

RED ROOTS, RADICAL FRUIT: CHILDREN OF THE OLD LEFT IN  
THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND THE NEW LEFT

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **RED ROOTS, RADICAL FRUIT: CHILDREN OF THE OLD LEFT IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND THE NEW LEFT**

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Children of the Old Left were leading participants in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left. During their childhood these individuals often participated in their parents' political activities and many developed their own organizations to support Old Left causes. Like their parents, young leftists were persecuted for their activism during the McCarthy period. Red Diaper Babies (RDBs), children raised by parents associated with the Communist movement, and their peers from other Old Left organizations were followed by FBI agents, attacked on the playground, and harassed in the classroom.

When these young activists entered college in the Sixties, they helped start or joined social movements that supported these Old Left values learned during childhood. These radical youth were instrumental in starting some of the major protest organizations of the decade, most notably Students for a Democratic Society, the Free Speech Movement, and later the Weathermen.

In addition to their participation in the New Left, radicals participated at all levels of the Civil Rights Movement in the North and the South. As a result of their childhood experiences, these young activists differed significantly from other white non-leftist volunteers and their experiences help expand historians' understand of white activism during the Civil Rights Movement.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

The Communist Party initially introduced the term “red diaper baby” (RDB) in the 1920s to disparagingly describe members’ nepotistic reliance on birthright over merit for promotions. Outside the Party, Americans also considered the description RDB negatively, though for different reasons. To most Americans, RDBs were leftist traitors and rabble-rousers. According to Linn Shapiro, an RDB Sixties activist who interviewed and spoke with fellow radicals at several RDB reunions, the events of the Free Speech Movement (FSM) finally changed young leftists’ negative perceptions of this label. In 1964 the John Birch Society sought to suppress political protest at Berkeley by publishing an “RDB list.” Imagine their surprise when, instead of being quelled, activists rallied around the RDB label. The red diaper slur, a form of anti-radical red baiting, united FSM activists who proudly identified themselves as children of the Left and bonded over memories of politicized childhoods.<sup>1</sup> As leaders in FSM, the participation of RDBs was highly visible and numerous conservative groups drew attention to it on campus. The *New Guard* magazine, published by the Young Americans for Freedom organization, ran an article about the FSM protests entitled, “Behind Campus Youth Turmoil: The Red Diaper Babies Grow Up.”<sup>2</sup> This type of targeting happened on many college campuses across the country. At the University of Wisconsin, Madison, RDBs

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<sup>1</sup>Linn Shapiro, “Beginning the Exploration: Taking Over the Family Business,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 3.

<sup>2</sup>Terry Anderson, *The Movement and The Sixties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 109.

were daily identified and slandered by a right-wing Madison radio commentator who broadcast RDBs' names, addresses, and daily activities.<sup>3</sup>

The term RDB applies to children whose parents were Communist Party elites, union leaders, rank-and-file members, and fellow travelers. This inclusive definition of RDB corresponds with Kate Weigand's usage of the term in *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation*. Weigand explained,

For my purposes, whether or not an individual was actually a member of the Communist Party is not particularly important. The Communist Party was the center of a large progressive movement that encompassed many organizations, and it profoundly influenced thousands of women and men. Many of them read the Party press and participated in formal and informal Party activities without officially joining the organization. This time period was known as the Popular Front.<sup>4</sup>

Similar to Weigand's inclusive definition, in his book *The Social Basis of American Communism* (1961) Nathan Glazer included individuals who were the children of Communists, those raised in Communist communities, the children of other radicals, and the children of "ordinary run of the liberal-minded Jews...philanthropists, and social workers" in his study of the Party.<sup>5</sup>

As Glazer and Weigand showed, the Communist Party's influence expanded beyond that of its formal membership, extending to a broader movement of radical involvement. Particularly during the 1930s Popular Front era and also in the immediate

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<sup>3</sup>Elizabeth Ewen, "A Way of Seeing," in *History and the New Left: Madison, Wisconsin, 1950 – 1970*, Paul Buhle, ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1990), 152.

<sup>4</sup>Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 9.

<sup>5</sup>Nathan Glazer, *The Social Basis of American Communism* (New York: Harcourt, 1961), 132.

aftermath of World War II, the public's interest in the Party increased and many people joined different organizations affiliated with the Communist movement. This did not necessarily mean people joined the Party, but they were involved in the cultural, political, and educational activities supported or led by its members. While some participants were loosely associated with the organization, the leadership and core membership were devoted to the Party. Glazer wrote in *The Social Basis of American Communism* that to be a Communist "means, ideally, and in large measure in reality, to be enlisted as a soldier in an organization. One hesitates to call it a 'cause,' ... Yet it acts on those committed to it as powerfully as any cause, any movement, has in the past."<sup>6</sup> Obviously not all RDB parents displayed this extreme devotion to the Party. As a result, the parents' varying degrees of dedication affected RDB experiences during the McCarthy era. Some RDBs had family members in leadership positions at the center of the movement in the Party who were constantly harassed, called before investigatory committees, arrested, imprisoned, or went underground. RDBs from these families had to deal with the very public trials and negative media attacks against their parents and were often targeted by strangers on the streets and neighbors in their communities. Many RDBs in this category were known throughout the Party as Smith Act Victims, named after the legislation by which their parents were charged.

Some RDBs had parents in charge of Party-run organizations like unions or civic groups that answered to the Party line and experienced relatively the same treatment. Regardless of their professional status, if these individuals were employed outside the Party or sympathetic organizations, they were often questioned, harassed, and fired from

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<sup>6</sup>Glazer, *The Social Basis of American Communism*, 4.



their jobs. If RDBs' parents were union members, they could be expelled from the unions during this time period under the Taft-Hartley legislation. If the union itself was perceived as too radical, the entire group could be kicked out of larger umbrella organizations like the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) which had built mass unionism in America since the 1930s. For those whose parents were not card-carrying members, if they had once been associated with the Party or had relatives who were, they could also be investigated and harassed. In addition, RDBs had parents who were merely fellow travelers or progressives who were questioned by federal agents and ostracized from their communities. These individuals subscribed to Party publications, went to parades, and supported Party causes. Their children were educated about racial and class inequality and encouraged to challenge their peers' opinions on the subjects. At times fellow travelers, too, were harassed, blackballed, fired, or arrested, but not to the same extent as the more prominent Party leaders and members. Though the level of media attention following these arrests was nowhere near that of the Smith Act victims, it was still extremely painful. Regardless of their parents' degree of involvement in the Party, RDBs were similar in their sense of being different from the rest of society, marginal, fearful of arrest, paranoid about federal agents, concerned for their parents' safety, and committed to a better America

In addition to RDBs, this dissertation also includes a smaller number of individuals who were raised in other Old Left political families, such as the Socialist Party and unions that were not associated with the Communist Party or the Communist-led Movement. Children raised in these leftist families had some things in common with RDBs: government agents harassed their homes and arrested their parents, they were

raised with a value system that championed the working class and racial equality, they felt as radicals they had a special mission to improve America. Another similarity between many members of the Old Left was their secular Jewishness and how their cultural background motivated their parents' participation in the Left. This phenomenon, and other examples of similarity and difference, will be discussed in Chapter One. As a result of these parallels between children raised in Old Left families, non-RDB radical youths are also at times included in this study.

At an RDB Conference held in 1982 that included participants from the entire Old Left and not just the Communist Party, Linn Shapiro, one of the RDB co-leaders of the event, provided a description of the participants' similar experiences and characteristics. From these similarities Shapiro drew the following central assumptions about the values RDBs and other leftists share:

- \*We were raised in opposition to – at best, in ambivalence to – a central tenet of American society: accumulation for private profit and personal upward mobility

- \*We were raised to support a somewhat mystical and vast international brotherhood in a society which said primary allegiance was to biological family and no more...

- \*We were raised to value diversity in a sacred and ethically-bound society

- \*We were raised to value ideas in a society that is anti-intellectual

- \*We were raised to value collective action in a society that is desperately individualistic. (We knew that our family had already made history by creating the first revolutionary socialist society. We had impact far beyond our small numbers if we acted together.)

- \*We were raised as fighters in a passive society. (Born into a culture of struggle, our definition of being alive, adult, whole, is linked to fighting for social change.)<sup>7</sup>

RDBs and many children reared in leftist families had childhoods quite different from what most people picture as common during the 1950s. Raised in radical

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<sup>7</sup>Shapiro, "Beginning the Exploration: Taking Over the Family Business," 4.

households, young leftists' parents were often the antitheses of the grey flannel suit fathers and gingham skirt mothers of the postwar era. Old Left children were a unique group of young Americans who were primarily white, middle or working class, heavily Jewish in background, and educated on topics of sexism, classism, and racism. Not surprisingly, their early exposure to these issues inspired social activism at young ages. For these children, picket lines, politics, and protests were family events. While in grade school Sharon Jeffrey, the daughter of socialists, helped her parents canvass in support of the Socialist Party candidate.<sup>8</sup> As a child RDB Eleanor Raskin "learned to crawl, then walk, then march."<sup>9</sup> RBD Mark (last name withheld) recalled, "My first memory of being a red diaper baby was in 1947 or '48, May Day Parade, marching all the way up from downtown to uptown."<sup>10</sup> Even younger, RDB Gail (last name withheld) said, "I started marching when I was three. I was aware of being different."<sup>11</sup>

Drawing upon their histories of childhood activism, children from Old Left families were some of the first white students to participate in the Civil Rights Movement and also in the New Left. Conversations around the dinner table, family trips into low-income neighborhoods, after-school protests, and political discussions prepped these youngsters for an unprecedented level of participation in 1960s student movements. Young radicals observed and experienced first-hand the hypocrisy of American ideals,

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<sup>8</sup> Sharon Jeffrey, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan (October 1978), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Thai Jones, *Radical Line: From the labor Movement to the Weather Underground, One Family's Century of Conscience* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 152.

<sup>10</sup> Mark (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves, 1983," in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 59.

<sup>11</sup> Gail (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves, 1983," 41.

creating a perception of America that was different from most American children. They were sometimes harassed by the law, the government, their teachers, schoolmates, and even called to account within their own radical communities. These young activists were raised in an environment of persecution, secrecy, camaraderie, factionalism, and idealism that influenced them to be among some of the first white, college-aged participants in the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), as well as leaders in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), The Free Speech Movement, (FSM) and, later the Weathermen.

Of course not all children raised in radical families were content with their anointed status as the reformers of America. Some felt overwhelmed or frustrated by the role they were charged to play in the political, public arena. RDB Barbara's (last name withheld) fellow traveler parents consistently emphasized her responsibility to help the world. At times, as a normal child, she resented the constant parental reminders. A particularly vivid memory took place in 1965 when Barbara was fifteen and her family was protesting the Vietnam War on a picket line in front of the White House. It was Christmas day. Barbara's father had been gone all morning working on placards instead of being with the family. She recalled asking him why he had to sacrifice the family's happiness for this protest, a protest with only seven people. Her father replied, "Because it's important. It's more important than this holiday. It's important to the world."<sup>12</sup> Barbara remembered, "I resented it for about another two years. I thought about it often, of giving up certain things within a family context for one's ideas."<sup>13</sup> At times young

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<sup>12</sup> Barbara (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves, 1983," 52.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 52.

leftists, like Barbara, felt overlooked or even abandoned by their parents. In particular RDBs felt their parents prioritized politics over family, and many remember feeling neglected and depressed as children.

While Old Left families were picketing and protesting during the 1950s, many others in America seemed lulled into a complacent stupor. Non-leftist Tom Hayden remembered his childhood and the world of the Fifties as a one-dimensional era that lacked any real social conflict. Hayden recalled a strict conformity that only allowed,

one reality, one set of values: those of the comfortable middle class...life was already programmed: You went to high school, then college, then got married, and found a job. If you were talented or lucky, you might move from your hometown to a more exciting life on one of the coasts.<sup>14</sup>

In 1963, before his participation in the New Left, Carl Ogelsby, another non-leftist who later became president of SDS, was contentedly living the life Hayden described above. Oglesby described himself as “happy to kiss Beth and the kids goodbye and head off for Bendix, joyful to be in my Alfa...happy to be an upwardly mobile Everyman with a mortgage and a few dreams.”<sup>15</sup> In comparison, the majority of young radicals rejected middle class values that promoted conformity to consumerism and traditional gender roles. RDBs especially denounced the McCarthy era’s crackdown on civil liberties, often starting their own protest groups at school or in their neighborhood. Many young leftists were activists who publicly and persistently challenged the status quo.

As a result of growing up on the Left, many children were raised in an atmosphere of fear and persecution. While young activists raised in Socialist or Progressive families

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<sup>14</sup>Tom Hayden, *Reunion: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1988), 14.

<sup>15</sup>Carl Oglesby, *Ravens in the Storm: A Personal History of the 1960s Anti-War Movement* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 5.

were persecuted, RDBs were particularly targeted during this time as a result of the Smith Act convictions and the Rosenberg trial. When the Rosenbergs were arrested in 1950 it was the culmination of a catastrophic time for American Communists and their children. That same year, the Korean War started, the discriminatory McCarran Act passed that required Communist organizations to register with the Attorney General, and Alger Hiss, who had been accused of spying for the Soviet Union, was convicted of perjury. The subsequent trial and execution of the Rosenbergs psychologically affected RDBs who to this day consider the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg as one of their most powerful childhood memories.

What made the Rosenbergs' situation so terrifying was how it mirrored RDBs' own lives. Most RDBs either had a family member or knew of an individual who was subpoenaed and investigated in this period. Though the Rosenbergs were the only Communists sentenced to death during the second Red Scare, children of the American Communist Movement had to deal with the arrests, trials, and incarceration of their parents. RDBs were terrified of what might happen to their mothers and fathers while in prison, knowing leftist inmates were often persecuted or assaulted. Children were aware of several violent attacks on jailed communists, like Henry Winston who went blind in jail after being denied proper medication or Bob Thomas who was hit on the head with an iron bar and died a few years later due to medical complications that were never treated.<sup>16</sup> In addition, two other activists were burned alive in their cells when inmates

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<sup>16</sup> Gil Green, "Forbidden Books on Trial," in *It Did Happen Here: Recollections of Political Repression in America*, Bud Schultz and Ruth Schultz, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 87.

were given paint thinner to immolate the trapped men.<sup>17</sup> The combination of traumatic childhood experiences, family activism, and rejection of middle class values resulted in radically different childhoods for leftists than for others growing up in the fifties.

The first three chapters of this dissertation look at the unique childhood experiences of children of the Left in postwar America. Chapter one begins with brief histories of the Communist and Socialist parties in the United States. This section also provides a sociological analysis of both organizations' memberships and examines how individuals' differing roles in the Party-led movement and other radical organizations shaped somewhat different childhood experiences for their children. In addition this section also examines why so many of the activists were from Jewish backgrounds and how Jewishness affected their parents' involvement in the Left. The chapter explains how studying young radicals raised in these Old Left families contributes to the history of children by expanding studies about childhood in the 1950s and adding examples of child agency during this period. Since this dissertation relies heavily on oral histories and memoirs produced years after the 1960s, it also discusses the strengths and weaknesses of using these types of sources, and relying largely on these sources alone. These limitations are particularly important to consider when individuals are recounting childhood events that happened decades earlier and are generalizing about a broad category of people, not all of whom became radical activists.

The study of young radicals in Chapter Two expands our understanding of childhood during the 1950s. Historians of childhood examine how children assimilate,

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<sup>17</sup> Ben Chavis, "Criminalization of Dissent: The Frame-up," in *It Did Happen Here: Recollections of Political Repression in America*, Bud Schultz and Ruth Schultz, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 207.

accept, and reject the values of their parents, as well as the ways that children and youths create their own values. Chapter Two examines how the 1950s in general and the community of the Old Left in particular educated and influenced young leftists. This chapter looks at the McCarthy period as it specifically relates to RDBs by focusing on the Rosenberg trial, the McCarran Act and the Smith Act. It also takes into consideration national events that affected a wider range of activists, such as the House of Un-American Activities Committee, other investigatory committees and restrictive anti-Communist legislation, the expansion of the Cold War, Fifties gender roles, and race relations. In addition to the national events that influenced young radicals, this chapter focuses specifically on Left institutions such as progressive schools, Jewish secular schools, Party literature for young people, and leftist summer camps which formed an organizational milieu supporting a separate childhood for children from all Old Left backgrounds.

Building on this research, Chapter Three looks at the ways children from Old Left families took what they were learning, both through formal education and in actual protest participation with their parents, and created their own new outlets for activism at school and in their communities. Like their parents, children expressed an almost religious devotion to their causes. One RDB who was already political during her childhood and continued later in life has argued the Left effectively transmitted its values and dedication from one generation to another. She wrote:

We should be clear that these indirect processes were doing something right because here we are, successful products of our culture, if only because we self-identify as red diaper babies. Without us, there would be no conscious progressive tradition or presence in this society. Without us, there would be no connective tissue between generations on the Left, no rank-and-file troops with an almost



biological response to injustice, no hereditary Left to pass on visions and ideals and methods of work.<sup>18</sup>

The chapter also examines how children perceived their parents, and how adults parented their children. Lastly, the chapter looks at young radicals who rejected their parents' activism and attempted to be apolitical or conservative despite the politics and influences of their leftist families. Let us be clear: not all RDBs or children from Old Left backgrounds became political radicals in the 1960s, and not all radicals in the 1960s were the children of Old Left families. Nevertheless, enough of them participated, and often at leadership levels, that they are worth studying as a unique cohort.

Building on their childhood activism, many young leftists eagerly joined the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, which is the focus of Chapter Four. Though SNCC adopted a group-centered leadership structure and only the chair and executive director were appointed to leadership positions, radicals were highly valued for their activist abilities and often assigned roles that carried great responsibility. In his work *Three Lives in Mississippi*, William Huie claims RDB Mickey Schwerner occupied the highest organizational positions of any white participant in SNCC in 1964.<sup>19</sup> Whether enfranchising African Americans in the South or raising money in the North to continue the struggle for equal rights and extending the struggle to Northern cities, children of the Old Left were involved in every major organization and performed the gamut of jobs. Many said that they could not have kept away from the movement if they had tried, so

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<sup>18</sup> Shapiro, "Beginning the Exploration: Taking Over the Family Business," 2.

<sup>19</sup> William Huie, *Three Lives in Mississippi* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000).

eager were they for an opportunity to enact their values of equality and put their protest techniques into action. RDB Ron Ridenour remembered:

I took the step...I needed to do something more tangible than be a member of the C[ommunist]P[arty]. It was too conservative and over-weighted with old people, who couldn't or wouldn't be activists. Through my civil rights work, I saw information about the upcoming Mississippi Summer Project. I had worked with CORE in Los Angeles. Now I took the big step to struggle in the lion's mouth.<sup>20</sup>

Though the South was dangerous for any civil rights activist, it was particularly so for the children with Old Left backgrounds. The KKK and other white supremacy groups specifically targeted leftists, and the two RDB activists killed during Freedom Summer, Mickey Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, show the extent of this hatred.<sup>21</sup> The chapter on the civil rights activism not only examines how young radicals contributed to the movement, but also challenges the homogeneous depictions of white activism in the historiography. Most studies separate activists into racial categories and ignore how differences of politics, class, religion, and activist experience affected the participants and shaped their involvement.

Chapter Five places radical activists within the historiography of the American Left by examining their participation in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Free Speech Movement (FSM), and later the Weathermen. These three organizations were co-created and co-led by young leftists, and attracted many of their radical peers to their ranks. The first section looks at SDS during its beginning stage when young leftists helped create the mission statements and policies that would influence the entire New

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<sup>20</sup>Ron Ridenour, "Freedom Summer Orientation," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/info/ridenou1.htm>, (accessed September 27, 2010).

<sup>21</sup>Charles Marsh, *God's Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 70.

Left. Though initially unified in goals and tactics during SDS's organization phase from 1960 – 1962, throughout the rest of the decade young radicals were increasingly unable - amidst the escalating war abroad and the broadening upheaval at home - to agree on the best way to bring about change in America. Young radicals fought over politics and mass resistance, differed on who was the harbinger of change - the working class, students, people of color and so forth - and experimented with new forms of mass politics that were different from the Old Left. However, at each stage of SDS's theoretical and practical twists and turns, young radicals from the Old Left were leaders in the organization and contributed to the new theories and strategies that greatly influenced the organization's direction. Near the end of the decade, they were at least partially responsible for the New Left's demise. RDBs introduced and promoted the policies that led to increased sectarianism in the group and isolation from the rest of society.

The predominance of leftist leaders is also true for the FSM at the University of California, Berkeley. This section examines how RDBs at Berkeley played integral roles in the founding and fashioning of that movement. Leftists utilized the Popular Front strategy introduced by the Communist Party in the 1930s to unify disparate student groups on campus against the administration. In addition to looking at different leftists' strategies, this section also uses Berkeley radicals as examples of the paranoia and fear of law enforcement agents that afflicted activists with Old Left backgrounds.

The third section of this chapter looks at the differences between Jewish non-leftists and radical Jews' reaction to anti-Semitic statements made at the 1967 Convention of the National Conference of New Politics. Growing Third Worldism in the radical movement in the 1960s, which included a critical reaction to Israel, set off new,

complicated currents that many Jewish leftists had to deal with. Finally, the last section of this chapter demonstrates a clear continuity between the Old Left and the New Left. While the two Lefts were different in outlook and orientation, they were also united in part through family ties, financial assistance, activist techniques, values, and moral support.

Children of the Old Left were key contributors to Sixties social movements. On campuses across the country, they were among the leaders who inspired other college students to join protest organizations. Many participants then, and most history books now, do not make the connection between young leftists' unique childhood experiences and the skills and dedication they brought to their 1960s activism. This dissertation provides a link between Old and New Left radicals' childhood participation, teenage activism, and young adult commitments to radical social causes. It explains how parents, progressive schools, radical literature, and summer camps championed integration, class equality, and freedom of speech. Many RDBs soaked up these values and subsequently championed them with active leadership and participation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left. Studying young leftists' lives complicates our understandings of childhood in 1950s America, adds depth and dimension to our perception of white participants in the Civil Rights Movement, and shows the New Left's acceptance and rejection of the Old Left and then, surprisingly, its descent into the in-fighting, factionalism, and isolation that, similar to the Old Left, debilitated radical activism in America.

### **Explanation of Terms**

Since this dissertation includes children from a variety of Old Left backgrounds, it is important to specify how the different groups are referenced. When an experience or event involved or affected children from multiple political organizations, the following terms are used: radical youth, young radicals, radicals, leftists, young leftists, children from Old Left families or children of the Old Left, or some variation of these terms. If the situation relates exclusively to one group, than a specified term will be used: RDB, children from a Socialist background, etc. Activists who are RDBs will be identified with “RDB” in front of their name.

### **Explanation of Sources Without Names**

For many children from the Old Left, the memories of persecution and paranoia are so strong they hesitate to reveal their identities. In 1982 and 1983, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, both RDBs, organized a conference for children from Old Left backgrounds at the World Fellowship Center in Conway, New Hampshire. Around 100 individuals participated in discussions and interviews ranging from topics on “The Politics of Relationships” to “Our Radical Foremothers.” Kaplan and Shapiro published the conversation transcripts in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*. The accounts ranged from painful to triumphant with many drawing connections between their early childhood experiences and later activism. Some, like Kaplan, whose friend died in the Greenwich Village townhouse explosion in 1970, mourned the death of friends, others spoke bitterly of lost childhoods, and many mentioned being harassed by FBI agents. Though they agreed to be involved in the conference, the majority of them declined to

include their last names and in some cases allowed themselves to be identified only by a letter in the published transcripts. For references made to these individuals, only their first name is listed, followed by (last name withheld), or if necessary just a letter is used followed by (first and last name withheld). A few of the oral history participants I talked with wished to remain anonymous and are referred to with a letter followed by (first and last name withheld).

## **Chapter Two: Historical Foundations and Methodology**

### **Introduction**

Mimeographing, marching, and May Day parades were childhood activities for children of the Old Left in post-World War Two America. At an early age, young radicals were already taking to the streets to protest and challenge the racism, classism, and materialism that permeated American society. Influenced by their parents' examples, many children of the Left soon became active themselves in social movements that advocated desegregation, nuclear disarmament, and freedom of speech. As a result of leftists' childhoods, which differed radically from those of most American youths, it was natural for many of them to contribute to new causes in Cold War America. In addition to their activism, children from Old Left families were distinctive also in their musical tastes, reading material, and weekend activities, as well as in their perspective on international affairs. When young radicals made public these differences by their behavior, they often became social pariahs and were deemed un-American. Harassed on all fronts, many Old Left children were hassled by FBI agents, police, neighbors, school administrators, teachers, strangers, and other students. When historians argue the baby boom generation was one of the most coddled and spoiled in history, they are not talking about young radicals.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike their contemporaries, children raised in Old Left families were neither pampered nor sheltered. Though they were only children, during the McCarthy Era young leftists experienced similar public and personal persecution as the adult activists. Though parents could have protected their children from such attacks by preventing their

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<sup>1</sup>For more on this topic, please see Landon Jones' *Great Expectations: America and the Baby Boom* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981).

participation in public movements, they did the opposite, often including them in their activities. Instead of shielding their families, parents encouraged children to embrace their staunch commitment to radical ideals and join them on picket lines and at protest marches and parades.

Including the study of Old Left children into discussion about postwar America shows how a small group of young people socialized in radical families rejected and protested the status quo that was embraced by the majority of their peers. This is not to say leftists were the only children excluded from the idealized childhood of the late 1940s and 1950s or to say that only children of the Left became activists. Historians document Appalachian, Hispanic, and African American children who lived on the periphery of the American Dream.<sup>2</sup> Historians also document people from traditional mainstream backgrounds who later were mobilized, in ways contradictory to their parents' values, into the Civil Rights Movement or were radicalized on campuses by the New Left. However, while poor white children were excluded from the decade's material excess, for the most part they wanted to be included, and mainstream America socialized many other youths to seek careers in corporate America.<sup>3</sup> This was not so for many young radicals. These leftist children and teenagers refused the conspicuous consumption, political

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<sup>2</sup>For more on this topic, please see Wilma King, *African American Childhood: Historical Perspectives from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Marta Ester Sanchez, "Shakin' Up" *Race and Gender: Intercultural Connections in Puerto Rican, African American, and Chicano Narratives and Culture (1965-1995)* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005); Sue Books, *Invisible Children in Society and Its Schools* (Mahwah, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum Associates, 1998).

