics. Shortly after publishing “How to Research Your Local Military Contractor,” the researcher told the peace scholars and editors of The Radical Teacher journal, Reamy Janson, Marilyn Frankenstein, and Louis Kampf, that “he and his colleagues didn’t do ‘peace studies.’ Instead, they researched, wrote about, and ran workshops on military economies in the South, racism and sexism in the armed services, military expenditures and social priorities. That sort of thing. But no ‘peace studies.’” Janson, Frankenstein, and Kampf pointed out that the injustices he listed were in fact central to their scholarship. Schlesinger countered that he wished to ground the peace community in an understanding that he and his colleagues at Highlander knew well: the changes they hoped to realize rested on local economic circumstances and not only on international politics. He opposed the military–industrial complex on the grounds that it violated local, social, and economic justice. The Highlander team saw peace as a material project.

Despite the patronizing tone, Schlesinger and his colleagues criticized some members of the peace community justifiably. International concerns like the deployment of ground-launched missiles in Europe and the fear of global nuclear war galvanized protesting crowds at the

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8 Schlesinger, “How to Research your Local Military Contractor,” 17.


International Days of Protest in North America and in Europe. However, many anti-nuclear activists deserved less correction. Mobilization for Survival, for example, had a history of connecting concerns for peace with local, social, and economic justice. In 1977, they showcased their priorities through their simple four-point mission statement: “Zero Nuclear Weapons, Ban Nuclear Power, Stop the Arms Race, and Fund Human Needs.”¹¹ Women’s Pentagon Action drew connections between defense spending and specific social neglects in their unity statement when they asserted, “Legislative committees that offer trillions of dollars to the Pentagon have brutally cut day care, children’s lunches, and day care centers…”¹² From its inception, Seneca peace campers decried the social costs of financing nuclear weapons. They were aware that encampment area residents depended on the Seneca Army Depot for jobs and trade, and devoted a portion of their handbook to the notion of conversion, or transferring skills production, resources, and machinery from the military to civilian use.¹³ The new wave of American encampments represented by the peace camps in Philadelphia, Kent, and St. Paul adhered more closely to the kinds of protests that the Highlander team recommended. They took on local defense corporations and the circumstances they sustained directly.


The peace camps in Kent, St. Paul, and Philadelphia patterned their activism on the work of American protesters who targeted the nuclear power industry in the previous decade. In 1976, several former anti-Vietnam protesters and environmental activists in New England formed the Clamshell Alliance with the aim of stopping the Public Service Corporation’s (PSCo) proposed nuclear power plant in Seabrook, New Hampshire.¹⁴ That same year in Northern California, anti-nuclear activists calling themselves the Abalone Alliance gathered in San Luis Obispo to protest the Pacific Gas and Electric Corporation (PG&E), who planned to activate their Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant.¹⁵ The protest language, organizational strategies, and activist tactics of Clamshell and Abalone activists found their way into the American women’s peace camps of the 1980s.

In an October 1976 teach-in about the nuclear power industry, the Clamshell Alliance warned about the dangers, high costs, and unnecessary uses of nuclear power; factors that were easily transferable for activists who opposed nuclear weapons and the industries that profited from them.¹⁶ Women’s peace camps highlighted all three concerns. In their protests against the Savannah River Plutonium Production Plant, the women of the short-lived Savannah River Women’s Peace Camp in Aiken, South Carolina cited the dangers of nuclear weapons, not only


¹⁵ In her seminal work on the activist cultures of the late 1970s and early 1980s, Barbara Epstein asserts that the formation of the Clamshell Alliance led the nonviolent direct action movement of the 1970s and the 1980s. The Alliance led to the formation of communities across the country who modeled themselves on the culture it had established. See Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution*, 58.

http://nonviolence.rutgers.edu/document/IIP0205F05.
as armaments but also as a manufacturing and storage issue, as their central activist concern. In their resistance to Boeing and Sperry Defense, the Puget Sound Women’s Peace Camp and the Minnesota Women’s Peace Camp rallied around the issue of the high costs of nuclear weapons, which, they argued, would be better invested elsewhere. In their protests against General Dynamics and the Philadelphia Navy Yard, the women of the Philadelphia Women’s Peace Encampment developed a uniquely urban peace argument against the nuclear weapons that diverted funds from the urban poor of their own Philadelphia.

Even though Clamshell and Abalone Alliance protesters had specific location-based concerns, they nevertheless attracted a wide group of partners from far-flung locations who did not necessarily share the same points of view. In their training packet, Clamshell organizers described their alliance as affinity groups, or dozens of local “Clam chapters,” with activists who returned to their homes after an action “to spread the anti-nuclear message and to fight the nuclear energy industry throughout New England.” Women’s Pentagon Action adopted the Clamshell strategy and women’s peace camps then adopted these tactics from the WPA. The


20 In their protester’s training packet, the Clamshell organizers claimed that they adopted their “affinity group” structure from pre-Civil War Spain’s Iberian Anarchist Federation “where large networks of affinity groups succeeded in freeing large areas of Spain” from an oppressive central government. In “Introduction to Clamshell Training Packet,” 1.
Minnesota Women’s Peace Camp began as a local affinity group for the Seneca women’s peace encampment. Many members of the Philadelphia Women’s Peace Encampment were part of a local branch of the Women’s Pentagon Action; their group functioned as a Philadelphia affinity group for the Seneca encampment as well.

The Clamshell and Abalone alliances utilized decision-making strategies that transferred first to the WPA and consequently to women’s peace camps as well. In their handbook, members of the Abalone Alliance acknowledged the importance of the consensus process among nonviolent activists, stating that the method “relies on persuasion rather than pressure for reaching group unity,” which proved a natural fit for the peace community. Consensus meshed especially well with peace camps’ commitment to nonviolence and their feminist analysis of power. The Abalone handbook also stressed the importance of group rather than individual viewpoints, stating that coming to agreement “relies on a sense of common searching, rather than individual assertion.” This approach contrasted with the corporate “leadership” model where administrative hierarchies defined company structures. The Puget Sound unity statement and the Minnesota Women’s Peace Camp’s statement of purpose both expressed their commitment to the consensus process for the duration of their protests.

23 The Boeing Company, the protest target of the Puget Sound Women’s Peace Camp, is a good example of the corporate leadership approach. In his analysis of Boeing’s corporate culture in the 1980s, economist Edward Greenberg states that, “If there was to be a new ethos to guide Boeing’s operations, Phil Condit and Harry Stonecipher [Boeing chief executive officers] made it clear that they would aggressively pursue shareholder value——more responsive to the needs of Wall Street than to those of all its stakeholders.” Boeing workers did not support this shift, but they had to make their way through it. See Edward S. Greenberg, Leon Greenberg, Sarah Moore, and Patricia B. Sikora, Turbulence (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 39.
The Clamshell and Abalone alliances developed protest practices, including narrative-driven activist performances and long-term occupations that influenced peace-camping methods. By placing their bodies on corporate property, the alliances physically disrupted company projects and everyday operations in ways that made their alternative narratives visible. In their August 1978 actions at Diablo Canyon, Abalone members blockaded the company’s gates so that they could “demonstrate and defend the people’s right to halt the operation of the plant.” They planted trees and brought solar collectors and windmills to the site to showcase their vision for the land’s conversion from a nuclear power plant to a site hosting alternative energy sources. Their audience was not particularly receptive, however. An editorial featured in the Watsonville, California newspaper, a town thirty minutes from the PG&E plant, printed its opinion of the protesters, “They jammed the jails and the court system in San Luis Obispo County. They want publicity and they got it…the real losers are the taxpayers. They are busted with bills for paying for the whole affair.” An editorial in the San Francisco Examiner reported, “A traveling troupe of demonstrators, rehearsed as any Broadway cast, have been putting on an act at Diablo Canyon. We congratulate them on their proficiency in the craft which is the disruption of democracy. They invaded private property, blocked workers access to the plant, and fell inert when the police came.” The editors concluded by asking anti-nuclear resisters to think about whether they wanted to be part of “tactics that are so destructive of the democratic way of life.”

Many Californians objected to the costs of policing, arresting, and litigating the five hundred


activists arrested in the August actions. Though the California activists devised and performed a story of “transformation” so that their target audiences, Diablo workers, corporate leadership, and the general public, might “see” their vision for the future, they did not necessarily persuade viewers to accept it.\(^\text{27}\)

*The Puget Sound Women’s Peace Camp*

On September 27, 1983, Leslie Redtree, Kris Delaney, Susan B. James, Tammy Jo Dunakin, and Cynthia Nelson entered the Boeing Air Launched Cruise Missile Assembly Plant in Kent, Washington. Pretending to be employees, the five women arrived with the usual throng of workers at the daily shift change. With their forged Boeing identification tags, the guards waved them through the entry-gate. The women wandered, unnoticed, on the factory floor for forty-five minutes, chatting casually with workers busy with their tasks. At first glance, a casual viewer might have guessed that the well-dressed women in blazers and slacks were a management team sent by corporate headquarters to check on factory floor production levels, or the women might have been union representatives eager to discuss benefits and pay raises.\(^\text{28}\)

Even though the women spoke earnestly about production and wages, workers who paused and

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\(^{27}\) The Abalone Alliance activists were not the first Americans to use their bodies to perform imaginative narratives to represent their hopes for the future in public spaces. In her analysis of nineteenth century parades, Mary Ryan argues that such practices were built into the American cultural framework through the practice of civic parades. Ryan asserts that during the nineteenth century, parades were showcases for public groups to “present themselves, rather than abstract symbols, for public view...where they performed a detailed, descriptive portrait of the urban social structure.” See Mary Ryan, “The American Parade: Representations of the Nineteenth-Century Social Order,” ed., Aletta Biersack and Lynn Avery Hunt, *The New Cultural History* (University of California Press, 1989), 131-152, 137.

gathered to listen more carefully would have concluded that their conjectures were mistaken.

Instead of encouraging workers to streamline their assembly procedures to raise profits or pause
and bargain for better pay, the women urged their audience to abandon their workstations for the
sake of peace.

Figure 20. “Puget Sound Peace Camp Members Lived in these Tents throughout the Summer at a
Site with No Running Water,” October 23, 1983
Source: Elaine Kramer, The Courier Journal, Louisville, Kentucky

Redtree and her colleagues had not travelled far to make their incursion into the Boeing
plant that day. They simply walked across the highway. As members of the Puget Sound
Women’s Peace Camp, they had been camping on land across the highway from the Boeing
compound for three months. They were among thirty Seattle women who, on June 18, 1983,
staking tents in what one camper called a “city drainage ditch,” just outside the Boeing cruise

29 The large defense research and development compound, Boeing Kent Space Center, rested on a 120-acre campus.
In “Site Information for Boeing Kent Space Center,” Department of Ecology State of Wisconsin, Last updated 2019,
missile plant. Two early Seneca encampment organizers and Seattle newcomers, Rachel Lederman and Gail Terzi, initiated the camp. Lederman asserted that when she and friends migrated to Seattle, “it seemed natural to bring the peace camp idea with us.” Joined by Boeing employee Diana Siemens, Lederman and Terzi presented the notion of a West Coast peace camp at a lesbian–feminist community forum. A small circle of women enthusiastically supported the idea and formulated a plan to set their camp near the Boeing plant. Initially, they intended to bivouac in a public park on a narrow strip of land along the Green River, located near the Boeing compound. When the women asked about the proper permits for their stay, city officials said that it would be “perfectly legal to be on the land as long as you don’t sleep there.” After the women assured the officials that they would indeed be sleeping on the site, but would ensure proper sanitation, security, and even fire lanes for city fire truck access, city officials offered to lease another plot of nearby land. The women spent their first summer near a lagoon, on land set aside by the city for use as a sewage treatment facility, directly across the highway from the Boeing Company.

The Puget Sound campers aimed to stop the production of cruise missiles at the Boeing plant and to persuade the company’s workers to make that happen. They knew that they could not convince their audience to oppose nuclear weapons merely because of the weapons’ capacity


31 Participants of the Puget Sound Women’s Peace Camp, We Are Ordinary Women, 22.

for violence. They needed to show who benefitted from the profit the weapons generated. In their unity statement, written before anyone pitched a tent in Kent, the Puget Sound women asserted that Boeing and other military related industries, including Rockwell International and General Dynamics, made billions from the arms industry. In the eyes of the Puget Sound women, corporations stole from the people who could “afford it least.” Taking their cue from the Highlander research model, Puget Sound campers identified the Boeing workers as among the robbed.³³ Despite little hope of doing so, the camping women aimed to lead a workers’ revolt from within the plant itself.

The Puget Sound camp faced a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire, surrounding the seventeen large buildings that made up the giant assembly plant. The defense contractors manufactured weapons, but they advertised themselves primarily as a maker of commercial airplanes. The Puget Sound campers set out to dispute that message by targeting Boeing employees with an information campaign. Typically, Puget Sound campers, who might number between fifteen and forty, would start each day with a trek across the road to the Boeing building with leaflets in hand to catch workers as they entered and exited the factory for their shifts.³⁴ Some of the leaflets listed figures comparing several categories of government spending to job creation and concluded that defense spending led to fewer jobs than health care, education, or construction. Other flyers invited Boeing workers to camp related events, including a peace camp orientation and a community forum on “feminist resistance to militarism.” Another called

³³ Participants of the Puget Sound Women’s Peace Camp, "Unity Statement," in We Are Ordinary Women, 33.

“Why Boeing?” listed information about the cruise missiles that were assembled inside the factory. Some Boeing workers resisted the leafletting campers, spitting as they passed. Others stopped and talked. Diana Siemens recollected an exchange with one Boeing employee who asked, “You don’t really think you’re going to get the government to change?” She assured him that she did indeed think they could change things, and invited him to the camp.

Puget Sound encampment co-founder and ten-year Boeing employee, Siemens bridged the divide between Boeing workers and the camp. Siemens protested the Vietnam War in the 1960s but called herself a “Vietnam burnout” who became “too tired to care.” After remaining “unpolitical” for six years, the election of Ronald Reagan prompted Siemens to get political again. Through local feminist circles, she heard about the women at Greenham Common and Boeing’s role in the manufacture of cruise missiles. Siemens began planning the Puget Sound encampment while still working at Boeing and thought that perhaps because of her insider status, her co-workers might become allies in efforts to persuade the company to get cruise missiles off its assembly lines. On the camp’s opening day Siemens used the occasion to announce to the press and five hundred visitors, “I work at Boeing and I want you to know that everyone at Boeing does not support cruise missiles.” Most of her co-workers had nothing to say about her announcement, and no one responded negatively. Some supported Siemens with kind words, and over time contributed supplies to the campers. None joined the peace camp or their actions; as one worker explained, “I have a wife and kids. I have creditors, I have a mortgage…” By the end

35 Participants of the Puget Sound Women’s Peace Camp, We Are Ordinary Women, 59.
36 Participants of the Puget Sound Women’s Peace Camp, We Are Ordinary Women, 109.
37 Participants of the Puget Sound Women’s Peace Camp, We Are Ordinary Women, 110.
of the peace camp’s first year, Siemens lost hope for an inside insurrection at Boeing, and when she concluded that working at Boeing by day and camping across the street at night required too much of her, she quit her job at Boeing.³⁸

Puget Sound camping women ranged beyond Boeing, sometimes traveling twenty miles north to Seattle to reach a broader audience. In the summer of 1983, during the first three weeks of their camping venture, several women took part in city-wide demonstrations against U.S. intervention in Central America and protested at the Canadian Consulate against cruise missile testing in Alberta. That month, campers also trekked north to march in the Gay and Lesbian Pride Parade. On July 4, 1983, several camping women donned duck costumes and gathered at Seattle’s Green Lake Park for a street theater performance they called the “duck action.” They held signs reading “Don’t Duck Your Responsibility” and “Don’t Be a Sitting Duck” to urge their audience to recognize their passive position as citizens held hostage by the growing arms race. They used the Fourth of July holiday to stretch their point and sang and danced to an old American favorite, Old MacDonald, with revised lyrics:

Old McReagan has new bombs  
We are sitting ducks  
If we don’t stop him now  
We’ll all be out of luck

The arms race is totally quacked  
We are sitting ducks  
Nobody wins with a first strike attack  
We are sitting ducks.³⁹

³⁸ Participants of the Puget Sound Women’s Peace Camp, We Are Ordinary Women, 110.

The dancing and singing duck-dressed campers urged onlookers to stop “ducking” their responsibility, “declare independence,” and to join them in their crusade at Boeing to stop production of the cruise missiles.\textsuperscript{40} The peace camp performers urged their audience to consider the ways that nuclear weapons made them helpless, because they had no voice in whether they were built or how they would be used, and certainly no defense against them if they were.\textsuperscript{41} The Puget Sound women aptly chose the Fourth of July—a day usually meant for celebrating independence—for their performance because they recognized nuclear weapons’ capacity for eroding autonomy. The peace-camping women urged their audiences to reassert their civic agency by opposing cruise missiles.

In late October 1983, Puget Sound women took a cue from Greenham Common and circled the Boeing plant.\textsuperscript{42} They chose an average work-day for their event, Monday, when Boeing workers would be entering and exiting the plant, so they could disrupt normal operations. Though the crowd of demonstrators did not reach the numbers the campers hoped for, two thousand women appeared. Even two thousand bodies were only half of what were needed to go around the massive Boeing complex. Organizer Julia Park acknowledged that instead of

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{41} Scholar Elaine Scarry affirms the peace campers point when she describes nuclear weapons as “out of ratio” because they strip people of their ability to defend themselves in any practical way. Scarry asserts that atomic weapons degrade democratic citizenship because they are designed to “kill millions” while being fired by only a very few at the behest of one person, the president. By Scarry’s light, nuclear weapons created “sitting ducks.” See Elaine Scarry, \textit{Thermonuclear Monarchy: Choosing between Democracy and Doom} (New York: W. W. Norton and Sons, 2014), 6.
\item \textsuperscript{42} “Puget Sound Women’s Peace Encampment Newsletter, October 1983,” 3.
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encircling the entire perimeter, “We arced it.” Still, she stated, “We were jubilant,” and claimed that the encirclement “was probably the largest all-woman demonstration ever in the Pacific Northwest.”

