
**MIXED LEGACIES: CONTESTING THE MEANINGS
OF “THE SIXTIES” IN THE U.S. ANTI-NUCLEAR
MOVEMENT, 1976-1987**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the anti-nuclear movement in the United States from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, and assesses how activists within that movement demonstrated an ambivalent relationship to the legacies of the 1960s. Different activists, groups and organizations mobilizing against the threats posed by nuclear power and nuclear weapons, in the process promoting very different ideas about the efficacy of protest, the nature of the nuclear threat, and the meaning of “the sixties.” Responding to a mixed legacy of activism and radical thought in the years since the 1960s, activists in the wider anti-nuclear movement both challenged and embraced the role of activism on the left in the midst of the conservative revival of the 1970s and 1980s.

The popular cultural idea of “the sixties” as a time of hippie rebellion and destructive revolutionary movements affected progressive social movements in the 1970s and 1980s as they attempted to define themselves in response to popular memories of the 1960s. Oppositional social movements in the wake of the 1960s experimented with different styles of protest, on the one hand attempting to influence public policy, and on the other, satisfying personal philosophies of resistance. The “turn to the right” in local and national politics during the 1970s and 1980s meant that activists needed to redefine their role as harbingers of social change, without diminishing their appeal by advocating ideological or tactical radicalism. At the same time, however, many activists, groups, and organizations refused to compromise their identities in order to join a broad-based anti-nuclear movement; instead, they reaffirmed their radical stance on social change, in the process ensuring that the legacies of New Left and countercultural radicalism from the 1960s would be characterized by their mixed reception amongst anti-nuclear activists in later years. It is this process of – alternately – reaffirming, negotiating, and rejecting the legacies of the New Left and the counterculture in the anti-nuclear movement of the 1970s and 1980s that is the central theme of this thesis.

DECLARATION

This thesis is a product of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree at any other institution. It contains fewer than 100,000 words, excluding footnotes and bibliography.

Approval has been obtained from Macquarie University's Human Research Ethics Committee for two oral history components. Reference numbers: HE26SEP2008-D06068; and 5201000917.

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A NOTE ON SOURCES

Manuscript collections used in this thesis were often unprocessed, leading to a difficulty in accurately identifying items. Due to the nature of the collections, many items were also undated, lacked author identification, and were often hastily written papers, containing illegible handwritten annotations. Unprocessed boxes would often have their original folder system, which were either untitled or whose titles bore no resemblance to the contents within. Other boxes contained no folders at all.

As such, every effort has been made to provide an accurate and consistent method of identifying archival sources in the footnotes. Where items were undated, I have marked them “n.d.” as per standard conventions. Alternatively, an estimated date has been provided in square parentheses, where such a date was approximated by the contents of the source, or by related items elsewhere in the collection.

I have cited items from manuscript collections by numbering the folder, rather than including names of folders, which is often a clumsy and inconsistent system of citation. Folders were numbered consecutively; i.e., if a footnote reads “Box 20, Folder 7,” the folder in question is the 7th folder in Box 20 of the respective collection. Where no folders existed within a box, or an item was found loose within a box, items have been identified by box number only.

Where more than one accession exists for a collection, or where a collection spans several repositories, repeated citations will refer to the accession number and/or the relevant library.

ABBREVIATIONS

AFSC	American Friends Service Committee
CALC	Clergy and Laity Concerned
CNNW	Coalition for a Non-Nuclear World
CCNV	Community for Creative Non-Violence
FFL	Fast for Life
FOR	Fellowship of Reconciliation
GPM	Great Peace March for Global Nuclear Disarmament
LCPJ	Lawrence Coalition for Peace and Justice
MfS	Mobilization for Survival
NOW	National Organization for Women
NWFC	Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign
SANE	National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy
WAND	Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament
WEFPJ	Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WPS	Women's Party for Survival
WSP	Women Strike for Peace
WRL	War Resisters League