<sup>3</sup>For more on this topic, please see Charles E. Strickland and Andrew M. Ambrose, "The Baby Boom, Prosperity, and the Changing Worlds of Children, 1945 – 1963" in Joseph Hawes and N. Ray Hiner's *American Childhood: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1985).



conservativism, and social conformity of the 1950s. When the majority of Americans submitted to the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and other investigation boards, children from Old Left families protested the arrests and trials of their parents. While the rest of teenage America purchased a growing variety of goods with indiscriminate abandon, young radicals boycotted racist stores and corporations. Where society demanded strict adherence to rules regarding gendered behavior, to some degree Old Left children also challenged standard gender roles – although there continued to be gender discrimination even in movements that they created. As a result of their outspoken activism, these activists provide a different model of American youth during the Cold War years.

### **Historical Background**

To fully understand how children from a range of Old Left backgrounds had experiences differing greatly from their non-radical peers, it is necessary to provide a brief historical and sociological overview of the Left. This section looks primarily at the Communist Party, since the majority of those included in this study are RDBs, and gives a sense of American Communism as a thriving and then declining movement which included numerous organizations and affiliations in a complicated web. A shorter look at the Socialist Party's history, which was in friction with American Communism, follows this section.

The Communist Party had its largest following in America from 1935 to 1939 during the Popular Front era. This new era, announced by General Secretary Georgi Dimitroff at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International in Moscow, instructed Communists to abandon the revolutionary activities of the Third Period (1928-

1934) to join with progressives around the world to stop fascism from spreading internationally. As a result of this policy change, Party members in the United States began organizing efforts among the unemployed, intellectuals, industrial workers, farmers, African Americans, and youth. Communists played important roles organizing unions and paving the way for Party leadership in these organizations. With their new strategies, the Communist Party attracted tens of thousands of new members to its ranks. From 1930 to 1939 Party membership rose ten-fold from about 7,500 to at least 75,000 and possibly reached closer to 100,000. This number does not include the individuals interested or sympathetic to the Party that did not actually join.

These new members were attracted to the Party for a variety of reasons. Many working class individuals were involved in trade unions that were heavily influenced by Communist leaders and organizers. These individuals were not necessarily joining the party for its theoretical arguments, but due to the tangible improvements they hoped to experience from wage increases, better working conditions, and from the creation of a collective voice. A historical study conducted by Gabriel Almond at Princeton showed that three quarters of those who joined during this period were not doing so as a result of radical political theory or commitment to socialist revolution. Only 28% had read or studied the classical writings of Communism and the remaining participants had no formal training in political theory whatsoever. RDBs raised in these households with less formal training were not similarly exposed to the intellectual and theoretical discussions that occurred in other RDB families. Regardless of this lack of education, these members

were devoted to the Party and the movement and its broad support of the working class and the class struggle.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to recruiting through labor unions and the unemployed, the Party also garnered the attention of many middle class intellectuals. As the country's economic and social woes worsened, some members of the middle class were looking for answers and solutions for the country's economic woes. Bert Cochran wrote in *Labor and Communism: The Conflict that Shaped American Unions* that "sections of the American middle class, cut adrift from their conservative moorings, were scanning the shores for new alliances."<sup>5</sup> Even if their families were still financially afloat during this period, individuals could not help but notice the thousands of jobless workers Communists were organizing into hunger marchers or the 1.4 million signatures they gathered in support of unemployment insurance. Those who might have been members of other radical or leftist groups watched the Communists accomplish, starting in 1930 with only 7,000 members, more than all the other radical groups did together.<sup>6</sup> Even when the Comintern did an about face in 1939 and signed the non-aggression pact with Hitler, calling on Party members to help keep America out of the war, and then two years later in July of 1941 reversed that dictate when Germany invaded the USSR, many people remained supportive of the Communist movement and committed to the struggle against fascism. Except for the pre-World War One period when the Socialist Party was at its height, the

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<sup>4</sup>Bert Cochran, *Labor and Communism: The Conflict that Shaped American Unions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 12.

<sup>5</sup>Cochran, *Labor and Communism*, 95.

<sup>6</sup>See Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Fridrikh Firsov's *The Secret World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

Communist Party between 1938 and 1948 was the most important and largest revolutionary or radical movement in American history.

Historian Theodore Draper has even argued that the 1930s Communists should in actuality be ranked ahead of the pre-World War One Socialists as a result of their greater internal cohesion and discipline, in addition to their wider field of influence. Draper asserted, “Individual Communist party members spent more time and energy for the party than did individual Socialist party members; many Communist sympathizers and fellow travelers were the equivalent of Socialist party members in their service to the party.”<sup>7</sup>

After the end of World War Two, especially after 1948 when Progressive candidate Henry Wallace’s presidential bid failed, the Party’s popularity quickly dissipated. With the alliance between Russia and America dissolved after the Yalta Conference in 1945, the middle and late 1940s were marked by the early stages of an escalating Cold War. The ensuing power struggle between the two superpowers and their numerous proxies around the globe ended any remaining Popular Front alliances as the Communist Party once again shifted its orientation toward being an instrument of class warfare and an ally of the USSR in the American-Soviet Cold War. Convinced that a violent collapse of the American economy was imminent, war between the Soviets and Americans was inevitable, and a fascist government would soon occupy the White House, Party leaders determined it necessary that thousands of first and second tier members should go into hiding. Though this theory was introduced in 1947 prior to the federal government’s crackdown against the Party, it became a reality after the conviction

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<sup>7</sup>Theodore Draper, “Review of Joseph Starobin’s *American Communism in Crisis, 1943 – 1957*” *The American Political Science Review* 67 no.3 September (1973): 1030.

of top Party leaders in the Smith Act Trial of 1949. As a result of this flight underground, a skeletal organization remained in the public eye while the fugitive coterie struggled to retain their leadership of the Party. Historians believe the misery and confusion that resulted from this flawed strategy were responsible for the damaging effect and mass exodus of members after Khrushchev's 1956 speech exposing Stalin's corrupt and murderous leadership.

In addition to this fiasco, the Party also lost its working class base after the Taft-Hartley legislation passed in 1947. As anti-Communism grew among American workers, Communist union representatives were expelled from numerous trade unions, especially the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Throughout this period, Communist leaders, members, fellow travelers, and individuals at one time affiliated with the Party often came under government scrutiny and public persecution. Defeat and retreat, increasing isolation, and expanding repression now marked what once seemed the inexorable march of history in a growing popular movement. These topics will be covered in more depth in the following chapters.

Knowledge of the sociology of American Communism may help explain the different range and levels of persecution and trauma RDBs experienced while growing up. Some children had parents who were top leaders in the Party and key organizations and were investigated, arrested, and jailed for their activities. The highest tiers of leadership were the national and state leaders who translated Marxist theory into tangible strategy and made sure the membership obeyed Party orders. Members at these levels were professional revolutionaries, what Philip Selznik described as "technically trained

members of an elite group.”<sup>8</sup> These individuals attracted the greatest public and governmental attention and persecution, particularly from Joseph McCarthy, HUAC, and other government committees. This elite level instructed the cadre - specially trained members ready to risk public persecution, physical harm, character assassination, incarceration, and death to support their cause.<sup>9</sup> Nathan Glazer describes cadre members as “trained, committed, disciplined Communists, at the disposal of the party, ready to work for it in whatever area and for whatever end the central leadership directed.”<sup>10</sup> This group included middle class professionals who either worked for the Party as doctors, teachers, professors, or lawyers, or had jobs in the public workforce. Though not leaders of the Party, these individuals were often also called before investigatory committees, lost their jobs or had their careers disrupted.

Cadres also included trade union leaders and civic organizers who worked for Party affiliated organizations. At times these individuals might have a conflict between their allegiance to the Party as a whole, and the union or organization they represented. While these individuals were all part of the same movement, their involvement in

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<sup>8</sup> Philip Selznick, *The Organizational Weapon: A Study of Bolshevik Strategy and Tactics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952), 18.

<sup>9</sup> Saying “death” might sound extreme, but Party members joined in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade to fight in the Spanish Civil War. Roughly 2,800 volunteered and 700 were killed in action or died of wounds or sickness. For more on the subject, please see Richard Bermack, *The Front Lines of Social Change: Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* (Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2005); Peter Carroll and James D. Fernández, *Facing Fascism: New York and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Museum of the City of New York, 2007); Cecil Eby, *Between the Bullet and the Lie: American Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969); James Yates, *Mississippi to Madrid: Memoir of a Black American in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* (Seattle: Open Hand Publishing, 1989).

<sup>10</sup> Glazer, *The Social Basis of American Communism*, 76.

overlapping circles resulted in divided loyalties and created tensions between unionists and the Party. These union leaders also had direct contact with the rank-and-file contingents who included numerous non-Communists and also increasing numbers of anti-Communists. These working class members helped organize at their factories, lead union locals, sell Party publications, and support Party-affiliated labor unions. Blue-collar Party members were often expelled from unions and blacklisted by employers during the McCarthy period.

The last group discussed in this dissertation contains the fellow travelers and progressives who generally took the broad line of the Party, but were not Party members. These individuals often joined Party-associated organizations, like John Reed Clubs or the Anti-Imperialist League, but were never card-carrying members. RDB Robert Meeropol described progressives, using his adoptive parents who were teachers for examples, as individuals who “believed that almost everything the Soviet Union did was right and almost everything that the United States did was wrong.”<sup>11</sup> These different groups made up the heart of the Communist Left and its biggest constituency. From high-ranked leaders to rank-and-file members to fellow travelers, Communist Party members and fellow travelers were united in their support of the working class struggle and the fight against fascism. As a result of these various degrees of participation and commitment, RDBs experienced different levels and kinds of government, national, and local persecution.

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<sup>11</sup>Robert Meeropol, “Opening Presentation 1983,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 8.

Party strongholds of membership included Jewish, Slavic, and Finnish communities that provided both leaders and rank-and-file members. The majority of RDBs in this study are notably Jewish and it is important to explain why such a high percentage of individuals discussed come from this ethnic background. While there certainly was a diversity of RDBs in the movement, the majority of my interviews, oral histories, and memoirs are from RDBs located on the East Coast, particularly in New York. New York City was the center of the Party membership and membership was particularly strong among Jews in the city. If my study had drawn from sources located in Chicago, the participants would most likely have come from a more Slavic background, if from Detroit a Hungarian background, if from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan a Finnish background, or if from the South many would be African Americans. While this study includes RDBs from all these areas, the majority of the RDBs studied are East Coast Jews.

In order to understand why so many Jews were involved in the Communist Party, and in the Old Left in general, requires a bit of sociological imagination. The Communist Party's recruitment efforts were most effective among working class groups whose members had prior exposure to European labor and socialist organizations and traditions. Jews were among the highest percentage of ethnic groups in the Party and the most stalwart working class and middle class members. Like many immigrants, Jews came to America with some knowledge of leftist and labor-oriented politics and in the Twenties, when the Party was primarily made up of immigrant industrial workers, Jews ranked between the second and fourth largest foreign-language membership group. Jewish Communists were unique also in their heavy concentration in the clothing industry.



While in no ways a homogeneous group, the culture and values they did share allowed them to be key contributors to the labor movement without needing to modify their ethnic identity.<sup>12</sup> They remained a strong, united community from which Communists were not expelled or isolated. Their devotion to the Party was tangibly demonstrated from 1930 to 1935 by the seven to nine Yiddish daily newspapers that enjoyed a circulation ranging from 369,000 to 549,500. In his book *The Social Basis of American Communism*, Nathan Glazer stated that the Jewish membership was “the most important to the Communist Party.”<sup>13</sup>

While support for the Party and its institutions grew strong in the Jewish community, the Party nonetheless set strong constraints on what it would do to attract Jewish members. Because the Party took a strong stance throughout most of its history against “nationalist ideology,” it therefore opposed Zionism in all its forms. This anti-Zionism coupled with Communism’s anti-religious stance made the Party abhorrent to the rest of the non-secular Jewish community, as seen by the anti-Communist denunciations from defense organizations like the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, and the American Jewish Committee, and socialist bodies like the Jewish Labor Committee and the Arbeiter Ring (Workmen’s Circle). Regardless of the Party’s anti-Zionist policies, Jewish communists remained with the movement because of its connection with Jewish experience and also its disconnect from traditional Jewish institutions and values.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Glazer, *The Social Basis of American Communism*, 135.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 84, 85.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 152.

The earlier generation's prioritization of the Party over Jewish culture was especially influential on many RDBs who mirrored their parents' disconnect from Jewish values or religion and expressed the same preponderance of commitment to the Left and secular Jewishness over commitment to traditional Jewishness and community. Glazer explained that "To be a Communist meant to shed the limitations of one's social reality, and to join in a fraternity that transcended the divisions of the world. This was the attraction of Communism to many Jews who no longer thought of themselves in any way as [traditionally] Jewish."<sup>15</sup>

During the Thirties when the Party transitioned from one that was primarily working class to one that was one-half middle class, again the largest portion of its members came from Jewish origins. Many second-generation Jewish immigrants moved up and out of the clothing industry and other industrial pursuits and entered into teaching, public service work, law, and other occupations. They did so during a period of blocked mobility in the Great Depression and they did so still affected by rising currents of increasing anti-Semitism and discrimination. Many were drawn to the Communist-led activism of the 1930s that helped organize the industrial unions, fight fascism, and back the Roosevelt New Deal. Communists also were opponents of discrimination.

Glazer wrote that from the 1930s to the 1950s when the Party was at its greatest size and influence it was, "rather more successful in becoming the 'vanguard' of the intellectual and professional workers."<sup>16</sup> Jews were again some of its most devoted members. As a result, Glazer explained, "The doctors and lawyers in the Communist

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 168.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 130.

Party were no random sample of doctors and lawyers in general, but were predominantly drawn from these [Jewish] newcomers.”<sup>17</sup> As a result of their experiences as a persecuted minority, Jews looked,

with a cold and hostile eye on the world of received things, traditional religion, traditional culture, the traditional order of society. All these had historically meant for Jews oppression, anti-Semitism, restriction. Freedom and fraternity and human possibility were for them bound up with the breaking of old forms and the letting in of anything new and radical.<sup>18</sup>

During the Depression when it appeared that capitalism was failing, Jewish intellectuals were receptive to alternative political and economic theories.

While Jews filled many Party leadership positions, this dedicated group of Jewish apparatchiks was but a small percentage of those in the American Communist movement. Many Jews in the movement were fellow travelers and progressives who supported Party goals and causes, but were not necessarily members. Thus while Jewish representation in the Communist Party and its associated organizations was high, many more were participating on the periphery of the movement.<sup>19</sup> With the growing trend of secularity affecting the Left, Glazer addressed the difficulty of defining of who is to be considered when discussing the “Jewish element” of the Party. His definition is “someone who considers himself to be at some times and in some way a Jew and who is so considered by others.”<sup>20</sup> This study uses the same definition.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>19</sup> This topic will be covered with more depth later in the dissertation. For more information about this topic, please see Nathan Glazer’s *The Social Basis of American Communism* (New York: Harcourt, 1961).

<sup>20</sup> Glazer, *The Social Basis of American Communism*, 134. Glazer goes into his definition in more depth explaining, “To give it a content more important for present

While the majority of individuals in this dissertation are RDBs, some come from other Left organizations. The most prominent is the Socialist Party. Due to the relatively small number of individuals mentioned from this category, an in depth explanation of Socialism in America is beyond the scope of this dissertation. That said, it is important to explain what elements of Socialist Party history might shape similar and different experiences among Old Left children. Socialism first came to America with German refugees escaping the 1848 revolution. The majority of the working class base for socialists came from European immigrants who, like communists, first came into contact with radical politics in their native countries and then were often forced to emigrate as a result of their participation in radical parties and labor unions. The movement grew among the working class and intellectual circles to such a degree that in 1912 the democratic Socialist Party, envisioning a worker's republic, garnered almost a million votes in that year's election. The Party drew its support from trade unionists social reformers, and the populist farmers movement. Similar to the Communist Party, its most dedicated members, what Glazer calls the Socialist Party "shock troops," came from the Jewish community, especially Jews in New York. These Jewish members were least likely to defect and the most likely to supply both manpower and financial assistance.<sup>21</sup>

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purposes, it can be said that people in this category, no matter of what type, have experienced. Whether "non-Jewish" or "Jewish" Jews of the second generation are considered, it will be found that their fathers probably spoke the same language, engaged in the same group of occupations, followed the same religion and customs, emigrated at roughly the same time, from the same cultural sphere, to the same country, settling in the same neighborhoods in certain cities...there is no question but that most Jews in this country share a common history of rapid rise in the socio-economic scale, and a common tendency to be more interested in liberal politics (to use this term as it is generally used in America, to refer to all political positions left of center or that have historically been derived from left-of-center positions) (134).

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 20.

When the Party denounced American involvement in World War One, it was attacked by the government and the public, as well as lost a number of members. Following the war and the Russian Revolution, the Party was split by the formation of the Communist Party and wracked by infighting. In 1934 a coalition of members backing Norman Thomas desired an “all inclusive” party that would unite members from various other radical organizations including the Communist Party and support direct action. The Old Guard, primarily older New York members who had fought against Communists for control in the garment industry during the 1920s, preferred electoral politics to confrontational methods and in response went along with the American Labor Party (ALP) which was actually begun by CIO labor leaders in league with President Franklin Roosevelt. The ALP supported candidates sympathetic to the New Deal and to union causes and though it had an exclusionary policy towards Communists from the beginning, this policy was never enforced and many Communists joined then and more joined later. Just as the Communist Party experienced a membership surge during the Depression, so, too, did the Socialist Party. And, again similar to the Communists, many of these new members came from the Jewish community, both the middle class and working class. While this period united many trade unions with either the Socialist Party or the ALP, the Socialist Party’s failure to support World War Two caused tension between the party and other labor unions, most notably Walter Reuther in the United Auto Workers and also David Dubinsky and the garment workers unions.<sup>22</sup> After the war, Socialists were targeted during the McCarthy era, though not to the same extent as Communists. None of their leaders were forced underground, nor were any members of

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<sup>22</sup>For more about the Socialist Party’s history in America, please see Irving Howe, *Socialism and America* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985).

their party accused of spying and executed, like the Rosenbergs. Candidates running for the ALP were red baited and the organization ran its last campaign in 1954 and was terminated in 1956.

To fully understand the important changes RDBs and other young radicals brought to the New Left, it is important to at least reference the deep antagonism between Communists and Socialists. In addition to the split in the Socialist Party after the Russian Revolution that raised ire between the two organizations, the Communists during the Third Period (1928 – 1934) had expressed extreme hostility toward political organizations that blocked their revolutionary objectives. Socialists were known as “social fascists.” During this period the Communists spent much of their time attacking other Left organizations for political reformism and designating them as principal enemies of the revolution. An extreme example of this confrontational approach was seen at the 1934 Socialist rally at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Communists rushed the stage during the event resulting in a brawl.<sup>23</sup>

For their part, Socialists were stalwart anti-Stalinists and denounced the Comintern and its policies. Socialists and Social Democrats in the ALP broke away from the New York party in 1944 and created the alternative Liberal Party. Children raised in this atmosphere remember the factionalism that tainted the Old Left. Emily (last name withheld) was raised in a Socialist family and recalled:

The tension went on beyond the normal craziness of just being a red diaper baby because there was all this intra-left fighting. For me, not only was there the image of the FBI and capitalism but there were these dreaded Stalinists that were after you also. You had to be frightened not only of the FBI but

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<sup>23</sup>For more about this event please see Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Fridrikh Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

you also had to be careful on the Left who you talked to ‘cause it could be a Stalinist.<sup>24</sup>

Doug (last name withheld) stated that his parents came from Communist families who considered Socialists to barely be members of the Left, while Ira (last name withheld) learned the derogatory names for leftist who did not belong to the right party.<sup>25</sup> Esther (last name withheld) remembered that as a child, amidst the ongoing factionalism, she “got very bitter about political styles and dogmatism.”<sup>26</sup> Later in the Sixties, activists from non-leftist backgrounds could not understand the Old Left drama that surrounded SDS. This tension erupted during the Port Huron Conference when the students decided to seat a Communist observer. RDBs and children from Socialist backgrounds, in comparison, understood the historical reasons behind the Old Left’s visceral reaction and wanted, if possible, to get beyond it.

Regardless of which Party their parents were associated with or the degree of their membership, children raised in Old Left families had distinct and different experiences during the McCarthy era than many other children in America. The experiences of youth and children are often overlooked in historical studies, leaving a gap in our comprehensive understanding of a time period. Children offer a unique perspective on American history both for their own experiences and as an analytical lens with which to

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<sup>24</sup>Emily (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 48.

<sup>25</sup>Doug (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 55; Ira (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 21.

<sup>26</sup>Esther (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 23.

view different eras. In an attempt to fill this gap in the historiography, the next two chapters of this dissertation look at the postwar period through the eyes of young leftists. These chapters draw upon and engage existing historiography, but also examine post-World War Two America from a perspective and analytical lens different from previous studies. While there are books done on Cold War childhood or leftist persecution during the McCarthy Era, the two subjects have not been combined. This dissertation examines how the children of American Communists, Socialists, radicals and progressives responded to their parents' politics, were affected by the crackdown on subversives in the late 1940s through early 1960s, and contributed their own activism to social causes.

By doing so, this dissertation contributes to the field of children's history in two ways. First it provides radical youth's unique perspective of postwar America, a perspective that complicates the stereotypical perception of youth during the Cold War. In addition, it shows that young leftists' agency expands our perception of civil rights and social activism in the Fifties. Studying RDBs and their radical peers' early activism also demonstrates an indisputable connection between members of the Old Left and New Left generations.

Children's history is a relatively new field. Prior to Philippe Aries' *Centuries of Childhood* (1962) and the extensive document collection edited by Robert Bremner, *Children and Youth in America* (1974), the history of childhood was originally a subset of social history. Aries and Bremner argued that childhood and youth were worthy of an independent field and helped establish a distinct historiography for the subject. Though early efforts at creating a methodology were difficult, childhood historian David Rothman explained the motivation to overcome these challenges. He wrote:



Despite the many methodological and substantive difficulties apparent in the literature, historians are understandably reluctant to quit the field. It seems too important. Well aware of the work in other social science disciplines in which childhood in particular and socialization in general is so crucial an element, they cannot help but wonder about the effects of childhood and family training on the structure of past societies, about the changes that have occurred.<sup>27</sup>

In his book *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (2006), Steven Mintz wrote, "The history of children is often treated as a marginal subject."<sup>28</sup> Part of academia's reluctance to view children as viable subjects is the lack of sources available that include their perspective. Mintz agreed "there is no question [the history of childhood] is especially difficult to write. Children are rarely obvious historical actors. They leave fewer historical sources than adults, and their powerlessness makes them less visible than other social groups."<sup>29</sup> To combat this shortcoming, historians often utilized a combination of institutional records, diaries, yearbooks, school assignments and oral histories to document children's lives. In her book *Jewish Girls Coming of Age in America* (2005), Melissa Klapper used the subjects' diaries and journals to focus on a specific group of young women and pinpoint the unique experiences of Jewish daughters. Mary Mitchell also utilized the writings of children in her article "'A Good and Delicious Country': Free Children of Color and How They Learned to Imagine the Atlantic World in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana." In her work Mitchell incorporated children's letters to better understand how free African American children developed their own

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<sup>27</sup>David J. Rothman, "Documents in Search of a Historian: Toward a History of Childhood and Youth in America," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2, no. 2 (1971): 370.

<sup>28</sup>Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2006), 1.

<sup>29</sup>Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 1.

understandings of citizenship, nation, and race during a time of great upheaval in the United States.<sup>30</sup> Mitchell used similar sources in her book *Raising Freedom's Child* to show how freed slave children responded to Reconstruction. Using children's voices helps historians demonstrate how young people affected their social, political, and economic surroundings. Though limited in influence, children's wants and needs are "inextricably bound up [and affect] the broader political and social events in the life of the nation."<sup>31</sup>

As the field has developed, the historiography has shifted from studies about children from adults' perspective to studies about children from children's perspective. The original studies written in the Sixties used the former model. For example, Bernard Wishy's *The Child and the Republic* (1968) looked at the debate about child nurture between 1830 and 1900 through the use of child-rearing literature and children's books. While Wishy's research drew upon material produced for children, he was not studying the experiences of children themselves. Instead, Wishy was examining 19<sup>th</sup> Century parenting techniques from material produced about children or published for children. Though Wishy's approach was adopted for many early studies, as the field developed additional methodologies were introduced. One approach placed the child as an historical actor, attempting to study the child's agency and to reflect his or her voice. This approach was used in David Nasaw's *Children of the City* (1970) and James Marten's

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<sup>30</sup> Mary Niall Mitchell, "A Good and Delicious Country": Free Children of Color and How They Learned to Imagine the Atlantic World in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana," *History of Education Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (2000): 124.

<sup>31</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 1.

*The Children's Civil War* (1998).<sup>32</sup> An additional method focused on childhood as a social and cultural construct, as seen in Peter Slater's *Children in the New England Mind* (1977) and Viviana Zelizer's *Pricing the Priceless Child* (1985).

Some more recent contributions to the historiography have included focus on parental discipline, as seen with Peter Stearn's *Anxious Parents* (2003) and Ann Hulbert's *Raising America* (2003). Another subject has been the development and influence of youth culture, examined in Grace Palladino's *Teenagers: An American History* (1993) and Jon Savage's *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture* (2007). Also under scrutiny has been youth consumerism, explored in Daniel Cook's *The Commodification of Childhood* (2004), Chris Jenk's *Childhood* (1996) and Ellen Seiter's *Sold Separately: Mothers and Children in Consumer Culture* (1993). Another developing field studies public policy as it relates to children. This approach has been used by Alisa Klaus in *Every Child a Lion: The Origins of Maternal and Infant Health Policy in the United States and France, 1890 – 1920* (1993) and Selma Berrol's *Growing Up American: Immigrant Children Then and Now* (1995). One of the newer fields is that of childhood and globalization, studied in Raymond Grew's article "On Seeking Global History's Inner Child" (2005) and Paula Fass' *Children of A New World: Society, Culture, and Globalization* (2007).

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<sup>32</sup>For examples of such efforts to re-create the lives of children in the past, see Karin Calvert, *Children in the House: The Material Culture of Early Childhood, 1600 - 1900* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992); Roger Chartier, ed., *A History of Private Life: The Passions of the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1989); Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Family* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992); Hugh Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood Since the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); Howard Chudacoff, *Children at Play: An American History* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).