The women modeled their action on Women’s Pentagon Action’s performative storytelling in their march on the Pentagon the year before. The women hoped to represent a distinct emotion on each of three of the four sides of the complex—hope, fear, and rage—so that they could express a range of responses to the weapons built inside. For the final leg of their encirclement, the women planned to shift from emotions to action. However, the performance did not come to pass because women arrived over the course of time in “carload after carload,” rather than all at once. Instead, women simply walked several times around the factory compound, conducting what one onlooker called a “mobile vigil.” Camper Gail Terzi described the event as a “hodgepodge of women...a lot of older women, women with babies, lesbians, straight; not a lot of women of color, but some, women from all over the West Coast and even some visiting from Europe.” Despite the number of women who joined the action, Terzi concluded, “I don’t think the encirclement had any measurable effect on Boeing.” Boeing’s spokesperson, Jim Grafton, characterized management’s overall relationship to the camp, “We really don’t have a reaction to what they’re doing. This is a free country. Everyone can express

43 Participants of the Puget Sound Women’s Peace Camp, We Are Ordinary Women, 86.


46 Participants of the Puget Sound Women’s Peace Camp, We Are Ordinary Women, 89.
their opinion.”47 Grafton’s response only articulated one perspective, however. In a news report, Puget Sounder camper Susan James asserted that many employees responded to the women who spent a good portion of the summer leafletting them daily. “We hear that we’re the hottest topic during lunch hours at Boeing,” James claimed. “We know that there is a lot of examination of conscience going on over there.”48

Weeks before the encirclement, in September 1983, the campers lost their lease. They then rented a small house on the highway, blocks from the sanitation pond and no longer quite as close to the Boeing plant. Few permanent campers remained after the move and less than fifty campers returned during the entirety of the camp’s second summer.49 One of ten campers who published a closing document for the camp, self-identified Indian woman and feminist Julia Park, offered a detailed diagnosis of what went wrong.50 Park cited the September 27, 1983 infiltration of the Boeing Plant as the primary reason for the camp’s demise. Park asserted that the Boeing entry “effectively killed what little growth of trust there was.” The five women who walked into the plant had conspired for months to undertake the “deliciously secret mission.”51 For Park, this created an inner circle which perpetuated the kinds of hierarchies they were attempting to oppose. Park also identified a core issue that perhaps informed the camping women’s loss of trust: the whiteness of the Kent peace camp’s culture.

48 Kramer, “Peace Camp: Enduring for a Cause” 60.
50 Participants of the Puget Sound Women’s Peace Camp, We Are Ordinary Women, 112.
I can only find one woman who will admit that she also thought that we could stop production of the cruise and alter the course of the world. I thought we were laying new tracks for the freedom train to roll on down to glory, away from the patriarchy and toward a women’s way of being in the universe. Instead it looks like we built a rollercoaster for white women with a ticket.

Park asserted that older, poor, religious women, or women of color felt uncomfortable in the Puget Sound camp’s environment. She stated, “I am finally embarrassed by the fact that I have been the only woman of color to stay involved in this peace camp.” Though ostensibly all women were welcome, Park asserted that “the reality was different;” to be a comfortable camper, one had to be “white, young, slender, middle class, educated, and lesbian (or wondering).” Writing further, Park advised women to, “use the same babysitters, shop at the same stores, go to the same meetings, and work in the same places. Have coffee together. Become friends. Become lovers. Talk and work together. Do not expect women of color, who have enough to do, to take the first step.” By urging future activists to include women of color from the beginning in their daily lives together, Park offered a solution for endemic peace camp whiteness, well-suited for the quotidian activism of peace-camping women. Sadly, however, according to Park, many Puget Sound women were not prepared to extend their daily lives beyond their own exclusive color line.


53 Participants of the Puget Sound Women’s Peace Camp, We Are Ordinary Women, 113.

54 Park, "For Your Eyes Only: Secrets of the Peace Camp." 9.

The Minnesota Women’s Camp for Peace and Justice

On October 1, 1983, 125 women calling themselves the Minnesota Women’s Camp for Peace and Justice settled in for a long occupation next to the Sperry Defense Industry’s employee parking lot. They hauled firewood, pitched tents, and constructed a donated yurt. In the midst of their labors, they gathered, held hands, chanted, and demanded that Sperry and their fellow St. Paul–area defense contractors—Honeywell, FMC Corporation, and Control Data—stop production of first-strike nuclear weapons, publicize their military contracts, and begin converting to non-military production. The women chose their location because Sperry had recently agreed to produce cruise missile parts. These were the same cruise missiles shipped from the Seneca Army Depot, where many of the Minnesota campers had spent their summer protesting with the WEFPJ.

The Minnesota peace women protested Sperry Corporation because the company manufactured the trigger mechanisms for cruise missiles. Sperry had a long tradition of manufacturing electronic weapons systems. During World War II, Sperry developed over three hundred defense-related products for the war, and ran schools where they fed, housed, and trained over 77,000 members of the military. Sperry became known as the “brain-mill for the military.” After the war, Sperry developed computer systems, including the UNIVAC in 1952, one of the first and most well-known lines of digital computers for commercial use. By the

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57 Over one hundred Minnesota women camped at the WEFPJ over the summer in 1983. See Allen, “Women’s Peace Group Encamps in St. Paul.”

1970s, Sperry produced everything from shaving razors to farm equipment, as well as weapons triggers, computers, and information management systems for the U.S. military.\(^59\)

Greenham Common camper Simone Wilkinson joined the women in St. Paul for their first camping day. In an opening ceremony that featured songs and speeches, Wilkinson cautioned the crowd about the potential results of their protest by relaying her own Greenham Common experiences and concluding, “We’ve taken all kinds of abuse from the British police and the public.” Wilkinson placed her warnings well. The camping women did run into adversity. Within two months, their four largest tents were burned down during a brief period while the site remained unattended. Though Sperry blamed the women’s negligence for the fire, they decided to let the campers stay. The corporate managers reversed that decision one week later, after a small unexplained fire took place inside the Sperry plant on Thanksgiving night. On December 7, St. Paul police woke eighteen Minnesota campers in their newly constructed geodesic dome and arrested them for trespassing. Sperry made an official statement on the matter: “The situation has now escalated to constitute a clear and present danger to the safety of the employees, neighbors, and passersby, Sperry property, and to the women themselves.”\(^60\)

Camper Nancy Mosier claimed that they were “given no advanced notice and were taken immediately downtown.” While the women rendezvoused with the police, Sperry security pulled a front-end loader to the disrupted camping site and removed the women’s dome, tents, and a small wooden shack. Within hours of the removal, thirty-five women gathered and set up a single tent, and several of the women crawled inside. Police dragged ten women from the two-

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person pup tent and pushed it over. In a push-pull melee that followed, the police snatched tent poles and plastic sheeting from campers and snow trucks arrived to dump snow on the site. While women attempted to block the entrance, the police made thirteen arrests and the remaining women agreed to leave the property. In a later statement, Sperry summarized their justification for the eviction by asserting that the women’s “acts were nonpeaceful in nature and are clearly illegal, violent, and intolerable.” No evidence tied the women to the factory fire, and camper Patricia Milbruth defended the group, saying, “We’ve done no civil disobedience, we decided that the camp was enough.” Based on the tussle with tent poles and the arrests that followed, authorities did not punish campers for what the Sperry managers characterized as intolerable violence, but rather trespassing. A later company statement verified it: “Sperry never intended to allow the camp to exist forever and would continue to seek arrest of protesters who trespass on the property.”

Undeterred by the arrests, within one week, more than one hundred women gathered and began to rebuild the camp on a lot across from Sperry Defense. The construction crew also celebrated an impromptu bon voyage party for a few campers who would soon travel to England to take part in Greenham Common’s 1983 “Embrace the Base” December 11 action. The women located their new campground on a small island median in an intersection between

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62 Dennis McGrath, “Protest Encampment Torn Down at Sperry; Eighteen Women Arrested,” 7.

Shepard Road and Highway Five, a well-traveled highway which fronted the Sperry plant. They operated under constraints which they learned about over time, because the Minnesota highway system managed their site. Campers could not block traffic, post signs on fences, or leaflet cars. For housing, the women built a small shack, one that might normally be perched on a frozen Minnesota lake over a drilled fishing hole.

The women managed to sleep comfortably, even in Minnesota winters. They had sturdy tents, warm sleeping bags, and multiple blankets for the nights, which served them well, even in the coldest subzero temperatures. However, the campers had great difficulty functioning during the day. They found it impossible to read, write, plan strategy, or complete even the simplest of tasks in the Minnesota cold. With at least three solid walls, the shed served as a warming house. After constructing it, the women learned another one of the highway department’s constraints: their shack violated municipal rules because it lay “on the middle of a loop-entrance and exit ramp for highway five.” The highway department forbade the women to build a permanent structure. Speaking for the peace camp, Zashata Lynn stated, “I personally don’t want to be arrested on state property, that’s not our purpose. Our purpose is to protest against Sperry.” So, the women broke down their shed, carried three of its solid walls across the highway, and quickly nailed them together on the steps of the Sperry entrance. They then bolted it to the Sperry Corporation’s front doors, and campers Trish Graf, Sissie Oppenheim, and Lillie Spritz

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66 Dennis J. McGrath, “State Orders Peace Campers at Sperry to Remove Shelter.” Minneapolis Star Tribune, December 13, 1983. 1B.
perched on three chairs and occupied the hastily constructed parts. While the women waited patiently for the police to arrive, fifty other women sang songs for encouragement. The police came, the women refused to leave, and were arrested. After this confrontation on Sperry land, the women made their final move across the highway, this time after constructing a moveable tipi and a longhouse built with bent wood and fabric. With both, they were able to camp through the punishing 1983-1984 Minnesota winter while they continued to protest Sperry Defense.67

Despite their deliberate vulnerability and their commitment to camping in the Minnesota cold, the campers were practical, and acknowledged their assets and liabilities clearly. Their location on Shepard Road, a major St. Paul traffic artery, allowed them to reach a broad audience of up to 24,000 drivers per day who saw their protest signs. The women planned to stock up on wood, fuel, and food, have a planning meeting every Tuesday, and host an open house for the public on Sunday afternoons.68 Camper Suzanne River acknowledged the peace camp’s limits, “What the group does in the coming weeks depends on the energy of the group. We want to stay open to the spirit of urgency. Most of the women hold jobs and many are mothers, so they don’t have a lot of free time to devote to the effort.” Many of the women managed this by organizing themselves into groups who would camp on separate days of the week, while maintaining their jobs and families on alternating non-camping days.69

67 “Pamphlet: Minnesota Women’s Peace Camp for Peace and Justice,” 3.


In December 1983, the Sperry Corporation pled guilty to overcharging the federal government $3.5 million for a defense contract to produce the MX missile. Ultimately, the government whittled down the charge to $325,000, and according to the court, the balance would be resolved through negotiations between the government and Sperry. In a May 1984 U.S. District Court hearing on the arrest, lawyers questioned Department of Justice officials about why they settled for such a small percentage of the original overcharge. The Department’s Chief of the Defense Procurement Fraud Unit claimed that the $3,175,000 difference “represented accounting issues which were not subject to prosecution.”

On June 14, ten Minnesota peace campers visited Sperry’s corporate offices to express their outrage at the settlement. They traveled fifteen miles south of St. Paul to Sperry’s Univac Park complex, called “plant eight,” in suburban Eagan, Minnesota. The women demonstrated at the plant and demanded that the company pay the full amount of their overpayment. They insisted on meeting with Dick Seaburg, the Sperry vice president in charge of defense operations. Seaburg did not comply and instead called on authorities to arrest the ten protesters for trespassing. In response, camper Polly Kellogg declared that, “We’re going to keep pressing the issues. We don’t want to see it buried in the whole government coverup. The public has got to be outraged, if the government isn’t going to be.”

The women did not see the corporation as a debtor to the American taxpayers, but rather as robbers. They demanded that Sperry “give back what they stole.”

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70 Beyond the question of whether accounting errors were subject to criminal charges, there were jurisdictional issues as well; the Justice Department official claimed that Sperry's accounting issues would have to be settled between the company and the Department of Defense, not the Department of Justice. See Mike Kaszuba, “U.S. Settled for 10% When Sperry Admitted Overcharge on Missile,” Minneapolis Star Tribune, May 23, 1984, 6.

71 Misa, The Digital State: The Story of Minnesota’s Computing Industry, 97, 89.

camping women called Sperry’s overcharge a crime, while the company, if they addressed it at all, called the infraction an accounting error.

The following month, the women appeared before Dakota County Judge Eugene Atkins for what the reporter for the Minneapolis Star Tribune, Mike Kaszuba, called an “emotional” five-hour trial. The defense argued that the women were justified in their trespass because they had responded to a crisis “when no other alternative existed.” For the camping women, the government’s prosecution of Sperry provided an emergency because Sperry’s guilty verdict presented them with a rare opportunity. The suit allowed the campers to align their goals, albeit temporarily, with the aims of the government. They were given a brief window of time to underscore their arguments against military spending in the context of the legitimate judgment of the Justice Department and the District Court. According to the Minneapolis Star Tribune, the federal government’s prosecution of Sperry was the first criminal case against a major defense contractor.73

The women failed to make their argument successfully, and the court declared them guilty of infringing the Sperry campus. The judge stated that he agreed with some of their concerns but still maintained that by encroaching on the corporation’s property, the women advocated anarchy. He gave the defendants the choice between paying seventy-five dollars, going to jail, or writing a 1,500-word composition on the legal and social ramifications of their protest. The judge suggested several essay topics including, “What their protest goals were,” “How did they plan to achieve their goals,” “What the consequences would be for the legal

73 Kaszuba, “U.S. Settled for 10% When Sperry Admitted Overcharge on Missile,” 1
system,” and “The steps that the government should take to change the system.” When reporters asked the Sperry Corporation’s spokesman about the trial, he stated that, “It was not our place to comment on the trial outcome.” Public representatives of both Sperry and Boeing employed similar hands-off tactics when they commented publicly on their mutual “peace camp” problem. Both corporations preferred to demand the women’s removal and arrest rather than engage with them directly. The tactic allowed the companies to retain a remote—even neutral—posture, a preferable stance for a defense corporation whose industry prioritized military secrets.

Five of the women chose to write essays and five chose jail. Polly Kellogg, who opted for the latter option, stated that “going to jail was a stronger statement of her convictions than writing an essay.” Kellogg had a point. Unlike payment or discourse, incarceration corresponded with her and her colleagues’ activist methods and experience. As prisoners, authorities required women to stay, and as campers, authorities continually commanded them to leave. In both cases, peace-camping women remained. Their bodies brought to life the protest goals that the judge hoped to restrain to the confines of their assigned essays: by going to jail, the women did not back down on the aim of their original protest action—their effort to engage with Sperry officials over ballooning defense expenditures and their demands that they publicly disclose the details of their defense contracts. By remaining in jail, the campers showcased the consequences for making that attempt.


Urgency drove the Minnesota peace-camping women, who strove to end the production of nuclear weapons and to call into question the system that depended on them. In their statement of unity and purpose, the women of the Minnesota Women’s Camp for Peace and Justice identified themselves as differently-abled lesbian and heterosexual grandmothers, mothers, sisters, and daughters of the earth who were Black, Indian, White, Chicano, Asian, and Jewish. From the camp’s beginning, they hoped to embody diversity. Eleven days after pitching their tents on Sperry land, the Minnesota peace campers formalized their temporary habitation by receiving a treaty granted by members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and Women of All Red Nations (WARN). The campers stated that the agreement granted them permission to
stay on the land.\textsuperscript{76} AIM and WARN aimed for historical correction. For the Minnesota Women’s Peace Camp, accepting the treaty expressed solidarity with the Native American groups’ goals. Camping transformed the transaction into more than a symbolic gesture, however. By sleeping, eating, and working on the ground, and placing their rights to do so in the hands of AIM and WARN, the Minnesota peace campers made a material stand. By camping on the Sperry parking lot, and acknowledging AIM and WARN’s claim on the land, they placed the Sperry Corporation’s legitimacy as owners of the land in doubt.

That doubt made a very small dent in the vast accumulation of legal privilege the company had in store. In a letter to the editor of the \textit{Minneapolis Star Tribune}, Minnesota camper Theresa Stanton illustrated Sperry’s corporate entitlement by comparing two scenarios, one real and the other imagined, about the right to privacy. For the first, she recalled a very recent news story, the Sperry lawsuit in which the company overbilled the government by $3.5 million on a military contract. Authorities charged, tried, and fined the company. Authorities did not identify the names of the individual perpetrators at Sperry.\textsuperscript{77} Stanton then told her second story, theorized from an aggregate of news items she had read. She told of a legal battle waged by a welfare mother who had also “bilked the government” for “one-one hundredth” the sum of Sperry’s infraction. Stanton claimed that if authorities charged a woman on public assistance, the situation would likely be handled quite differently from that of the Sperry case. Authorities would reveal the woman’s name, and Stanton surmised, “newspapers would furnish every detail


\textsuperscript{77} The District Court judge reviewing the case expressed surprise over the fact that no one was identified: “Nothing happened to anybody. It hasn’t been called to my attention that any individual has been punished. I just have a view that this will never stop until the officers of a corporation are held accountable for the conduct of their subordinates.” See Kaszuba, “U.S. Settled for 10% When Sperry Admitted Overcharge on Missile,” 1.
they could scrounge about her life.” Stanton concluded, “We are not all equal under the law, despite the proclamations of the U.S. Constitution, the judicial system, and the best efforts of civil-rights groups. Corporations are privileged bodies.”

Figure 22. “Snow Piled Up Wednesday Around the Tent of the Minnesota Women’s Peace Camp for Peace and Justice Outside the Sperry Company,” November 24, 1983
Source: Donald Black, Minnesota Star Tribune

The Minnesota women’s camping adventure did not survive two Minnesota winters; they endured a final eviction and closed their camp in October of 1984. One month before the women left the camp for a final time, they conducted a group interview with reporter Mike Kaszuba. Camp co-founder Nancy Mosier stated, “A year ago, nobody even knew Sperry was making parts for nuclear weapons.” Another woman claimed “their biggest goal—making Minnesotans

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aware that Sperry was a major defense contractor—was accomplished.” Another said “their commitment,” which included living in tents and in a makeshift cabin during subzero weather, “showed passers-by that they were serious about their beliefs.”

The Minnesota camping women put a spotlight on Sperry’s privileged anonymity by placing it in sharp contrast to their own lack of it. By staying in sight of the well-heated mid-century Sperry building, first in its parking lot and then across the road in the grass verge between highway interchanges, the campers displayed the items their bodies depended on for sustenance. With their laundry lines strung with sleeping bags, dishrags, and damp overcoats, and their makeshift kitchen with suds-filled plastic bins, camp stoves, and kerosene lanterns, the women revealed their physical frailty. Their vulnerability went beyond material possessions; their struggles with juggling work, children, dogs, inclement weather, evictions, arrests, and court dates indicated their everyday human weaknesses. That very precarity enabled the Minnesota women to gain success in one significant way: it served as an earthy personal backdrop to Sperry’s sleek corporate entitlement. In the end, Sperry retained its privileged silence and never engaged with the campers. Top executives never met with the campers, and when the last woman left, security guards told the press in a prepared statement that the campers’ actions had “not affected Sperry’s business policies in any manner.”