Historians have also begun to examine the specific childhood experiences of children of minority groups, as seen with Wilma King's *Stolen Childhood* (1995) and *African American Childhood* (2005) and Katherine Smith's article "Childhood, the Body, and Race Performance: Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Etiquette Books for Black Children" (2006). In addition to African Americans, Hispanics have been studied in Thomas Carter's *Mexican Americans in School: A History of Educational Neglect* (1970), Asian Americans in Wendy Jorae's *The Children of Chinatown* (2009), and Native Americans with Clifford Trafzer's *Boarding School Blues* (2006).

As this historiography has expanded, so, too, have scholars' respect for studying childhood, children, and youth as historical subjects. Though originally the narrow domain of developmental psychology and education, childhood is now studied more broadly in literature, social history, cultural history, sociology, communications, and urban affairs. In order to provide a forum for scholars to meet and discuss their research, the interdisciplinary Society for the History of Children and Youth was launched in 2000. While these have been promising developments for the field, Leslie Paris argued in her article, "Through the Looking Glass: Age, Stages, and Historical" that the discipline will have achieved a milestone "once it is no longer possible to write history without greater awareness of age."<sup>33</sup>

Relating the field of children's history back to this dissertation, research shows that neglecting to study children leaves out information necessary for understanding historical cause and effect relationships between children raised in the 1950s and their participation in 1960s social movements. The omission of focus on children from studies

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<sup>33</sup> Leslie Paris, "Through the Looking Glass: Age, Stages, and Historical Analysis," *Journal of the History of Childhood & Youth* 1, no. 1 (2008): 1.

of postwar America prevents historians from understanding fully the social and cultural developments of this period. Studying public and private influences on children, and the ways in which children responded to those influences helps explain future shifts in political or social norms, such as voting patterns, spending preferences, or intensified generational conflict. This is particularly true for children from Old Left families who developed the ideological values and activist skills during childhood that inspired many of them to participate in social movements during the 1960s through the present day.

By studying young leftists' attempts to influence different social, political, and economic forces in the Fifties, it is clear these young people were not passive creatures absorbing postwar culture, politics, socialization and schooling. Like their parents, they, too, were involved in responding to the evolution of their society. While there are multiple studies on childhood and teenage life in American history and specifically during the Cold War, few of them mention children of the Old Left in any depth. Though young leftists made up a relatively small percentage of American youths, as a unique political minority of Americans they should be included. The issue of similarity and difference between the standard American childhood and the lives of young radicals during this period is an important comparison overlooked in the current historiography.

*Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* by Steven Mintz, provided one of the most comprehensive surveys of American childhood from the 1700s through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While *Huck's Raft* has several chapters that examine children's lives in the Fifties and Sixties, Mintz included little on radicals' experiences and nothing about white children's involvement in 1950s civil rights protests or high schoolers' participation in SDS or anti-war protests during the 1960s. This omission excludes children from the Old

Left who enthusiastically participated these activities. These individuals are also omitted from Mintz' argument that the 1950s were the "golden age of American childhood." Mintz accurately showed how racial minority youth were not enjoying carefree childhoods, but he does not expand his analysis further to investigate other factors, such as parents' politics, that would negatively effect children. If he had included the government's repression of the Left, Mintz could have strengthened his argument against the "golden age" myth by including the persecution of young radicals.<sup>34</sup> *Huck's Raft* discusses the Cold War's impact on children, but only generally. In his discussion of games that involved the US versus the Soviets, Mintz never introduced a subset of children who thought representing the USSR meant that you were being the good guys.<sup>35</sup>

Children from the Old Left are also excluded from studies focusing on youth and youth culture. Grace Palladino's *Teenagers: An American History* has two sections dedicated to life in postwar America. Palladino used music as a lens through which to see the developments of this period. Though *Teenagers* goes into great detail about rhythm and blues in the Fifties and rock n' roll in the Sixties, there is barely a mention of the growing popularity of folk music during this period. The book also has a chapter "The Content of Their Character: Black Teenagers and Civil Rights in the South" that depicts African American teenagers' civil rights activism during the 1950s, but makes no mention of any white teenage leftists who supported the civil rights cause with sympathy protests and fundraisers.

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<sup>34</sup>Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 275.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 283.

In another work that excludes young radicals, *Raising Consumers*, Lisa Jacobson redefined the child-as-consumers timeline. Jacobson pushed back the origin of the child consumer from the 1950s to the 1930s. While *Raising Consumers* aptly documents the growing trend of youth consumerism and challenges the historiography on the subject, like most studies on consumerism Jacobson does not show opponents who challenged the growing trend of conspicuous consumption, specifically Communists and Socialists. Leftist parents and their children condemned materialism as bourgeois and exploitive of the working class. While American Communists did support better wages and working conditions that would have permitted stronger involvement in the growing consumer culture, they rejected the current system that excluded the lower class and depended on an exploited workforce. Radicals' rejection of American consumerism continued throughout the postwar era and is rarely mentioned in studies on the subject.

Even books and articles that specifically examine youth in the postwar era overlook children raised in Old Left families. The article "The Baby Boom, Prosperity, and the Changing Worlds of Children, 1945 – 1963" by Charles E. Strickland and Andrew M. Ambrose in *American Childhood: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook* (1985) does not include young leftists as a counter to their look at the "Child-Centered" family. During a time period when children and their numerous activities dominated the household agenda, children raised in Old Left families often had parents who struggled to reconcile their political activism with their roles as mothers and fathers. As a result, many young leftists felt abandoned by their parents. Even more specific to the postwar time period is Leerom Medovoi's *Rebels: Youth and the Cold War* (2005) that studies teenagers during the McCarthy Era. Medovoi wrote about teenage identity

and the creation of the “rebel” in the 1950s. Using film and fiction, *Rebels* shows how the characters seen as “bad” in postwar America were also the “guarantor of the nation’s antiauthoritarian democratic character.”<sup>36</sup> When presenting the idealized US image broadcast during the Cold War, the fact that rebellious individuals could exist without being executed or imprisoned emphasized the great liberty and freedoms of America.

Medovoi also tried to connect the emergence of this identity of the rebel as a precursor to the rise of identity politics in the 1960s and beyond, countering the more traditional view of seeing the Sixties as a reaction against the Fifties. But what Medovoi failed to do is take young leftists into account as a concrete example of seeds sown in the Fifties that flowered in the Sixties. RDBs and their radical peers did not participate in the Sixties because of a Hollywood “rebel” identity created in the Fifties, they had been committed activists from a young age and did not need an alternative version of the ideal American teenager to inspire their 1960s social activism.

A field of scholarship that does take teenagers’ activism into consideration looks at the legal cases that arose from student protests in the Sixties against the Vietnam War at public high schools. Ian Haney-Lopez’s book *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice* (2003) examines Mexican-American high school students in East Los Angeles who were punished for protesting their school’s appalling conditions.<sup>37</sup> As a law

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<sup>36</sup>Leerom Medovoi, *Rebels: Youth and the Cold War Origins of Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press), 3.

<sup>37</sup>Haney-Lopez looked at these student to “describe the evolution of a non-white racial identity among Mexicans...to illustrate how racial thinking leads to and stems from legal violence...to offer a general theory of race as ‘common sense’ that helps us to fathom not only the rise of the Chicano movement but also current racial dynamics” quoted from Haney-Lopez’s book *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice* (Cambridge, MA, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 2.



professor, Haney-Lopez looks at the legal ramifications of the students' activism, examining the development of racial identity during the lawsuits. Expanding the scope outside of California, Lorena Oropeza's *Raza Si!, Guerra no!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism During the Vietnam War Era* (2005) looks at Chicano high schoolers' protests in San Antonio and New Mexico. Another article addressing teenage activism and court cases is Gael Graham's "Flaunting the Freak Flag: Karr v. Schmidt and the Great Hair Debate in American High Schools, 1965–1975" (2004). Graham examines how hairstyle was a type of protest during the 1960s that was inflammatory enough to become a legal issue.<sup>38</sup>

Studies also examine high school student activism to see how it affected schoolteachers. The chapter "Public High Schools, the Courts, and Anti-War Dissent" in Marc Gilbert's *The Vietnam War on Campus: Other Voices, More Distant Drums* (2001) focuses on different legal cases where teachers were suspended or fired for refusing to say the Pledge of Allegiance or wearing a black armband in protest of the Vietnam War. While the chapter examines different cases involving teachers' perceived influence on high school students, the study does not look at the students themselves. Similar to Gilbert's approach is Kermit Hall and John Patrick's study "Freedom of Speech in Public Schools: *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Communist School District*" in their book *The Pursuit of Justice: Supreme Court Decisions that Shaped America* (2010). Neither Gilbert's study nor the work of Hall and Patrick specifically look at the students themselves or include young leftists who were involved in similar protests. Current

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<sup>38</sup>Gael Graham, "Flaunting the Freak Flag: Karr v. Schmidt and the Great Hair Debate in American High Schools, 1965–1975," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 2 (2004): 1.

studies of high school student activism are not analyzing student protest as it directly applies to young people as agents of change, but instead the legal ramifications of the protests on different minority groups or high school teachers.

While many studies on childhood overlook youths from Old Left backgrounds, one book focuses on them in depth. Paul Mishler's *Raising Reds: The Young Pioneers, Radical Summer Camps, and Communist Political Culture in the United States* (1999) uses the political culture of children to study the Communist Party. Mishler is interested in the Communist Party's methods for instructing the next generation about its values and goals through children's literature, youth programs, and summer camps. Though a very helpful look at Communists' efforts to educate their children, Mishler does not examine the Party's success or failure in its efforts to transmit these values and beliefs to RDBs. *Raising Reds* also does not include the effect of these programs on the political, personal, or psychological development of the children. Mishler explained, "This is not because the children's perspective...is unimportant. Rather, I want to look at these activities for what they illustrate about the culture of the adults who created them."<sup>39</sup> Mishler documented the type of literature RDBs read, the camps they enjoyed, and the secular schools they attended. But because his study does not include the effect these materials and institutions had on RDBs themselves, he never includes the children's voices or perspectives in his work. Mishler mentions, for example, that RDBs were happy at summer camp because it was the only time they were not at odds with the surrounding culture, but he never explores how this experience influenced or affected campers' childhood activism or later

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<sup>39</sup>Paul Mishler, *Raising Reds: The Young Pioneers, Radical Summer Camps, and Communist Political Culture in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 2.

participation in 1960s social movements.<sup>40</sup> He also, except briefly in the conclusion, did not draw connections between the children raised in leftist families and the events of the Sixties. In addition, Mishler examined a slightly earlier time period than postwar America. His focus is the 1920s through 1940s when the relative acceptance and success of the Communist Party created an entirely different atmosphere and experience for members and their families.

To build on Mishler's work, this dissertation focuses on RDBs and other children from Old Left families and examines radical organizations' influence on children. Understanding the effectiveness of lessons learned in childhood can help explain leftists' motivation for participating in the social movements of the 1960s. These influential connections are shown in radicals' activism and personal perceptions, and also in the memoirs they have written and oral histories they have produced. Because institutional records do not capture this type of data, this dissertation relies heavily on the perspectives shared by children of the Old Left in oral and written form to identify the connection.

The necessity for including children's own perspective is emphasized in the children's history field. William M. Tuttle discussed this need in *Daddy's Gone to War: The Second World War in the Lives of American Children* (1993). After completing the initial 600-page draft of his book, Tuttle realized he needed the children's perspectives to make the narrative engaging. Prior to their inclusion Tuttle said his study was, "essentially one-dimensional and boring. What was missing was authenticity – that is, the

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<sup>40</sup> Mishler, *Raising Reds*, 88.

voices of the homefront children themselves.”<sup>41</sup> Nearly fifty years after Victory in Japan Day, Tuttle put a request in more than one hundred newspapers for people’s childhood memories about the war. He received around 2500 letters that included poignant descriptions of pain, fear and pride. These personal accounts provided, in Tuttle’s estimation, the authenticity his book had lacked. *Daddy’s Gone to War* includes a caveat about the effectiveness of these letters and their subjectivity, and Tuttle made no claim to have uncovered the typical or representative wartime childhoods. Rather he has attempted to “document the range of children’s experiences.”<sup>42</sup> Like Tuttle’s work, this dissertation does not depict a standard Old Left childhood, but explores these experiences for patterns of similarity and difference.

To examine the lives of young leftists, this dissertation also uses a variety of primary sources that includes material produced by radical youths at their summer camps such as newsletters and letters home, camp yearbooks, and in particular oral histories. These oral histories were either conducted for this dissertation, come from activists’ autobiographies, or are discussions recorded at two RDB conferences. The use of this type of source presents similar complications to those experienced by Tuttle with his World War Two letters, and these shortcomings will be discussed in order to demonstrate the benefits and drawbacks of using RDBs’ own voices.

Oral historians tout their craft as the means of capturing individuals’ actual emotions and experiences. Defined as “a body of spoken narratives that are told by people about themselves and their environment,” these narratives document how

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<sup>41</sup>William Tuttle, *Daddy’s Gone to War: The Second World War in the Lives of America’s Children* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), x.

<sup>42</sup>Tuttle, *Daddy’s Gone to War*, xi.

individuals view themselves at a given point in time. As a result, some scholars view oral history as one of the most important research methodologies available to both academic and public historians. Proponents of oral histories argue the documents provide the feelings and experiences of peoples traditionally excluded from studies due to their lack of economic, social, or political importance.<sup>43</sup> According to some historians, oral history is the core of all family history and truly describes what happens in the private sphere.<sup>44</sup> Oral histories show the traditions and cultural values passed down from generations that do not necessarily appear, even though their influence is profound, in other primary sources. To explain the development of oral history and its shortcomings, the following section provides a brief description of the origins of oral history as a field, the challenges oral historians faced convincing other scholars to accept their work, the limitations of oral histories, and the ways to specifically address these weaknesses for this dissertation.

### **History of Oral History**

Throughout the late twentieth century until the practice gained credibility in the 1980s, historians debated oral histories' virtues and flaws. For the roughly four decades prior to its acceptance oral history practitioners pleaded their case with a variety of arguments. Proponents asserted the importance and continuity of using oral histories to explain the human experience, a phenomenon that had occurred throughout humanity's existence. This argument is stated in Rebecca Sharpless' essay "The History of Oral

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<sup>43</sup> Harriette McAdoo, "Oral History as a Primary Resource in Educational Research," *The Journal of Negro Education* 49, no. 4 (1980): 415.

<sup>44</sup> Joan Jensen, Beverly Baca, and Barbara Bolin, "Family History and Oral History," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 2, no. 2 (1977): 93.

History” in *Handbook of Oral History* which traces the use of oral sources from their earliest use in fifth century BCE Greece. In addition to the argument of its perpetuity in human civilization, scholars asserted the discipline’s importance for documenting peoples’ lives not included in the traditional narrative. For example, the Works Progress Administration’s former-slave interviews conducted in the 1930s gave historians the sources necessary to help challenge Ulrich B. Phillips’ “peculiar institution” depiction of slavery.<sup>45</sup>

Prior to its general acceptance, New Left historians embraced oral history to study groups previously ignored in the historiography. The goal of these historians, many located at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, was to produce a more accurate narrative that radicalized “the practice of history by contesting a ‘hegemonic’ view of agency and power.”<sup>46</sup> Paul Thompson’s *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (1978) thoroughly articulated this new combination of oral history and social history. In “Oral History as Evidence” Ronald Grele wrote that Thompson’s view of oral history was “the latest stage of a long tradition in the use of ‘oral evidence’ to uncover the history of everyday life, in the fullest sense of ‘everyday,’ from the minutest aspects of the interior world of the family to the largest propositions of oppositional culture.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See Kenneth Stamp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Knopf, 1967) for his usage of WPA narratives to counter Phillips’ arguments.

<sup>46</sup> Ronald J. Grele, “Oral History as Evidence,” in *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, Thomas L. Charlton, Lois Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless, eds. (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2007), 37, 38.

<sup>47</sup> Grele, “Oral History as Evidence,” 38.

The continuing struggle to achieve credibility in academia resulted in oral historians creating a specific definition of oral history, developing a methodology, determining the direction for future work, and establishing professional objectives and standards.<sup>48</sup> Academic journals and conferences brought oral historians together to evaluate changes in the field, examine new technology available to conduct and store interviews, and discuss the increasing popularity of oral history both inside and outside academia. With the growing availability and ease of cassette players, oral history became accessible to everyone in the late 1970s. At first oral historians were territorial about their field and resented interlopers who violated rules of evidence or published uncomplicated analyses of their interviews. Oral historian William Moss wrote that his colleagues could not help but wearily view the growing popularity of their domain. He stated, “While [oral historians] were banging on the postern door of the academic castle clamoring for admittance, the great sea changes of populism and technological revolution knocked down the whole wall and let everyone in, to come and go as they please.”<sup>49</sup> Faced with tangible evidence of both oral histories’ usefulness and the thoughtful establishment of methodological processes and standards, oral historians and their craft were finally accepted in the 1980s. Even if now seen as a valid historical source, the debate about the strength and weaknesses of oral histories continues.

Though oral histories are an effective way to show the thoughts, feelings, and actions of people during a specific time period, one must remember their problematic

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<sup>48</sup> Rebecca Sharpless, “The History of Oral History,” in *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, Thomas L. Charlton, Lois Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless, eds. (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2007), 11, 14.

<sup>49</sup> William Moss, *Oral History Program Manual* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 7.

nature. Michael Frisch argued in his book *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (1990) that one cannot simply accept oral history as “historical evidence because of its immediacy and emotional resonance, as something almost beyond interpretation or accountability, as a direct window on the feelings and ...on the meaning of past experience.”<sup>50</sup> Just because an individual was at an event, lived through the time period or experienced strong emotions does not mean their recollections are completely accurate or can be accepted at face value. Oral history is a subjective account of one’s life, and memory is a malleable and changing trigger for oral history. As Jean Barman pointed out in her article about childhood memory entitled “Oh, No! It Would Not Be Proper to Discuss That with You”: Reflections on Gender and the Experience of Childhood,” “Everyone builds his or her own theory about the history and course of his or her life by attempting to classify his or her particular success and fortunes, gifts and choices, favorable and unfavorable elements of his or her fate according to a coherent, explanatory principle.”<sup>51</sup> Barman continued, “To understand the childhood of a single person, we must understand both the culture that he or she experienced as a child and the culture perceived as existing at the time that the individual is sharing his or her experiences of childhood. Thus is the telling constructed.”<sup>52</sup> Consequently, it is necessary to take into account how long ago the event happened, the intensity of emotion the event evoked, the individuals’ experiences after the event, and

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<sup>50</sup>Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 159, 160.

<sup>51</sup>Jean Barman, “Oh, No! It Would Not Be Proper to Discuss That with You”: Reflections on Gender and the Experience of Childhood,” *Curriculum Inquiry* 24, no. 1 (1994): 63.

<sup>52</sup>Barman, “Oh, No! It Would Not Be Proper to Discuss That with You.” 63.



how current social, political, and economic circumstances could influence the interviewee's perspective.

Why and how an individual chooses to recall a certain event and how accurately that memory is are difficult puzzles for the researcher to solve. The first step is determining the accuracy of the interviewee's information. Oral historians have utilized interdisciplinary methods to understand the accuracy and reliability of human memory. Barman examined this phenomenon in her article and found that while her sources were dealing with experiences from their childhood they retold past experiences through the perspective of an adult.<sup>53</sup> Oral historians found that as memories are filtered through a contemporary lens to determine their content and worth, childhood experiences are tweaked and revised to fit current circumstances. This results in the descriptions of the past coming through the perspective of the present day, and makes recalling the past, in the words of British oral historian Paul Thompson, an "active process."<sup>54</sup> Memories are triggered by an event in the present, such as an interviewer's question. Each stimulus is unique and will never occur in the same way again. As a result, memories are never recalled in the same way and thus the individual creates a different past each time he or she describes the memory.<sup>55</sup>

The important question is the continuity between these varied versions of one's past. Small discrepancies in detail are not necessarily problematic, but large changes can call into question the accuracy of the individual's memory. In these cases it is necessary

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>54</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 113.

<sup>55</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 171.

to compare an individual's account to specific primary sources for verification, or to contemporaneous oral histories of similar experiences. To ensure accuracy, oral historians adopt oral historian Charles T. Morrissey's admonition, "Paper trail first, memory trail second."<sup>56</sup>

Due to the individual's childhood memories being filtered through a contemporary lens, reminiscences can be restructured to support current goals or disappointments and to serve present day agendas. Edward Casey wrote in *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*:

It is an inescapable fact about human existence that we are made out of memories: we are what we remember ourselves to be...there is never a selfless moment – at least not after the earliest phases of an individual's development – and each successive self is built on its own selective stock of memories.<sup>57</sup>

In a similar vein, French historian Daniel Bertaux wrote:

Stories about the past are told from the present, from a situation which may have changed over the years and defines a new relationship to the past. It is *this relationship* which underlies the whole story, defines the meaning which it is supposed to convey: for one never tells a story in itself, but in order to convey some meaning about the present; in most cases this – often unconscious – goal of meaning-constructing prevails over the faithful reconstruction of the past.<sup>58</sup>

According to Bertaux, when analyzing oral histories researchers should always consider how the individual's recollections are a commentary on the present and the past. The historian should ask how the stories told and events described give insight into the

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<sup>56</sup> Charles T. Morrissey, "Oral History Interview: From Inception to Closure," in *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, Thomas L. Charlton, Lois Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless, eds. (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2007), 165.

<sup>57</sup> Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 1987), 290, 292.

<sup>58</sup> Daniel Bertaux, "Stories as Clues to Sociological Understanding: The Bakers of Paris," in *Biography and Society: The Life History Approaching the Social Sciences*, Daniel Bertaux, ed. (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981), 98. Emphasis in original.

individual's contemporary conception of their past and what that adds or detracts from their historical account. In order to understand how or if the interviewee has adapted his or her story and what these changes imply about their relationship with the past, again it is important to compare their memories to primary or secondary sources.

One of the most prominent examples for meaning-constructing is shown in the memories individuals choose to share. Concerns about personal reputation, covering others' mistakes, or social mobility affect the stories people are willing to tell. French oral historian Isabelle Bertaux-Wiame found in her work with Parisian migrants that successful immigrants talked at length about their unhappy childhoods while those who were still financially unstable were hesitant to divulge the miseries of their past. According to Bertaux-Wiame, "For [the financially unstable], to talk about the unhappiness of the past is to talk about the present, too."<sup>59</sup> A later section in this chapter discusses how contemporary events could affect RDBs' memories and interpretation of childhood events.

Expanding on this idea of emotions affecting memory, Valerie Yow writes in *Recording Oral History* (1994), "We use stories not only to make sense of our experiences, but also to justify decisions, to profit from past experience in making current decisions about the present and future, and to reassure ourselves that we have come through life's challenges and have learned something."<sup>60</sup> Because people use the past to reassure themselves about their present situation, the mood of the individual greatly affects his or her remembrances. Yow's research shows that depressed people remember

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<sup>59</sup>Barman, "Oh, No! It Would Not Be Proper to Discuss That with You." 57.

<sup>60</sup>Valerie Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Practical Guide For Social Scientists* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), 35.

less detail and have memories that are less vivid than people who are not depressed. In addition, happy people tend to recall happy memories.<sup>61</sup> Children raised in Old Left families both support and contradict Yow's findings. Many individuals readily divulged the struggles of their youth in great detail while at the same time lamenting the present-day political, social, and economic situation. In comparison, other leftists shared the painful events in their childhood, but also commented about the nurturing environments they were raised in and their pride in their parents' activism.

The variety of influences affecting and manipulating individuals' memories underlies oral histories' problematic nature. However, studies have been done that prove oral histories' high level of accuracy. Oral historians determined that while the present can influence a person's memory it does not make the memories inaccurate beyond usefulness. Proponents base their conclusions on studies done by the medical field concerning memory and memory loss. Showing the tenacity of childhood memories, psychologist David Rubin found that from middle age on people accurately recall more memories from their childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood than from the most recent years of their life.<sup>62</sup> Daniel Schacter in *The Seven Sins of Memory* (2001)

described the cataloging and accuracy of these memories. Schacter wrote:

At relatively early points on the forgetting curve – minutes, hours, and days, sometimes more – memory preserves a relatively detailed record, allowing us to reproduce the past with reasonable if not perfect accuracy. But with the passing of time, the particulars fade and opportunities multiply for interference – generated by later, similar experiences – to blur our recollections. We thus rely ever more on our memories of the gist of what happened, or what usually happens, and attempt to reconstruct the rest by inference and even sheer guesswork. Transience

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<sup>61</sup>Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 45.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 35.

involves a gradual switch from reproductive and specific recollections to reconstructive and more general descriptions.<sup>63</sup>

Schacter argued that while memories change with time and become less detail oriented, they are still reasonable reproductions of what occurred.

Other tests conducted to determine the reliability of memory agree that memories remain consistently accurate across time. A study involving a World War Two vet proved this assertion. The man was interviewed three times in twelve years, each interview conducted four years apart. The results showed that his memories were not always correct when specific dates were required. For example, the interviewee did not always remember the army's exact position or details such as the water temperature during the invasion of southern France, but his more general details were constant. During each interview the man's memory supplied a consistent analysis of his experiences, an interpretation of their meaning, and an account of their emotional impact.<sup>64</sup> This demonstrates that even though events are viewed through the present lens, in this case a lens that changed three times across a twelve-year span, the memories remained relatively constant.

Studies have also shown that people have a tendency to remember everyday details as accurately as large events. In addition to remembering the range of events, the feelings that accompanied the incident are usually consistent in the individual's multiple testimonies. A study done with people who observed office robberies found that interviews conducted four and then 15 months after the theft produced the same

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<sup>63</sup> Alice M. Hoffman and Howard S. Hoffman, "Memory Theory: Personal and Social," in *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology*, Thomas L. Charlton, Lois Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless, eds. (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2007), 283, 284.

<sup>64</sup> Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 41.

remembrances. Scientists concluded that highly emotional events are imprinted in people's memories and details about the event are retained even when concomitant information has been forgotten.<sup>65</sup> Schacter noted that some memories refuse to fade, and when this occurs the memory tends to involve regret, trauma or some other negative emotion. He also suggested that all emotions tend to strengthen a memory but that negative emotions can strengthen a memory to the point where it is intrusive and interferes with normal activity.<sup>66</sup> Historians and psychologists define trauma as an event or series of events of such negative effect on the individual that there is a break with life before the trauma and an influence on life afterwards.<sup>67</sup> This would certainly apply to the majority of RDBs who experienced the traumatic arrest of their parents, protested the execution of the Rosenbergs, or were physically abused and verbally harassed as a result of their adolescent activism.

The benefits and problems regarding the use of oral histories are comparable to those of using memoirs. Similar to oral histories, the use of memoirs and their reliability as a source was originally challenged. The debate was evident in the late 1800s, as seen in the 1896 article "Recent Memoirs of the French Directory" in *American Historical Review*. Memoirs, like oral histories, must also be carefully examined for accuracy and require analysis of the writer's motive for producing the work, the age and time period when written, and the circumstances under which the memoir was written.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>66</sup> Hoffman and Hoffman, "Memory Theory: Personal and Social," 283, 284.

<sup>67</sup> Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 45.

<sup>68</sup> H.M. Stephens, "Recent Memoirs of the French Directory," *The American Review* 1, no. 3 (1896): 475.

Contemporary autobiographical theory began with the publication of Georges Gusdorf's 1956 essay, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography." Gusdorf described the genre as a primarily Western phenomenon written by men who possess a certain feeling of personal importance and a desire to recapture their pasts and inscribe their own image onto the historical record.<sup>69</sup> James Olney, one of the most outspoken champions of the field of autobiographical studies, shares Gusdorf's viewpoint that autobiography reveals the present consciousness of the autobiographer rather than a historically grounded depiction of the past. Through the process of writing, Olney argues, the autobiographer "half discovers, half creates" herself.<sup>70</sup>

In addition to Gusdorf's work, Roy Pascal's now classic *Design and Truth in Autobiography*, published in 1960, also helped create modern autobiographical theory. Since then, the majority of autobiographical theorists have positioned their arguments within a complex, interconnected spectrum based on the terms in Pascal's work.<sup>71</sup> The trend to incorporate representatives of the genre into the academic curriculum, as well as to self-consciously reflect on the form and function of autobiography, began in earnest in the 1970s. Since then there have been a multitude of scholarly activities – articles, bibliographies, collections of essays, special issues of journals, and journals devoted to

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<sup>69</sup> Georges Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, James Olney, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980). Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 72.

<sup>70</sup> Olney, *Autobiography*, 21; Roy Pascal, *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 60.

<sup>71</sup> For more on this topic, please see Jennifer Jensen Wallach, "Remember Jim Crow: The Literary Memoir As Historical Source Material" (PhD diss., University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2004).

the topic. Journals *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*, *Biography*, *Prose Studies*, and *A/B: Auto/Biography Studies* were established in the mid-1980s. In addition a variety of conferences, Black Autobiography, the Self and Other, Women's Autobiography and Biography, the Autobiography Conference, have also started.

As a "text" of a "life," autobiography is about change, presenting the "before" and "after" of individuals who have undergone transformations of some kind in their experience.<sup>72</sup> In her published dissertation entitled "Remember Jim Crow: The Literary Memoir As Historical Source Material," Jennifer Jensen Wallach explained the peculiar nature of memoirs, showing their position between the disciplines of literature and history. She argued that while literary critics currently dominate the field of autobiography, insights drawn from autobiographical works have great potential to enhance historians' understanding of a time period by showing how "individual thoughts, emotions, perceptions, and misperceptions of each historical agent are constitutive of the historical reality of a particular moment."<sup>73</sup> Memoirs capture a historical period as perceived through the lens of a particular individual, giving an insight into the personal, unique life experiences of a variety of people.

The enthusiastic outpouring of interest in the study and use of autobiographies has been sudden and dramatic. Still expressing surprise at the meteoric rise in popularity and use of this form, most articles about autobiographies comment on this phenomenon

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<sup>72</sup>Carolyn A. Barros, "Figura, Persona, Dynamis: Autobiography and Change" in *Biography* 15, no. 1 (1992):1 – 28. For an examination of the theory and scholarly analysis of autobiographies, please see Paul Jay's article "What's The Use?: Critical Theory and the Study of Autobiography" in *Biography* 10, no. 1 (1987): 39 – 54.

<sup>73</sup>Wallach, "Remember Jim Crow," vi.



before even starting critical discussion about the field.<sup>74</sup> One of the reasons that autobiographical criticism has assumed such a prominent place in literary studies, and this relates directly back to the study of leftist activists, is the fact that an inordinately large number of 1960s activists have written autobiographies about their participation in Sixties social movements. This phenomenon suggests that the historical climate of the decade also helped usher in the era of the autobiography, which has expanded to include a much greater cross section of society than at any other time in the history of the genre.<sup>75</sup> According to William Zinsser, we live in ‘the age of the memoir...everyone has a story to tell, and everyone is telling it.’<sup>76</sup> This certainly applies to the memoirs used in this dissertation, which run the gamut of movement leaders’ memoirs to those of rank and file participants.

When analyzing memoirs, autobiographies, or oral histories, it is important to consider when the interviews were conducted or published. As Bertaux-Wiame stated, memory is tied to the interviewee’s emotional state and must be taken into consideration when analyzing and using the interview or memoirs. Factors to be considered include if something negative has occurred in a person’s life, the general malaise of the times, or

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<sup>74</sup>For more on this topic, please see Albert Stone, *Autobiographical Occasions and Original Acts: Versions of American Identity from Henry Adams to Nate Shaw* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982); James Cox, *Recovering Literature’s Lost Ground: Essays in American Autobiography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989). Wallach provides this quote from Albert Stone, “One finds personal histories everywhere one finds books: on library shelves and in the syllabi of college courses; at the checkout counters of drugstores and supermarkets; on best-seller lists, as book club selections, in reviews...of the *New York Times*; in the knapsacks of high school students and hitchhikers,” (Wallach, “Remember Jim Crow,” 8).

<sup>75</sup>Wallach, “Remember Jim Crow,” 11.

<sup>76</sup>William Zinsser, ed., *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 3.

the simple fact that the goals the individual hoped to fulfill did not happen. These considerations are particularly relevant to children of the Old Left who were dedicated to marginalized political and social causes during their childhood, young adulthood, and are still in many cases supporting these movements. The fact that these causes were not as successful as hoped could negatively taint their memories or make memories seem more painful in light of this failure. While liberalism certainly changed the social and political terrain during and after the Sixties, the socialist government and anti-materialist economic system leftists were hoping to implement did not happen. For the former activists the future has belonged to the enemies of American Communism and progressivism. Many are still trying to incorporate their value systems into a world that seems, according to them, determined to undermine their principles.

### **Methodology**

The majority of the sources used to describe RDBs and their radical peers' childhood experiences in Chapters Three and Four are transcripts from RDB retreats in 1982 and 1983 held at the World Fellowship Center in Conway, New Hampshire. Each retreat attracted roughly 50 participants from the spectrum of Old Left backgrounds, with women's attendance to men's at a 3:1 ratio. As a result of this higher percentage of women, discussion topics focused on gender equality, sexism, lesbianism, and childcare. Two RDBs who organized the sessions, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, hoped to answer the following questions: "What were the commonalities in our upbringing, our values, and our lifestyles? What were the differences? What could we offer each other that would

help make sense of our shared experiences?”<sup>77</sup> The weekend discussions started with “Beginning the Exploration” and “Introducing Ourselves” where participants described their childhood experiences and spoke about their reluctance to even come to radical retreats or speak about their backgrounds. Other sessions included “Raising Children”, “Our Radical Foremothers”, “The Politics of Relationships”, “The Next Generation”, “Making Choices: Jobs, Careers, Security”, “Class Issues”, and “Jewish Red Diaper Babies.” While many radicals talked about pride in their activism and ideals, they also explored the psychological trauma and issues they still dealt with as both children and now adults. Some were in counseling or visited a psychiatrist. A few were still paranoid about their pasts and reluctant to discuss such issues with others. RDB Mindy Fried was initially convinced that a federal agent had followed her to the meeting.<sup>78</sup> Three of the participants refused to use their names in the transcripts, instead being identified only by a letter. The majority stated their present occupations and activism was based on the lessons they learned in childhood.

For the twelve oral histories I conducted, I found similar results. My interviews occurred almost 30 years after the New Hampshire retreats, but they uncovered the same type of memories. Even though it was 2010 and 2011, some interviewees were still quite reluctant to share their stories and wished to be identified anonymously. One interviewee

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<sup>77</sup> Judy Kaplan, “Preface,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), Preface.

<sup>78</sup> Mindy Fried later realized the man she thought was an agent was actually a former colleague of her fathers and that was why he showed so much interest in her, “Beginning the Exploration: opening Presentation 1983,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 9.

wrote when discussing the confidentiality form, “Even though the political climate right now is not particularly focused on the CP [Communist Party], with a change in political leadership next year who is to say that there would not be another witch hunt?”<sup>79</sup> Most interviewees, however, enthusiastically reminisced about their earlier activism and said they enjoyed discussing the past. Many of those I interviewed were still involved in leftist politics and still worked for the goals they adopted in childhood.

With regards to both the oral histories I conducted and those from the RDB retreats held in the early Eighties, it is important to explore how the contemporary political, economic, or social situation would affect participants’ recollections. As Barman asserts, to understand how memories are constructed, it is necessary to understand the individual’s culture during childhood and the culture existing at the time of the individual’s sharing about their childhood experiences.<sup>80</sup>

The first component to address for the reunion transcripts is location and audience. The attendees were in a private, safe place with other leftists who had experienced similar parenting styles, government persecution, and personal activism. Though some participants were still paranoid about sharing their identities or at first reluctant to speak, they all had chosen to attend and were interested in at least hearing about the life histories of other activists. The conferences themselves presumed a coherence and commonality to being children from the Old Left. Yow explains how the narrator may describe the memory differently with different cues, or in other words,

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<sup>79</sup> A (first and last name withheld), Email with the Author, 1, September, 2010.

<sup>80</sup> Barman, “Oh, No! It Would Not Be Proper to Discuss That with You”: 63.

reconstruct it differently when responding to different needs and environments.<sup>81</sup>

Talking in a supportive environment in front of sympathetic peers, it is likely participants shared more freely than if the audience had been unfamiliar, indifferent or hostile. In the case of the RDB conferences, the events would have created similar environments of support and security that would have encouraged attendee participation.

From the conference transcripts, it is obvious that many RDBs were unified in the desire to pass along their value system to the next generation. Parents wanted to find a practical and effective way to do so in an unsupportive society. While the current rejection of their values was not the violent attack of the Forties and Fifties, it was no less effective at hindering their progress. The next generation of young radicals growing up in the 1970s and 1980s was not particularly interested in supporting social causes or sacrificing comfort for civil rights. Retreat participants compared their own childhood experiences to those of their children and lamented the lack of social networks, schools and neighborhoods to support radical values. With these group laments the participants became what Yow calls a “community of memory.” This term relates to a once vibrant community that has dispersed and lost its foundation of support and now survives only in the minds of its former inhabitants.<sup>82</sup> Leftists’ sense of nostalgia about their childhood communities’ cohesiveness and support could be idealized as a result of the present day’s lack of a support system. Many mentioned the warm, caring leftist communities they were raised in during their youth.

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<sup>81</sup>Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 37, 38.

<sup>82</sup>Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 193.

Nearly all of the individuals at the retreats expressed a sense of despondency regarding the current political, social, and economic climate. This is not surprising considering the national and international events that occurred in the five years prior to the conferences. New Leftists watched as President Johnson's Great Society was dismantled by Republican administrations' attacks on big government. In *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (2001) Bruce Schulman describes the rise of the sunbelt states in the South and West that favored low taxes, minimal public services, military spending, and the empowerment of state rights over the federal government. Throughout the Seventies these developments came to define the national agenda, an agenda that helped calm America's discomfort with the reforms and radicalism of the Sixties.<sup>83</sup> According to David Farber in *America and the Seventies* (2004), these transitions happened because the country was ill at ease during the 1970s. Farber describes Americans as "unsure of ourselves in our relations to each other and the world at large."<sup>84</sup> While the changes in governmental policies might have quelled some Americans' fear, they would have only exacerbated those of Sixties activists who watched their hard won victories lose federal support.

Another painful blow in the Seventies struck at workers' rights. For a group whose parents had been dedicated labor unionists, it would have been discouraging for leftists to see the setbacks of labor unions and the corroding of the Rust Belt as industry

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<sup>83</sup> Bruce Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 255.

<sup>84</sup> David Farber, "The Torch Had Fallen," in *America in the Seventies*, Beth Bailey and David Farber, eds. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 11.

migrated south to escape union regulations and workers' rights legislation.<sup>85</sup> Jefferson Cowie in his 2004 article "Vigorously Left, Right, and Center" described how the post-Dave Beck and Jimmy Hoffa labor movement spent the 1970s fighting the same battles fought a half-century before over stagnant wages, horrible working conditions, and lack of recognition.<sup>86</sup> For New Leftists whose parents were members and leaders of labor unions or were the legal counsels for unions, this would have been a bitter loss.

The early years of the Eighties promised little comfort as the Reagan administration took office and launched his conservative counterrevolution. The country was still in the midst of a deep recession and part of the president's solution for the economic downturn was to reverse Democrats' federal assistance programs. As conservatism gained supporters and became the nation's most influential ideology, John Ehrman stated that liberalism, which had been in decline since the 1970s, was finally repudiated by a majority of voters in the early 1980s.<sup>87</sup> *In The Eighties: America in the Age of Reagan* (2005), Ehrman showed how the programs most affected by spending reductions were those that assisted the poor and racial minorities.<sup>88</sup> In addition to this loss, Robert M. Collins's *Transforming America: Politics and Culture During the Reagan Years* (2007) asserted there was a renewed popularity of conspicuous consumption during the decade, a cause leftists had fought since childhood. However

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<sup>85</sup> See Thomas Sugrue's, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>86</sup> Jefferson Cowie, "Vigorously Left, Right, and Center: The Crosscurrents of Working-Class America in the 1970s," *America in the Seventies* in Beth Bailey and David Farber, eds. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

<sup>87</sup> John Ehrman, *In The Eighties: America in the Age of Reagan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>88</sup> Ehrman, *In The Eighties*, 66.

while many Americans were indulging in materialism, Collins documented the concurrent emergence of an urban underclass and increased homelessness.<sup>89</sup> By the 1980s, Collins argues, many Americans had come to embrace more individualistic ways of thinking, inhibiting their ability to perceive the structural dimensions of social problems or accept the notion that their tax dollars should be used to fix them or even support government at all.<sup>90</sup>

Leftists had numerous reasons to find the 1970s and early 1980s nightmarish. The Christian Right's attack on *Roe v. Wade*, the failure of the Equal Rights Amendment to pass, and society's attack on feminism in general, as documented in Susan Faludi's *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (1991), were substantial setbacks. For the former anti-war protestors, Jimmy Carter's signing of Proclamation 4771, a law requiring 18 to 25 year olds to register for a peacetime military draft after the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan, brought back memories of Vietnam. The murder of San Francisco's first openly gay City Supervisor Harvey Milk and the killer Dan White's light prison sentence enraged activists. American empowerment of Latin American dictators, Chile's Augusto Pinochet and Argentina's Leopold Galtieri, and their administrations' numerous human rights abuses were disheartening.<sup>91</sup> Though few RDBs

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<sup>89</sup> Robert M. Collins, *Transforming America: Politics and Culture During the Reagan Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 128.

<sup>90</sup> Collins, *Transforming America*, 117.

<sup>91</sup> Victoria Ortiz was deeply involved in a variety of solidarity civil rights movements supporting reform in Latin America. She moved to Mexico City in 1975 and spent five years there working for the release of a group of Chilean women who had been imprisoned in Chile by the Pinochet regime. Through the efforts of Ortiz and her fellow activists, primarily women associated with the far-left party, the MIR (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria), the Chilean women were permitted to leave for Mexico



were particularly supportive of the Soviets, the fall of the USSR was still a blow. An event that hit closer to home was the Brinks truck robbery in 1981 that resulted in two former Weather Underground Organization members being sentenced to life imprisonment. Though historians have shown the Eighties were not a completely conservative era, to those living in the decade without historical hindsight the picture looked grim. As Yow found with her subjects, when the individuals felt unsuccessful or unhappy they tended to recall more despondent memories about their past. For New Leftists meeting in the early 1980s the dreary political, economic, and social climate surely affected their memory selections.

Regarding my interviews conducted in political climate of 2010 and 2011, the Left was experiencing some successes. The first African American president had been elected in 2008 and gay marriages were legalized in California. But there was still concern about the United States' international military engagements, involvement in Middle Eastern wars, the lack of youths' interest in political and social causes, and disappointment with the Obama administration. While some New Leftists were still activists, many were looking for less organized ways to express their progressive views and activism.

With all these different variables applying to oral histories how can they be validated as worthy sources? Perhaps in the fact that a variety of Old Left children from numerous sources and interviews conducted from the 1960s through 2011 depict similar

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through a diplomatic arrangement brokered by Mexico's then-president Luis Echeverria. Ortiz did a wide variety of support work with them, both in Mexico and back in New York, including the development of position papers for the party on women's issues and feminism and a women's health project she spearheaded (Email with the Author November 11, 2010).

experiences. There are also additional primary sources that substantiate their recollections. Leftist camp newsletters, non-leftists' oral histories, school records, newspapers, SNCC documents, and FBI files support radicals' statements. Another way to evaluate leftists' statements about their youth and roles as child activists is to compare their memories with those of their parents. From both autobiographies and oral history interviews, this dissertation compares children and parents' memories. It also includes parents' perspectives about their children, and how parents perceived their children and what it meant to be raised in an Old Left family. In most cases the stories are the same. Parents knew being a member of the Party or involved in political activism was a commitment that demanded personal sacrifice from themselves and their children. In some scenarios, parents might not have realized the extent of their children's trauma, but they knew such a childhood would be painful and stressful. Adult activists asked a lot of themselves and they required the same sacrifices of the next generation.

As previously mentioned, the sample of individuals used in this study largely draws on people who grew up in New York City and are Jewish. There are several reasons for this high proportion of East Coast Jews. One explanation is the predominance of Jews of both the Communist Party in general and Jewish Party members in particular on the East Coast. The majority of camps and progressive schools were located in that part of the country, and it is from those institutions I was able to locate interviewees. There certainly were RDBs from the West Coast, but the majority of the ones included in this study are from the Atlantic seaboard. Therefore it should be remembered that this dissertation is selective and deals only with a limited aspect of a broader subject.

Other than a few recognizable leaders, the majority of those interviewed were located through websites specifically created for camp participants or school alumni. These groups, like the Yahoo Group Camp Wochicamine (Camp Worker's Children's Camp), celebrated a component of young radicals' childhoods. In these cases RDBs were searching out fellow activists for support and memories. One Facebook page on the Downtown Community School (DCS) site had a discussion posts for "How DSC [a]ffected Our Lives" another was a group conversation where members reminisced about their school days and activities. The site had a collection of old yearbook photographs that inspired happy posts. Though these people are now spread across the country, they have "communities of memory" on the Internet that allow them to connect and reminisce with each other. As noted earlier, most children of the Old Left happily recounted their childhood participation in social causes, perhaps feeling it had been their window of opportunity that the following decades had not provided many opportunities to recreate. All interviewees had participated in some form of childhood activism and been involved in at least the Civil Rights Movement or the New Left. Several of them I located through the Civil Rights Movement Veterans Archive that incorporates experiences from various organizations and geographic locations.

With regards to the memoirs and oral histories incorporated into this dissertation, the majority of them come from prominent organizational leaders. While there were plenty of RDBs and other leftists who were active participants or brief contributors to the movement, memoirs and oral histories are often limited to the leadership level. Many of these individuals are still active in leftist politics. In order to include a variety of perspectives, I have attempted to include memoirs of former leftists who have switched

their political allegiance, such as David Horowitz and Ronald Radosh. In addition I have included mentions of RDBs and leftists who did not continue on the Left.

My conclusion that continuity does exist between the Old Left and New Left does not depend on oral histories that specifically confirm or deny this argument, but by examining the childhood experiences of leftists who, as activists in the Sixties, displayed concrete signs of continuity. While there certainly were children of the Old Left who denounced their radical roots or remained apolitical, they were also not contributing to the New Left, and thus their experiences do not sway the argument that those who did participate did bring Old Left strategies, financial support, and methods with them. Looking at children from the Old Left who participated in Sixties social movements shows the continuity of a radical tradition in American politics and the connections between the generation of 1960s protesters and their parents.

One of the questions asked of each RDB was if their experiences growing up in leftist families influenced and supported their future activism. Every participant I interviewed answered in the affirmative. R (first and last name withheld) stated “The 1950's experience made me more savvy and more cautious than most...I was smarter.”<sup>92</sup> Victoria Ortiz answered the question, “Definitely yes. My whole world view has always been informed by the political lessons of my childhood. I can’t see myself ever not living these values.”<sup>93</sup> Daniel Safran stated that his family “felt great empathy for and identification with people who were oppressed ... My RDB experience made it easier for me than most of my peers to identify with those who are oppressed. My family’s

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<sup>92</sup> R (first and last name withheld), Email with the Author, 15, November, 2010.

<sup>93</sup> Ortiz, Email with the Author, 11, November, 2010.

commitment to social justice values gave me a comprehensive world view that sustained my belief that we are all obligated to make the world a better place.”<sup>94</sup> Lewis Siegelbaum stated his RDB background contributed both positively and negatively to his activism. He explained that by “positively” he meant an “appreciation of the necessity to subordinate the ego as a means to achieve cooperation in pursuing a pre-defined goal as well as a repertoire of knowledge about past struggles, songs, etc.; by ‘negatively’ I meant a certain paranoia derived from the experience of my father whose career, friendships, etc. were ended thanks to McCarthyism.”<sup>95</sup> It is important to note that those interviewed for this dissertation were leftists who respected their parents’ political values, and thus almost unanimously make a clear connection between their childhood and their college-aged activism.

### **Conclusion**

Though many children of the Old Left were politically active during the McCarthy era, their important contributions are not found in history books covering this time period. Incorporating their lives into studies of postwar America provides another lens for understanding the McCarthy era. Looking at young radicals shows how a group of children were raised in a political, social, and economic value system contrary to that of most Americans. By looking at commonly studied events through the perspective of radical youth, or analyzing incidents often left out of history books, our understanding of life in the McCarthy era is expanded. Examining how parents transmitted political

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<sup>94</sup>Daniel Safran, Email with the author, 23, November, 2010.

<sup>95</sup>Lewis Siegelbaum, Email with the Author, 30, August, 2010.

ideologies to their children and the ways children of the Old Left accepted or rejected these values explains how their value systems were created. Studying what young activists did to adapt and incorporate these goals into their own forms of protest shows children's ability to create a society that more closely mirrored their perceptions of liberty and justice for all.

The following two chapters about young leftists' childhood look at the events, organizations, and political ideals that affected radical youths. These influences will be examined on the macro and micro level. The macro level looks at the Cold War, McCarthyism, the Holocaust, and the Rosenbergs. The micro level studies how the family, religion, and leftist institutions educated and influenced young radicals. Analyzing these different influences uncovers how children of the Old Left accepted, rejected, and adapted the values of both American society and those of their parents. It suggests that there was a clear connection between Old Left activists and their New Left children. In order to better understand the ways young radicals formed their values during childhood this chapter and Chapter Three draw on research questions from the history of childhood field. Using this methodology shows how the political and social atmosphere of postwar America, in combination with the lessons politicized children learned from their parents, created the value system that in turn motivated their participation by many in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left.

The dangerous and threatening world of the post-World War Two years is where this analysis starts. Examining the persecution that surrounded young activists shows the degree of hatred directed to these children and their families. This atmosphere is in stark contrast to the solidarity and security provided by upbringing in radical communities. As

these two worlds interacted, many children of the Old Left learned how to put their radical ideals into public practice. These moments of activism motivated leftists' disproportionate representation and participation in the protest organizations of the 1960.

## **Chapter Three: Growing Up Left During the Cold War**

### **Introduction**

When asked to envision a 1950s childhood most people picture crew cuts, picket fences, cul-de-sacs, and apron-clad moms. Few see incarcerated fathers, FBI agents, and Free the Rosenbergs rallies. For young radicals growing up in the Forties and Fifties, postwar America was an increasingly scary place. As a result of their families' connections to the American Communist Left or other leftist organizations, RDBs and their radical peers were a targeted minority. While these attacks were particularly severe for RDBs whose family members were top ranking members of the Party, most young leftists, regardless of their parents' relationship with the Left, remember feeling scared and insecure during this time period. Though just children, government agents followed young radicals to school, teachers taunted them during class, and neighbors cursed them in the streets. In spite of this persecution, young leftists participated in social causes that promoted racial, gender, and class equality.

Children's activism and the harassment they suffered for this activism set them apart from most youth in postwar America. In order to understand the radically different nature of leftist and non-leftist childhoods, this chapter focuses on the societal influences, family relations, religious experiences, education institutions, voluntary activity, and recreations that influenced young activists.<sup>1</sup> To understand how the Cold War's domestic and international policies affected these individuals differently than other children, this chapter will examine McCarthyism, various anti-Communist legislation, the House of

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<sup>1</sup>N. Ray Hiner and Joseph M. Hawes *Growing Up in America: Children in Historical Perspective*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), xx.



Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), and the FBI. Examining these organizations includes studying parents' subpoenas, trials, blacklisting, incarcerations, or going underground. In addition to looking at the McCarthy Era's affect on the Old Left and their families, this chapter also examines the Left's influences on young activists. These influences include Progressive schools, Communist Party children's literature, participation in parents' activism, and the leftist summer camps specifically created to nurture and encourage activism. Looking at these influences not only shows the unique components that made up young leftists' childhoods, but also explains the motivation for their activism both as children and as college students during the Sixties.

The first components to examine are the societal conditions that shaped young radicals' development. This question looks at the institutions and environments in which children lived and the patterns and nature of the relationships that occurred within these institutions. This portion of the chapter will examine the larger oppressive atmosphere of the Cold War and McCarthy era that included key events such as the execution of the Rosenbergs, a tragedy especially traumatic for RDBs as a result of the couple's Party membership. It will also look at the effect of FBI investigations, parents' incarcerations, blacklistings, suspicious accidents, parents' flight underground, and families forced to flee the country. This section examines the traumatic effect such events had on young leftists and how they attempted to cope with the fear and paranoia that surrounded their lives.

The next section looks at the ways families attempted to create radical communities and enclaves to provide practical and moral support for each other. For families who stayed in the United States, many lived in protective leftist neighborhoods

like the Coops in the Bronx or Trenton Terrace in Washington, DC. These areas, whether they were entire city blocks or smaller apartment buildings, were refuges that provided children with a sense of safety, security, and normalcy. Support networks and cultural facilities supported RDB activism and gave them a sense of pride in and dedication to their social causes. In many ways it also gave young radicals a sense of disconnect from the outside world. For children ensconced in these radical communities, many did not meet their first Republican until college.