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In March 1984, during Philadelphia’s “Women’s History Week,” members of the Philadelphia Women’s Peace Encampment visited the affluent Bourse shopping mall food court in Central Philadelphia. Disguised as waitresses, they mingled with diners, holding trays full of war toys, tiny dioramas, and leaflet menus. The faux waitresses approached patrons and offered their assortment saying, “Did you order this?” In response to their “customer’s” shaken heads and confusion, the “servers” would assert, “Well you paid for it.” The women concluded their transaction by explaining how their consumer’s taxes were paying for “war toys and death stuff” instead of city services. The activists also visited another mall, the Gallery in Center City, a lower rent district, to do the same thing. Philadelphia encampment member Z felt more comfortable talking about war spending there because she “was talking to people whose sons were in the army, or whose sons had gotten out of the army, and who were in the army themselves—a much broader cross section of people.” The economically-distinct venues for the Waitress Action showcased the diverse urban environment that the Philadelphia encampment women operated in, and foreshadowed the challenges they would come to face.


The Philadelphia Women’s Peace Encampment described themselves as a feminist activist group of eight to twelve lesbian and bisexual women who sought to confront a wide range of issues and base their activism on a feminist perspective. The name “Philadelphia Women’s Peace Encampment” referenced the group’s support for women’s peace camping, but it did not reflect their own practices. The Philadelphia group did not actually camp, and this
caused a considerable amount of confusion. The women aimed to link the peace camping mission of exposing nuclear weapons with their own actions against unemployment, hunger, and homelessness in their own city. The Philadelphia women called themselves an encampment because they considered themselves to be embedded in Philadelphia in the same way that Greenham women were entrenched near the Greenham Common Air Force Base. The Philadelphia women wished to use their bodies not to expose a nuclear missile location, but instead to reveal the inequities in their city because of the weapons’ cost.

Philadelphia encampment founder Peggy McGuire credited the birth of their group to a spring of 1983 visit to Philadelphia’s Friends Center by Greenham Common women Susan Lamb and Simone Wilkinson. Many members of the audience that night discussed a new peace camp proposed for Seneca, New York. At around the same time, members of the Philadelphia branch of Women’s Pentagon Action publicized the new peace camp as well, plastering parts of West Philadelphia with flyers. Consequently, over twenty Philadelphia women visited the new Seneca encampment several times during the summer of 1983 to take part in their actions. During their operations as a Seneca affinity group, the women built a fledgling Philadelphia-based activist community. They cemented this sense of cohesion with their first local action in October 1983 at the Franklin Plaza Hotel’s Tricentennial Celebration.


Celebrants at the hotel gathered that day to toast the community’s long-standing German-American relationship. In 1983, Philadelphia prepared to commemorate the three hundredth anniversary of the Germantown area of Philadelphia. On October 6, the Tricentennial Celebration of German–American Friendship would honor the anniversary by hosting a state dinner at Philadelphia’s finest hotel, the Franklin Plaza. The evening would feature two distinguished honorees, German President Karl Carstons and Vice President George H. W. Bush. The encampment women questioned the intentions of the honored guests. Instead of a gathering to acknowledge a historical German–American friendship, the encampment newsletter charged that the “boys at the top” were “whipping up a great ballyhoo over the communist menace and the security of Europe.” Many other local peace groups also objected to the celebration. Several of them held a rally nearby at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Philadelphia encampment members wanted more than a rally, however. Fifty-four-year-old mother of seven and encampment member Peggy Hasbrouck stated, “Speeches at rallies were not likely to be noticed.” Hasbrouck and her fellow protesters wanted to be “in direct contact” with the people in power. Members of the Philadelphia encampment meant to interrupt the proceedings of what they saw as a commercial directed at Philadelphia consumers for Cold War politics and the Pershing II missiles, which would be on their way to Germany a short month later.

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On the evening of the festivities, camper Janice Hill “packed a borrowed cocktail dress and thrift store pumps” and headed to the Franklin Plaza Hotel. Hill’s companions, Thelma Stoudt and Donna Cooper, wore traditional German costumes, and clutching thirty helium balloons each in front of their dirndls, entered the dining room to a round of delighted applause. On cue, the women opened their hands and released their floating bouquets. To the guests’ astonishment, each balloon bore a message written on its underside that became clearly visible upon its ascent. The ceiling of the dining room suddenly brought an anti-nuclear billboard of balloons into relief, with directives stating “Say No to Euromissiles” and “Peace without Missiles.” In the meantime, partygoers waved Hill and her well-dressed encampment companions into the dining room. Hill recalls that they “milled through the crowd” until they found a central location where each opened their evening bags and drew out purple shawls with messages printed on them: “STOP EUROMISSILES.” The women drew their shawls over their shoulders, formed a circle, and began to keen, or wail in a traditional mourning ritual for the dead. Hill explained that their public mourning at the plaza that evening aimed to convey “the gloom of corporate greed, executive deception, and unthinking nationalism.” The Philadelphia women developed a performative commercial of their own for the elite of Philadelphia gathered at the Franklin Plaza state dinner that linked individual greed, industrial capitalism, nuclear excess, and Cold War politics.

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91 Hill, “Newsletter Draft: Ballyhoo, Balloons, and a Light in the Gloom.”
The encampment women had the connection between capitalism and militarism in mind from the first time they met, six months before their Franklin Plaza Hotel action in the spring of 1983. At that time, the Philadelphia women gathered chiefly to discuss ways to support plans for the Seneca peace camp. In their first newsletter, the Philadelphia women echoed their New York sisters, declaring, “It’s wrong to be developing nuclear technology that affords us the ability to wipe out all life on earth many times over.” Even then, however, the Philadelphia women considered themselves as more than just a distant support network for the nascent Seneca camp; they shared a specific point of view that targeted military-fueled capitalism. They followed their initial declaration with a caveat and claimed, “wrong that so many innocents are victimized by the greed of the few.”

After November 1983, as founding encampment member Susan Schachter stated, “when the bombs had already gone to Europe,” the group broadened their ideological concerns beyond the range of fighting militarism and shifted to focus on problems unique to Philadelphia. McGuire recalled that at a retreat the group discussed how broader “nuclear stuff” did not allow them to keep local women central to their work. Therefore, the encampment made a collective decision to stay as local as possible.\(^92\) Z clarified their territorial boundaries: “If you couldn’t get to an action by local transportation, we didn’t do it there.”\(^93\) This decision both narrowed and broadened their base. By shrinking their territory to Philadelphia’s metro area, their causes

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\(^92\) In a 1984 funding proposal, the Philadelphia Encampment women recorded that during a December 1983 retreat they agreed to “work primarily for our local community.” See “Funding Proposal for the Ongoing Work of the Philadelphia Women’s Encampment,” March 10, 1984, DG157 Philadelphia Women’s Peace Camp Records, Historical and Organization Files, Box 1, Folder: Philadelphia Women’s Peace Encampment Organization First Steps, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, 2.

\(^93\) Kulp, “Philadelphia Women’s Peace Encampment,” 2.
expanded to include the myriad local injustices that were not necessarily included in the category of militarism. Z summarized their thinking, “Everybody can be against the bomb, but what does it mean in people’s everyday lives?”

Founding member Z expressed frustration at being called an encampment: “People always ask us, ‘Encampment—Where’s the peace camp?’” In August 1984, the women decided to answer that question by trying to establish a modest peace camp. They began to make plans for bivouacking at least part time at the Philadelphia Navy Yard, a military site that might soon be decommissioned and converted to civilian use. Well within metro Philadelphia limits, the Yard did not violate the encampment’s commitment to local action, and as a military site, it meshed with the Greenham Common and Seneca camping model. The Navy Yard had another advantage because of its potential candidacy for conversion from military to civilian use. This fulfilled the first goal listed in the group’s overall commitment to “focus on the immediate damaging economic effects of U.S. military spending on our lives and the lives of women…” Camping at the Navy Yard underscored the notion that military spending robbed social spending and damaged people’s lives.

On Nagasaki and Hiroshima Day, August 6, 1984, a dozen encampment women gathered just across the highway from the Navy Yard, and executed a one-day action. The group chose the space for that particular day to link the Navy Yard to the anniversary by declaring it “responsible for producing the uranium-235 used to test the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.”

Starting at 8:15 AM, the same time that the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, the women began the day seated in a circle on the grass, holding photos of the bombing’s aftermath. Throughout the course of the day, they hosted speakers on conversion, shared international encampment news, and discussed their own local camping plans. The women also handed out flyers, performed a four-act “scenario” which memorialized Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and reclaimed the local land in honor of its history. Later, the women held a candlelight vigil, picketed the Navy Yard, and planted a tree. In the end, the women did not sleep on the land near the Navy Yard. In a later meeting, one member described the Hiroshima Day action as a “fizzle.”

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99 Jennifer Henricus, “Women’s Group Gathers Near Base to Recall Bombing, Promote Peace,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 7, 1984, sec. B; This statement became a bone of contention between the encampment women and the newspaper because the newspaper reporting omitted the activist’s distinction between the uranium used in testing and the fuel used in the Hiroshima bombs. The encampment women called the reporting a “serious error” which discredited them by implying that their “research was not thorough and their information unsound.”


continued to deliberate the “camping” idea, and longstanding member Daphne asked, “What does an urban encampment mean? Does it mean camping homeless in the street?”

On March 30, 1985, six months after their Navy Yard experiment, the Philadelphia women settled themselves for the day near a new IBM Product Center in a shopping district called Penn Center in downtown Philadelphia. Busy Saturday shoppers could rent or purchase a Selectric III typewriter or the IBM 5260 “retail” computer system at the new store. Or according to the store’s advertisement, customers would not “have to buy anything at all;” they were “welcome to just browse. Pick up free literature. And ask questions.” On the sidewalk outside of the store, shoppers could find even more answers to questions about IBM and their products, though not from sales assistants. Stationed outside the shop, the peace encampment women held signs, handed out flyers, and repeatedly declared that IBM supplied most of the computers used by South Africa’s Homelands Department to enforce its policy of apartheid.

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104 “IBM Opens a New Shopping Center Advertisement,” Philadelphia Inquirer, November 18, 1980.

105 The PWPE held their IBM action on a Saturday during the National Weeks of Action Against Apartheid. See “Letter from PWPE to Sisters,” DG 157 Philadelphia Peace Camp Records Historical and Organizational Files Box 1 Folder: Philadelphia Women’s Peace Encampment Outreach and Coalition Work 1985, Swarthmore College Peace Collection; The National Weeks of Action Against Apartheid was a two week period was organized by “The American Committee on Africa.” See “Washtenaw County Coalition Against Apartheid,” January 18, 1985, Vertical File, Washtenaw County Coalition Against Apartheid, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.
That day, in addition to their information campaign, the Philadelphia activists wanted IBM customers to understand the impact of IBM computers in a more visceral way. They wanted customers to know what the machines accomplished by keeping the records that policed the boundaries between Black and white in the streets of the towns and cities of South Africa. On
each end of the sixteen hundred block of Chestnut Street facing the product center, Philadelphia encampment women strung a banner bearing the message, “You are now entering South Africa. Be prepared to show your passbook.” The twin placards served as a portal to the stretch of sidewalk adjacent to the store. Dressed in official looking attire, dark pants with light shirts and ties, the encampment women policed their store-front zone. At one end of their self-imposed precinct, several women held signs stating, “South Africa Passbook Authority.” Other encampment members distributed a thousand printed passbooks to Saturday shoppers, telling each that they were replicating the experience of Black people in South Africa, forced to carry identification that enabled the government, with the technology of IBM, to track and police their every move.

At twenty-minute intervals, the Philadelphia women performed “scenarios,” or street theater to represent what would happen if a passerby did not have the proper documentation for their Chestnut Street or mock-South African passage. At various spaces on the block, encampment performers acting as apartheid police officers confronted two passing actors and demanded to see their passbooks. One held their passbook out and the other had empty hands. The faux-apartheid officer consulted a hand-held calculator clearly marked with the letters I.B.M. and shouted at the empty-handed performer, checked her calculator/computer again, and whisked her away.106 In her recollection of the event, Philadelphia camper Laura stated, “It really affected people who were watching; people thought it was real.”107 The Philadelphia encampment women thus used the street outside the IBM shop to illustrate the crime that


depended on the computer corporation’s complicity. The women placed boundaries around the store’s territory to teach a visceral lesson. By creating a gentle replica of the far harsher reality of what Black South Africans endured every day, the women accomplished what they set out to do: “make people aware of what it would mean if apartheid existed in the streets of the U.S.”

In the 1980s, apartheid—of a different kind—did exist in Philadelphia. A great many people of color, especially Black Americans, found it difficult to live comfortably in Philadelphia. From 1950 through 1970, urban planners led by architect and city planning director Edmund Bacon revitalized Philadelphia and shuffled residents to make way for their projects. Their long-term planning made the way for successful retail districts in the downtown area, including the Chestnut Street retail block where the Philadelphia encampment women protested and performed in front of the IBM store. By the 1970s, the project displaced African Americans who had previously rented in the neighborhood. Bacon’s revitalization project is just one example of the displacement and financial distress that African Americans experienced throughout the city during the postwar decades.

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110 Heller, Gregory, L. and Garvin Alexander, 133.
111 In their analysis of cities during the 1980s by level of distress, U.S. Housing and Urban Development researchers Sue G. Neal and Harold Bunce Neal compared per capita incomes, poverty rates, and employment, and concluded that Philadelphia was the eleventh-most distressed city in the United States. In Sue G. Neal and Harold Bunce, “Socioeconomic Changes in Distressed Cities During the 1980s,” Cityscape 1, no. 1 (August 1994): 123–52, 135; Between 1979 and 1988, poverty rates in the U.S. peaked in 1983 with 15.2% of households lacking the means to cover their basic needs. In Philadelphia, the poverty level was 26.1%. In the first half of the 1980s, African Americans accounted for 44.3% of the Philadelphia region’s poor but were only 19% of the population. See Michael Leeds, Janice Fanning Madden, and William J. Stull, Work, Wages, and Poverty: Income Distribution in Post Industrial Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 81.
The Philadelphia peace-camping women knew about the difficulties Black Philadelphians faced, and this impacted their decision not to establish a physical peace camp. Choosing to leave a home for a tent on the street, in the context of their city, might logically be interpreted as a flagrant display of white privilege. In the spring of 1985, the Philadelphia women met to plan an action in connection to the Sisters of Mercy’s homeless shelter near the city’s Washington Square. The meeting prompted one camping woman to ask, “What does an urban encampment mean? Did it mean camping homeless on the street?” She wanted to be sure that the group would act constructively and avoid disrupting “the women and the neighborhood.” The women suspected that because of the realities of living in Philadelphia, leaving a permanent home by choice and peace camping when so many were forcibly removed from their homes was an indulgence, no matter how cold, wet, and uncomfortable it might be. For the Philadelphia encampment women, bivouacking on Philadelphia’s streets would only showcase their own advantaged position and do nothing to alter their city’s racist housing paradigm.

The group also questioned protest methods other than camping. In January 1985, several group members took part in a Lesbians Against Racism (LARA) anti-apartheid action in Washington D.C., where they engaged in direct protest at the South African embassy’s door. Encampment member Betsy summarized the group’s reflections on the action, “You just sort of go there, and then you dance around, you get arrested, and then the whole nightmare in jail starts.” Susan Schachter added that she had mixed feelings about the special treatment she received while being arrested for the action, concluding, “I found it really difficult; it just didn’t

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seem right to me. If we had been prostitutes or anything else, we would have been hauled [off] and thrown in jail. There was a piece of me that felt it was really a mockery. We were privileged white women; they’re not going to do anything bad to us. We were singing in the cop station. We were giving each other back rubs. It seemed to me a contradiction.” Betsy added, “That’s the criticism of civil disobedience that involves arrest—why are all these middle-class white women working so hard to get themselves into jail?”

Betsy asked a pertinent question. When considered in the context of the rising incarceration rates in late-twentieth-century American cities, their lighthearted stay in jail was an indulgence. It dawned on the Philadelphia encampment women that the South African apartheid they protested in front of the IBM store echoed the segregation and maltreatment that existed in their own city.

Between 1973 and 2006, the American prison population quintupled because of a national political push against crime. The drive had devastating consequences for the lives of the imprisoned, their families, and their communities. Black Americans suffered especially from the policies. In the 1980s, even with the mass increase of incarceration, the likelihood of being sent to prison for a random member of the general population remained very low, at just a little over half a percent. However, in 1980, if you were a Black American male with no high school diploma, the chance that you might be incarcerated in your lifetime rose to ten percent, and eighteen years later, it rose to thirty-eight percent. Mass incarceration created what social

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115 Bruce Western and Becky Pettit, “Incarceration & Social Inequality,” Daedalus 139, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 8–19, 9-11.
scientists Ann Pettit and Bruce Western called an “invisible inequality,” because prisoners were removed from the eye of institutions established to measure labor markets and household income. Mass imprisonment creates an insidious form of segregation which rivals the policing of streets utilized in South African apartheid.

In many ways, strategic incarceration after acts of civil disobedience shone a brighter light on the encampment members’ privilege than camping in an impoverished city with segregated and inadequate housing. Imprisonment is more evident than poverty in terms of time, space, and volition. It is simpler to identify the forces that send people to jail than those that push citizens into poverty. Going to jail happens geographically; one is sent from one place, a courthouse, to another place, a jail, where one’s body is trapped. Though impoverishment restricts mobility, it does not end it entirely. The process of incarceration happens at a discrete time that is easily imprinted on one’s memory. At one hour, one is free, at another, bound. Poverty is a condition; it rarely has a conspicuous start or end. It is almost always involuntary unless it is a part of a religious vow. Authorities mandate incarceration, except in the case of civil disobedience, where the line is blurry. For peace campers, including members of the Philadelphia encampment, particularly after their LARA action, utilizing the court system and serving jail time served as a protesting tool. Jail gave them a way to publicize their cause with their bodies.