Old Left parents made sure their children were educated about the social and political problems facing America. This chapter looks at the different institutions that contributed to this education, while Chapter Four looks at the ways parents taught their children in the home. The Party and other leftist organizations printed books and reading material to teach radical values. In addition to this form of education, many children were sent to secular Jewish schools that usually met after school and on the weekends. These community schools gave young leftists a sense of pride in their Jewish heritage and working class activism.

Often in combination with these Jewish institutions, children attended progressive schools that used radical curricula and unconventional teaching methods. These private institutions followed the methodology created by John Dewey in the early 1900s. In this educational system academics were not reduced to rote learning, but instead consisted of fieldtrips, art projects, outdoor excursions, and protest activities. This type of learning environment was also embraced at the radical interracial camps RDBs and their peers attended. Created by leftist organizations to provide summer solace from the city and public persecution, children cherished their weeks at camp that renewed their dedication

to civil rights activism. At camps individuals were taught the power of song to promote and nurture a movement. Many of the lyrics they learned at a young age came from Pete Seeger, a hero of the Left who continued to inspire activists during the 1960s. The children who had the privilege of attending private progressive schools and radical summer camps escaped some of the harassment experienced by those forced to interact with the public on a daily basis.

In comparison, children who were not raised in protective communities and attended public schools often experienced extreme persecution. The pattern and nature of the relationships that occurred within these environments were those of fear, paranoia, solidarity, and dedication to one's ideals. The variety of locations where children were raised often depended on the level of their parents' participation in the Party. Children of parents who were in leadership positions or white collar professions were most likely to attend private progressive schools and live in supportive neighborhoods. Those with rank-and-file status lived in both supportive radical communities like the Coops or lower-income areas. Sometimes there was a deliberate effort to integrate ethnic or racial neighborhoods, and other times it was a financial necessity. Children from fellow traveler families and those raised in families disconnected from, but still carrying the taint of, their Old Left roots, were more likely to mention the lack of a supportive community. These individuals were especially grateful for their summer camp experiences.

### **Cold War Childhood**

Growing up in postwar America in an Old Left family was a traumatic experience for children, regardless of their parents' connection to radical organizations. RDB Rachel

Fast Ben-Avi, whose prominent father Howard Fast was arrested for his political beliefs and Party membership, described her experience as, “The events of the time... frightened me into silent, sometimes sycophantic submission... By the time I was six or seven I was clinically depressed. There are photographs of me that were taken then. In them I look sad, beaten, angry.”<sup>2</sup> Children whose parents were not famous Communists experienced the same anxiety. RDB Miriam Zahler, whose mother was a rank-and-file Party member, recounted, “Fear and despair prevailed: at least that’s what I remember. The political events of the period disrupted my childhood as forcefully as if Joseph McCarthy had been camped on our doorstep.”<sup>3</sup> Aaron (last name withheld), whose parents were Socialists, remembered his parents being too fearful to vote in any elections, afraid their electoral choices would result in government persecution.<sup>4</sup>

Even children whose parents had escaped overseas to avoid prosecution were terrified. RDB Victoria Ortiz, who lived in England in the early 1950s stated, “The atmosphere of fear and mistrust permeating ‘50s society was something I definitely absorbed.”<sup>5</sup> Children of the Left, labeled by J. Edgar Hoover in their FBI files as “Un-

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<sup>2</sup>Rachel Fast Ben-Avi, “A Memoir,” in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 125.

<sup>3</sup>Miriam Zahler, “A Poisoned Childhood,” in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 205.

<sup>4</sup>Aaron (last name withheld), “Jewish Red Diaper Babies, 1983” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 112.

<sup>5</sup>Victoria Ortiz, Email with the Author, November 11, 2010.

American” feared for both their parents’ and their own safety.<sup>6</sup> This is not to say that young leftists were the only children worried about their wellbeing during the Fifties. Most children in post-war America grew up fearing nuclear annihilation as a feeling of impending doom permeated society. Air raid drills were the norm after the USSR developed atomic weapons in 1949 and some school districts assigned children dog tags so their bodies could be identified after a Soviet attack.<sup>7</sup> Bill Ayers remembered that early in the 1950s his grade school teacher taught the class that no matter where the children were, at home, at the park, in the classroom, they “should stay alert to the possibility of a nuclear attack. Once, as a group of us boys wrestled across the playground, Miss Loving reprimanded us for being too rowdy, adding that we weren’t in any position to respond properly to a nuclear attack.”<sup>8</sup> The 1951 civil service announcement featuring Bert the Turtle and the catchy jingle “duck and cover” exemplified this fear of possible nuclear war.

Americans viewed the USSR as the greatest threat to American national security. Supporting the Soviets or questioning American domestic or foreign containment policy was considered un-American and subversive. Congress passed new legislation and old laws were resurrected to imprison those with actual, alleged, or past connections to leftist organizations. Consequently young leftists were raised in families whose political and social activism was seen as un-American and dangerous. As a result, in addition to the

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<sup>6</sup>Sally Belfrage, *Un-American: Activities: A Memoir of the Fifties* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 16.

<sup>7</sup>“The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals” in *National Association of Secondary School Principals Part III* 36 (1952), 183.

<sup>8</sup>Bill Ayers, *Fugitive Days: A Memoir* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 19.

pervasive fear of nuclear attacks, children on the Old Left grew up with an “under siege” mentality, a mindset similar to children living in an occupied country. Viewed as the enemy, radical children and their parents were watched, harassed, abused, attacked, and despised by neighbors, employers, government agents, and law enforcement officials.<sup>9</sup>

While most leftist organizations were considered potential national security threats, those affiliated with the Communist movement came under the toughest scrutiny. Though not all RDBs had Communist card-carrying parents, many of them had parents or relatives who at one time were connected to the Party or other radical groups in its orbit. The irony is that by the McCarthy Era the Party was waning.<sup>10</sup> Communists achieved their greatest influence from the 1930s through World War Two when they were the largest leftwing force in US history. Paul Mishler, in *Raising Reds*, argued that throughout this period Communists even earned a kind of respectability in American

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<sup>9</sup>One RDB’s father was given a dishonorable discharge from the military because he was marrying the daughter of a Communist Party member (Sharon (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 13.

<sup>10</sup>For studies on the Communist Party in America see Melvyn Leffler, *The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917 – 1953* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994); Martin Lipset and Gary Marks, *It Didn’t Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000); Paul Buhle, *Marxism in the United States: Remapping the History of the American Left* (London: Verso, 1991); Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?: The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 1982) and *If I Had A Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); Philip Jaffe, *Rise and Fall of American Communism* (New York: Horizon Press, 1975).

life.<sup>11</sup> During World War Two, 15,000 Communists enlisted and upon returning home, thousands of uniformed Party veterans proudly marched in the 1946 May Day parade.<sup>12</sup>

Though the Party emerged from the war with a strong, enthusiastic membership of 80,000 its good standing quickly diminished thereafter. Within two years, when the Party again paraded on May Day 1948 the group was under attack. Marcher Howard Fast remembered being waylaid by parochial students with everything from brass knuckles to pens chanting, “Kill a commie for Christ!”<sup>13</sup> The termination of America’s wartime alliance with the Soviet Union and the end of a Popular Front strategy that had organized and built coalitions with other progressive, liberal, and labor forces left Communists increasingly isolated and without allies. As the Iron Curtain descended in the postwar years, American’s fear of Soviet influence both internationally and nationally increased. Mirroring public concern, the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947 essentially, and legally, forced the elimination of Communists from any position of leadership in the trade unions. As a result the Party lost a considerable part of its operational base.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the Taft-Hartley Act that particularly targeted Communists, state and federal governments passed legislation that cracked down on the entire Left. These laws were meant to ensnare individuals with any connection, past or present, to

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<sup>11</sup>Paul Mishler, *Raising Reds: The Young Pioneers, Radical Summer Camps, and Communist Political Culture in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 63,64.

<sup>12</sup>Jessica Mitford, *A Fine Old Conflict* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 65; Howard Fast, *Being Red* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990), 142.

<sup>13</sup>Fast, *Being Red*, 185.

<sup>14</sup>Deborah Gerson, “*Is Family Devotion Now Subversive?*” *Familialism against McCarthyism*,” in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945 – 1960*, Joanne Meyerowitz, ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 154.

organizations or causes deemed dangerous to national security. An example of affected individuals is David Horowitz's father who was a longstanding member of the Communist Party. In 1952, under New York's 1949 Feinberg Law, Horowitz's father and seven other teachers were fired. The law declared teachers "unfit" if individuals were members of either the Communist Party or the Party of the Puerto Rican nationalist group that had shot and wounded seven members of Congress. When asked if he were a Communist, like many questioned, Horowitz's father refused to answer and was summarily fired for "insubordination." The father had taught English for 28 years, all but four at his present employment. Horowitz's firing came just two years shy of receiving his pension, which he was forced to forfeit as a result of his refusal to answer.<sup>15</sup>

On the national scale, new congressional committees were legalizing attacks on all political "deviants."<sup>16</sup> These committees and executive orders validated the numerous investigations, arrests, and incarcerations of Old Left parents. The installment and empowerment of HUAC in 1945 as a permanent committee in the House of Representative showed America's fear of the Left.<sup>17</sup> The nine-committee members investigated potential threats to American security and the constitutional government. Again and again the committee argued that the US was in grave danger from Communist

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<sup>15</sup> David Horowitz, *Radical Son: A Generational Odyssey* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 65.

<sup>16</sup> For an account of the FBI's attack on the Communist Party, please see Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall *The COINTELPRO Papers* (Boston: South End Press, 1990).

<sup>17</sup> Robert K. Carr, *The House Committee on Un-American Activities 1945-1950* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1952), 208.



attack and focused its investigations on real or suspected Party members or associates.<sup>18</sup>

Robert Carr wrote as early as 1952 that HUAC provoked more controversy and criticism than any other congressional committee. Carr stated, “No such committee has been more bitterly attacked or more vigorously defended.”<sup>19</sup> Regardless of its disputed status HUAC, seemed an unstoppable juggernaut. Spewing anti-Communist accusations as late as 1961, Francis E. Walter, chairman of the Committee, declared it a well-known fact that the Communist Party of the United States sought to “destroy our free society – by violent means if need be – and to supplant our constitutional government by Soviet-style dictatorship.”<sup>20</sup>

One of the first HUAC targets was the movie industry in 1947. All members of a group of writers and directors famously called the Hollywood Ten were charged with contempt of Congress for refusing to answer the committee’s questions about their political inclinations.<sup>21</sup> This investigation was closely followed in 1948 with the testimony of former Soviet spy Whittaker Chambers and in 1950 with alleged Russian spy Alger Hiss’s conviction of perjury. Essentially given free reign to attack and subpoena at will, HUAC was an indomitable force. It was so powerful that in 1953, 185 of the 221 Republican congressmen requested to serve on the committee.

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<sup>18</sup>Carr, *The House Committee on Un-American Activities*, 1.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>20</sup>*Structure and Organization of the Communist Party of the United States: Hearings before the Committee on Un-American Activities House of Representatives November 20, 21, 22* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 564.

<sup>21</sup>Richard M. Fried, *The McCarthy Era in Perspective: Nightmare in Red* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 76.

Like the rest of the country, young leftists tuned into the televised HUAC investigations. For children from Old Left families, however, these were not the trials of traitors but of their parents, relatives, and family friends. While many watched the proceedings in their living rooms, a few were allowed to attend the trials. For the most part, the individuals questioned during these televised investigations ran the gamut from peace activists, to Party leaders, to public figures affiliated with the Communist movement, to radical union organizers. RDB Mindy Fried's father was a union organizer for the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America in Buffalo, New York. At the age of thirteen Fried recorded in her journal, "A couple of weeks ago my father was subpoenaed to come before the hearing... There was some violence. One 15-year-old got locked up in a cage, for screaming and yelling and fighting while her father was on the stand."<sup>22</sup> After the nightly news covered the trial and the newspaper ran pictures of Fried's father, the family started receiving numerous threatening phone calls. Though the Frieds finally took the receiver of the hook so they could sleep, Mindy remembered many sleepless nights.<sup>23</sup> Most radicals during this time period suffered from insomnia once their names appeared on a congressional subpoena. They knew that individuals summoned by HUAC were guilty until proven guilty, which was the majority ruling.

Eventually HUAC was recognized by many citizens as a mockery of American ideals, exemplified by former President Truman in 1959 calling the committee, "the most

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<sup>22</sup> Mindy Fried, "Opening Presentation 1983," in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 11.

<sup>23</sup> Fried, "Opening Presentation 1983," 11.

un-American thing in the country today.”<sup>24</sup> However until its decline in the mid 1960s, HUAC was a destructive force that helped to demolish the left community. And while Truman might have realized the unconstitutionality of HUAC in 1959, the president was not a critic of the committee during his administration. Some scholars argue the postwar era should be called Trumanism, not McCarthyism.<sup>25</sup> Accused by Republicans of being soft on Communism, Truman instituted a loyalty program in 1947 that investigated the loyalty of every federal employee. Some historians argue Truman’s example ignited the paranoia that gripped the 1950s. By 1951, three million government workers had been investigated and cleared by the Civil Service Commission. Every single employee was investigated. It did not matter if individuals had ever even been involved in leftist organizations, or had long renounced their membership in such groups; the government cast a large, indiscriminate net that caught anyone who appeared suspicious. One government worker was summoned to a loyalty hearing simply because he carpooled with a known Communist.<sup>26</sup> Several thousand workers protested against the Loyalty Oaths by resigning. After the investigations, 212 employees were dismissed for questionable loyalty, but not a single person was indicted, and no evidence of espionage was ever found. Later Truman acknowledged the unconstitutionality of his program and stated that the Loyalty Oath had been a “terrible mistake.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 124.

<sup>25</sup> For more on this topic, please see Richard Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>26</sup> Marvin Caplan, “Trenton Terrace Remembered: Life in a “Leftist Nest” *Washington History* 6, no. 1 (1994): 58.

<sup>27</sup> Caplan, “Trenton Terrace Remembered:” 57.

Regarding Truman's confession, RDB Marvin Caplan, whose friends were investigated, commented, "Such concessions, after the fact, are cold comfort to [people] who lost their jobs in loyalty purges and found themselves and their families exposed to public disgrace when their names turned up on blacklists and they were summoned before HUAC and other investigative committees."<sup>28</sup>

While Hollywood came under assault in 1947 with the HUAC investigation, the Communist Party was indicted in 1948 under the Smith Act, which was passed in 1940 to prosecute sedition during World War Two. Resurrected with relish in the postwar years, defendants were charged with treason after the FBI gathered prosecuting evidence through wiretapping, stalking, and interrogation. The first trial found eleven Communist Party leaders guilty.<sup>29</sup> The federal grand jury in New York explained the group was guilty on two indictments: the first for being Party leaders; the second for Party membership. Each charge called for a \$10,000 fine and a maximum prison sentence of ten years. The defendants' lawyers were also sentenced with terms ranging from 30 days to six months, though Abraham Isserman was given a 14-month sentence and disbarred from practicing law in his home state of New Jersey.<sup>30</sup> Between 1951 and 1956, there

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 58.

<sup>29</sup>Ron (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1982," in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 12.

<sup>30</sup>Gil Green, *Cold War Fugitive: A Personal Story of the McCarthy* (New York: International Publishers, 1984), 1, 54.

were 141 Smith Act indictments and 29 people sent to prison before the Supreme Court stuck down all convictions in 1957.<sup>31</sup>

As new charges of sedition were announced, the American public, both radical and mainstream, became terrified and paranoid. RDB parent Gil Green, one of the eleven leaders convicted in 1948 under the Smith Act, remembered, “People were so frightened that when a reporter for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* went out into the streets with the Preamble of the Constitution, they refused to sign even that.”<sup>32</sup> Though only a handful of people were actually found guilty under the Smith Act, anyone investigated was denounced as culpable by the government, society, bosses, and relatives.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to the Smith Act, the Truman Loyalty Oath, various other state and federal laws, and HUAC, leftists were also assaulted by Joseph McCarthy, Chairman of the Permanent Subcommittee on investigations of the Government Operations Committee of the U.S. Senate. As the red scare intensified, in leftist circles McCarthyism became synonymous with unsupported, indiscriminate charges.<sup>34</sup> Bombastic and abrasive, McCarthy tarred defenders of civil rights as “egg-sucking phony liberals...whose ‘pitiful

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<sup>31</sup> Russell Freedman, *In Defense of Liberty: The Story of America’s Bill of Rights* (New York: Holiday House, Inc., 2003), 53.

<sup>32</sup> Gil Green, “Forbidden Books on Trial,” in *It Did Happen Here: Recollections of Political Repression in America*, Bud Schultz and Ruth Schultz, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 77; Gerson, “*Is Family Devotion Now Subversive?*,” 165. In 1957 the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, handed down the crucial *Yates v. United States* decision in which the court ruled that prosecution for mere advocacy of ideas, without plans for future action, is unconstitutional.

<sup>33</sup> Carl Bernstein, *Loyalties: A Son’s Memoir* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 26.

<sup>34</sup> Michael J. Ybarra, *Washington Gone Crazy: Senator Pat McCarran and the great American Communist Hunt* (Hanover, NH: Steerforth Press, 2004), 4.

squealing...would hold sacrosanct those Communists and queers.””<sup>35</sup> McCarthy was such a divisive figure that for a time only Harry Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower could compete with him for front-page headlines.<sup>36</sup>

As the Left community associated with the Communist Party reeled from accusations, investigations, and convictions coming from a variety of accusers, the American public loudly supported the governments’ policies. Old Left families quickly became social pariahs. In his book *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretive History* (2005), Van Gosse states that around 10,000 people suffered from McCarthyism through the loss of jobs and social standing.<sup>37</sup> While this is a relatively small number in a country of millions, it had ripple effects throughout radical, progressive, and liberal communities. Many individuals formerly active in social causes refused to participate for fear of being targeted by McCarthy or another government investigations. RDB Robert Ross’ parents, who had previously supported progressive causes, stopped publicly associating with any leftist organizations.<sup>38</sup> A number of people were also threatened with deportation if they did not answer authorities’ questions or refused to divulge evidence against others. Deportation was a terrifying threat for many Old Left parents and grandparents who were immigrants.

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<sup>35</sup> Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear: Joseph R. McCarthy and the Senate* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 89.

<sup>36</sup> Ybarra, *Washington Gone Crazy*, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretive History* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 15.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Ross, Interview with the Author, 24, January, 2011; Ellen Beener, Interview with the Author, 9, May, 2010; A (first and last name withheld), Email with Author, 1, September, 2010.

Even family members who were naturalized citizens suffered these ominous intimidations.<sup>39</sup> RDB Miriam Zahler's rank-and-file mother, an immigrant from Poland, received summons from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to appear for a hearing regarding her citizenship status. Mrs. Zahler replied in a letter that she had been a naturalized citizen for years, INS had no grounds for reviewing her file, and that she would not be coming to the hearing."<sup>40</sup> Though Miriam's mother seemed unfazed by the government's attempt to deport her, some of the accused could not muster such courage. After being fired, blacklisted, threatened with deportation, and ostracized by friends, several of the accused committed suicide.<sup>41</sup> For the Left community this time period was known as "The Great Fear" and was a traumatic environment for a child.<sup>42</sup> For young radicals, the postwar years were not the "golden age of American childhood" many white baby boomers fondly recall.<sup>43</sup>

As a result of ongoing investigations and court cases, leftists were constantly shadowed and threatened by FBI agents. This happened to children regardless of their

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<sup>39</sup> Marion (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1982," 16.

<sup>40</sup> Zahler, "A Poisoned Childhood," 205.

<sup>41</sup> Tom Quinn, "To Swing a Union Election," in *It Did Happen Here: Recollections of Political Repression in America* Bud and Ruth Schultz, eds., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 123; John Randolph and Sarah Cunningham, "There's No Business Like Show Business," Bud Schultz and Ruth Schultz, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 145. Bernstein, *Loyalties*, 236; Robert Meeropol and Michael Meeropol, *We Are Your Sons: The Legacy of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975), 22; Victor Rabinowitz, *Unrepentant Leftist: A Lawyers Memoir* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 100.

<sup>42</sup> Rabinowitz, *Unrepentant Leftist*, 102.

<sup>43</sup> Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2006), 275.

parents' degree of affiliation with Old Left organizations. While many citizens thought J. Edgar Hoover the defender of America, as seen by the numerous letters he received from adoring and concerned citizens, young leftists had a completely different perspective. Hoover and his agents terrified them.

The FBI would specifically come harass children when they knew parents were not home. RDB Lorraine's (last name withheld) family, who had traveled to the Soviet Union and been honored by the Soviet government, was blacklisted in 1950 and her family suffered frequent visits from the FBI, particularly when the children were home alone. Lorraine remembered, "We spent a great deal of time worrying about how to deal with the FBI...It was terrible. They were two of the slickest, neatest, smartest human beings I've ever had to deal with."<sup>44</sup> For RDB Alan (last name withheld), whose father was part of the Party underground, the FBI was outside his door everyday for at least three years.<sup>45</sup> RDB Gail (last name withheld), whose father she described as "very big in the Party" and went into hiding, remembered being stalked by the FBI when the family occasionally tried to meet with their father. She recalled how, "the FBI chas[ed] us, like a chase scene in the movies...I remember that being both scary and very exciting."<sup>46</sup>

RDB Danny Green had an agent specifically assigned to him who tailed him everywhere and attempted to interrogate his classmates. Gil Green, a Party Leader and Danny's father, said his three children's experiences with the FBI were "etched into their

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<sup>44</sup> Lorraine (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1982," 12.

<sup>45</sup> Alan (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1982," 24.

<sup>46</sup> Gail (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1983," in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 41.



memories, so what they can never forget, is the cruel, vindictive war of nerves unleashed against the family by the FBI.”<sup>47</sup> While households with prominent leftist parents certainly received the most attention from government agencies, the FBI did not limit its investigations to the leadership tier of radical organizations. RDBs whose parents were fellow travelers came under the same scrutiny. RDB Rich (last name withheld), whose mother left the Party prior to World War Two but remained active in progressive politics and causes, was investigated by the FBI several times. His mother feared the investigations would lead to her husband’s firing from his job as a junior college teacher.<sup>48</sup> Emily (last name withheld) whose father was active with the Sailor Union of the Pacific while her mother organized cannery workers, remembered, “I still see a huge gray wall and these two men with their crew cut hair. They were always taking my father out and threatening him.”<sup>49</sup> RDB Craig (last name withheld) whose parents were not Party members but lived in the Coops and supported progressive causes recognized the cars that consistently parked outside his apartment and watched them These

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<sup>47</sup>Green, *Cold War Fugitive*, 71. There is one favorable account of the FBI’s tailing of family members. Alix Dobkin remembered that her Grandmother, who was a Party member, befriended the FBI agent assigned to follow her. She was fond of him, called him “My agent,” and made attempts to educate him about the Left. In turn, the agent always sent Dobkin’s grandmother a card on her birthday and accepted her annual invitation for an afternoon tea and conversation. The grandmother was fully convinced during these session she revealed no incriminating information and he gathered none, and there was no arguing with her (Alix Dobkin, *My Red Blood: A Memoir of Growing Up Communist, Coming onto the Greenwich Village Folk Scene, and Coming Out in the Feminist Movement* (New York: Alyson Books, 2009), 17.

<sup>48</sup>Rich (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 56.

<sup>49</sup>Emily (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 48.

confrontations with authority figures would happen again during the Sixties, but this time leftists were not as scared, having survived such treatment during their childhood.<sup>50</sup>

One of the most traumatic childhood experiences involving federal agents was having a parent arrested. While children from the variety of Old Left backgrounds experienced federal agents' threatening visits, it was most often children with parents in prominent Party roles or union leadership positions whose parents were arrested. Sometimes parents were simply handed a subpoena, ordered to appear in court and imprisoned after the trial.

Other children had parents who were taken straight to jail by police or the FBI. Ten-year-old Danny Green was almost left alone in a New York hotel when the FBI ambushed his father, Gil Green. The FBI agreed to wait for a babysitter only because the elder Green refused to leave his son alone, declaring, "Hell no! I'll not leave until my son is taken care of. Until that's done, I'm staying right here. If you want to take me, you'll have to drag me out by force."<sup>51</sup> When Julius Rosenberg was arrested his eight-year old son RBD Michael was listening to "The Lone Ranger" on the radio. Michael remembered it was the most exciting part of the episode when the FBI arrived. The agent walked over and turned off the radio. Michael turned it back on. This power struggle continued for

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<sup>50</sup> Alix Dobkin, *My Red Blood: A Memoir of Growing Up Communist, Coming onto the Greenwich Village Folk Scene, and Coming Out in the Feminist Movement* (New York: Alyson Books, 2009), 196.

<sup>51</sup> Green, *Cold War Fugitive*, 39. Green wrote about the arrest, "At the time the incident occurred, I was furious – not for the inconvenience caused me, and not even for the indignity, but because ten-year-old Danny had been subjected to so shocking and frightening an experience" (39).

some time until he heard his mother's yell, "I want a lawyer!"<sup>52</sup> For RDB Albert Lannon, his father's arrest in 1951 was one of the most traumatic nights of his 13-year-old life.

Lannon remembered:

Mom shook me awake, whispering, 'They're arresting Dad. Get up. Get dressed.' ... Two giant FBI agents were watching Dad get dressed... They handcuffed him and led him down the stairs from our Manhattan apartment. My sister, Karen, who had turned seven the day before, stayed close to Mom, wide-eyed... Mom looked at me with an uncommon light in her eyes and said, 'Go to school. We'll show them we're not scared.' But oh god, I was scared. I walked the two blocks to Junior High School 60 waiting for someone, some... thing to pounce on me.<sup>53</sup>

Lannon's father, a Party leader, was arrested for plotting to overthrow the US government by force and violence. His picture, with the sixteen other New York communist leaders arrested in the 6 A.M. raid, was inked on the cover of every daily newspaper. Upon getting to class, his fellow students whispered and pointed at Lannon, called him "Commiebastid," and jumped him after school. Lannon wrote that at the age of fourteen he turned to drinking to "escape my feelings, to run away from my anger. The anger came knowing I was afraid, from fear and hatred of a government that could deprive me a father, the father I desperately craved connection with."<sup>54</sup> Sometimes parents were even snapped off the streets, like RDB Stephanie Allan's father, a leader of

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<sup>52</sup> Meeropol and Meeropol, *We Are Your Sons*, 5.

<sup>53</sup> Albert Allan, "When Life Was a Party," in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 70.

<sup>54</sup> Albert Vetere Lannon, "Commiebastid," in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 71, 72.

Michigan's Communist Party, who was handcuffed and carted off at a bus stop in her hometown of Detroit by several carloads of FBI agents.<sup>55</sup>

While many parents arrested were high-ranking members of the Party, not all were. In some cases children did not witness their parents' arrests, but heard about their parents' convictions while listening to the radio. Barrows Dunham, a professor in Temple University's Philosophy department, who had been a party member from 1938 until 1945, was investigated and cited for contempt of Congress due to his pleading the Fifth Amendment during the hearing. Dunham and his family first learned of this citation and the accompanying prison term from his son who heard it while driving home.<sup>56</sup> Other times children learned of their parents' arrest after the police had already taken them away. RDB Pete Karman, whose parents were rank-and-file members, came home from junior high in the early 1950s to find his house empty. Later that evening, two police officers came to the door and said both parents had been arrested and were awaiting deportation hearings. Six months later his parents were released, and shortly after Pete's father suffered a heart attack and died.<sup>57</sup>

In addition to arrests, children were also afraid of suspicious accidents that happened to activists in radical communities. RDB Ilana Girard recounted a suspicious accident that claimed the life of her father, Alfred Girard, and almost killed her entire family. Alfred Girard's death in 1954 at the age of 43 was the result of a mysterious car

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<sup>55</sup> Allan, "When Life Was a Party," 118.

<sup>56</sup> Barrows Dunham, "To Smear a Professor," in *It Did Happen Here: Recollections of Political Repression in America*, Bud Schultz and Ruth Schultz, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 135.

<sup>57</sup> Suze Rotolo, *A Freewheelin' Time: A Memoir of Greenwich Village in the Sixties* (New York: Broadway Books, 2008), 14.

malfunction. Girard was a charismatic activist who illegally organized cotton pickers, taught at the California Labor School, fought Jim Crow, and was fired from his job as an electrical engineer two months after HUAC hearings came to San Francisco. Before the fatal crash, the FBI continuously tailed the family, broke into their house, threatened Mr. Girard, and bugged home phones. The Girards were terrified, but Mr. Girard refused to stop his activism. However, within three months of being fired he was dead. Mourners at the funeral commented on the suspicious nature of the car accident and murmured, “Too many comrades silenced by so-called accidents.”<sup>58</sup> Girard’s was not the only suspected case of government sabotage. Some believe Paul Robeson, who was investigated by HUAC and had his passport confiscated, was also the victim of FBI treachery. On four different occasions while driving, Robeson’s steering wheel became unattached and flew off. His supporters accused the FBI of attempted murder.<sup>59</sup>

Another RDB, Bernie (last name withheld), blamed government persecution for his mother’s death. His mother sold copies of the *Daily Worker* and was an active Communist Party member. Bernie believed his “mother killed herself because she became paranoid during the McCarthy era. She got to the point where she would not come out of the house because she felt that they were following her. They may have

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<sup>58</sup> Ilana Girard Singer, “Dead Men Tell No Tales,” in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 194.

<sup>59</sup> June Levine and Gene Gordon, *Tales of Wo-Chi-Ca: Blacks, Whites, and Reds at Camp* (San Rafael, CA: Avon Springs Press, 2002), 217.

been. She ended up committing suicide because she thought they were banging at her door.”<sup>60</sup>

These episodes were especially traumatic for RDBs, who out of all the different categories of young leftists, faced some of the most severe persecution. But even if it was not to the same degree, most children from Old Left backgrounds found the postwar years particularly terrifying. As young children they did not understand what was happening to their parents and why it was happening. Psychologists attribute different stages of development to children according to their age, with the years five through eleven being the most vulnerable. During this formative stage children struggle to think outside of themselves and assume another’s perspective or understand a variety of people’s experiences.<sup>61</sup> Without the ability to understand society’s negative perception of radicals, young leftists did not have the reasoning capacity to understand why their parents were perceived as criminals. In particular, the inability to conceive of different perspectives, such as those of anti-leftists, could have left children without any conceptual framework to analyze what was happening in America and in their own lives. These vulnerable years from age five to eleven were also the ones when many children dealt with the arrest of their parents. RDB Jane Lazarre remembered scared adults standing around a dining room table counting a pile of money that would “buy Judith’s father back from prison.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Bernie (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 38.

<sup>61</sup>William Tuttle, *Daddy’s Gone to War: The Second World War in the Lives of America’s Children* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 114.

<sup>62</sup>Jane Lazarre, “Growing Up Red: Remembering A Communist Childhood in New York in *The Village Voice Anthology (1956 – 1980): Twenty-Five Years of Writing*

Most members of the movement did not get arrested or put in jail. With a membership once at 80,000 Party members, and double that number who went along as progressives or fellow travelers, only a small percentage of people were arrested and imprisoned. For those outside the targeted leadership circle, parents demonstrated a varying degree of support for radical organizations and those being investigated. RDB Alix Dobkin remembered her father telling her, ““We had some very exciting experiences in the Party...I played a minor role, but it was my most shining hour!”<sup>63</sup> Some families defiantly displayed *The Guardian* on their coffee table, while others hid it underneath other magazines.<sup>64</sup> Others fought with their children over permission to take *The Guardian* to school.<sup>65</sup>

Many progressive parents enthusiastically supported their children’s activism. Angela Davis’ mother was a member of the Southern Negro Youth Congress in Birmingham, Alabama, an organization in which Communists played a central role. Her mother had been a national officer and leading activist in the campaign to free the Scottsborough Nine. When Angela was young, her mother encouraged her daughter’s interest in Marxism, let her join a Communist Party affiliated youth group when she was fifteen, and sent her to the progressive Elizabeth Irwin High School in New York to

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*From the Village Voice*, Geoffrey Stoke, ed. (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1982), 254.

<sup>63</sup>Dobkin, *My Red Blood*, 7.

<sup>64</sup>Mickey Flacks and Richard Flacks, Bentley Historical Library (June 1980), University of Michigan.

<sup>65</sup>Ruth (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 21.

finish her last two years of high school.<sup>66</sup> RDB Joan (last name withheld), whose parents subscribed to *The Guardian* but hid it when anybody came over, were still involved in leftist causes. Joan remembered, “My mother was active in civil rights things in town and women’s peace groups. By the time I was in high school she was fairly well known.”<sup>67</sup> RDB Judy (last name withheld) had parents who moved to a small farm in rural southeastern Pennsylvania to escape the hard childhoods they had as RDBs. Though her parents were no longer politically active, they still supported progressive causes. Judy and her mother ran a UNICEF penny drive on Halloween, which was considered a radical activity by the locals.<sup>68</sup>

Jane Adams’ parents had been active in the Socialist Party, but left the organization after tiring of the sectarian infighting. Though they were the only white radicals in their rural Midwestern farm community, Adam’s parents supported the Civil Rights Movement with petitions that challenged segregation and had African American friends over to their house.<sup>69</sup> RDB Barry (last name withheld), whose parents were upper middle class professionals, supported equal rights.<sup>70</sup> Barry remembered “I was inculcated, right from the beginning, with a sense of the brotherhood of all peoples.” This mindset distanced Barry from his small town peers who periodically beat him up. Barry

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<sup>66</sup> Kum-Kum Bhavnani, “Complexity, Activism, Optimism: An Interview with Angela Y. Davis,” *Feminist Review* no. 31 (1989): 66.

<sup>67</sup> Joan (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 19.

<sup>68</sup> Judy (last name withheld), “Beginning the Exploration: Opening Presentation 1982,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 2.

<sup>69</sup> Jane Adams in *Prairie Power: Voices of 1960s Midwestern Student Protest*, Robbie Liberman, ed. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 55.

<sup>70</sup> Barry (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 29.



recalled, “I had a lot of problems with fear, terror, as a child...The fear that people out there were gonna get you.”<sup>71</sup> Even when parents were not dedicated leftists, their allegiance with progressive causes and connections to the Party often resulted in harassment and attacks against their families.

Psychologists believe there are few things more terrifying for children than witnessing adults’ fear. Studies show children contract anxiety from their parents. As a result, “In every situation where the parent...showed evidence of fear or panic the children reacted in a similar manner, usually to an exaggerated degree.”<sup>72</sup> RDB Laura (last name withheld), whose parents were staunch supporters of the Party, recalled, “I remember being really, really frightened and the adults around me who were progressive being frightened as well, and the secrecy. We were coached about not talking to people and being very careful. It was an enormous burden, I think, for kids to have to somehow come to terms with growing up.”<sup>73</sup> For the Smith Act victims this period was particularly painful. With their childlike understanding, they believed if their parents simply apologized to the government, they could stay at home with the family. When this solution did not work, they became frustrated and angry. Sometimes children made up stories about the whereabouts of their incarcerated parents, too embarrassed to admit they were in jail.<sup>74</sup> The public humiliation that accompanied these childhood experiences

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>72</sup>Tuttle, *Daddy’s Gone To War*, 12.

<sup>73</sup>Laura (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 17.

<sup>74</sup>Peggy Dennis, *The Autobiography of an American Communist: A Personal View of Political Life, 1925 – 1975* (Westport: Lawrence Hill & Co., 1977), 186, 188.

affected them permanently. When adult RDBs talk about their early memories many still express bitterness, paranoia and fear.

Young radicals' inability to understand at least the motivation for harassing, investigating, arresting or incarcerating their parents made a frightening period in American history even more terrifying and confusing. Understanding RDBs' and their leftist peers' perspective about this era shows the importance of examining history not only from different genders, races, and classes, but also different ages. In *Daddy's Gone to War* (1993), William Tuttle argued that age should be incorporated as an important lens through which to view childhood experiences and historical events. He suggested that age, with references to stages of psychological development, needed to be a category of analysis along with race, gender, class, and ethnicity.<sup>75</sup>

### **The Radical Community and the Rosenberg Execution**

In addition to being raised in this oppressive atmosphere of government and public paranoia that involved their own relatives, again RDBs in particular were also traumatically affected by developments within the larger radical community. The most influential event was undoubtedly the execution of the Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in 1953. The Rosenbergs' situation was particularly influential because their arrest so closely mirrored what was happening in RDBs' own families. As a result, the extreme fear that accompanied the investigations, arrests and incarcerations of parents was exacerbated by the Rosenbergs' death sentence. In addition, most RDBs parents, whether

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<sup>75</sup>Tuttle, *Daddy's Gone to War*, viii.

Party members or fellow travelers, were involved in the effort to have the Rosenbergs' death sentence commuted or to free them altogether.

While their parents' efforts were important, undoubtedly what made the Rosenbergs' deaths such a personal loss for RDBs were their own failed efforts to free the Rosenbergs. Several RDBs were friends with Michael and Robert and knew the family personally.<sup>76</sup> RDBs themselves kept constant vigil from the beginning of the trial in 1951 to the couple's execution three years later. For two years RDBs were members of the Rosenberg Defense Committee, signed clemency petitions, and picketed the White House.<sup>77</sup> Particularly for those living on the East Coast, the Rosenbergs became the focus of their lives. RDB Ronald Radosh was an active member of the Youth Committee for the Rosenbergs, handing out leaflets in the streets of New York and traveling to the capital to protest with other students.<sup>78</sup> RDB Lenore (last name withheld) marched in Free the Rosenberg protests in Washington D.C., Boston, and New York. At these protests she was pelted with eggs.<sup>79</sup> RDB Dorothy Zellner, who would later become an important activist in SNCC, was fervently committed to the Rosenberg Defense Committee. She recalled:

I lived and breathed their case. I wrote letters, signed clemency petitions, went to rallies, stood on street corners winter and summer with the Rosenberg committee

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<sup>76</sup>Karl Knobler, Email with the Author, 4, September, 2010.

<sup>77</sup>Gail (last name withheld) and Liz (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1983," 41, 42; Bernstein, *Loyalties*, 101.

<sup>78</sup>Ronald Radosh, *Commies: A Journey Through the Old Left, the New Left, and the Leftover Left* (San Francisco: Encounter, 2001), 29.

<sup>79</sup>Lenore (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1983," 43.

giving out leaflets and asking for signatures from passerby. I knew as much about the Rosenbergs – people I have never seen – as I did about my own relatives and certainly cared more for them than some of the people in my life.<sup>80</sup>

RDB Carl Bernstein's family had different members of the Rosenberg's defense team over to their home. Houseguests included lawyer Emanuel Bloch and Morton Sobell's wife, Helen. Bernstein's mother organized the Washington Committee to Secure Justice for Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. It was Carl's job to stuff envelopes, unpack cartons of literature sent from New York, and insert mimeographed appeals for funds. He and his mom spent hours distributing copies of *Death House Letters of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg* published before the execution. A photograph of the Rosenberg children on the pamphlet's back cover showed two young boys roughly the same age as Bernstein. This image of Robert and Michael Rosenberg left a lasting impression on Carl who stated, "Even today when I look at that picture, it evokes grief – not fear as it did then, but a sense of utter helplessness."<sup>81</sup>

RDBs living abroad also tried to help with the cause. RDB Victoria Oritz attended an alternative, progressive, Quaker boarding school in the English countryside during the early 1950s. Her mother, afraid her Communist Party activities would result in her arrest, moved the family away from the potential danger. Though overseas, the Rosenberg case still permeated the family's conversations and activism. In protest of the persecution and

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<sup>80</sup> Dorothy M. Zellner, "Proletaria and Me: A Memoir in Progress," in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 85.

<sup>81</sup> Bernstein, *Loyalties*, 100.

ultimate execution of the Rosenbergs, nine-year-old Ortiz formed the protest group, “I Hate Eisenhower Very, Very Much.”<sup>82</sup>

With the death of the Rosenbergs, parents’ arrests were even more terrifying. Young RDBs were unable to differentiate between the Rosenbergs’ case and those of their own mothers and fathers. As a result RDBs were convinced that the government would execute their parents, as well. RDB Stephanie Allan was ten years old when her father was arrested under the Smith Act in 1953. She knew that the Rosenbergs had two sons the ages of herself and her sister.<sup>83</sup> She remembered, “I was terrified by the executions and frantic that my parents would be killed...I remember crying myself to sleep night after night, praying to Mother Nature, hoping no police officer would take my parents away to jail and put them in the electric chair.”<sup>84</sup> RDB Ilana Singer, felt the same fear as Allan, recalling, “I was very sad for their sons, Robby and Michael, but I also worried: Who would take care of me, my brother, and sister if *our* parents were

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<sup>82</sup>Victoria Ortiz, Email with Author, 11, November, 2010.

<sup>83</sup>In 1949 eleven top Communist Party leaders were convicted under the Smith Act. During the next five years, almost 200 more national, state and local Communist leaders were prosecuted, with over 100 people were convicted. Their crime was to “knowingly or willfully advocate, abet, advise or teach the duty, necessity, desirability or propriety of overthrowing the Government of the United States or of any State by force or violence, or for anyone to organize any association which teaches, advises or encourages such an overthrow, or for anyone to become a member of or to affiliate with any such association.” The majority of the government’s prosecuting evidence was newspaper articles or leaflets supporting the eventual overthrow of capitalism found in people’s homes (Isserman, *If I Had A Hammer*, 4; Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left*, 14).

<sup>84</sup>Allan, “When Life Was a Party,” 118. After their parents’ arrest, the Rosenberg boys lived with their dad’s mother who took them in with great reluctance and ultimately put them in the Hebrew Children’s Home where the boys were miserable (Robert Meeropol and Michael Meeropol, *We Are Your Sons: The Legacy of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975), 26).

electrocuted?”<sup>85</sup> Psychologists call something as traumatic as the Rosenbergs’ execution a flashbulb memory where time stops and a freeze-frame documentation of that exceptionally emotional event, down to the last detail, is seared into one’s memory. This certainly happened for many RDBs regarding the Rosenbergs case. Mickey Flacks said the trial was one of the key events that she remembered from childhood, and several RDBs mention the executions as their first, most profound memory.<sup>86</sup>

The Rosenbergs Trial sent shock waves throughout the entire leftist community. Some first generation RDBs, whose parents had been radical in their home countries, quickly withdrew from public activism. RDB Aaron (last name withheld), whose Mother had been associated with the Polish Communist Group remembered, “When they got to this country in ’49, ’50, that got washed away. Maybe the political climate in the United States had a lot to do with it. The whole thing with the Rosenbergs might have told them: stay back, keep quiet, don’t do anything.”<sup>87</sup> Though they still passed their leftist values along to their sons through family discussions, Aaron’s parents never took any public political stands, even when it came to local, state, or national elections. Other parents who stayed on the outskirts of politics remained dedicated to the Rosenberg case. RDB Liz (last name withheld) whose parents were not in the Party but considered themselves Progressives, maintained an around the clock vigil for the accused. They recruited individuals from all around the country to do it, but Liz's own family members filled

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<sup>85</sup> Singer, “Dead Men Tell No Tales,” 196.

<sup>86</sup> Margaret M. Braungart and Richard Braungart, “The Life-Course Development of Left- and Right-Wing Youth Activist Leaders from the 1960s” *Political Psychology* 11, no. 2 (1990), 255.

<sup>87</sup> Aaron (last name withheld), “Jewish Red Diaper Babies,” 112.

many shifts. She stated about the Rosenberg's execution, "I'll never forget that last day as long as I live."<sup>88</sup>

After the trial, a common RDB topic of conversation for those whose parents were under investigation was to ask their mothers and fathers if they, too, would be going to jail and killed. The parents could only answer, "I don't know."<sup>89</sup> Some children thought they, too, would be imprisoned with their parents. For children whose parents were already in jail after the 1948 Smith Act trial, the Rosenbergs increased their fear of never seeing the incarcerated parent again. RDB Gene Dennis was already scared when his father was jailed in 1949. The experience was so traumatic Gene had multiple nightmares in which he woke up sobbing, "I tried! I couldn't stop him! I tried!" detailing to his mother his attempt to stop his father from being shot. After the Rosenbergs were executed, his mother remembered that Gene woke up, "His eyes glazed, my ten-year-old screamed over and over again, 'I don't want to die!' In my arms and only half awake, he sobbed, 'They'll kill him, too. Bring my daddy home; they'll kill him, too'","<sup>90</sup>

The Rosenbergs' execution traumatized the whole family, adults as well as children. The household's entire equilibrium depended on the case and RDBs picked up on their parents' sense of deep emotional connection to the trial. For RDB Miriam Zahler, whose mother was devoted to exonerating the Rosenbergs, it seemed that the fate of her mom and the Rosenbergs became inextricably linked. When her mother went to rallies, Zahler was convinced she would never see her mother again alive, and would go stand in

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<sup>88</sup> Liz (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1983," 42.

<sup>89</sup> Dobkin, *My Red Blood*, 51.

<sup>90</sup> Dennis, *The Autobiography of an American Communist*, 207, 210.

her closet and cry tears of anger, frustration, and loss. Both Zahler and her mother knew that in fighting for the Rosenbergs, she was fighting for herself and her family.<sup>91</sup> Zahler remembered, “During the rest of the summer, the air in the house felt choked and thick. Grief over the Rosenbergs lingered; for some years after 1953, our lives were overlaid with sadness.”<sup>92</sup> This sense of loss has not lessened for some RDBs and their families. Carl Bernstein’s mother still cried many years later when discussing the couple’s death.<sup>93</sup> For RDBs and their parents, the Rosenbergs represented the fate of people who stood up for their politically radical values.<sup>94</sup>

For convicted Communists who refused to serve their prison sentences, their only option was to become fugitives. By the early 1950s the Party decided it was necessary to preserve organizational continuity, in the event of mass government arrests, by sending some of its first and much of its second tier leadership - around two thousand individuals - into hiding. This meant thousands of law-abiding citizens went underground to hide from their own government.<sup>95</sup> This policy was later denounced as detrimental to the Party and a major political weakness, but at the time Communist leaders believed desperate times demanded desperate solutions.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Zahler, “A Poisoned Childhood,” 207, 208.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 207, 208.

<sup>93</sup> Bernstein, *Loyalties*, 102.

<sup>94</sup> Radosh, *Commies*, 48.

<sup>95</sup> Dobkin, *My Red Blood*, 51. Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Kirill Mikhaïlovich Anderson, *The Soviet World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 12.

<sup>96</sup> Opponents of the plan pointed out it was difficult to operate as an effective organization when the majority of the membership was in hiding. They also believed it



When RDB parents went underground, sometimes couples lived separately. Anna Kaplan's parents were underground and apart for two years starting in 1952. Their first reunion resulted in her mother's pregnancy. Unfortunately after the reunion Kaplan's father was moved to another secret location and her mother could not tell him the news. He did not hear about the baby until four months before it was due, did not end up seeing his younger daughter until she was a month old, and did not live with her until she was a year and a half. The complete silence between the couple was so severe that when Kaplan's mother had an emergency Caesarean to save both her and the baby's life her father was not even aware of the operation. Not only was the mother prevented from announcing Anna's birth to her husband, but for months she also could not tell him about the death of his mother.<sup>97</sup> Further discussion of how parents', primarily fathers', decision to go underground affected their families will be addressed in Chapter Four.

For some, the government's persecution had become so intense and dangerous that families decided to leave the country. RDB Rosalyn's (last name withheld) family escaped to Venezuela in the early 1950s after watching the McCarthy hearings.<sup>98</sup> Diana Anhalt, an RDB expatriate, wrote, "Firmly convinced that it was simply a matter of time before the United States became another Nazi Germany, Belle and Mike chose to move

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was caving to pressure because the Communist Party, even during the height of the McCarthy era, was still a legal organization (Rabinowitz, *Unrepentant Leftist*, 79).

<sup>97</sup> Anna Kaplan, "Born Underground," in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 226.

<sup>98</sup> Rosalyn (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1982," 14.

to Mexico.”<sup>99</sup> The family relocated in 1950 where they lived with a group of around fifty or sixty progressive American families who also moved there, a cohort the FBI referred to as the American Communist Group in Mexico. Among the most famous were: George Open, a Pulitzer Prize winning poet; three of the Hollywood Ten (Ring Lardner Jr., Albert Maltz, and Dalton Trumbo); Alfred Stern and his wife Martha Dodd, who was the daughter of FDR’s ambassador to Nazi Germany; Fred Vanderbilt Field who was an heir to the Vanderbilt fortune but had a warrant out for contempt of Congress; and Cedric Belfrage, a former editor of the *National Guardian*.

Families also fled behind the Iron Curtain. In 1950, RDB Ann Kimmage, her little sister, and her parents escaped to Czechoslovakia. Kimmage’s father was involved with the Institute of Pacific Relations, an organization accused of passing information to the Soviets. As a result her father was under investigation and subpoenaed to testify before the Senate International Security Committee. Just prior to the hearing, in the middle of the night, Kimmage was woken up, told to put on the dress she was to wear to second grade the next day, and left her home, her life, and the United States for 13 years. The Kimmage’s relatives had no idea what happened to the family, and rushed to the house after several days of unanswered calls. Everything was in perfect order, though there were no inhabitants. During all those years abroad, Ann’s father only sent one message to the extended families “The four of us are alive.” Upon returning the United States, both

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<sup>99</sup>Diana Anhalt, “Resuscitating Corpses: Memories of Political Exile in Mexico,” in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 177.

sets of grandparents ostracized their children. When Kimmage's mother called her father to announce their return, he informed her that he no longer had a daughter.<sup>100</sup>

Old Left families chose different ways to cope with persecution. Some went to jail, some went underground, and others relocated to different countries. Regardless of the choice parents made, young radicals witnessed the persecution of their families. The execution of the Rosenbergs exacerbated their fear of the federal government and law enforcement agents. Young leftists saw their parents labeled un-American, dangerous, and subversive. In national and local newspapers, underground parents were classed with murderers, con men and kidnappers as the government's most wanted criminals.<sup>101</sup>

Though only children, guilt through association meant young leftists were also seen as threats to American security. Whether their parents were national Party leaders or small town activists, children were often the harassed or attacked by their peers, neighbors, strangers, and teachers. Thus at an early age young activists learned that standing up for ones' ideals could result in dangerous repercussions. They also realized that negative labels were attached to good people, people who supported racial equality and workers' rights, or on an even more basic level were kind, loving parents and relatives. Later in the 1960s when students from Old Left families would again be slapped with derogatory names and called "Un-American," they remembered the history of persecution they had witnessed and experienced during their youth. Activists remembered that their parents had been called the same names and it gave them a sense of continuity with their parents' generation and values. Young leftists, already introduced

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<sup>100</sup> Ann Kimmage, *An Un-American Childhood*, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), xvii, xviii, 7-10.

<sup>101</sup> Green, *Cold War Fugitive*, 69.

to the American government and justice department's flaws, were quick to point out these same weaknesses in America's racist legal system and foreign policy in the Sixties.

While some white participants were shocked and disillusioned by the federal governments' actions during the Civil Rights Movement, student protests, and Vietnam War, children from the Old Left were already intimately aware of the government's crackdown on civil liberties and use of extralegal means to combat opposition.

### **Leftist Safe Havens**

While children from Old Left families were often scared about their own or their parents' safety, there were havens from this constant threat of persecution. Whether in large or small communities, many children were raised in radical neighborhoods that nourished their activism and gave them a sense of security. A majority of these radicals were housed in the Bronx cooperative apartment buildings: the Amalgamated Houses, the Farband Houses, the Sholem Aleichem Cooperatives, and the United Workers Cooperative Colony. In the 1920s a conglomeration of labor unions, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, the Zionist National Jewish Workers' Alliance, and the communist-dominated United Workers, designed living facilities for their members that were economic, artistic,

political, and communal.<sup>102</sup> The United Workers Cooperative Colony, “the Coops” was literally built by the Party for workers’ housing to provide a decent place to live.<sup>103</sup>

Similar to the other cooperatives, the Coops were two large red brick buildings that covered several square blocks in the far reaches of the Bronx. The Coops could house up to 3,000 people at one time, including hundreds of children of all ages.<sup>104</sup> RDB Ruth Pinkson described the sense of unity found in these enclaves as one great family. Pinkson remembered, “The concerns of the Coops residents mirrored the concerns and ideals of my parents. Being part of this community gave us a sense of security, of oneness in our outlook and our activities. Everybody knew everybody else and had each other’s support.”<sup>105</sup> In the Coops there were cultural and sport centers, a huge library sponsoring lecture series, book reviews, and symposiums, in addition to an auditorium for tenant meetings, concerts, choral groups, and celebrations. It was an “internally self-sustaining community” that “functioned also as the heart of neighborhood rent strikes and demonstrations.”<sup>106</sup> Different organizations were formed to support those under attack from the government. RDB Deborah Gerson remembered being very ill after her father

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<sup>102</sup> Maggie Wrigley, “Radical Builders in the Bronx,” *Designer/Builder: A Journal of the Human Environment* 4 no.6 (2006).  
[http://www.designerbuildermagazine.com/designerbuilder\\_radicalbld.html](http://www.designerbuildermagazine.com/designerbuilder_radicalbld.html), , (accessed November 18, 2010).