The encampment members drew on a long-standing American civil disobedience tradition. The justification for imprisonment in civil disobedience has changed over time. Historian Lewis Perry utilizes Howard Zinn’s definition of civil disobedience, “the deliberate

116 Western and Pettit, “Incarceration & Social Inequality,” 12.
violation of a law in pursuit of a social goal,” and asserts that it has been a tool used by protesters in the United States since the pre-revolutionary era. Perry highlights Martin Luther King’s reasoning for the use of imprisonment in civil disobedience as a way “to arouse the conscience of a community.” King’s justifications for imprisonment were distinct from other groups like the International Workers of the World (IWW) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Freedom Riders, who practiced jail time in their civil disobedience, not to generate public sympathies but to create cost pressures on local governments.117 Philadelphia encampment member Susan Schachter’s feelings about her incarceration after the Washington D.C. LARA action represented a turning point for the encampment, because they began to question their civil disobedience tactics and reckon with their privileges, especially their prerogative to choose their own fates. As an incarcerated protester, Schachter knew ahead of time that she should prepare for a stint in jail. She knew that her fellow Washington D.C. inmates who were not LARA protesters did not share that advantage. They had been “thrown” in jail for prostitution or other acts. For the protesters, jail contributed to their civil disobedience plans, for the other prisoners in their midst, it was a personal calamity. Paradoxically, for the protesters, jail showcased their bodies and their cause, and for their fellow non-protesting inmates, jail opened the door to social invisibility.

117 Lewis Perry, Civil Disobedience: An American Tradition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 14,15: In their analysis of incarceration and civil disobedience, Isabelle Sommier, Graeme Hayes, and Sylvie Ollitrault cite yet another justification for choosing imprisonment as a consequence of civil disobedience which was asserted by Henry David Thoreau, who wrote in Civil Disobedience, "I know this well, that if one thousand, if one hundred, if ten men whom I could name, – if ten honest men only, – aye, if one HONEST MAN, in this state of Massachusetts, ceasing to hold slaves, were actually to withdraw from this copartnership, and be locked up in the county jail therefore, it would be the abolition of slavery in America." Thoreau believed that jail was the only moral way to respond to heinous social ills and if enough people followed their conscience it would create an overwhelming social force for change. See Sommier et al., Breaking Laws: Violence and Civil Disobedience in Protest, Protest and Social Movements (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 146.
Other American peace-camping women also questioned the civil disobedience tactics that activists often employed. The same kinds of doubts created a sharp fracture between the Puget Sound campers in 1983, during the planning stages for five of its members’ incursion into Boeing. Puget Sound camp organizer Jane Myerding wrote a formal letter of dissent to the women of the Kent, Washington camp over their decision to conduct civil disobedience which involved arrest, a public court hearing, and a likely ending in jail. Foreshadowing the Philadelphia women’s objections, Myerding baulked at the privileges that the women would likely secure while making their legal journey. She likened their potential advantages to those of many young white men faced with the draft, “For some men, there were ways out—as students, for example, or conscientious objectors (COS); these ways out were most often available to men with class or color privileges.” Myerding explained that some who were against the war also protested the Selective Service System itself, “which they saw as an integral part” of the violence of the war. “I believe,” Myerding claimed, “that resistance to the entire system (the SSS as well as to military service) was the path most consistent with a commitment to nonviolence. For me, the courts are the prison system’s analogue to the military system’s draft boards.” 118 Myerding concluded, “If you go into court with your privileged status written all over your white face,” the court will respond accordingly. Myerding did not object to protest; rather, she objected to activists who used the court system to gain a public hearing, because she believed that, like the Selective Service System, the court acted as “an effectively functioning part of the death

machine.”¹¹⁹ For Myerding, anyone who used the courts and a trip to jail as a megaphone for their cause became complicit with the violent system of incarceration.

The violence of incarceration and of poverty revealed the Philadelphia women’s privilege, and the brutal violence of militarized policing reinforced it. When they first emerged as a Seneca peace camp affinity group, the Philadelphia women coalesced around the idea of preventing the violence of the cruise missile, which could carry out a potential bombing far away in Europe. Another bomb, dropped and detonated in their own city, forced the activists to reckon with violence closer to home. On May 13, 1985, in West Philadelphia, police dropped a small bomb onto the roof of a home at 6221 Osage Avenue.¹²⁰ The device detonated a rooftop gasoline tank, destroyed the home, and started a fire that burned down sixty-one more homes on the surrounding blocks. The targeted house belonged to members of MOVE, a small tightly-knit Black communal family. Neighbors called the group a “back to nature” community menace, and the Philadelphia police, mayor, and district attorney called them terrorists.¹²¹ MOVE members viewed themselves as religious disciples who put their faith in the ideas of their founder, John Africa.¹²² The MOVE bombing and the fate of member Ramona Africa, after her escape from the bombing, challenged and reshaped the Philadelphia encampment activists’ purpose and closed the door on their notion of camping for good. Reflecting on the weeks after the MOVE bombing,

¹¹⁹ Myerding, “Open Letter from Jane Myerding to the Women of the Puget Sound Women’s Peace Camp."


encampment member Z stated that, “I think we shifted from there to working more on racism from home.”

In 1968, handyman Vincente Leaphart wrote a pamphlet called *The Guidelines*. By 1972, he had changed his name to John Africa and established a headquarters for himself in West Philadelphia’s Powelton Village neighborhood, where he lived communally with a small group of followers, all of whom changed their last names to Africa. The group rejected modern technology, supported animal rights, and maintained strict vegetarian diets. They broadcasted their beliefs at zoos, political rallies, and from bullhorns and loudspeakers attached to the front porch of their home. In August 1978, after several MOVE members had been arrested, the group staged a protest on their property which resulted in a long siege and a final shoot out with the police. In the end, authorities arrested and convicted nine MOVE members for the shooting of a policeman, Officer John Ramp. As a result, authorities evicted the rest of the group and bulldozed their house. Seven years later, authorities charged four members of MOVE—now relocated to the house on Osage Avenue—with disorderliness and sanitation violations stemming from neighborhood complaints.

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124 Leaphart is often characterized as a co-writer because he dictated that text of *The Guidelines* to Donald Glassey, a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania. See Assefa Hizkias and Paul Wahrhaftig, *The MOVE Crisis in Philadelphia: Extremist Groups and Conflict Resolution* (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990), 10; Assefa and Wahrhaftig state that Leaphart wrote *The Guidelines* in the early 1970s, but Richard Evans sets the date at 1968. In Evans, *MOVE*, 5.

125 Wagner-Pacifici, *Discourse and Destruction*, 15.


127 In their reporting on the day of the bombing, journalists Thomas Gibbons, Robert Terry, and Janet McMillan stated that, “Although specific charges were not available, sources said they stemmed from complaints by MOVE’s neighbors.” The reporters continued, “The property, where packs of stray dogs and cats roam, has been cited for
Figure 25. MOVE Member Works on Bunker atop the Group’s House in the 6200 block of Osage Avenue, May 13, 1985
Source: John Costello, *Philadelphia Inquirer*

numerous sanitation violations.” See Gibbons, Terry, and McMillan, “Members Threaten Officers,” 1; s Also found in Wagner-Pacifici, *Discourse and Destruction*, 49.
During the new arrest, MOVE members engaged in a stand-off with police because they refused to exit their home until authorities released their nine colleagues from prison.\textsuperscript{128} The impasse lasted for days. During that time, the police drew a cordon with barricades around the six square blocks surrounding the house and evacuated the neighborhood.\textsuperscript{129} By May 13, 1985, the police shut off the block’s water and electricity, stationed a stakeout and a bomb disposal unit, and engaged in a gunfight with armed MOVE members. In the afternoon, Philadelphia’s Mayor Goode held a press conference, and calling the conflict a “war,” stated that the police would seize the house by any means necessary.\textsuperscript{130} Less than two hours later, a police helicopter hovered over the Osage Avenue house while a passenger reached out and threw onto the house roof what looked to witnesses like a package, but was in fact a “satchel charge” bomb. A neighborhood witness to the bombing, Kareem Nadir, stated, “Do you know what they’ve just done? They’ve dropped a bomb on babies.” He was correct. Five adults and six children were killed in the explosion—everyone in the Osage Avenue MOVE family—except one woman and child, Ramona and Birdie Africa.\textsuperscript{131} At 1:30 am, five hours after the bombing, police arraigned Ramona Africa and ordered her held on three-million-dollar bond on charges of aggravated assault, reckless endangerment, offensive weapons, conspiracy, resisting arrest, and risking a catastrophe, all because of resisting


\textsuperscript{131} Gibbons, Cooke, and Coakley, “Gunfight Continues After Blast,” 10.
arrest for a failure to appear in court for a bond hearing on disorderly conduct. Six months later, authorities still held Africa at the Muncy high security women’s prison, 170 miles northwest of Philadelphia. It was not clear why. MOVE scholar Robin Wagner-Pacifici asserted “there was a “willful ignorance of the actual contents of the arrest warrants” on the part of authorities, and not even the police commissioner who ordered the bombing read the arrest warrants. During a regular group meeting after the bombing, Philadelphia encampment member Roberta reflected on the public’s lack of knowledge and wondered why Africa continued to be held. Another member wondered whether it was because she refused to work the system. Another member did not wish “to lambast Mayor Goode, etc...but [was] seeing the militarism inherent.” Encampment member Betsy, despite her colleague’s reserved judgement, wanted to take action. Z asserted that if the Osage Avenue neighborhood had been white, the authorities would not have let the neighborhood burn. Laura agreed with Z, stating, “Also, the fact that they would drop a bomb is important. The fact that they [MOVE] wouldn’t fit into our

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133 There was a wide disparity between the “lower-order magnitude” of the MOVE members’ crimes and the calculated physical risks in interactions between MOVE members and police. Wagner-Pacifici asserts, “There was a “willful ignorance of the actual contents of the arrest warrants” on the part of “those in charge,” and that not even Police Commissioner Sambor who ordered the bombing read the arrest warrants. Pacific concludes, “Certain crimes do tend to be associated with set levels of police force. When one simply doesn’t know what crime one is dealing with, the level of force has no legal parameters.” See Wagner-Pacifici, Discourse and Destruction, 104.

134 “Meeting Minutes, November 19, 1985 P1,” November 19, 1985, 1, DG 157 Philadelphia Women's Peace Encampment Records, Historical and Organizational Files Box 1, Folder PWPE Minutes, 1984-1985, Swarthmore College Peace Collection; Unlike the charges against the MOVE members, the militarized forces used against them were indeed clear; well before the bombing, a 250 member police force had evacuated “civilians,” cordoned off a six-city-block area, and fired over 10,000 rounds of ammunition from automatic weapons and assault rifles. In Assefa and Wahrhaftig, The MOVE Crisis in Philadelphia, 113.
system makes them expendable.” A little over a year later, Z would echo Laura’s comment by quoting a theme framed as a question, presented at the All People’s Congress National March on Racism in Philadelphia: “Why do you think white lives are worth more than black lives?”

Ramona Africa presented her perspective on that question at her grand jury testimony:

...what really makes us so bitter is that nine innocent MOVE people are in prison for one hundred years each, for a murder no one saw ‘em commit, for a murder no one can prove they committed, cause they did not commit it. At the same time, the world saw system officials drop that bomb on us, killing eleven innocent MOVE people and these officials is still walkin’ the street, still employed in the system, and still bein’ payed with the tax dollars to keep on murdering money-poor unofficial poor folks.

After the MOVE bombing, racism became central to the Philadelphia encampment’s concerns. From their group’s inception in April 1983, the activists attempted to answer the question, “Philadelphia Women’s Encampment: Why?” They all agreed on two fundamental reasons for being: first, that “it was wrong for people to be hungry, homeless, jobless, hopeless in a land of such obscene plenty,” and secondly, that “it’s wrong for people to be developing nuclear technology that affords us the ability to wipe out all of life on earth many times over.”

This twofold purpose set their activist course:

So we work, we speak out, we act in opposition to the generals and the corporation men. But our uneasiness lingers. We look again, more deeply perhaps and discover that the very fact that we happen to be women makes us targets of male-inspired violence in many aspects of our personal lives too. Some of us have been raped; some of us have been poorly trained to compete for jobs of our choice, and if we do get them, are paid significantly less than men are paid for doing the same work; some of us regularly suffer verbal abuse for walking down the street; some of us are persecuted

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135 “Meeting Minutes, November 19, 1985 P1,” 1.
137 Wagner-Pacifici, *Discourse and Destruction*, 105.
for our sexual choices, and those of us who have had husbands or male lovers may have had our self-esteem brutalized, if not our bodies.  

Along with sexism, the women acknowledged other similar oppressions, including “racism, classism and every form of human chauvinism rooted in an ethic of power over. But in the Philadelphia encampment’s early documents, the listed items other than sexism had a perfunctory tone; they opposed sex-based chauvinism more than classism or racism because they saw it every day in their own lived experience. The MOVE bombing changed that. Encampment member Peggy stated that she and “most other people I know” were shocked by “the burning down of an entire city block by police dropping bombs on a neighborhood in the city.” Peggy concluded, “[We were] unable to move or know what to do about it…at least having a focus on Southwest Philadelphia meant we were at least doing something.” Violence inflicted on the members of MOVE, starting with the bombing of their house, the sudden deaths of its inhabitants, and the arrest and incarceration of its one surviving adult victim, brought racism out of a perfunctory list of ills and into close proximity for the Philadelphia women.  

Conclusion  

A collective examination of the encampments in Kent, Washington, St. Paul, Minnesota, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania represents a change in the peace camping movement towards

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140 The direct link between violence, grief, proximity, and political ideas that is revealed in the connection between MOVE bombings and the shifting activist focus of the PWPE is underscored by Judith Butler’s assertions about the vital link between political communities and the vulnerability of bodies, “...each of us is constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies—as a site of desire and physical vulnerability, as a site of a publicity at once assertive and exposed.” Judith Butler, Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence (London; New York: Verso, 2006), 20.
addressing local problems of economic disparity—and in the case of the Philadelphia encampment, white privilege. Reviewing the camps collectively reveals the limits of 1980s women’s peace camping as an activist strategy for economic social justice. The similarities among the Puget Sound Women’s Peace Camp, the Minnesota Women’s Camp for Peace and Justice, and the Philadelphia Women’s Peace Encampment became quickly apparent. Seneca women’s peace camp affinity group members established each in the summer or fall of 1983 and they all held a mutual common cause: to oppose the deployment of the cruise missile in Europe. Beyond the most obvious likenesses, all three women’s peace camps reveal a common ideological influence: to oppose nuclear weapons in tandem with supporting the quest for material equality. Because of their economic missions, each camp appropriated the activist tools and strategies of anti-nuclear groups, the Abalone and Clamshell Alliances which were developed as a byproduct of their ongoing corporate occupations. Each camp had its own distinctions as well, and it is in those differences that the boundaries of peace camping as a vehicle for political protest are revealed. The arc of their members’ communal experiences corresponded to each encampment’s Quixotic “windmills,” or set of economic wrongs each group hoped to right, their distinct geographies, and finally to their own white, feminine, and middle-class narratives.

The peace camps in Kent, Washington and in St. Paul, Minnesota were shaped ideologically and territorially by their proximity to the companies they protested. Their protest against the weapons built by Boeing Company and Sperry Defense was their raisons d’être. Authorities evicted both camps either shortly before or after the deployment of cruise missiles at Greenham Common in November 1983. After those evictions, neither encampment flourished,
but not only because of their removals. City managers ousted the women of the Kent, Washington camp, but the women procured a house with land to camp on nearby. Despite their new property, they stumbled—in part on their own exclusionary white identity—and with few members remaining, broke camp within a year. Like the Puget Sound camp, the Minnesota encampment lasted less than two years, and during its tenure the women braved inclement weather and multiple evictions. Their endurance constituted their most remarkable accomplishment. The St. Paul peace-camping women battled publicly with the Minnesota weather in tents and longhouses on a highway island across from the Sperry Corporation. Ultimately, authorities forcibly evicted the St. Paul campers, and they did not camp for a second northern winter. Unlike their Puget Sound sisters, the women did not stumble on their own exclusionary tendencies; instead, their insecure reliance on the arbitrary benevolence of the state highway department ended their camping experiment. The Minnesota women had no foothold on which to wield political agency. The Puget Sound and Minnesota women’s peace camps did not survive because of their insularity and dependency, respectively, a set of critical fault lines that were embedded in their members’ cultural and political identities.

Using camping as a measure, the Philadelphia Women’s Peace Encampment had even less success than the Puget Sound or Minnesota camps. But ultimately, they were a longer lasting and more successful activist venture. The Philadelphia women gathered for the first time in the spring of 1983 and remained active as a group through 1988. They differed from the Puget Sound and Minnesota campers in that they were not so singularly focused on one protest object. They had a plethora of ever-changing causes, including battles with corporations like IBM, diplomatic missions, and ultimately the longstanding racial inequities in their own Southwest
Philadelphia. Beyond their diverse set of foes, however, the Philadelphia encampment persisted because they circumvented cultural obstacles. Through a deft use of performative irony, by donning either business attire, formal wear, or waitress uniforms, the Philadelphia women wielded their gender in their protest performances not by celebrating their feminine difference but by lampooning it. Paradoxically, because the Philadelphia women never established their own physical camp and instead remained embedded in their city, they could not ignore the violence and local inequities that they witnessed every day in their own community. By virtue of proximity, the Philadelphia women came to recognize their own racial and economic advantages and reckoned with their own practices which perpetuated their own exclusions and biases. By recognizing the privilege that camping required, and choosing to remain embedded in their city not as campers but as ordinary residents, the Philadelphia women revealed the limitations of camping peace bodies.
CHAPTER FIVE

ORGANIZED PEACE BODIES: FRAUEN FÜR DEN FRIEDEN AND PEACE CAMPS ON THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT

On October 15, 1983, the West Berlin peace activist women of Frauen für den Frieden (Women for Peace) decided to stay in their own city to mark the International Days of Protest, a week-long series of demonstrations across Canada, the United States, and Europe. The intercontinental protests opposed the 1979 NATO two-track decision to jump-start the manufacture and deployment of land-based medium-range missiles. The West Berlin women acknowledged that their decision to stay in their city, which would not host weapons, might have seemed odd to most of their activist colleagues who were congregating at military bases and weapon sites across the Western world. The Berlin women remained at home because their city represented the symbolic “center of confrontation between both blocks” of the politically-divided Cold War world. For their part in the protest week, Frauen für den Frieden (FFDF) would counter Berlin’s East–West brokenness by forming a human chain along the city’s famous dividing wall.¹

Despite their choice to remain in their hometown during the mass protest, members of Berlin’s FFDF typically had a wide-ranging territory for their actions. The summer before their

wall action, the peace women trained activists who then traveled four hundred miles west to the mountainous Hunsrück area of West Germany to establish a women’s peace camp adjacent to the United States Hasselbach military base. In addition, each summer from 1981 through 1983, members of the Berlin group exited their city and crossed international borders in mass marches that covered nearly two thousand miles. Some of the women who formed a chain with their bodies to highlight the Berlin landmark had in fact just returned from Geneva, Switzerland, the endpoint of their most recent summer march. Several of the women did not return; instead, they chose to remain in the Swiss city to establish a women’s peace camp outside of the United Nations compound at the *Palais des Nations*. Berlin’s FFDF played a vital role in establishing two women’s peace camps, West Germany’s Hunsrück Women’s Resistance Camp and *Camp pour la Paix* in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Berlin FFDF provides insight into factors that pushed women to form encampments, as well as the links that bound European women’s peace camps with each other and the broader anti-nuclear activist movement around the globe. Berlin’s FFDF and the pair of peace camps the group generated demonstrate the ways that European peace women responded to the looming deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles in Europe. The women of Berlin’s FFDF created transnational networks sustained through training, workshops, newsletters, conferences, and travel, which included personal journeys, organized tours, and activist marches that crossed national borders. The European encampments constructed through these networks built a practical framework for feminist direct action that made its way from Britain to the United States to Germany and Switzerland. Examining women’s peace networks and the mobilization of peace-camping bodies sheds light on the United States’ military and nuclear presence on the
European continent. The women of FFDF awakened the public to their potential nuclear precarity.