<sup>103</sup> Al Richmond, *A Long View from the Left: Memoirs of an American Revolutionary* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973), 70.

<sup>104</sup> Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women’s Liberation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 116 .

<sup>105</sup> Ruth Pinkson, “The Life and Times of an Elderly Red Diaper Baby,” in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 232.

<sup>106</sup> Pinkson, “The Life and Times of an Elderly Red Diaper Baby,” 232.

was arrested and receiving a bundle of toys from a Party support group.<sup>107</sup> A phone tree was also developed to warn people of FBI busts and incoming subpoenas.<sup>108</sup> Though in some sense these locations were secure enclaves, these radical communities were always under FBI surveillance. Craig (last name withheld) remembered, “There were these little Fords all around the blocks and there’d be two guys sitting in them day and night.”<sup>109</sup>

Some communities were so insular the young activists did not meet their first Catholic, Mid-western Christian or Republican until they were college-aged.<sup>110</sup> Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) co-founder RDB Robert Ross was raised in such a radical bubble it was not until marriage he even discovered, “Jewish families without socialists or Communists in them. I thought it came with the territory.”<sup>111</sup> His SDS cofounder, RDB Steve Max, did not meet his first Catholic individual until 1962 at the Port Huron Convention.<sup>112</sup> Sheli (last name withheld) remembered it was a big shock when she interacted with people who were neither Jewish nor leftist.<sup>113</sup>

One of the better-known refuges for the Old Left outside of New York was Trenton Terrace located in Washington, D.C. Herbert and Lillian Benjamin, relatives of

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<sup>107</sup> Gerson, “‘Is Family Devotion Now Subversive?’” 151.

<sup>108</sup> Bettina Aptheker, *Intimate Politics: How I Grew Up Red, Fought For Free Speech, and Became a Feminist Rebel* (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2006), 40.

<sup>109</sup> Craig (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 19.

<sup>110</sup> Thai Jones, *A Radical Line: From the Labor Movement to the Weather Underground, One Family’s Century of Conscience* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 21; Kenneth Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 80.

<sup>111</sup> Kenneth Heineman, *Put Your Bodies Upon the Wheels: Student Revolt in the 1960s* (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 2001), 70.

<sup>112</sup> Heineman, *Campus Wars*, 80.

<sup>113</sup> Sheli (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 45.

the project's financiers, who were staunch Communist Party members, managed this apartment building of 214 units built in 1941. Herbert was a national leader and best known as the "supreme commander" of the 1931 National Hunger March in D.C. When soliciting renters, the Benjamins made sure their friends were tenants, though only 60 of the families were as actively radical as the Benjamins. Regardless of politics, the majority of renters were Jewish. During the 1950s, when there was talk of setting up an internment camp for Communists one resident commented, "they wouldn't have to round us up, they could just put a fence around the project."<sup>114</sup> Trenton Terrace was known for its communal spirit, cooperative nursery, and activist headquarters for the Coordinating Committee for the Enforcement of the D.C. Anti-Discrimination Laws.<sup>115</sup> It was also known as a "leftist nest."<sup>116</sup>

In hindsight, RDBs and their radical peers partially attribute their survival during the McCarthy era to these oases. RDB David Horowitz, raised in a protective neighborhood, believed his entire youth was a type of quarantine from the vindictive public. He remembered,

There was the protective environment of our political community itself, a kind of hospital of the soul. We were embattled, surrounded by enemies, and this made the members of our tribe like a family. There was instant recognition by other who shared our values and political commitments.<sup>117</sup>

While these neighborhoods were protective to some point, they could not completely shield children and their parents from the outside world. Craig (last name withheld), who

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<sup>114</sup> Caplan, *Trenton Terrace Remembered*, 54.

<sup>115</sup> Caplan, *Trenton Terrace Remembered*, 60.

<sup>116</sup> Bernstein, *Loyalties*, 89.

<sup>117</sup> Horowitz, *A Radical Son*, 53.

was raised in the Coops, remembered, “We knew that we were really a surrounded enclave. People would come down in mass groups to attack us, physically attack people in the neighborhood. So we knew. There was security in the neighborhood. You knew where the weapons were, if you needed weapons.”<sup>118</sup>

Not all young leftists grew up in supportive neighborhoods. These children either had parents who distanced themselves from the radical organizations, had always been more comfortable to remain on the periphery, or who purposefully integrated African American or Hispanic communities. RDB Judy (last name withheld), whose mother ran the UNICEF penny drive in her small town, was convinced the John Birch Society was going to bomb their house. She described her childhood removed from other RDBs or leftists as an isolating experience.<sup>119</sup> Barbara (last name withheld) lived in a neighborhood without a single other leftist and always felt like an outsider.<sup>120</sup> RDB Barry (last name withheld) and RDB Liz (last name withheld) whose parents were Progressives felt the same sense of being isolated.<sup>121</sup> Some families who grew up in these non-leftist communities were careful to protect themselves from guilt by association with Party members. RDB Myra’s (last name withheld) parents, who had been radical in the ‘30s and dropped their politics during the McCarthy era, told radical friends and relatives not to park in front of the house.<sup>122</sup> RDB Liz’s (last name withheld)

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<sup>118</sup> Craig, “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 17.

<sup>119</sup> Judy, “Beginning The Exploration: Opening Presentation 1982,” 22.

<sup>120</sup> Barbara (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 47.

<sup>121</sup> Barry (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 29; Liz (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 42.

<sup>122</sup> Myra (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 44.



fellow traveler father, who was a dentist, asked relatives who sold *The Worker* to stop staying at his house for fear he would lose patients.<sup>123</sup> RDB Karen (last name withheld) who was raised in Denver and then Portland, OR, believed growing up on the West Coast without the supportive leftist or Jewish communities other young leftists enjoyed made her childhood more difficult than most. This seemed especially true when FBI agents would deliberately knock on the door, knowing she and her siblings were home alone.<sup>124</sup>

For leftists who grew up in supportive communities, during the Sixties these activists helped recreate similar communal living spaces with fellow participants who supported their stance on civil rights, freedom of speech or the Vietnam War. These groups would subsist on the collective contributions of rent and food money. Called Freedom Houses in the South and Economic Research and Action Projects (ERAP) in the North, activist centers provided the same sense of security, solidarity and racial diversity. Just like their families and community groups, student leftists would spend hours discussing and analyzing socioeconomic racism and the evils of capitalism. They would stay up late hashing out new protest methods or demonstration sites. Just as the FBI and the public attacked the Coops and other communities, the KKK, other white supremacy organizations, and anti-leftist groups attacked the Freedom Houses and ERAP centers. While children from the Old Left were just as scared as the other white students by these threats, they had already survived a persecuted childhood and knew they could survive this, too. When other white students were shocked and demoralized by the federal government's refusal to protect civil rights workers or student protestors, RDBs and their

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<sup>123</sup>Liz "Introducing Ourselves 1983," 42.

<sup>124</sup>Karen "Introducing Ourselves 1983," 53.

radical peers were not. Having been repeatedly harassed and persecuted by the FBI during childhood, the government's refusal to enforce laws and protect civil liberties came as no surprise.

### **A Radical Education**

Children from the Old Left were highly educated about the social and political problems facing America. Though all learned similar lessons, they had a variety of educational experiences. This section looks at the institutions they attended, while Chapter Three explores the education they received at home. Young radicals attended the gamut of educational facilities. Many enrolled at public school, institutions condemned by the Left as friends "to the bosses and millionaires...[enemies] of the workers and the pioneers."<sup>125</sup> Public school teachers and fellow students mercilessly harassed leftists. Standard curriculum presented a version of history, politics, and economics diametrically opposed to what radicals learned at home. Other leftists whose parents could afford the tuition were fortunate enough to attend private progressive institutions like the Little Red School House in New York City which provided a safe learning environment where students were encouraged to question authority, attend protests, and use textbooks printed by leftist publishers. In addition to the public and private schools, many children also attended secular schools where they studied Yiddish and Jewish history.<sup>126</sup>

The Communist Party, in particular, was always on the lookout for ways to educate children on correct Party ideology. Books reviewed in the Party paper alerted

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<sup>125</sup> Mishler, *Raising Reds*, 78.

<sup>126</sup> Paul Mishler's *Raising Reds* does a nice job examining the different ways the CP educated children about Party ideology. He examines the different literature published to inspire young people to activism, though does not note the effectiveness of these publications to do so.

parents to racist or anti-Semitic tracts used in public schools and suggested alternatives, along with pointers on how to rid public schools and libraries of such publications.<sup>127</sup> A recent anthology of this educational material was compiled in *tales for little rebels: a collection of radical children's literature* edited by Julia Mickenberg and Philip Nel. This compilation includes works by Langston Hughes, who was one of the few children's authors summoned before HUAC. While Hughes was not targeted for his children's literature, the HUAC investigation inspired him to write for young radicals as a result of the blacklist. His works included *The First Book of Negroes* (1950), *The First Book of Rhythms* (1954), and *The First Book of Africa* (1960).<sup>128</sup> As the editors of *tales for little rebels*, point out, leftist children's books "provides vivid examples of the ways in which values and ideology – in this case, radical values and ideology – can be boiled down to their most elemental form."<sup>129</sup> These stories are examples of how the radical community opposed the dominant power structure through the translation of their goals into simple, didactic stories to teach children the language of rebellion.

Young radicals were educated from works like *The Socialist Primer: A Book of First Lessons for the Little Ones in Words of One Syllable*. This primer included a lesson on The Ten Rules of Life that included: "Love your fellows, who will be your fellow workmen for life" and "Remember that all the good things of the earth are produced by labor: Whoever enjoys them without working for them is taking what belongs to

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<sup>127</sup> Henry, "Beginning the Exploration: Opening Presentation 1983," in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 6.

<sup>128</sup> Julia Mickenberg and Philip Nel, eds., *tales for little rebels: a collection of radical children's literature* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 2.

<sup>129</sup> Mickenberg and Nel, *tales for little rebels*, 7.

labor.”<sup>130</sup> Another example of leftist literature is *ABC for Martin* from *Martin’s Annual*. Some of the letter definitions are “F is for Fascist, a murderous brood” or “J is for Jail, where good rebels are held.”<sup>131</sup> For older students there were books like *The Lollipop Factory* about multi-ethnic women who banded together to overcome unfair working conditions and *Mary Stays After School or – What This Union’s About* that was published by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America to promote children’s pride in their parents’ union memberships. One RDB raised on these stories went on to write *Girls Can Be Anything* showing a young girl becoming a doctor, airplane pilot, and President.<sup>132</sup>

Radicals believed the publication of these works would erase and replace the lessons children learned from the outside world. Max Bedacht, general secretary of the International Workers Order (I.W.O) described the purpose of these books in his introduction to the *New Pioneer Story Book*:

What you are learning in school now and what you read outside of school, in newspapers and books and magazines, is determining what you will do when you grow up. The rich people who own this country know that. That is why they want the government to control education. These rich men, the capitalists, also control the literature you read. American literature is rich in children’s books and stories and magazines. But these books were not written to give you pleasure. They are written in order to give you certain ideas that the rich men want you to

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<sup>130</sup> Nicholas Klein, *The Socialist Primer: A Book of First Lesson for the Little Ones in Words of One Syllable in tales for little rebels*, Julia Michenberg and Philip Nel, eds. (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 13.

<sup>131</sup> M. Boland, “A B C for Martin” from *Martin’s Annual* in *tales for little rebels*, Julia Michenberg and Philip Nel, eds. (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 20.

<sup>132</sup> Mickenberg and Nel, “Work, Workers, and Money,” in *tales for little rebels*, Julia Michenberg and Philip Nel, eds. (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 60; Norma Klein, *Girls Can Be Anything*, in *tales for little rebels*, Julia Michenberg and Philip Nel, eds. (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 87; Amalgamated Clothing Workers, “Mary Stays After School or - What This Union’s About,” in *tales for little rebels*, Julia Michenberg and Philip Nel, eds. (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 116.

have...Reading these stories will help you understand the life about you. As you learn to understand life you will learn to shape your own lives. You will not merely be pawns kicked around by destiny; you will become masters of your own destiny. You will not only be part of history, but you will become makers of history.<sup>133</sup>

The Communist Party took special care to publicize books emphasizing themes of children's involvement in politics, children marred by economic injustice, the importance of ethnic diversity, and family relationships.<sup>134</sup> While the rest of American youths were reading about Dick and Jane, young radicals read stories where children were active participants in controversial social movements. The effectiveness of these lessons is seen in children's activism covered in Chapter Four.

### **Progressive Schools**

The educational material provided by the Party was incorporated into the private progressive schools many leftists attended. To a large extent these schools, like the radical communal neighborhoods, shielded children from the outside world. Students at times were so immersed in the world of radical politics they were unaware other education systems existed. Laura (last name withheld), who attended one of these schools, grew up thinking all of America learned to view the world just like she did.<sup>135</sup> To some extent this is what radical parents hoped to accomplish. They wanted to create learning environments that were so protected and powerful their children would not be exposed to or even consider another way of life. The idea to start progressive private

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<sup>133</sup>Mishler, *Raising Reds*, 110,

<sup>134</sup>*ibid.*, 115, 119.

<sup>135</sup>Laura, "Introducing Ourselves 1982," 17.

schools was founded on principles and pedagogy introduced to American education at the turn of the twentieth century by progressive John Dewey. The desire to see students enjoying and benefiting from a liberal education motivated Dewey's educational reform.

John Dewey was a social activist who marched in the streets for women's enfranchisement, established the American Association of University Professors, and helped organize the American Civil Liberties Union.<sup>136</sup> In addition to this work, he also founded the Progressive school movement in America and wrote and lectured tirelessly on the subject in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>137</sup> Dewey, called the philosopher of the "back to people movement," believed the education process had been "co-opted by an industrial philosophy of social efficiency." He believed academics were dominated by the narrow interests of the few for the exploitation of the masses. According to Dewey educational institutions operated in the interests of big business, creating a class-divided society that educated some students into "masters" and others into "slaves."<sup>138</sup>

Dewey and his supporters desired a social transformation that would lead to a non-alienating, developmental, libertarian culture. They believed that education could liberate and free humanity by arousing and elevating the consciousness of learners into alert and active citizens. Just like Old Left parents, Dewey and his proponents believed the current system of education in capitalist societies lulled students into a false sense of

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<sup>136</sup> Debra J. Anderson and Robert L. Major, "Dewey, Democracy, and Citizenship," *The Clearing House* 75, no. 2 (2001): 104.

<sup>137</sup> A complete list of only the title of his articles, speeches, scholarly monographs, and books takes up 153 pages of text (Anderson and Major, "Dewey, Democracy, and Citizenship," 104).

<sup>138</sup> John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 98.

freedom and equality, as well as disguising the social forces that influenced the form and content of curricula. In place of this destructive educational methodology, Dewey created an alternative system with the following emphases: pluralism, developmental individualism, solidarity, egalitarianism, participation, and social revolution.

With these values, progressive educators strove to create a system where individuals could exercise control over their own educational process, children were not limited by their class differences, and students were perceived as more than receptacles for predigested knowledge.<sup>139</sup> In order to allow children to discover and nurture their own abilities and not be confined by authority figures, Dewey advocated a non-authoritarian class dynamic where students would become teachers and teachers would become students. The end result would be a pedagogy that developed “children who are joyful, cooperative, and peaceful, neither racist nor sexist nor repressed.”<sup>140</sup> Dewey’s articles were lauded by a variety of left organizations and even included in the Socialist publication, the *Progressive Journal of Education*.<sup>141</sup> Building on his example, progressive schools that young radicals attended adopted Dewey’s model and encouraged students to be independent thinkers and challenge their teachers. This type of education motivated their activism, encouraged them to question authority, and gave them a

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<sup>139</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 114.

<sup>140</sup> Peter M. Lichtenstein, “Radical Liberalism and Radical Education: A Synthesis and Critical Evaluation of Illich, Freire, and Dewey,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 44, no. 1 (1985): 41.

<sup>141</sup> Mishler, *Raising Reds*, 26.

radically different academic experience than what other children were receiving during this time.<sup>142</sup>

Children of the Old Left attended a number of progressive schools for their primary and secondary education. Though every school was unique, each one was built upon the principles Dewey established. These schools were highly valued by the radical community. An editorial in *The Worker's Child*, a Communist education journal for leaders of children's organizations, shows the importance the Party put on education. The article argued the right kind of education was necessary to correct the bourgeois influence corrupting children's minds. It was crucial for progressive schools to counteract influences that turned "our children against us by giving them a strike-breaking, militarist ideology."<sup>143</sup>

Progressive schools, in comparison, encouraged students to think beyond the conservative limitations of 1950s curriculum by assigning *The Communist Manifesto*.<sup>144</sup> Many RDBs and their radical peers on the East Coast attended liberal schools like the Hessian Hill School, the Downtown Community School, the Jefferson School, the Walden School, the Little Red School House and the Elizabeth Irwin School (LREI).<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> It is important to note that Dewey's ideas did have support in the public school system until the 1950s when they were seen as by conservatives as "education for socialism, and socialism is only a euphemism for communism" and removed from schools (See Douglas Miller and Marion Nowak's *The Fifties: The Way We Really Were* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1977), 252).

<sup>143</sup> Mishler, *Raising Reds*, 30.

<sup>144</sup> Bhavnani, "Complexity, Activism, Optimism:" 67.

<sup>145</sup> Sarah (last name withheld) "Introducing Ourselves, 1982," 26. For more information about radical schools, please see Ronald Radosh's chapter "The Little Red Schoolhouse" in *Commies: A Journey Through the Old Left* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2001).



The American public regarded these schools wearily. Nineteen years after Hessian Hills was started in 1913 by a group of parents, a 1932 *Time* article reported townspeople were still suspicious of the “hatless, overalled, unrepressed children” who took field trips to the local industries and asked adult questions.<sup>146</sup> This distrust would grow in the postwar years as the country became suspicious of anything that challenged the status quo.

These schools were havens for students, but also for leftist educators, administrators, and artists as well.<sup>147</sup> The Downtown Community School and LREI were known as refuges for teachers fired from public schools or other blacklisted artists and intellectuals from the Left. These teachers, like David Horowitz’s father, would not answer questions about their membership in subversive organizations, nor would they testify during HUAC’s investigation of the New York school system.<sup>148</sup> Many of the faculty at LREI previously taught at the Jefferson School, a well-known left-wing high school that was forced to close down.<sup>149</sup> The Downtown Community School also employed a number of blacklisted educators. Pete Seeger was the music teacher, Yolanda Wilkerson, the wife of Doxey A. Wilkerson who was the secretary of the Communist Party, taught eighth grade. One of the seventh grade teachers was a member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, the fifth grade teacher was the wife of someone who was a

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<sup>146</sup>“Education: In Hessian Hills,” *Times Magazine*, Monday, Dec. 19, 1932) <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,753511-1,00.html>, (accessed May 9, 2010).

<sup>147</sup>Judy Plapinger, Email with the Author, 7, September, 2010.

<sup>148</sup>Radosh, *Commies*, 25.

<sup>149</sup>Ortiz, Email with the Author, 9, September, 2010.

Brigade member and fought in Spain, and the science teacher was Helen Sobell, whose husband was a co-defendant of the Rosenbergs.<sup>150</sup>

Concern about radicalism in the education field increased during the postwar years. In 1950 the National Council for American Education (NCAE) printed a pamphlet entitled, “How Red is the Little Red Schoolhouse?” On the cover of the booklet was a Soviet soldier injecting a hypodermic needle labeled “Organized Communist Propaganda” into a red school building. Sections within the pamphlet were entitled, “The Treason Ring is out to make Red of your Children” and “Textbooks can be Red propaganda.”<sup>151</sup> The NCAE was correct in their accusation that these progressive schools enrolled communists. The alums of LREI are a sort of “Who’s Who” of the Children of the Old Left that include Victor Navasky, future editorial director and publisher of *The Nation*, Angela Davis, Kathy Boudin, book editor Daniel Menaker, the wives of Harry Belafonte and Pete Seeger, the Rosenberg (Meeropol) boys, Julie Arenal Primus, whose relatives were involved in one of the plots to assassinate Leon Trotsky, and Joady and Nora Guthrie, two of Woody Guthrie’s children.<sup>152</sup> Students knew that many of their classmates were the children of black-listed Hollywood writers or other victims of McCarthyism.<sup>153</sup>

The schools young radicals attended were the antithesis of traditional educational curriculum. Just like the early Progressive schools, students had few rules or restrictions

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<sup>150</sup>Knobler, Interview with the Author, 4, September, 2010; Plapinger, Email with the Author, 7, September, 2010.

<sup>151</sup>Douglas T. Miller, Marion Nowak, *Fifties: The Way We Really Were* (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 248.

<sup>152</sup>Radosh, *Commies*, 26.

<sup>153</sup>Ortiz, Email with the Author, 9, September, 2010.

but instead were allowed to explore and learn at their own pace. Sally Belfrage, who went to Hessian Hills, remembered the students called the teachers by their first names, engaged in lively debates with the faculty, were unlimited by structure, marks, or tests, and were encouraged to be free and instinctive. The school did not have a geography textbook, instead the students used paper-mache to build an enormous 3-D structure of the Hudson Valley. In place of gym there was “rhythms” class where everyone wore Grecian tunics and small suede-soled slippers. The students emoted and expressed themselves to the music of an improvising pianist or “Ballade for Americans” by John La Touche and Earl Robinson.<sup>154</sup> Belfrage commented, “We never had to learn anything; occasionally we did anyway.”<sup>155</sup>

Though at a different school, David Loud had an experience similar to Belfrage.

Loud’s parents sent him to Antioch Experimental School where he remembered:

We didn’t have any texts or homework or marks...The only academic things we worked on were reading and arithmetic. There were long hours for just sitting at your desk doing whatever you wanted to do, drawing, reading, art, shop, or playing around outdoors, walking in the glen, picking up a little natural history and stuff like that.<sup>156</sup>

Walden School, and many like it, lacked conventional modes of discipline. Students held mock protests in the cafeteria that spilled out to the street disrupting traffic or read the *New York Post* during class with their feet on the desk.<sup>157</sup> At Walden the majority of the

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<sup>154</sup> Belfrage, *Un-American Activities*, 11.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>156</sup> J. Anthony Lukas, *Don’t Shoot -- We Are Your Children* (New York: Random House, 1971), 17.

<sup>157</sup> Seth Cagin and Philip Dray, *We Are Not Afraid: The Story of Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney, and the Civil Rights Campaign for Mississippi* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 63.

enrollment was Jewish, with a few African American students. Mickey Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, two civil rights activists killed during Freedom Summer 1964, attended Walden.

Like most private leftist schools, Walden constantly addressed the current national and international political and social developments. Teachers encouraged discussions and debates about national and foreign policy to show students the importance of freethinking. During the early Fifties the focus was the Rosenberg trial. At LREI most of the student body became involved in the Youth Committee for the Rosenbergs by picketing at the White House and handing out leaflets downtown. According to former student Ronald Radosh, “everyone connected to the school [thought] it was simply a given truth that the Rosenbergs were innocent progressives who were murdered because of their dedication to peace.”<sup>158</sup> As the decade progressed, a key focus became participating in the growing Civil Rights Movement. After the murder of Emmitt Till in 1955 and the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 through 1956, the Left community began emphasizing the need for more civil rights activism within its own community. As a result students would go to civil rights protests as a group, taking their own bus to prove independence from their teachers.<sup>159</sup> As the Civil Rights Movement continued, students picketed Woolworths, attended the March on Washington, and raised money for the Congress of Racial Equality and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup>Radosh, *Commies*, 29.

<sup>159</sup>Cagin and Dray, *We Are Not Afraid*, 63.

<sup>160</sup>Dobkin, *My Red Blood*, 125, 179.

While young radicals who grew up in progressive education thought highly of the system, those who experienced it after several years of public school had difficulties adjusting to the change. Coming from a structured and formal educational setting, some students did not thrive at progressive schools. Carl Bernstein started out in a public school and moved to the progressive Parkside Elementary in Washington D.C. Bernstein remembered there was very little in the way of book learning. The school featured “New Math,” which meant after Bernstein returned to public high school he never passed a “normal” math class without having to take it twice. Other subjects, History and Social Studies, were taught with pageants and plays where students dressed up and performed historic events. The primary innovation of the school was the Freedom Card, a piece of cardboard that let you leave the classroom and go explore outside. Nature projects included a rock garden, soil erosion observation and plenty of hoes and rakes. Bernstein summed up the transition away from his public school experience, “Basically I was a city kid who read very well. I could do some arithmetic. Now I found myself in a classroom with hoes and rakes and teachers who handed out Freedom Cards, though not to me. I went from being a great student to a terrible student in those days.”<sup>161</sup> Sally Belfrage also found the transition from public to private school difficult. Encouraged to develop her own opinions on subjects without teachers’ input, Belfrage remembered, “The other children seemed to be able to handle this, but I wished somebody, anybody, would tell me something, anything, rather than merely hint or suggest.”<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup>Bernstein, *Loyalties*, 133.

<sup>162</sup>Belfrage, *Un-American Activities*, 11.

As shown with the pamphlet “How Red is the Little Red Schoolhouse?” the McCarthy era attacked progressive schools that cared too much about “creative self-expression” and not enough about cold, hard facts. This accusation was lampooned by the students, “It was a running joke that none of the Waldenites could spell (some couldn’t hold a pencil properly), but they had strong opinions, could express themselves, and weren’t afraid to do so.”<sup>163</sup> After the success of Sputnik I in 1957, progressive schools were targeted as the weak link in American’s education system that allowed the Soviets’ victory in the space race. Institutions influenced by John Dewey were labeled “education wastelands.”<sup>164</sup>

In comparison to progressive school students, young leftists enrolled at public schools experienced a harsh learning environment. Belfrage, who attended both private and public schools, had this to say about her radical peers who never ventured out of private institutions, “All of them are in a cocoon. As long as they’re in there together they feel snug and strong and free to make wisecracks and pretend everything is o.k.”<sup>165</sup> For those like Belfrage, who attended public school, it was a tortured existence.<sup>166</sup> Children from Old Left families were mercilessly persecuted for their radical views. Even when they kept their political differences to themselves, trying to hide it from their classmates

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<sup>163</sup>Cagin and Dray, *We Are Not Afraid*, 62.