The members of the October 15, 1983 Berlin Wall “human chain” articulated their primary mission as well as that of the West German and Swiss women’s peace camps they had engendered. The linked women made a simple list of demands which they addressed to Eastern and Western audiences on both sides of their city’s barrier. The United States received the first demand: “Stop the deployment of Pershing II and Cruise missiles.” The women’s second message addressed the Soviets: “Scrap the SS20s!” The third edict called for all European citizens to press for a “Europe free of Nuclear Weapons.” Another demand followed: “Turn swords into plowshares,” which the women addressed to the world at large. After the fourth directive, the demonstration took a festive turn. Children played games and musicians performed a trumpet concert. The wall itself performed, by serving as a backdrop that framed the women’s fifth and final command: “The two German states, West and East Berlin, must not be allowed to become a battlefield again, not to be misused as a launch pad for missiles, not to become a target for nuclear weapons.” Reflecting later on their own action, the women asserted that as citizens of Berlin they were uniquely positioned to speak out about nuclear weapons, because the wall served as a territorial reminder of Cold War tensions that they lived with every day. Those conflicts wove through their everyday experiences just as the wall twisted through and divided their city. On their day of action, the peace women of Berlin used their linked bodies to

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3 “Menchenkette an Der Mauer.”

4 “Menchenkette an Der Mauer.”
showcase the symbolic epicenter for all the protests that would be featured during the international protest week at weapons laboratories, corporations, and military installations that had a vested interest in the wall. Their embodied protest represented a “short form” of the peace-camping method. Though their engagement lasted for hours rather than weeks, months, or even years, FFDF adopted the methods of the European and American peace camps—some which they had recently helped to establish—and used their bodies to make their claim by standing in the spot that best illustrated their protest.

_Frauen für den Frieden_

In 1980, thirty-three-year-old feminist Eva Quistorp established the West Berlin branch of FFDF with her colleagues Detel Aurand and Eva Mari Bannach Eple. The group would serve as a central hub for West Berlin’s women peace activists.\(^5\) FFDF began its journey as a 1980 petition drive, _Anstiftung der Frauen zum Frieden_ or Inciting Women to Peace. The campaign called on feminists, peace activists, and environmentalists to resist a popular German political effort to amend the constitution so that women could be conscripted for mandatory military service. The attempt to institute the constitutional change had been circulating since 1975, and by 1980, two of the major political parties in Germany supported it.\(^6\) In their petition statement, Quistorp and her colleagues argued that by calling on women to join the German military, the government did not seek to elevate women’s rights but instead simply hoped to recruit more people. The Inciting Women to Peace petition objected to women’s service because they


opposed the “interests of the military, the interests of the war, nuclear power plants, and the nuclear warheads.” They wished to align their quest for gender equality with an argument for peace.

One year before the Inciting Women to Peace petition, women in Scandinavia, Austria, Switzerland, France, Holland, and England began circulating statements and gathering signatures of their own against nuclearism and the escalating arms race. The multinational petitionerers all intended to coordinate their efforts by handing over their signatures collectively at two 1980 United Nations Women’s Conferences, to make sure that peace would be at the forefront of the conferences’ agendas. The West Berlin feminist monthly *Courage* took note of the international petitioning efforts and responded by hosting its own women’s conference in Cologne, which led to the birth of the European-based FFDF. In her forward to a 1982 collection of the new group’s newsletter articles, Quistorp reflected on how the international groundswell of feminist support for a peace agenda inspired her to move beyond mere petitioning and start the new peace group’s Berlin branch. With the new group, she aimed to continue strengthening international cooperation between women’s peace activists not only in Europe but across the Atlantic in the United States. Quistorp argued that feminist women needed to make a political stand for peace.

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8 “Anstiftung Der Frauen Zum Frieden,” 1.

9 “Anstiftung Der Frauen Zum Frieden,” 2.

because their liberation depended on effective disarmament. FFDF would serve as a stage for “autonomous” women, or members of the women’s liberation movement in Germany.  

Eva Quistorp committed herself to politics when she was a student at the Free University in Berlin in the mid-1960s. The devout daughter of a pastor in a Confessing Church, an anti-Nazi Protestant church movement, Quistorp grew up in in a small town on the lower Rhine, in a rural part of western-most Germany. She claimed that “[s]tudying in Berlin was like jumping into deep water for me.” Because of her Confessing Church ties, theology professor Helmut Gollwitzer befriended Quistorp, and she often spent time with his family in their house near the university. The Gollwitzer household was a home base for members of the radical student movement like Rudi Dutschke, who led 1968 anti-authoritarian, extra-parliamentary opposition (APO) protests. Though Quistorp became close to Dutschke and his wife and participated in sit-ins and teach-ins at the university, she did not take the lead in any political resistance until the following decade. In 1972 she traveled to Chile to speak on behalf of Dutschke, who had been invited by its socialist president, Salvador Allende, to speak on socialism. Quistorp claimed that


12 The Confessing Church movement in Germany was founded by Pastor Martin Niemoller and pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer in 1934. Confessing churches represented only a "tiny radical minority" of churches in Germany which engaged in a Kirchenkampf or church struggle against Nazism. See Robert P. Erickson, "Nonconformity, Opposition and Resistance in the Third Reich: Essays in Honour of Peter Hoffmann," 115-135, in Nicosia, Francis R. Ed. and Stokes, Lawrence D., Germans Against Nazism (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 115.


South America was “an insane world opening for me.” Because of the 1973 Pinochet coup, after which many of her Chilean friends were tortured, Quistorp became even more committed to radical political reform. In the mid-1970s, Quistorp moved to Gorleben, in northern West Germany to train as a teacher. In 1977, authorities chose Gorleben—which had been an old salt mining area—to serve as a nuclear waste disposal facility. Consequently, Quistorp joined a local women’s group that became a part of an extended occupation of the site. Over 100,000 anti-nuclear activists demonstrated against the proposed nuclear waste storage site. Quistorp asserted that her experiences at Gorleben taught her how to forge political alliances through a common cause that bridged gaps between people as different as rural farm wives and urbane radical women.

In his biography of Green politician Joschka Fisher, biographer Paul Hockenos asserts that the 1970s German anti-nuclear occupations of Gorleben and Whyl—a proposed site for a nuclear power plant in the forested area of Southern Germany—were “rolling experiments in participatory democracy” that featured open universities, informal courses, and lectures, serving as an “antidote to Germany’s elite institutions.” The anti-nuclear occupations represent just a

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15 Christopher Becker-Scaum and Robert Camp, Interview with Eva Quistorp.


portion of the thousands of German grassroots initiatives formed in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{20} After the Gorbelen protests, Quistorp joined her colleagues Rudi Dutschke, Petra Kelly, and Roland Vogt and gathered a $20,000 budget and formed the Green Party. They participated in the first European parliamentary elections in 1979 and won 3.2\% of the vote.\textsuperscript{21} The following January, the Greens formed a German national party with a platform focused on environmentalism, feminism, and peace, and launched a campaign to gain representation in the German Bundestag.\textsuperscript{22}

The linked concerns of peace, women’s rights, and the environment which grounded the Green Party also formed the foundation for the women’s peace camping movement. Quistorp used the political skills and the ideals she developed with the Greens to build the Berlin FFDF. Quistorp recollected that during those years, she met Congresswoman Bella Abzug at a Berlin conference, who called on women to “interfere in international politics.”\textsuperscript{23} Quistorp and the Berlin women for peace did just that; they meddled with international politics of the Cold War by conducting a feminist nonviolent civil disobedience campaign and by contributing to the formation of two peace camps in West Germany and Switzerland.

Members of the FFDF mobilized their activists in remarkably militarized ways. Like soldiers, the Berlin peace women underwent training, conducted long marches, engaged in

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\item Hockenos, \textit{Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic}, 134.
\item E. Gene Frankland, Donald Schoonmaker, \textit{Between Protest And Power: The Green Party In Germany} (Avalon Publishing, 1992), 84.
\item Christopher Becker-Scaum and Robert Camp, Interview with Eva Quistorp Quistorp; \textit{Frauen Fur Den Frieden: Analysen, Dokumente Und Aktionen}, 10.
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nonviolent skirmishes, occupied territory, endured privation, and sustained a communications network which kept them informed and sometimes even coordinated their efforts. Like a military intelligence command center, FFDF sustained the flow of ideas and information while they mobilized bodies from their base in West Berlin. Political Scientist Gene Sharp asserts that, “Nonviolent action is a means of combat as is war. It involves the matching of forces and the waging of ‘battles,’ requires wise strategy and tactics, and demands of its ‘soldiers’ courage, discipline, and sacrifice.”24 FFDF managed ways to challenge NATO and allied governments’ military intentions. The peace women wrote letters, published newsletters, organized regular meetings, reported on actions, and initiated conferences. The Berlin group also used bodies to confront power. Though committed to nonviolence, the FFDF resistance campaign’s tactics echoed military maneuvers, because they orchestrated peace bodies in blockades and marches that crossed international borders and provided feminist civil disobedience training for women who adopted their cause.25

FFDF provided the literary and physical networks that were directly responsible for the 1983 construction of two women’s peace camps: the Hunsrück Women’s Resistance Camp and the Camp pour la Paix. The Hunsrück encampment grew from a FFDF-led intensive training course in nonviolent civil disobedience at a Berlin women’s summer college. The Hunsrück women occupied a farm field in Reckershausen, West Germany, a small village situated about four hundred miles west of Berlin. The women chose their location because of its proximity to


the nearby Hasselbach military base, a potential host for cruise missiles. The Berlin group also had direct links to the international Geneva-based Camp pour la Paix. Participants of FFDF’s 1983 long march from West Berlin to Geneva decided to remain at the end of their long walk and bivouac in a field behind the United Nation’s complex at Geneva’s Palais des Nations where disarmament talks were set to begin. In both cases, camping bodies enacted FFDF’s disruptive politics.

*Hunsrück Women’s Resistance Camp*

In June 1982, Berlin peace women Claudia Straven and Suzanne Seeland traveled from West Germany to the United States to join the mass demonstrations that accompanied the Second U.N. Special Session for Disarmament in New York City. Straven and Seeland found encouragement from likeminded protesters from around the world, but they were particularly moved when they met with another more concentrated band of anti-nuclear activists, all women, from dozens of countries who gathered at Barnard College for a day-long Global Feminist Disarmament Conference. The conference featured feminist theorists, musicians, street theater performers, and anti-nuclear activists, all of whom met for several discussion sessions on the relationships between militarism and feminism and topics ranging from trade unions to peace activism and lesbian exclusion. Several sessions featured discussions about developing a theory

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of feminist nonviolence based on principles sketched out in unity statements by the Women’s Pentagon Action (WPA) and the feminist environmental group, Women for Life on Earth (WLOE) and put into practice at the peace camp at Greenham Common. Straven and Seeland exchanged ideas with their conference colleagues and returned to Berlin to apply their newfound knowledge by teaching local activists.  

Three months later, in September 1982, women from twenty different West German cities met at the annual “summer university” for women to undergo a week-long training session based on the materials carried from New York City by Straven and Seeland. There, students learned the practicalities and ethics of feminist nonviolence, organization principles, campaign strategies, and feminist decision making theories. One of the summer university courses which featured in FFDF’s newsletter and in plenaries, “Women’s Camp against Nuclear Weapons,” targeted future peace campers. The following summer in 1983, several former summer university students put their training into practice by setting out for Reckershausen to establish an encampment.

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The setting for the Hunsrück training in nonviolent disobedience had a rich story of its own. The Berlin summer universities, like feminist presses, bookstores, and health clinics, grew from the West German women’s autonomous movement. The first summer university in Berlin took place in 1976, and by its third year, several thousand women from all over Germany took part. The annual two-week Berlin gatherings for women echoed the burgeoning women’s studies centers established in American universities during the mid-seventies. By the early 1980s, Berlin’s Free University hosted the summer universities on its campus. In 1982, when Straven and Seeland taught their course, the rich “autonomous” or liberated setting of the Berlin summer university provided fertile ground for teaching the feminist nonviolent theories they learned about during their visit to the United States. Straven and Seeland taught from a text they carried with them back from New York, the feminist civil disobedience handbook “Blockade the Bombmakers.”

The “Blockade the Bombmakers” manual provides a window through which to view the complicated web that connected individuals with women’s peace camps and the peace organizations that sometimes sponsored them. Women for Life on Earth (WLOE) founder and Women’s Pentagon Action (WPA) member Ynestra King wrote one of the booklet’s

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foundational chapters, “Feminism,” which explained the theoretical underpinnings of feminist direct action. WPA activist and vital worker for War Resisters International (WRI) Susan Pines co-edited the text. Editors based the “Blockade the Bombmakers” manual on their recent experiences with civil disobedience and “a thick file of old handbooks” on past actions. The authors claimed that as they reviewed activist experiences, they became increasingly conscious of the links between feminism and nonaggression and how those connections “greatly expanded their understanding of nonviolent action.”

The editors wrote the training booklet especially for a June 14, 1982 New York City action in Midtown Manhattan in front of the United Nations missions of the world’s five nuclear nations, the Soviet Union, Britain, France, China, and the United States. During that action, a contingent of three thousand police officers assigned to the protest site arrested more than 1,600 protesters throughout the day. According to New York Times reporter Paul Montgomery, “well-rehearsed” protesters divided into a dozen smaller groups and received four hours of nonviolence training. The groups engaged in role-playing exercises in which participants put themselves in the place of the police and imagined what it would be like to be in their position. Their training could be seen in some of the day’s protests as well. The handbook gave instructions to protesters regarding how to approach police barricades, instructing them to engage in “nonthreatening


37 “Blockade the Bombmakers,” 2.

38 “Blockade the Bombmakers,” 4.

Montgomery reported that a group from Pax Christi protested at the French Mission, and “knelt at the barricades” and offered bits of bread to the assembled crowd as a sacramental offering of the “bread of peace.” One group of women protesters took the handbook’s suggestion to utilize creativity and draped themselves in yarn and carried a poster displaying the famed one-armed Aphrodite, with the caption, “Join the Venus de Milo—disarm.” Once arrested, a great many of the demonstrators refused to walk to the buses lined up to carry them off, choosing instead to lie down and force the police to drag them from protest line to curbside. The New York activists clearly followed the manual’s instructions regarding passive resistance on arrest. The training packet the Berliners carried home from New York City to their pupils at the summer university advised extensive training, role-playing to build empathy, affinity groups, direct and symbolic action, and strategic civil disobedience upon arrest. Summer university pupils went on to the Hunsrück camp where the lessons they learned in civil disobedience influenced their encampment structures, their actions, and their relationships with the military and the local communities around the base.

Straven and her colleagues’ guide contained advice for activists who might face power struggles, and it advocated mindful training to overcome oppressive chauvinist behaviors, including a section on how to eradicate what they called “patterns of domination.” A description of corrective discussion lessons asserted, “More often than not, men are the ones dominating

40 “Blockade the Bombmakers,” 17.
41 Montgomery, “1,600 Arrested in Nuclear Protests at 5 U.N. Missions, A23.”
42 Montgomery, “1,600 Arrested in Nuclear Protests at 5 U.N. Missions,” A23.
43 It is notable that women who attended Straven and Seeland’s course and went on to Hunsrück the following summer had also taken part in the men’s and women’s peace camp at the Grossengtingen military base. See Brown, “Women’s Resistance Camp,” 67.
group activity.” This portion of the training booklet included drills which recommended that participants count to five before responding to one another in order to combat interruptions. In another lesson, participants learned to govern their urge to speak on every subject and to refrain from overvaluing their own answers and solutions to problems. The summer university organizers also designed seminars to help students deepen their understanding of feminist concepts with theoretical questions about the links between sexism, militarism, and violence.

On July 15, 1983, women from Berlin, Heidelberg, and Cologne gathered for four weeks in a meadow nine kilometers from the Hasselbach United States Air Force 38th Tactical Missile Wing military base. One thousand women pitched eighty tents in the field rented for the summer from Adelle Boor, a retired local schoolteacher. Camp visitor Sabine Zurmühi reported that throughout the summer, Boor would occasionally visit the campers “for a talk and have a nice time.” The Hunsrück campers pitched their tents near the Hasselbach military base because NATO chose the spot for cruise missile deployment and because the German government deliberately hid the site.

44 “Blockade the Bombmakers Civil Disobedience Campaign,” 36.

45 “Blockade the Bombmakers Civil Disobedience Campaign,” 36, 37.


Wüscheim, a village just north of the campers’ cloistered field, offers a good example of the militarized territory that the camping women invaded with their presence. At first glance, the towns, hills, and dense woods dotted with occasional fields where farmers raised sheep and vegetables presented an idyllic pastoral picture. Closer inspection revealed other less-benign items scattered in the Wüscheim landscape. According to Hunsrück camp visitor Christina Perincioli, the area’s terrain was for concealing weapons. In the Berlin feminist monthly *Courage*, Perincioli described the military landscape hidden from plain view from the vantage point of a small farmstead in Wüscheim’s woods. The forest camouflaged an abandoned fuel depot, unused ramps for outdated 1950s-era missiles, superfluous fire control systems for Nike Hercules surface-to-air missiles, and radar and guidance systems. Fences barred the walking
paths in front of the cottage, but an intrepid stroller could circle towards the back and see vacated towers, a weapons depot, and barracks hidden in the trees. One area of the forest-armory had a new roll of reinforced barbed wire around a weapons depot, which stood as the only evidence that the base might be in preparation for something new.\textsuperscript{48} Despite the military’s attempts to hide them, the Hasselbach plans had been revealed in 1982. The German government was preparing for ninety-six West German–bound cruise missiles that would hide in the Wüscheim woods.\textsuperscript{49} The women in the Reckershausen field hoped to provide further evidence to back up the discovery.

In the first week of July, after several hundred camping women gathered with their cohorts and pitched their tents, they discussed ways to target the Hasselbach base with their first action. To do that, the camping women utilized a traditional “direct action” organizational model. In her camp memoir, Alison Brown reported, “We organized the camp borrowing from the experiences of other anti-nuclear and peace groups.”\textsuperscript{50} One affinity group resided in each tent and the members cooked and cared for one another and planned their own actions.\textsuperscript{51} The Blockade manual defined the affinity groups as small independent collectives that could be coordinated with other groups.\textsuperscript{52} Each cluster christened their shelters with names like Bella Blitz, Organized Chaos, Millie Dances, Cassiopeia, or Widerspinst, which allowed the groups to


\textsuperscript{49} Perincioli, “Nike in Front of Your Kitchen Door,” 8; Paul Hockenos, \textit{Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic}, 161, 162.

\textsuperscript{50} Brown, “Women’s Resistance Camp,” 67.


\textsuperscript{52} “Blockade the Bombmakers Civil Disobedience Campaign,” 33.
establish and maintain unique identities. Affinity members appointed a representative spokeswoman for their group, who attended a camp-wide spokes-council where members discussed and strategized overall issues and actions. This gave individual women the ability to draw strength from the whole camping community and to use that collective power to act in ways they would never be able to independently. Brown praised the results of the model, asserting that it produced a “synergistic effect” which allowed camping women to accomplish more as a collective than their individual efforts accounted for.

By the end of the camp’s first week, the women in their affinity tents prepared for their first action by arming themselves with pots, pans, lids, and ladles. Nearby, in anticipation for the arrival of cruise missiles, Hasselbach soldiers maneuvered convoys of truck-bed ramps that would carry missiles to concealed locations through the wooded countryside. On July 20, 1983, having been alerted to one of the convoy exercises, the Hunsrück women set out for the fenced field where soldiers prepared for their scheduled Lance missile launch drill. When the camping women arrived at the field, they banged a beat with their cooking instruments. The soldiers noted the noise and approached the gate. The campers took advantage of the momentary shift in personnel, and blowing whistles and banging their utensils, the kitchen brigade charged the practice field and dispersed in all directions. Pandemonium prevailed and without much resistance, the soldiers simply gave up their scheduled exercises and drove their missile convoy

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elsewhere down a wooded road. Undaunted, the campers chased the launch caravan for over two hours through the Hunsrück woods and fields. Despite their hot pursuit, the women did not catch the fleeing convoy. Nonetheless, they found cheer in the fact that local residents actively supported their cause, because many of them stopped to point out the direction of the fleeing convoys.  

The campers made connections with the residents of the area. They staffed information tables in the villages and visited locals from door to door, and though they had occasional breakthroughs, they were generally unwelcomed. Camper and memoirist Alison Brown recollected that, while community members often accepted and even assisted the campers’ stance against nuclear weapons, most locals rejected many of the campers’ feminist and often lesbian identities, and roundly opposed their choice to live without men. A female pastor from a town not far from the peace camp, Reverend Augusta Dahl, explained, “Most women in the area are traditional farm-wives who only know the word ‘emancipation’ from television. I do not know how such a woman can accept the exotic women of the camp.” Residents sometimes formed notions about the camper’s “exoticism” simply because of their numbers. The mayor of Wüschiem commented on the influx of campers, “Since there are so many women, it is not impossible that some of them are going into the pubs to drink lemonade and look for men.”

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57 Zurmühli, “Inside the Hunsrück Camp,” 8; Perhaps it was not surprising that locals supported the encampment women as they chased the convoys. Historians Catherine Lutz and Cynthia Enloe assert that “U.S. Nuclear weapons based on territory of its NATO allies were deadly, illegal, costly, militarily useless, and deeply, deeply unpopular.” See Catherine Lutz, ed., *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle against U.S. Military Posts* (Washington Square, N.Y: New York University Press, 2009), 96.


60 Perincioli, “Nike in Front of Your Kitchen Door,” 10.
women were outsiders with unpredictable behavior, and there were a lot of them. Hunsrück camping woman Sabine Stammer asserted that locals classified campers in one of three ways: as “nice girls,” who were told to go home, “wild women,” who were simply avoided, and the “furious ones,” who were beaten.⁶¹ According to the terms of Stammer’s assessment, soldiers on maneuvers viewed campers as “wild women,” because they fled their presence. But Stammer’s assessment does not hold when viewed in the context of local residents’ responses after the Hunsrück campers’ first action. The kitchen band of convoy-chasing women puzzled the village-dwellers, but they did not avoid the women or tell them to return home. Community members steered the women in the direction of the convoys and assisted them in their peace aims. Though the camping women were culturally alien to the majority of Hunsrück area residents, their message was not always rejected because of it. Their reception was quite different than the consistently hostile one received by their peace camp sisters in New York.

Hunsrück women disrupted the Hasselbach base with tactics other than pandemonium, hot pursuit, and noisemaking. In most cases, the women’s attempts at such disruptions had no effect, because except when the soldiers gathered for exercises, the base stood nearly empty. One camper reported that if someone made a “noise for a certain amount of time near the wide open Hasselbach area, one or two soldiers might appear.”⁶² The campers could not easily repeat the convoy exercise protest tactic. Charging the field to create chaos did not work if no soldiers were available to startle and confuse. So, the camping women decided to use silence and stillness as

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their weapon by standing at the Hasselbach gate, holding vigil. The women stayed on watch for several days and even set up temporary sleeping quarters at the entrance to what they called the “death base” camp. One camping woman on sentry duty reported that after some time, the base soldiers on guard became so familiar with them that they would offer water and even take orders for hot meals. In the materials for their summer university training, the Hunsrück organizers learned that holding vigil served as a long-term tactic that allowed them to adapt to the conditions at hand. By holding vigil, the Hunsrück campers revealed a sophisticated understanding of direct action, one that would allow them to change tactics and use their imagination to find the most effective options for facing changing circumstances.

During the vigil, twenty independently-minded Hunsrück activists decided that they needed to shift their strategy and remain at the gate on a semi-permanent basis. The small collective gathered fallen branches and constructed a small satellite encampment of their own away from the Reckershausen field and adjacent to the military base’s entry drive. The women posted a sign across the front gate of the base which read “Deathbase Hasselbach,” and decorated the entrance drive with graffiti and webs woven of yarn. The women furnished their makeshift hut with home-built benches and a table, and even a comfortable sofa with chairs donated by sympathetic locals and garnered from village sales. Like the military base’s gate, the forest

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63 Civil Disobedience scholar Gene Sharp reports that standing in vigil or remaining in one spot over an extended period of time, sometimes for hours, days, weeks, or even years, served as a traditional and effective means of protest throughout the twentieth century. One example of its use by anti-nuclear protesters includes members of the British anti-nuclear group, Direct Action Committee against Nuclear War, who stood silently outside Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Research establishment for three months from July through September in 1958. See Sharp, The Politics of Nonviolent Action, 147.

campers’ little “house” also had an entry sign. It read, “Visiting hours for police and military, 3:00 to 3:30 p.m. only. We need our time and energy for ourselves.”

It is not certain whether Hasselbach officer Major Mirham obeyed the campers’ house rules when he visited the women. However, on the summer afternoon when he did, his intentions were clear. He admonished the women, “You ladies are in the military security zone and you need to be very careful because our guys are young and armed to the teeth.” Major Mirham’s words of caution were not a simple warning that might be issued to picnickers trespassing in a military zone. His words conveyed a much more sexually aggressive message. His soldiers were “guys” who were not only armed, but “young” and—he implied—virile and ready to find and force their will on the camping women. The Hunsrück campers were familiar with the gendered dynamics in Major Mirham’s cautionary advice; they even launched a local campaign against it. The women observed the ways that the military affected the community. While witnessing military exercises and convoys of equipment on the local roads and listening to the Starfighter jets’ sonic booms, the encampment women heard rumors of soldiers threatening the local women of the community as well. Brown recalled that the U.S. military was “pervasive” in the community, and that the missiles were “just one part of a system which both needs and perpetuates militarism.” Brown asserted that campers intended Hunsrück to be a “safe space” for women. By exiling men, the women of Hunsrück believed that they needed a barrier between


67 My sources do not reveal whether Hunsrück camping women observed any specific acts violence perpetrated by the soldiers against local women. They only reveal that women heard rumors of such acts. See Brown, "Women’s Resistance Camp," 69.
themselves and what they believed to be multiple forms of masculine military and sexual violence.  

Multiple women’s peace camp founding documents also explained their “women only’ policy in similar language. The Kent, Washington Puget Sound Women’s Peace Camp unity statement describes the group’s understanding of the intersectionality of militarism, violence, and power dynamics: “We see a relationship between the rise of militarism and the violence women experience on the street, on our jobs, and in our homes. Both are part of a system that is based on some people having power over others and that legitimizes the use of violence to resolve conflicts.” In the Seneca Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice handbook’s section “Why a Women’s Peace Camp,” Susan Pines stated that the a sex-segregated camp challenged the effects of violence and affirmed their vision of a “non-exploitative, nonauthoritarian, nonsexist, non-armed future.” The unity statements and handbooks of peace camps formed a small canon of traveling documents that explored the relationship between militarism and violence against women and the environment. That canon moved from hand to hand, from camp to camp, and thus built a feminist discourse of women’s peace separatism that posited the idea that activist women worked best in a safe and separated all-women’s space because of the connections between violence and sex oppression.

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71 Roggenkamp and Stammer, “Frauenwiderstandcamp,” 22.
Even the Hunsrück encampment’s most casual visitor had full view of the group’s intersectional approach to militarism, violence, and women’s oppression. A poster marking the Reckershausen field entrance stated, “We women are gathered in this peace camp not only because we are resisting the threat of Pershing II and cruise missiles but also because we feel threatened by the suppression of women on a daily basis which is built through the terror of violence and war.”72 Many of the encampment organizers were veteran peace activists who decided to help establish the Hunsrück camp after experiencing sexual discrimination at a 1982 blockade of the Bavarian Grossenstingen military base.73 Reflecting on her Hunsrück experiences in the German feminist magazine *Emma*, camper Sabine Stammer stated that the camp had a “double theme.” First, the Hunsrück women opposed the European missiles set to arrive. Secondly, the camp aimed to resist all acts of violence perpetrated in the interest of suppressing women. Stammer quoted one of her Hunsrück colleagues, “The media always points out that we are only against the missiles and ignore the fact that we are equally against being ruled by men.”74

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74 Roggenkamp and Stammer, “Frauenwiderstandcamp,” 22.
On July 30, 1983, during their second weekend of actions, the campers planned consecutive events that featured a pair of marches and a bicycle tour. Women from multiple West German cities had made a weekend trip to join the campers. The press and the police attended the actions as well. The participants in the events would meet at a common endpoint, the Hasselbach base compound. The cyclists had a two-part mission to first poke around on their bikes and discover military installations in the surrounding area, and then ride around the village.

75 Roggenkamp and Stammer, “Frauenwiderstandcamp,” 22.
streets and broadcast those locations to residents. Another larger group of camping women, numbering in the hundreds, trekked through the woods that surrounded the Hasselbach military base. As they walked, they foraged herbs and berries and enjoyed the shady forest. By the time the walkers met the cyclists and arrived at the base gates, six hundred women had gathered. In a jubilant mood, they all greeted the three hundred policemen awaiting their arrival with music. Despite their lighthearted approach, the campers were not playing around. They had come to push through the base’s sentry gate. The posters and signs the women carried, “No power for senile men,” and “Open door, open house for cruise missiles,” revealed their serious intentions. The women ignored the heavy police presence, broke the locks, and streamed through the opened entry gate. Stammer reported that never before had Germans “infiltrated a United States military installation.”

According to Stammer, even though the women remained for an hour, climbed the roofs of the empty military buildings, and “did not spare powerful words,” not one policeman intervened. Stammer believed that the police treated the protesting women as if they were children, and responded as they would to an infantile threat. However, circumstances beyond this perception also contributed to police restraint. At the time of the Hunsrück women’s incursion, the base contained no missiles to protect. The British police responded violently to the Greenham Common women only after the missiles’ arrival at the British Air Force Base. Despite the lack of

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76 Roggenkamp and Stammer, “Frauenwiderstandscamp,” 23.
77 Stammer, “Keyword: Tigerwoman,” 23.
missiles, three hundred police awaited the marching and cycling women. Authorities did not beat, arrest, or even detain the Hunsrück campers, but they most certainly stood on guard.

Figure 28. “During the Blessing of the House,” “Bie der Weihe des neugebauten Hauses” 1983
Source: Sybille Plogstedt, Courage

The Hunsrück women intended to remain after their first four weeks of action during the summer of 1983, but problems beset the campers. Beyond the external difficulty of failing to procure shelter for the winter, the encampment suffered internal disharmony. In August, near the end of their first camping summer, the women who left the Reckershausen field formed a semi-permanent “minicamp” near the Hasselbach gate. They constructed a house to signal their

intention to remain permanently. The women dug trenches for wastewater and fresh drinking water and held a ceremony of blessing for their octagonal wooden structure.\textsuperscript{80} According to Brown, who counted herself among the “minicamp” activists, members of the larger encampment rejected the new Hasselbach-adjacent site because the smaller group refused to work within the main camp’s cooperative “affinity” model. Working within the camp’s consensus structure took a great deal of time and effort. To abide by the camp’s rules, each affinity group appointed a representative to attend the spokes-council to divide responsibilities and decide on large actions. Because the minicamp bivouacked several kilometers away from the main field, its members found it difficult to send a member to attend the large group meetings.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{80} Zurmühli, “Inside the Hunsrück Camp,” 9.

\textsuperscript{81} Brown, “Women’s Resistance Camp,” 70.
Figure 29. “Constructing the Death Base House” 1983
Source: Sybille Plogstedt, Courage
According to Brown, the Reckershausen field campers called the “base gate” women squatters, because they did not take on night watch duties or take turns caring for the encampment children. By remaining at the “Deathbase” entrance, the women did not perform the caregiving tasks necessary for maintaining a healthy communal camping daily life. The base-campers left the Reckershausen women with quotidian nurturing responsibilities while they performed what they considered to be the vital camping business of visible direct action. The Hunsrück Resistance Camp thus fell prey to the same conflicts and sex discrimination problems which the campers had tried to avoid when they formed the Hunsrück encampment.82 Even segregating themselves into an all-female environment failed to solve the disputes that arose from a gendered division of labor.

Despite the tensions of its first season, women returned to the Hunsrück Resistance Camp for six more summers until 1989. In 1985, during the camp’s third summer, the women adjusted their “affinity” model so that one tent no longer made up one group. Women could choose to sleep in smaller tents, which allowed multiple tents in one affinity group. These smaller clusters found their unity in a larger “kitchen” tent not meant for sleeping. The nurturance found in preparing meals and eating together provided the cohesion necessary for the women to work together and continue to return each summer until 1989.83

In the encampment’s first summer, many Hunsrück women were trained in the art of feminist civil disobedience at the summer university. However, their experiences revealed that


83 In her analysis of the way that food informed government across German nation states in the twentieth century, historian Alice Weinreb asserts that food related activities are central to enforcing gender related norms. See Alice Weinreb, Modern Hungers: Food and Power in Twentieth-Century Germany (Oxford University Press, 2017), 5.
the “feminist” part of civil disobedience depended on more than a clear understanding of the patriarchal violence and domination they resisted. Because it was inhabited by women, did not make the Hunsrück encampment a feminist space. Civil disobedience that aimed to liberate women from oppression also required a reassessment of the value of reproductive labor. Peace camping created a setting for that reassessment and opened a pathway for feminist rather than simply feminine resistance. Women conducted long conversations in affinity tents and the larger daily “spokes-councils” and grappled with questions regarding who would take on the childcare duties or “action weekend” cycling tours. The larger affinity group structure did not rest on biological assumptions about either task. By exiting their former lives, peace-camping women did not simply seek nights under the stars, they attempted to create a temporary feminist reinvention of community. It is telling that the women of the smaller minicamp at the Hasselbach base built a house. Constructing a wooden home allowed minicamp women to extricate themselves from other peace campers’ choice to live outside and instead find a place to dwell easily inside established gendered patterns of domination.

*Camp pour la Paix*

Women’s peace camps, including Hunsrück, shared some characteristics. All maintained a women-only policy and addressed issues related to militarism and sexism while adopting an anti-nuclear stance. Few camps, however, could follow the example of the intrepid Minnesota campers who bivouacked on a median nestled between a divided highway, and fewer still could emulate the Greenham Common women who made a traditional claim to their site by relying on the logic of British Common Law. Some, like *Camp pour la Paix* in Geneva, Switzerland, had to hunker down in a double space set in a busy parking lot.
At first sight, the Hunsrück women, who leased a meadow from a sympathetic widow, and the women of Camp pour la Paix, who had to make do with two caravans in a cramped concrete corner, might seem to have little in common. Hunsrück women bivouacked in a highly militarized and remote part of West Germany, while the smaller Camp pour la Paix sat adjacent to the Palais des Nations, the Swiss home of the United Nations, where international negotiations over peace and war took place. The German peace campers aimed to expose deliberately hidden weapons systems, while the women of Camp pour la Paix camped near a spectacular compound of public buildings. However, despite their differences, the two camps shared commonalities. The Hunsrück Women’s Resistance Camp and Camp pour la Paix had the same anti-nuclear aspirations, and both began in the second half of 1983. More importantly, the camps shared origins. The women from Berlin’s FFDF who helped to gather and train the Hunsrück encampment organizers also planned and executed the international peace march that resulted in the birth of the small Swiss peace camp.

FFDF called that 1983 march Peace START, an approbation that reflected the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks’ ongoing negotiations taking place in Geneva, Switzerland, their march’s endpoint. The Berlin women staked out the operations for the Peace START march well ahead of time. They worked to ensure that they would have a steady stream of marchers along the route and that their efforts were, if not sanctioned, at least visible to local and federal government officials. They also sought support from the broader international peace community. Eva Quistorp and her colleagues notified the mayors and other political notables of each city on the march route, including the ministers of the West German states of Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg. The women also ensured that the march would not be staffed by West Berliners
only, and made it an international effort by sending two thousand letters to peace women in Germany, England, France, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Sweden, the U.S., Canada, and Australia. Before the journey began, Quistorp also made sure to receive the endorsement of a robust list of notable peace activists, including the Green Party’s Petra Kelly, Norwegian peace researcher Johan Galtung, and long-time American antiwar activist and Project Plowshares founder Phillip Berrigan. Quistorp and her FFDF colleagues showed remarkable skills as peace action strategists because they achieved three vital ingredients for a successful campaign: sufficient personnel, institutional legitimacy, and funding.

The logistics of the cross-country journey were well organized, despite a challenging start. The march required international cooperation, which proved to be difficult during the Cold War, because marchers could only exit West Berlin by cars, bus, train, or plane because the city sat inside a ring of East German territories. The women requested permission to go through East Germany so they could exit on foot, but the GDR authorities denied this petition. In a letter to East Germany’s Secretary of State Oskar Fischer, East German peace activists expressed their disappointment with their government’s decision, stating that the walkers would be “forced to take a bus for the section that crosses the territory of the GDR…The group of women must think


86 “Friedens STRT Berlin-Geneva August 8-Sept 17, 1983 Handbook;” In his exploration of the spatial and cultural practices of West Berlin between 1979 and 1989, Geographer David Barclay called West Berlin a “unique island,” a city made up of “political activists, artists, immigrants, students, adherents of alternative lifestyles, including squatters and anarchists” who ignored and criticizes the allies who secured their city’s western status. People who wished to travel out of the city to other parts of Western Europe could not easily go on foot but could use cars, busses, and trains. See David Barclay, Walls, Borders, and Boundaries: Spatial and Cultural Practices in Europe (Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 114.
that the GDR is not supporting their initiative for peace. It is damaging the reputation of the
GDR in the international peace movement.” By marching through East Germany, FFDF
organizers had hoped the first stretch of their walk might be the most significant portion of the
route, because it would break the solid line separating the two halves of the Cold War map.
Instead, it began with a 314-kilometer bus ride southwestward to Hof, West Germany.

Despite the early setback, Quistorp and her Berlin cohort maintained high standards for
the marchers. Though not required to complete the entire journey, those who did join were
expected to walk for a full eight hours a day. In their handbook, the organizers were careful to
point out that for each marchers’ full day of walking, nations spent one billion dollars on
armaments and elaborated, “since 1945 one new nuclear weapon is produced every 30 minutes—
and during the same time 14,000 children are starving.” Along with sleeping bags, tents, and
gear for food preparation, the women brought signs and literature to spread the message that they
marched through “an occupied territory.”

87 “Remember We Hunger for Disarmament Submission to the Foreign Minister of the GDR, Mr. Osker Fischer,”
Berlin, Germany.

The extent of NATO and United States militarization had been uncovered in 1981 by the German magazine Der Stern, who published detailed maps revealing over one hundred nuclear
weapons depots or nuclear sites on West German soil. It is notable that the article drew from information uncovered by West German members of newly funded 1970s peace research institutes. The peace researchers travelled to the U.S. and “fill[ed] box after box with photocopies of reports, manuals, hearings, and archival material,” much of it found in records of U.S. Congressional hearings, and sent it back to West Germany. According to peace researcher Otfried Nassaur, the response to this information was “immediate and beyond anything we would have ever predicted.”

FFDF organizers reminded their Berlin-to-Geneva marchers that “as peace marchers they would see and feel what it really means…that the Federal Republic is the country with the greatest density of nuclear weapons on earth.” FFDF marked the route with scheduled stops at European cities, towns, and rural areas which hosted military outposts. They hoped to engage city authorities and citizens in each town they passed through. The activists pointed “out every single [military] object on the walk,” including martial academies, training areas, barracks, air bases, ammunitions depots, fuel depots, launching platforms, and command quarters. They would show that military installations crowded the map of Western Europe, and in particular, West Germany.

The Berlin to Geneva walk ended at the Palais des Nations, the home of the U.N. office in Geneva where Strategic Arms Reductions Talks (START) between the U.S. and the Soviet

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89 Elise Hanson Boulding, who along with her husband Kenneth Boulding pioneered the field of peace research, asserted that the kind of peace research that Der Stern relied on was developed after the Vietnam War when universities and other institutions created and sustained peace studies programs as a professionally supported discipline. See Judith Porter Adams, Peacework: Oral Histories of Women Peace Activists, Twayne’s Oral History Series, no. 5 (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 185.

90 Hockenos, Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic, 161, 162.


Union had been ongoing since May 1982. The discussions hit a major difficulty six months before the marchers arrived, when President Reagan announced his Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) which outlined a proposal for a U.S. defense program based in space and designed to shield the United States from incoming missiles.\(^9^3\) By September 1983, the talks stalled again, though both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R remained at the table for the time being.\(^9^4\) In an information sheet entitled “Geneva International Peace Camp” and signed Camp pour la Paix, members explained their decision to remain in Geneva after their long march from Berlin, “We believe that being in front of the U.N. in Geneva is one of the most important protest places in the world, because it is here that international disarmament treaties are negotiated…”\(^9^5\) The protesters hoped to raise trans-Atlantic awareness of the tug and pull between the superpowers over the balance of Soviet SS20 and U.S. cruise and Pershing II missiles. The Geneva women had walked through the very territories that constituted the planned missile chess board and were ready to witness the diplomatic talks armed with their own observations.

After their arrival on the Rue de Paix in Geneva in September 1983, many of the FFDF marchers joined members of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)


\(^{94}\) Kyle Harvey notes that the faltering talks in Geneva contributed to the climate of nuclear fear that was present in Europe in 1983. Harvey asserts that “the stalling of INF negotiations in Geneva, combined with the almost relentless hawkishness of the Reagan administration, indicated that Europe could emerge as a trigger for an escalation of super power tensions akin to the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.” He cited the slogan used at the time in European protests, “Remember Hiroshima, Prevent Euroshima.” See Kyle Harvey, “The Promise of Internationalism: U.S. Antinuclear Activism and the European Challenge,” in Friederike Apelt et al., eds., Making Sense of the Americas: How Protest Related to America in the 1980s and Beyond, (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2015), 232.

for a week of activities and discussions in “alternative disarmament talks” at the University of Geneva. At the end of the week, a group of the Berlin marchers calling themselves the Camp pour la Paix pitched tents in Campagne Riget, a University of Geneva field conveniently situated directly behind the Palais des Nations.

The Berlin-to-Geneva walk carried on a recent tradition of anti-nuclear marches which inspired peace camps. The 1981 Nordic Peace March that stretched from Copenhagen to Paris inspired the Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp. One of the principal co-founders of the British women’s peace camp, Anne Pettit, claimed that after she read about the Nordic march, she wanted to replicate it but with a different route, this time between her hometown of Cardiff, Wales to Newberry, England. Like the Berlin-to-Geneva travelers, Pettit and some of her colleagues decided to pitch tents and launch a semi-permanent protest site at Greenham Common Air Force Base. Though not directly inspired by a long peace walk, the opening of the Seneca women’s peace camp in Romulus, New York was also a destination for a long march. One hundred and fifty women and children from the Durham, North Carolina War Resisters League (WRL) made a 600-mile trek to the New York peace camp before its first public weekend in July 1983. WRL march organizer Mandi Carter reported that the WRL women and children walked eight hours each day—like the Berlin-to-Geneva marchers—through sixty communities and five

96 The WILPF and its work with the Brussels, Belgium–based STAR campaign and the women of FFDF were closely connected. Irene Eckart, a key organizer of the 1982 STAR campaign, also initiated the first Berlin branch of the WILPF the year previously. See Catherine Foster, Women for All Seasons: The Story of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 192, 193.

97 "Information Sheet Geneva International Peace Camp and Women’s Peace and Resistance Caravan."

states. At the end of each day, the Durham walkers either pitched tents or occasionally slept indoors at a church or in a generous local’s home. They divided their tasks, which included driving their group’s support vehicle, leafletting local towns, and contacting local media outlets. Carter noted that at the end of each day, the marchers had check-ins and often gave one another foot massages before bedding down for the night. Their long marchers made a communal exit from home, one where the temporary everyday rituals, including those Mandy Carter recalled like “shopping for food, filling water jugs, cooking meals on Colman stoves,” allowed them to experience a new way of life. It was a peace camping experiment on the move, with a specific beginning, a middle, and—unlike peace camping—an easily identifiable end.

A brief examination of the 1981 walk from Copenhagen to Paris that inspired Ann Pettit to establish the first women’s peace camp at Greenham Common reveals some of the elements that might have stirred the FFDF marchers to do the same. In early 1981, members of the Nordic Women’s Peace Committee, Wenche Soranger, Eva Nordlund, and Rakel Pederson, devised a plan for the Nordic Peace March with a clear endgame in mind: to arrive at a peace conference in Paris for a peace festival on August 6, Hiroshima Day. Though the peace committee set their sights on getting to Paris, they hoped to expand their campaign against nuclear weapons by getting as many people as possible to join them along the way. The 1100-kilometer route that weaved in and out of multiple nations and cities lent itself to varying levels of commitment. People could come and go—some intrepid walkers elected to join for the entire journey, while


others dropped in for a brief jaunt. The women called their long distance walk a “cultural exchange,” for fostering discussion and publicizing their goal “to make Europe a nuclear free zone from Poland to Portugal.”^101 The varying levels of commitment required for the march gave the organizers a strategy for success. It allowed everyone involved to feel like they were a legitimate part of the larger project, even if they had a limited amount of time or energy to contribute. The most successful of the women’s peace camps, Greenham Common, also allowed for graduated levels of commitment as well. This made room for the complicated pressures of women’s lives, which almost invariably involved a wide range of responsibilities, including children, grandchildren, partners, parents, and jobs.^102

Soranger, Nordland, and Pederson arranged sponsorship for the Paris-bound journey from international peace organizations. They also drew support from multiple Scandinavian peace organizations who funded a core group of women walkers from each of five Nordic countries—Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and the Faroe Islands—with the understanding that they would march the entire journey. When the core group of walkers reached a national border, a designated peace march “national host” met the core group and escorted them for their particular nation’s entire journey. Once en route, a three-person medical team including a physical therapist, a nurse, and a doctor tended to the bodies of the marchers. A tour bus with a

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^102 In her seminal research on Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp, Sasha Roseneil describes the fluid nature of women’s involvement with the peace camp. She asserts that “Getting involved in Greenham Common was a process, not a one-off decision. Many women came for a day and later came longer. Others lived there.” In Disarming Patriarchy: Feminism and Political Action at Greenham (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1995), 41.
revolving crew of four drivers followed lead marchers with their luggage and supplies for the journey. Everyone else, which by the end of the march included a crowd of 20,000 people, brought their own supplies. The peace march recommended that each participant carry a tent, a sleeping bag, a ground cloth, and a camping stove. For a small fee, a twelve-seat toilet wagon accommodated all walkers throughout the march.\textsuperscript{103} The Nordic Peace Walk thus developed into a massive, well-organized collective experiment that sparked the global women’s peace camping movement.

The Nordic march catalyzed multiple peace actions that followed in its wake. Eva Quistorp and her FFDF colleagues found inspiration by the Copenhagen-to-Paris walk’s success.\textsuperscript{104} By tracing its “long march” roots, \textit{Camp pour la Paix}, the small peace camp on the campus of the University of Geneva, grew from two long peace marches. Not only did both marches provide their participants with an excuse to exit from the usual course of settled daily life, but they offered a clear physical model for making that escape by providing a dry-run for camping. The marches also created an ideological template for the small peace camp. Though smaller in scale than the Nordic march and the Berlin-to-Geneva march, the Geneva camp echoed both long distance marches in their attempt to lead a long-term international outcry against nuclear weapons.

Women established \textit{Camp pour la Paix} in September 1983, during the height of Europe’s “hot autumn,” when millions of European citizens rose in protest from fear of what many called


“Euromissiles.” While the women of the Geneva peace camp had been traveling on their long walk from Berlin, they scanned the landscape for military installations which might be making preparations for those very missiles. Supplied with illustrated maps and diagrams, the marchers pursued a fact-finding mission aimed to provide physical evidence of nuclear sites. Knowing West Germany’s unfortunate place in the European nuclear map, the Berliner women guessed at the number of weapons outposts that pockmarked their path. When the marchers arrived in Geneva and made camp, they intended to share what they viewed on their long walk and to use what they witnessed as a check on the details discussed by the power brokers at the U.N. talks. They wanted to fulfill the aim of the march itself, which the organizers made clear from its outset, “We are going to Geneva because we want to make sure these negotiations are truthful and explore every single possibility of stopping the ongoing nuclear armament.”

Once they arrived in Geneva, the Berlin marchers had difficulty finding a place to stay. Exhausted, they constructed a rough temporary camp at the University of Geneva field behind the Palais des Nations. By Christmas, however, the women outwore their welcome, and at the request of the university, city police evicted them. The women remained on university grounds, nevertheless, and moved to University Hall II, a main floor of a University of Geneva building.

105 Political analyst Paul Hockenos describes what journalists referred to as Europe’s “hot autumn” as a time when millions of West Germans took to the streets to try to stave off the deployment of new U.S. nuclear weapons known as Euromissiles. See Hockenos, Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic.


Campus authorities, including the campus rector, tried to persuade the interlopers to leave the campus. The campers crafted a news bulletin that quoted the rector, “I am for peace but leave me in peace.”\textsuperscript{109} The women garnered some support for their cause at the college. Therefore, in January when authorities once again sent police to remove them, one hundred people stood by the University Hall occupiers. The university allowed them to remain until they worked out a resolution. Ultimately, the university created a working group made up of two professors, an assistant, and one student to find a suitable site. By April 1984, the committee finally settled on a solution for the peace campers—a parking lot.\textsuperscript{110} The women obtained two caravans which they dubbed the Wimmins Peace and Resistance Caravans and with the help of the university, they received permission to park the vans directly in front of the \textit{Palais des Nations}, where the United Nations Conference on Disarmament conducted its talks.\textsuperscript{111}


\textsuperscript{110} “Information Sheet Geneva International Peace Camp and Women’s Peace and Resistance Caravan.”

\textsuperscript{111} "Peace Camp News: Exile? Moving, No Expulsion."
The small trailers outside the United Nations building highlighted the encampment’s frailty, and perhaps even more so, their insignificance. Small enough to fit into two parking spaces, the imposing Palais des Nations dwarfed the campers’ caravan homes. The architects of the Palais designed it to signify its role as an internationally recognized arbiter capable of brokering paths towards peace. In comparison, the new peace camp outpost stood out as an absurdly makeshift operation seemingly incapable of mastering its own fortune, let alone the world’s.

The women of the Camp pour la Paix did not allow their inconsequential appearance to diminish the weight of responsibility they carried. Many, including the majority of NATO allied
nations, argued that expanding armories of sophisticated weapons would deter their enemies from initiating conflict. Despite that entrenched policy, NATO’s 1979 two-track decision asserted that ramped-up arsenals only represented half of its efforts towards deterrence. Negotiation remained an officially sanctioned option.\textsuperscript{112} Since 1979, a cohort of diplomatic representatives had gathered in Geneva several times a year for weeks at a time to talk about arms control. When in session, the public had permission to attend the negotiations for two hours each Tuesday and Thursday. Because the camping women were “restricted to two caravans,” they could not welcome overnight guests or manage large actions of their own, but they urged others to join them in attendance at the public meetings of the Conference on Disarmament. The group published a small bulletin offering visitors facts about nuclear weapons and careful directions through the half-mile-long \textit{Palais des Nations}. The pamphlet guided visitors through the main gate upstairs to the imposing \textit{Salle des Conseils}, or council hall, where guests could view the sessions in the mural-lined public gallery.\textsuperscript{113} Those who attended the arms negotiations in the assembly hall found the campers’ detailed instructions quite useful because of the size of the imposing U.N. campus. When new staff joined the \textit{Palais des Nations}, employers typically

\textsuperscript{112} In the text of the two-track decision, NATO chairman Joseph Luns asserted that the Warsaw Pact, led by the Soviet Union, had improved their weapons systems, particularly their intermediate-range weapon, the SS20, and this threatened the stability of forces and cast doubt on their deterrent strategy. Therefore, NATO would need to develop intermediate-range weapons of their own including Pershing II and cruise missiles. This constituted the first of the two decisions NATO made on December 12, 1979. The second decision was to continue arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union and members of the Warsaw Pact “through a special consultative body at a high level and would negotiate on a continuous basis and report to foreign and defense ministers who will examine developments.” See Chairman Joseph Luns, “Special Meeting of Foreign and Defense Ministers: The Double Track Decision on Theatre Nuclear Forces” (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, n.d.), E Library: Official Texts, NATO Digital Archive, \url{https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27040.htm}.

\textsuperscript{113} “Peace Camp News: Why a Wimmins Peace and Resistance Caravan?,” 1983, Box Switzerland Collective Box CDGB Folder Switzerland Camp por la Paix 1984, Swarthmore College Peace Collection.
gave them an informal test on navigating the building because of its size. By maintaining their parking lot presence and shepherding members of the public into the Salle des Conseils, even in the short windows of time offered, the activists expanded the range of witnesses to the high-level negotiations.

![Conference on Disarmament Begins 1984 Session](https://www.unog.ch/virtual_tour/palais_des_nations.html)

Figure 32: “Conference on Disarmament Begins 1984 Session” February 7, 1984
Source: UN7736916 UN Photo Digital Asset Management System

Ironically, less than two months after they arrived in Geneva for their twice-weekly task, the Geneva negotiators temporarily halted arms talks after the United States deployed Pershing II missiles at Mutlangen Army Base in West Germany on November 24, 1983. Soviet

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representatives left the table in protest the next day. Even though the United States had been clear about their intention to place the missiles in West Germany, the actual deployment took place suddenly, less than twenty-four hours after the German Bundestag granted formal approval for the move. According to journalist James Markham, the Soviets feared Pershing II missiles even more than other land-based missiles, because of their speed which could allow them to reach Moscow in minutes.\(^\text{115}\) The short course of events at the negotiating table at the *Palais des Nations* showed the women of *Camp pour la Paix* the importance of maintaining a presence on the front lines of nuclear negotiations, because U.S. representatives stayed on at Geneva, confident that the Soviets would return.\(^\text{116}\) Because of the Soviet’s exit, what had been active negotiations became instead a conference on disarmament that began in February 1984.\(^\text{117}\) By June 1984, the Soviets indicated to the U.S. that they were ready to start negotiations again.\(^\text{118}\) The *Camp pour la Paix* maintained their twice-weekly presence through 1985, when they helped to host a Geneva conference on women and peace from March 6-8, 1985, to mark the opening of a new round of negotiations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. They claimed that they met


to “remind delegates that the people of the world are still waiting after five years of discussions.”

The two women’s peace camps that FFDF generated were not as large or long-lived as the peace camp at Greenham Common, nor did they generate its publicity. However, Hunsrück campers carried the British camp’s mission onto the European continent by exposing nuclear weapons systems and soldiers hidden in the woods and hills of the German countryside. The Camp pour la Paix added to that mission by bearing witness to the stops and starts of negotiations between the Eastern and Western authorities who determined nuclear weapons’ numbers and ranges. Both camps contributed to a growing collection of nuclear knowledge that authorities did not readily volunteer.

The business of generating peace camps represented a small fraction of the work accomplished by the women of Berlin’s FFDF. They had an important place in the center of European opposition to NATO’s attempts to place land-based intermediate-range weapons on the continent. FFDF hosted the May 1983 Conference for European Disarmament (END) in Berlin, six months before the first missiles were set to arrive in Germany and Britain. The Berlin group led international peace walks through Europe every summer between 1981 and 1984. Perhaps even more vital, through their newsletter and their regular meetings, the Berlin group served as a clearinghouse for information regarding feminist peace action.

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That collaborative knowledge circulated, and over time FFDF learned new modes of action from the peace camps they generated. It is notable that after 1983, FFDF members hosted their own encampments in West Berlin each summer from 1984 to 1987. The camps, scattered in different locations in the city, addressed different causes. In December 1984, FFDF women pitched tents for the “West Berlin International Women’s Peace Camp at Airfield Gatow.” Campers bivouacked in the far western British sector of the city to protest the installation of a large British Royal Army shooting range. The women claimed that the range’s acreage spread so far that “normal restrictions wouldn’t allow it to be in Britain or elsewhere,” and impinged on residents’ sovereignty.¹²¹ That same year, the Berlin peace women participated in an extended vigil to demand that East German State Council Chairman Honecker release imprisoned supporters of the independent peace movement at Checkpoint Charlie, the well-known crossing point between East and West Berlin.¹²² On Hiroshima Day, August 6, 1985, FFDF’s Hildegarde Klimmeck organized a week long peace camp in West Berlin to mark the start of a “Stop the Arms Race” (STAR) march to Bonn, where the Berlin women would join others from several European countries to demand an end to nuclear weapons on the European continent.¹²³


In the summer of 1986, Berlin peace women, led again by Klimmeck, established a peace camp alongside the city’s Bannmeile, a restricted government district. Their theme, “the price of living with atomic accidents,” reflected on the devastating Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident in Ukraine the previous spring. Many FFDF members, including Eva Quistorp, who was a founding member of the West German Green party, came to the peace camp movement as committed environmentalists and nuclear power resisters. After the accident at Chernobyl, FFDF expanded their anti-nuclear discourse to reemphasize the dangers of nuclear power. They demanded the operational suspension of nuclear power plants until 1989 and to stop all nuclear testing. 124 In fact, West German resistance to nuclear power was very strong in the decade before Chernobyl; 1986 marked a full-throttled return to popular German anti-nuclear power sentiment.125

In May 1987, Klimmeck and FFDF camped in West Berlin yet again. In their invitation to the camp, they asked women, mothers, daughters, children, and female friends from “all four corners of the city” to join them—a pointed directive, considering Berlin’s directionally divided state. Their summons concluded, “And we women for peace are eager to welcome hopefully many women so that together we can overcome the borders imposed by the rule of men within us and around us.”126 This time, the Berlin women emulated smaller Camp pour la Paix and

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125 Hockenos, Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic, 143, 147.

camped to mark a symbolic site in the interests of an idea, to broadcast the notion of unifying Germany. The hope the peace women expressed was far closer to fruition than it had been when they began their work in 1981. One year after FFDF launched, the German left-wing political party, the *Alternative Liste*, reported that West Berlin, “the display window of the free world,” outlawed protests against President Reagan’s European tour. Five years later, in September 1987, peace groups in East Germany gathered for the first state nonaffiliated peace rally and march for a nuclear weapons’ free corridor in Europe and according to witnesses, “it was tolerated.” Peace protesters revealed an unexpected policy reversal on the part of the two sides of the divided city, an early and unsettling insight into the narrowing gap between East and West.

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On October 11, 1986, the women of FFDF traveled west by bus to visit the Hunsrück Women’s Resistance Camp. The travelers took part in a weekend “March of 180,000” to the Hasselbach base where cruise missiles had recently arrived. In their fall FFDF newsletter, the travelers reflected on what they saw on their journey. The local townsfolk showed overwhelming support for the demonstrators by placing peace signs in their windows and expressing well wishes. The locals’ anti-nuclear sentiments might well have been influenced by the combined arrival of the missiles and the recent accident at Chernobyl. The timing certainly presented

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troublesome corollaries. Alice Siergert, a correspondent for the Chicago Tribune who visited the area shortly after the demonstration, noted that the first missiles arrived in March, one month before the Chernobyl accident. She spoke with Hartmuth Pomryn, the mayor of Hunsrück, who stated, “everyone is afraid...the missiles are right under our noses.” Siergert noted that though not many locals took part in the “March of 180,000” in early October, many shared the demonstrators’ fear and rage. Mayor Pomryn claimed that, “the peace movement has informed us early on and everything they said has happened.”

Though the peace campers failed in preventing the cruise deployment, the camping women of Hunsrück were successful at least by one important measure: they fulfilled their mission to alert people to the missiles’ presence and its dangers.

In 1992, two years after the reunification of Germany and shortly after the final withdrawal of the Pershing II missiles from Germany, David MacBride of Americans for Peace wrote a letter of gratitude to all of the members of the West Berlin peace movement, and asserted that in the 1980s in the United States, members of the peace movement were dismissed as “cranks, pacifist terrorists, or directed by the KGB.” MacBride asserted that the West Berlin peace movement altered that damning portrait, and without them, “the situation would have been sad and frustrating” had “the people” not articulated their own different and better ideas about how to stay safe and secure in the world.

Certainly, the Berlin FFDF educated and prodded anyone who would hear them to take part in that vital expression. In the process of their

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continual urgency to resist the notion that Europe’s security depended on nuclear weapons, the Berlin women created pathways that led to the establishment of two women’s peace camps. With them, the Berlin peace group’s feminist vision came to life. By peace-camping, the FFDF-inspired women at Hunsrück and *Camp pour la Paix* ranged beyond street protest and direct action. By building kitchens and wastewater trenches, constructing shelters, sleeping in university buildings or parking caravans, preparing food, and caring for one another, daily life was the outstanding feminist feature of the camping women’s protests. Women’s peace camping transformed nonviolent civil disobedience methods by blending activist practices with quotidian struggles. Peace-camping women did not simply proclaim and perform their resistance, they hunkered down in their tents and caravans and lived it.
CONCLUSION

Women's peace camps were settings where tensions between equal rights feminist ideologies, maternal peace rhetoric, and broader activist practices played out every day. The results were messy. In their manuals, unity statements, and organizational papers, peace camping women demanded equal rights and repeatedly condemned essentialist ideas about women's roles. At the same time, many campers rejected normative feminine standards of dress, food, and daily grooming routines. Even so, camping women did not reject all the values associated with femininity. They elevated the practices of care and collaboration that were associated with maternalist ideology.¹ Moreover, in their signs, songs, and protest performances, peace camping women continually asserted their essentialist position as mothers, or potential mothers, of children who, because of nuclear weapons, were in harm's way.² Peace camping women were double minded. They demanded equal rights and an equal political footing and consciously asserted their female identities while doing so.

Peace camping women were not the first protesters who consciously used their identities as mothers as a political tool to protest war. In her investigation of the early 1960s antinuclear organization, Women Strike for Peace, (WSP) Amy Swerdlow asserted that WSP women used

¹ For more detail on the ideology of "maternalism" or "the work mothers do," See Sara Ruddick, Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989, 1995).
² In her analysis of gender identity and peace camp activism, Catherine Eschle asserted that Greenham women made nuclear infrastructures and gender and sexual norms at the same time and played an important role in popularizing some of the possibilities of identity and community action that are available to women today. See Catherine Eschle, “Beyond Greenham Women,” International Feminist Journal of Politics 19, no. 4 (2017): 471–90, 473.
their roles as housewives and mothers not merely to influence, as was traditionally accepted, but to build the political authority to "reign in the power of the Pentagon."³ Women peace campers revised the WSP model by creating spaces where the concerns of care and motherhood could be asserted outside of the perimeters of the nuclear family and outside of the notion of heteronormative biological duties. Other liberatory groups, such as the 1987 Aids Coalition to Unleash Power, (ACT Up) adopted the double-sided practice of equal rights assertion and identity politics that peace camping women constructed through trial and error.⁴

In addition to their contributions to changes in activist culture, peace camping women were a vital part of the transformational political story of the 1980s antinuclear resistance which is one of the largest social movements in the late twentieth century. It is arguably, also the most ignored. There are several reasons for this historical amnesia. For one thing, in the short term, antinuclear activists were unsuccessful in their aims. For example, its largest protest, the June 12, 1982 New York City disarmament demonstration protested two things: the 1979 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) decision to develop and deploy medium range missiles in Europe and the defense policies of President Ronald Reagan. The New York demonstrators did not accomplish their goals. One and half years after the demonstration, the military, with the help of defense contractors, devised, built, and installed the weapons and Reagan won reelection. Indeed, this double disappointment demoralized many nuclear resisters, including peace camping women. After 1983, political hopes faded, marches and demonstrations dwindled, and many


women's peace encampments shrank or disappeared altogether. Because of these early political failures, certainly the women's peace camping movement and arguably the entire antinuclear movement has been viewed as a footnote in the greater "end of the Cold War" story.

To conclude a history of the antinuclear movement with its failures, however, is shortsighted indeed. Less than a decade after their deployment, government authorities dismantled the missiles that thousands of peace camping women upended their lives to protest.\(^5\) By moving out of their homes—sometimes temporarily and sometimes for decades—and setting themselves next to nuclear locations, campers refused to allow government, military, and corporate authorities to conceal their nuclear agendas. The seven peace camps included in this dissertation reveal the ways that women peace campers used their peace bodies to lift the curtain authorities hid behind and invited the public to peek in. The women of the Seneca Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice articulated a collective apocalyptic nuclear fear that jostled their audiences' complacency. They did more than enact fear however, they expressed sorrow over the United States' nuclear culpability. By appropriating traditionally gendered mourning rituals, they created a temporary sonic and visual memorial for the Hiroshima and Nagasaki dead. Greenham women made cunning use of their bodies in political ways. They constructed benders, built cooking fires, climbed fences, and even danced on nuclear locations relentlessly. Through their persistent struggle to remain at Greenham Common, the campers' bodies shone a spotlight on the uncomfortable realities of American military occupation of British landscapes.

\(^5\) On December 8, 1987, President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary Gorbechev signed the INF treaty at a summit meeting in Washington D.C. At the time of its signing, the treaty was the most stringent and detailed verification regime set up by governments to control nuclear weapons. See INF treaty “Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty),” U.S. Department of State, accessed May 3, 2021, //2009-2017.state.gov/t/avc/trty/102360.htm.
The women who bivouacked near American nuclear corporations that designed and manufactured cruise missiles shared a different kind of foe. The immense Boeing Company and the sleek Sperry Corporation dwarfed the tiny and rustic encampments nearby. The Puget Sound campers staged a persistent information campaign by presenting leaflets that explained the consequences of Boeing's nuclear product to workers as they entered and exited their shifts daily. By tending to their physical needs, staying warm, keeping fed, and adjusting their family and work schedules to tend to their site, the Minnesota women performed a reminder of the contrast between the frailty of their bodies and the immense power of the military industrial complex. In their years long reckoning with the meaning of peace camping in their urban location, the women of the Philadelphia encampment reckoned with the privileges held by peace camping bodies. Their protected status as white, primarily middle-class women allowed the camping women of Seneca, Greenham, Kent, and St. Paul to persist with their protests. Only in very rare cases did police—or in the case of Greenham—American soldiers—use violence against the women. When they did, their actions were not lethal, and peace camping women's injuries were reported widely in newspapers—in marked contrast to Black bodies dwelling in cities like Philadelphia. The tragic MOVE bombing in Philadelphia exposed the cruel and callous devaluation of Black bodies and the privilege of white bodies—especially the deliberately precarious camping bodies of white women—and ended the Philadelphia encampment women's quest for a camping location.

The protests of the women of Hunsrück and Camp pour la Paix echoed the strategies of each of the other peace encampments featured in this dissertation. The Hunsrück camp utilized Seneca's performative strategies and Greenham's timely political maneuvering by encroaching on
nuclear spaces and showcasing their nation's military occupation. Echoing their Kent and St. Paul sisters, the women of Camp pour la Paix performed a continual information campaign and remained at their monumental United Nations site to remind the public of nuclear negotiations. Both encampments on the European continent reveal the ways that peace women built a storehouse of feminist direct action knowledge and constructed transnational networks to distribute a consistent women's peace camping model among women in the United States, Britain, and the European Continent.

The historical accountings of the conclusion of the decades-long struggle for global supremacy between the United States and the Soviet Union have been top-down stories. The narratives surrounding the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the breakup of the Warsaw Pact, and the cooling of the nuclear arms race featured Reagan's political savvy and Soviet Premier Michael Gorbachev's prescience. These stories assert the notion that victory depended on Reagan's show of military strength and his willingness to negotiate with Gorbachev who was amenable because of his recognition of the arms race's crushing expense. Those narratives shortchange the robust transnational resistance to nuclear arsenals that made the weapons politically difficult for both leaders to support. In the decade before the two leaders signed the

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7 Historian John Lewis Gaddis asserts that ultimately the Cold War ended because President Ronald Reagan recognized the need to negotiate with Michael Gorbachev, See John Lewis Gaddis, The United States and the End of the Cold War: Implications, Reconsiderations, Provocations, 1. issued as an Oxford Univ. Press paperback, Oxford Paperbacks History (New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994).

8 In 1985, before the INF treaty was signed, Historian Robert Tucker asserted that the Reagan administration was influenced by the public's widespread disapproval of his policies on the expansion of nuclear weapons technologies. Tucker argues that after the antinuclear movement gathered force in 1981, nuclear weapons "becamse politicized,"
agreement to eliminate intermediate range and shorter-range missiles—the INF treaty—in 1987, peace researchers uncovered nuclear locations, and protesters dogged weapons depots, testing sites, defense corporations, and the U.S. military installations that peppered the map of Western Europe. This analysis tells the story of seven of the hundreds of women's peace encampments that made a vital contribution to that relentless effort. Peace campers traveled to locations that their fellow activists identified and marked them with their bodies. Their story reveals an important aspect of the bottom-up resistance to a weapons system that was successfully banned.

If historians of the Cold War pay scant attention to the hidden story of antinuclear protests during the Cold War’s final decade, the public might once again fall prey to mythical tales of heroic leadership that brought the long stand-off to its end. With the United States' formal withdrawal from the INF treaty in August 2019, the prospects of reducing nuclear armories are diminishing.9 Telling the story of the struggles that ushered the first treaty into being may give us the tools to resist once again.


The Swarthmore College Peace Collection was a vital archive for this research. The archive holds collections featuring dozens of women's peace camps including Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, Minnesota Women's Peace Camp, Puget Sound Women's Peace Camp, Camp pour la Paix, and the Philadelphia Women's Peace Encampment. The archive also holds a significant portion of the records from peace organizations that sponsored and participated in peace camps including Women's Pentagon Action, Women for Life on Earth, the War Resister's League, and the Woman's International League for Peace and Freedom. The rich store of records at Swarthmore College also allowed me to explore the ties Greenham Common women cultivated in the United States through the records of their North American tours and their lawsuit, Greenham Women against Cruise Missiles. The international records of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom at the University of Colorado at Boulder also provided evidence for the vital links between peace camps that were forged by the 100-year-old women's peace organization.

The Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard holds the records for the largest women’s peace camp in the United States: The Seneca Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice. The archive also contains records which reveal the encampment's legal dilemmas, blueprints and plans for infrastructure, and organizational information that offered vital information for this research. In addition, the collection includes manuscript records featuring letters, group meeting notes, and a camp logbook that holds
detailed descriptions of daily camping life. All have added to the depth of the research. The Schlesinger also includes the records of Charlotte Bunch and Barbara Deming, two individuals who were vital contributors to the founding ideologies of women's peace camps.

The HerStory digital archive of the Women’s Encampment for a Future of Peace, Justice and Freedom is an essential archival collection for this research. The archive contains original film footage of camp actions and first-person interviews of peace camp participants. In addition, the archive contains the WEFPJ Encampment Handbook which outlines camp ideology, rules, declarations, and historical context. The Rutgers International Institute for Peace: Digital Archive of Nonviolent Resistance was also a vital source for records of the Clamshell Alliance, the Abalone Alliance, and handbooks used for multiple nonviolent direct actions.

Finally, FFBIZ, Das Feminisische Archiv, in Berlin was an invaluable source for the records of West Berlin’s Frauen für den Frieden (FFDF), a feminist peace action network that was directly responsible for the two European women's peace encampments featured in this dissertation, the Hunsrück Women's Resistance Camp in West Germany and Camp pour la Paix in Geneva Switzerland. The newsletters, flyers, announcements, handbooks, training manuals, newspaper articles, personal letters, and petitions contained at the FFBIZ archives allowed me to reconstruct women's encampments on the European continent and link them to peace camping projects in Britain and the United States.

The published primary sources available in the online archives of the 1970s and 1980s era feminist newsletters have been essential for this dissertation. Not only did they present vital reporting on incidents and circumstances at peace camps, they also offered insight into the ways that feminist women critiqued or praised the very notion of peace activism and peace camping
projects. Though it predates the peace camp movement, the Washington D.C. based newsletter *The Furies* published by an anti-militarist collective informed my understanding of radical feminist antimilitarism. The American feminist newsletter *Off Our Backs*, has an extensive discussion of the peace camp movement, feminism, and lesbian separatism which was indispensable for this project. *Courage*, a Berlin based feminist newsletter and *Emma* a feminist newsletter based in Cologne offered rare windows into women's day to day experiences at the Hunsrück Women's Resistance Camp in West Germany.

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VITA

Dr. Clay was born and raised in Wheaton, Illinois. Before attending Loyola University Chicago, she attended Northern Illinois University where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in History with a minor in Political Science in 2013. She continued at Northern Illinois University to earn her Master of Arts in History with a concentration in Public History in 2016.

When at Loyola, Dr. Clay has pursued her research interests in Women and Gender History while serving as a Teaching Assistant, Teacher of Record, and Career Diversity Fellow. Dr. Clay is currently working as an adjunct professor and part-time archival researcher at Loyola University Chicago.