<sup>164</sup>Charles E. Strickland and Andrew M. Ambrose, “The Changing Worlds of Children, 1945 – 1963,” in *American Childhood: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook*, Joseph M. Hawes and N. Ray Hiner eds. (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1985), 553.

<sup>165</sup>Belfrage, *Un-American*, 119.

<sup>166</sup>*Ibid.*, 120

for fear of harassment, young leftists were usually betrayed by their comments, dress, vocabulary, and taste in music.

Teachers and fellow students alike persecuted RDBs and their radical peers. Sometimes young radicals did nothing to draw the fire; simply being related to a known communist made them a target. RDB Nicky Belfrage, brother of the above mentioned Sally whose father was imprisoned in 1953, was called to the front of the class by his teacher and asked, “Who you gonna kill today, Belfrage?”<sup>167</sup> While Steve Nelson was on trial for sedition in Pittsburgh, his RDB daughter Josie’s teacher “would give the child carefully selected words...to spell aloud in before the rest of the class – words such as ‘trial,’ ‘jury,’ ‘guilty’ and ‘conviction.’”<sup>168</sup> RDB Linn Shapiro’s Assistant Principal showed a bit more humanity when he cautioned her that it would be better to lie about her absence than reap the wrath of her teachers and fellow students by informing them she missed class to participate in a civil rights march.<sup>169</sup>

As a result of this abuse, some young leftists tried to mask their politics as a form of protection. This was rarely successful. RDB Lenore’s (last name withheld) friends used to yell at her “You Red. Dirty Red.” Even though they called her these names, Lenore believed she was accepted because she shared her lunch treats with them. Remembering how desperate she was at that age for acceptance Lenore said she would

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>168</sup> Gerson, *Is Family Devotion Now Subversive?*,” 157.

<sup>169</sup> Linn Shapiro, “Beginning the Exploration: Taking Over the Family Business,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 2.

have “[given] them my soul to be accepted.”<sup>170</sup> In high school RDB Mary Louise Patterson’s homeroom teacher called her “Little Stalin” and another classmate “Little Lenin.” When another student played a Paul Robeson record for his class, the teacher snatched the record and screamed about having, ““that Communist in my class!”<sup>171</sup> She then accused the students of being Communists and said if they did not like it in America they should leave the country.<sup>172</sup> A discussion of the ways RDBs used public school as a forum for their activism is discussed in the next chapter.

### **Secular Jewish Schools**

In addition to attending progressive schools, many young leftists also attended secular Jewish educational facilities in the afternoon or on the weekends. The purpose of these institutions was to educate youth about their Jewish culture and history. With the predominance of Jews in the Left, parents wanted their children to understand and appreciate Jews’ important contributions to radical politics, labor unions, class equality and racial integration. Transmitting this actual knowledge to children who did not attend religious services was a concern for Jewish parents. Instructive articles addressed the

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<sup>170</sup>Lenore (last name withheld) “Introducing Ourselves, 1983,” 43.

<sup>171</sup>Robeson, a staunch communist, was a hero in the Party. David Horowitz remembered, “When this physically grand person appeared at the progressive rallies I went to, a palpable reverence filled the air. As he entered the room, a hush stilled the audience, virtually all white, which rose as one and began to clap rhythmatically, Soviet style, to pay homage to the great man. When the Robeson voice boomed “*Go down, Moses*” and summoned the Hebrew leader to tell old pharaoh to “*Let my people go*,” it was if he was issuing a summons to free us all. Its sound filled every bosom in the room with a glow of satisfaction, as though his presence confirmed our truth” (Horowitz, *A Radical Son*, 53, 54).

<sup>172</sup>Radosh, *Commies*, 13.



importance of this education for several generations prior to the Fifties, as seen with the pamphlet entitled “Bringing Up Your Jewish Child and You” published in 1925 by the Hebrew Union College. This document warned parents that Jewish children must be informed they are a minority so when they experience prejudice, they are not surprised and hurt by it. In addition, children must also be educated about their Jewish history so they are emotionally sustained by their proud heritage. Without this proper knowledge the child would be adrift without a sense of identity. The pamphlet provided a cautionary example with quotes from confused children who lacked proper education about Jewish culture and history. One quote read, “Look at me. I’m neither here nor there. As a Jewess, I don’t amount to much...I’ve been told that mine is a precious heritage, but I haven’t the slightest idea what it is. I can name quite a number of relatively unimportant English poets – but do I know who is the greatest Jewish poet? No.”<sup>173</sup>

In 1959 the Institute for Jewish Research, YIVO, printed articles entitled “Reactions of Second Generation Secularist Jews to Problems of Jewish Living” after conducting surveys with 425 subjects. The article encouraged parents to enroll their children in extracurricular activities with plays and celebrations of Jewish festivals, history, and literature.<sup>174</sup> Fortunately by postwar America there were numerous schools for parents to choose from, with 53 in New York City alone. More than four thousand

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<sup>173</sup>Kurt Lewing, “Bringing Up Your Jewish Child and You,” American Jewish Archives, Freidenreich Collection, Box 12, Folder 6: 9.

<sup>174</sup>“YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science,” YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York, 1965, American Jewish Archives, Freidenreich Collection, Box 12, Folder 5: 79, 86.

children ranging from kindergarten to high school attended these institutions.<sup>175</sup> Most of these children read literature from the Hebrew Publishing Company that emphasized the Jewish community's radical history.<sup>176</sup>

RDB David Horowitz read these texts when he went to a school designed by his parents to start "children off early on the road to a new world."<sup>177</sup> Horowitz remembered his education emphasized Jewish heritage from a radical perspective and eliminated religion. Lessons were meant to differentiate radicals from non-progressive Jews.<sup>178</sup> At Horowitz's school, every activity had a didactic element that emphasized the need for change and progress. During Jewish festivals each celebration was given a political interpretation. For example, when the children performed a play about Chanukah, the Maccabees were presented as valiant revolutionaries who were lifting the yoke of oppression.<sup>179</sup>

These secular schools that lauded radical events were considered subversive by the government, monitored by the authorities, and sometimes listed on the Attorney General's roster of subversive organizations. The 1951 FBI report on the Cooperative Jewish Children's School of Greater Washington read:

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<sup>175</sup> Mishler, *Raising Reds*, 77.

<sup>176</sup> Julia Mickenberg and Philip Nel, "History and Heroes," in *tales for little rebels*, Julia Mickenberg and Philip Nel, eds. (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 170.

<sup>177</sup> Horowitz, *A Radical Son*, 47.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 42. For a discussion of the Jewish community of this time period, please see Michael E. Staub's *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Post-war America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). This topic will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Four.

<sup>179</sup> Horowitz, *A Radical Son*, 42.

It is a cooperative because the parents are the management, and secular since it does not single out the principles of any one of the three main branches of the Jewish religion for instruction. It lists among its aims the teaching of the differences between the main branches of the Jewish religion and an historical appreciation of the Jewish role in the building of the United States and Israel.<sup>180</sup>

This description hardly describes a dangerous institution. What alerted the government to the school was its monthly newsletter that promoted Jewish progressivism, learning about the USSR, studying China, understanding the controversies raging around the trade unions, and talking about politics. The newsletter also critiqued public schools for their distortion and evasion of these subjects.<sup>181</sup> RDB Carl Bernstein was a student who enrolled in 1951 at a school started by his parents that was under federal investigation. Bernstein quipped that if the agents investigating the school had bothered to venture inside they would have been exposed to some surprising proofs of subversion. The FBI “would have learned that the vanguard of the revolution was to be marked by folk dancing. Folk dancing, it might reasonably have been inferred, was the single means of international struggle by which the working classes everywhere would rise up.”<sup>182</sup>

While these schools might not have been hotbeds of “subversive” activity, they did provide the cultural and historical foundation that many Jewish leftists drew upon for their activism. School curriculum strengthened the radical community by emphasizing the history of oppressed people, social justice, humanism, and an appreciation of the

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<sup>180</sup> Bernstein, *Loyalties*, 40.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 40, 41.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 41.

Jewish culture.<sup>183</sup> RDB David Loud was taught, “a humanitarian, libertarian, democratic, universalist interpretation of Judaism, stressing the themes of justice, peace and equality within the Jewish tradition.”<sup>184</sup> Jewish parents sent their children to schools to learn about the triumph of the immigrant class. RDB Sheli (last name withheld) also went to a school organized by the Jewish People’s Fraternal Order where she “learned the history of the Jewish people as working-class and oppressed people of Europe, and where our whole cultural life, our whole identity was political, and very class-conscious.”<sup>185</sup> To connect younger generations to this militant past, schools taught Yiddish, Yiddish culture, and politics, and for some children Yiddish was the first language spoken in the home.<sup>186</sup> Young activists were enrolled in these programs during grade school and continued attending after school and on the weekend through high school and sometimes even college.<sup>187</sup> The material learned at school percolated into and influenced their daily lives with messages of radical roots and Jewish responsibility. At hootenannies where

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<sup>183</sup> For a history of these secular schools, please see Paul Mishler, *Raising Reds: The Young Pioneers, Radical Summer Camps, and Communist Political Culture in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

<sup>184</sup> Anthony, *Don’t Shoot*, 19.

<sup>185</sup> Sheli (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982, 1983,” 26, 45.

<sup>186</sup> Lenny (last name withheld) “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 54; Braungart and Braungart, “The Life-Course Development of Left- and Right-Wing Youth Activist Leaders from the 1960s”, 255.

<sup>187</sup> Sheli (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” *Red Diaper Babies*, 45.

families would gather to sing folk and protest songs, some of their favorite selections were traditional Jewish songs.<sup>188</sup>

### **Religion**

In addition to the cultural lessons learned about Jewish history, some young radicals received religious instruction as well. Religious training was controversial in families where parents disagreed about including Jewish theology and children raised in hybrid households with a staunch atheist and a religious observer were often confused by parents' contradictory perspectives about religion. Ruth Hunter remembered that, "In our home, growing up as a red diaper daughter meant dancing to two different tunes: Mama's in the daytime, Papa's in the evening."<sup>189</sup> These different songs were often discordant and caused conflict between her parents. Her father was a passionate Marxist and attempted to inspire in his daughter the same fervor.<sup>190</sup> In contrast, Hunter's mother had a "quieter but more potent" effect.<sup>191</sup> Hunter said her mom took care to lovingly surround her children with Jewish traditions and nurture their Jewish awareness through songs, games, and food. This was comforting since her father denied the family of "the richness of Jewish faith, denied participation in religious rituals and prayers, denied observance of Yom Kippur with this traditional singing of *Kol Nidre*, the sacred Hebrew chant, or knowing that Rosh Hashanah was ushered in with the blowing of the ram's

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<sup>188</sup> Josh Kornbluh, *Red Diaper Baby: Three Comic Monologues* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1996), 22.

<sup>189</sup> Ruth Hunter, "Red Diapers to Protest Banners," in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 27.

<sup>190</sup> Hunter (last name withheld), "Red Diapers to Protest Banners," 27.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

horn.”<sup>192</sup> Hunter was conflicted between her atheist father and religious mother. She remembered, “Both were fiercely determined to leave their imprint on our development and as a result often left our young lives in disarray.”<sup>193</sup>

Recalling how the Jewish culture affected her life, Elaine (last name withheld) remembered, “Sometimes when I think of my mother, I think of her as Marx and matzah balls. And I think the matzah balls were, in many ways, as influential as her Marxist leanings.”<sup>194</sup> Of course it was not always the mothers who were practicing Jews. Pearl (last name withheld) remembered her father, who was raised an Orthodox Jew, sneaking off to listen to cantors at holidays.<sup>195</sup> RDB Alix Dobkin remembered her family visiting relatives for Passover Seder. When it was her father’s turn to perform the blessing he would slip in occasional political asides, likening HUAC to the Egyptian oppressors or “accidently” starting to say “Nixon” instead of “Pharaoh.” Dobkin said even though her father declared himself nonreligious, he always enjoyed the holidays.<sup>196</sup>

Some parents were staunch atheists who used their children as symbols of their anti-religiosity. RDB Bettina Aptheker’s mom would “sputter and curse, nearly spitting in her rage” when passing a Chasid on the street and “despised even the most reformed expression of Jewish religion, referring to anything religious with bitter sarcasm and

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<sup>192</sup> Hunter (last name withheld), “Red Diapers to Protest Banners,” 28.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>194</sup> Elaine (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 15.

<sup>195</sup> Pearl (last name withheld), “Jewish Red Diaper Babies 1983,” 110.

<sup>196</sup> Dobkin, *My Red Blood*, 38.

contempt.”<sup>197</sup> Peggy Dennis’ mother would purposefully send her children to school on the high holidays just to prove her family’s rejection of religion. Radicals’ secularism often created conflict within the Jewish community when members of the Communist youth organization Young Pioneers were the only students sent to school on Jewish holidays.<sup>198</sup>

The connection between being Jewish and joining social movements in the Sixties has been documented by scholars. Studies show that a disproportionate number of participants in the New Left – as in the American Communist movement earlier - were Jewish. Scholars explain that Jews’ attraction to the Left comes from their culture’s emphasis on acting in the service of one’s beliefs.<sup>199</sup> What these studies do not often mention is that many of these Jewish participants were young radicals with years of experience as social activists. RDB W (first and last name withheld) explained that her peers’ dedication to activism combined a sense of Old Left values and Jewish guilt. She stated, “We are plagued with social responsibility and think we’re selfish if we don’t somehow involve ourselves in [activism].”<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Bettina, *Intimate Politics*, 48.

<sup>198</sup> Dennis, *The Autobiography of an American Communist*, 21.

<sup>199</sup> Kenneth Keniston, “Notes on Young Radicals,” *Change in Higher Education* 1, no. 6 (1969): 30. See also Debra Schultz, *Going South: Jewish Women in the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001); Kenneth Marcus, *Jewish Identity and Civil Rights in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Norman Finklestein, *Heeding the Call, Jewish Voices in America’s Civil Rights Struggle* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1997); Kenneth Heineman, *Put Your Bodies Upon the Wheels: Student Revolt in the 1960s* (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 2001).

<sup>200</sup> W (first and last name withheld), “Making Choices: Jobs, Careers, Security 1982 and 1983,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 96.

Many young leftists who came from both religious and secular Jewish families attribute their activism to knowledge of Jewish culture and history. RDB Bruce Hartford credited his sense of Jewishness, in particular his understanding of the Holocaust, as being the motivation for his activism. While at a coffee house in Los Angeles, Hartford heard about a CORE meeting showing footage filmed during a civil rights protest in Torrance, CA. He remembered that in the movies “there were more fully-uniformed members of the American Nazi Party counter-demonstrating than there were CORE pickets. Jack boots, tan uniforms, swastika armbands, stiff-arm salutes, the whole regalia.” Hartford was a “Four-Nevers Jew”: Never forget, Never forgive, Never again, and most importantly in this case, Never stand by and let abuse happen to others. After seeing the Nazis on the film Hartford signed up for the next picket line. He remembered that when he arrived there “were more damn Nazis there than there were of us... And these were scary Nazis...This was a band of racist thugs surrounding a little CORE picket line... And they were throwing shit at us, and you know, the whole bit. Well, I was hooked.”<sup>201</sup> Many Jewish activists attributed their dedication to Civil Rights Movements to their cultural heritage and parents’ politics. As long as their Jewishness did not conflict with New Left theoretical developments, activists did not feel they had to choose between their culture and their politics. However, as Third Worldism theory developed in organizations like SDS and the Black Panthers, a perspective at times coupled with anti-Zionism, young leftists had to decide which part of their lives was more important. Many of them chose their politics, a decision that will be further examined in Chapter Six.

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<sup>201</sup>Bruce Hartford, “The Civil Rights Movement Veterans,” *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/hartford.htm>, (accessed November 23, 2010).



Whether it was a secular or religious education, the lessons young leftists learned from Jewish schools, progressive schools, or Party literature helped shape their values. The type of curricula and teaching methods radical activists used in freedom schools during the Civil Rights Movement showed the value they placed in these institutions and materials. In the South leftists helped create schools that promoted learning creatively about progressive subjects and emphasized African American culture and accomplishments.<sup>202</sup> The New Left also started community schools that emphasized the values designated by John Dewey and strove to inspire a new generation to find their own identity, be independent thinkers, and question authority.

### **Radical Camps and Folk Singing**

One of the few places that allowed children to be themselves and not live lives of dissemblance were radical summer camps. The Communist Party and other radical organizations started the majority of these camps in the 1920s. Popular with the Left community, New York alone had 27 camps.<sup>203</sup> When attending summer camps, children from Old Left families finally felt accepted and protected. Whether they were coming from rural communities and small towns where they were the only leftists, or escaping from the negative publicity that dogged their families, almost all RDBs and their leftist peers mention camp as an oasis. Shelia (last name withheld) said camp was the first place in her entire life where she felt safe.<sup>204</sup> RDB Jeanie (last name withheld), who was the

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<sup>202</sup> Ortiz, Email with the Author, 9, September, 2010; 14, September, 2010.

<sup>203</sup> Mishler, *Raising Reds*, 83

<sup>204</sup> Shelia (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves, 1982”, 15.

only radical student at her school, grew up thinking she was completely different from every other child until she went to camp at age fourteen. She was astonished to discover that there were people like her in the world. It was a “complete revelation” to meet children whose fathers also wrote union papers and were dedicated to activism.<sup>205</sup> RDB Daniel Safran remembered that even though he had friends in his all-white, middleclass suburban neighborhood, he always felt like he was “the other.” That was not the case at Camp Wyandot, the successor to Camp Workers’ Children Camp (Camp Wo-Chi-Ca) where he had friends from many different backgrounds and their daily interactions complemented his family’s beliefs in social justice and equality.<sup>206</sup> Another former camper, RDB Jane (last name withheld) said, “When I went to camp, my life basically went from summer to summer. My life in a suburb of New York City was empty of any content or anything I could relate to. I was always different. I had tremendous struggles around the fact that I was different from my peers in the suburbs. When I went to camp I was not different.”<sup>207</sup> RDB Debra (last name withheld) said “My salvation was camp. There’s no question that I spent ten months of the year counting down the days ‘til I could get to summer.”<sup>208</sup> Many campers have fond memories of camp where they felt accepted and loved, remembering it was a cruel, heart wrenching return to the real world at the end of summer.<sup>209</sup> RDB Suze Rotolo recalled that at camp:

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<sup>205</sup> Jeanie (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves, 1982,” 28.

<sup>206</sup> Daniel Safran, Email with the Author, 23, November, 2010.

<sup>207</sup> Jane (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves, 1982,” 33.

<sup>208</sup> Debra (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves, 1982,” 25.

<sup>209</sup> Kaplan, “Preface,” *Red Diaper Babies*, Preface. For some their camp friendships and activities became so all consuming when they returned to school they

There was no reason to create subdivisions for religions or ethnicity. We'd been brought up to unite, not separate. We had in common an outsider status inflicted on us by the Cold War and our parents' beliefs. Other than our seriousness about freedom, justice, equality for all, and banning the bomb, we were still just a bunch of teenagers.<sup>210</sup>

Though campers may have felt safe at these radical summer refuges, the camps were not immune from the turmoil that happened in the campers' lives during the rest of the year. Fear seeped into their bucolic campgrounds as the Cold War intensified. One summer at Kinderland there were 500 campers, but that winter state law enforcement led an investigation of the camp. The following summer there were only 40 attendees.<sup>211</sup> At the Camp Wo-Chi-Ca, the directors took down a "Paul Robeson Playhouse" sign because the local KKK threatened to raze the camp.<sup>212</sup> After Robeson's public statement that Negroes should not fight against the Soviet Union, the camp became the focus of such intense local hostility that armed guards had to be stationed along the perimeter.<sup>213</sup> Another time three RDBs with fugitive underground parents were removed from the Camp Wyandot bus just before it left for camp. FBI agents had threatened camp

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never talked to kids in their neighborhoods, completely abandoned former friends, and lived for the next summer with such intensity they detached from the rest of their life.

<sup>210</sup> Suze Rotolo, *A Freewheelin' Time: A Time Memoir of Greenwich Village in the Sixties* (New York: Broadway Books, 2008), 53. While most young leftists fondly recall the halcyon days, not all campers had positive experiences. Depending on parents' contribution to the Party, cliques formed that excluded campers with less illustrious connections.

<sup>211</sup> Horowitz, *A Radical Son*, 54.

<sup>212</sup> Levine and Gordon, *Tales of Wo-Chi-Ca*, 176.

<sup>213</sup> Horowitz, *A Radical Son*, 65.

administrators that if the children of fugitives were allowed to attend, the area would be under constant surveillance.<sup>214</sup>

Even with these incursions, camp was still all consuming and comforting because it supported and built on lessons learned at home. Camp Kinderland had the motto “*Foon shule in kemp, foon kemp in shule* (from shul to camp, from camp to shul).”<sup>215</sup> In addition to the usual camp games and cookouts, these leftist organizations included didactic activities that educated young radicals about racism, poverty, and at times sexism. Though the camps focused on the oppression of all working class peoples, there was a particular emphasis on the plight of African Americans. The Old Left community, and the Communist Party in particular, was the first white organization to publicly demand racial equality. RDBs learned about the Party’s commitment to the Scottsboro Boys who were falsely accused in 1931 of raping two white girls. As the court case dragged on, RDB Ruth Hunter recalled “Indelibly imprinted in my memory is the outpouring of rage and solidarity from the members of the Labor Lyceum during the famous trial of the nine Scottsboro Boys.”<sup>216</sup> RDB Ethel Panken’s mother was a member of the Unemployed Council, participated in hunger marches, and was active in the campaign for the Scottsboro Boys.<sup>217</sup> RDB Ruth Pinkson remembered that in the Coops

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<sup>214</sup>Gerson, “*Is Family Devotion Now Subversive?*,” 57.

<sup>215</sup>Mishler, *Raising Reds*, 89.

<sup>216</sup>Hunter, “From Red Diapers to Protest Banners,” 30.

<sup>217</sup>Ethel Panken, “Three Generations of Activists,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 247.

everyone was involved in freeing the Scottsboro boys.<sup>218</sup> Campers also wrote letters and held vigils for the defendants. The Old Left's support for African Americans was reflected in summer camps' efforts to integrate their cabins and financially support minority campers.

Camp Wo-Chi-Ca, in particular, was focused on the issue of civil rights. The camp had a Bill of Racial Equality written by the campers themselves that condemned sexism, classism, and racism."<sup>219</sup> Campers also wrote the camp's Freedom song that stated:

Wo-Chi-Ca's Freedom Song  
Clasped hands, black and white  
Joined together for a common fight  
With voices raised loud and strong  
Singing a new and living song

Neither hate nor oppression, to mar the plan  
Our life is a progressive worthy span  
This is the goal we're striving for –  
A better world --- forevermore!<sup>220</sup>

The Wo-Chi-Ca newsletter published by the campers was dedicated to "Freedom Fighters" and the children held an annual World's Fair in "The Defense of the Peoples' Rights."<sup>221</sup> This platform was supported by performances from Paul Robeson, a celebrity

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<sup>218</sup> Pinkson, "The Life and Times of an Elderly Red Diaper Baby," 232.

<sup>219</sup> Mishler, *Raising Reds*, 98,99.

<sup>220</sup> Robeson FBI File Box 1.A, 34,  
<http://vault.fbi.gov/Paul%20Robeson%2C%20Sr./Paul%20Robeson%2C%20Sr.%20Part%201%20of%2031/view>, (accessed August 21, 2010).

<sup>221</sup> Robeson, FBI file Box 1A, 33; *Daily Wo-chi-can*, "Friday, August 22, 1941, TAM 206 Tamiment Library, New York University.

at the camps. When visiting, sometimes Robeson's son slept in the same bunk as white children. Such close proximity of races was unheard of during the early 1950s.<sup>222</sup>

Camp Wo-Chi-Ca allowed white and African American students to interact as equals in a safe environment. Camp administrators made a concerted effort to integrate their camper population and the result was roughly 20% of the campers and 25% of the counselors were African American. Sometimes directors even went so far as canvassing in Harlem to find black campers who wanted to attend. To make the African American students feel included in the Left culture, bunks were named after heroic figures like Fredrick Douglas and Harriet Tubman. At campfire young radicals discussed ugly racial and ethnic stereotypes in comic books and put on a skit, "No More Auction Block for Me."<sup>223</sup> African Americans, also being exposed to a new culture and a different race of friends, liked being in an integrated environment. Some had never interacted with white peers before and enjoyed seeing people of all colors around the campground.<sup>224</sup>

As at the Progressive schools, campers were encouraged to not only learn about historic civil rights struggles in America, but to put their bodies on the line and be activists. To inspire campers, movement heroes were invited to address the campers. Paul Robeson regularly visited to give inspiring talks to the children. Robeson told the next generation of activists "You will build a world that will make me proud. I stood

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<sup>222</sup> Bernie (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1982," *Red Diaper Babies*, 34.

<sup>223</sup> Levine and Gordon, *Tales of Wo-Chi-Ca*, 12.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 16, 34. Several of the counselors and campers were later in interracial marriages. Paul Robeson Jr. who attended the camp, married a Jewish woman from Brooklyn. The racist crowd that surrounded the ceremony taunted the interracial couple as it left the ceremony.

here today helping you. You will help my grandchild, my great-grandchild. You will help the Negro people to walk this American earth in full dignity with you the Jewish people, with all Americans... You take the lead and show the real kind of America that we can build.”<sup>225</sup> The children were deeply inspired by Robeson and other African American activists. One cartoon strip in their newsletter celebrated the bravery of Doris “Dorie” Miller. Miller, a cook in the United States Navy, courageously fought during the attack on Pearl Harbor and was the first African American awarded the Navy Cross, the third highest honor awarded by the US Navy at the time.<sup>226</sup>

The effect of these talks and lessons developed campers’ understandings of race relations. One camper wrote that now she better understood, “how all people, regardless of race, color, or creed, live together as one large happy family, and gain from this relationships. I learned that Negro and white are equals.”<sup>227</sup> Similarly a camper at Camp Kinderland who attended a segregated public school wrote, “Kinderland has been of paramount importance in my personal development... My social outlook and activity was certainly shaped to a large extent by my experiences at camp.”<sup>228</sup> Another camper, who was depressed to be leaving camp and her newfound activism, was thrilled when her counselor told her about the I.W.O., which the counselors called their “winter camp.” Upon returning home the camper immediately joined the nearest lodge stating, “Just like camp, I.W.O consists of people of various nationalities. The I.W.O. is

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<sup>225</sup> Levine and Gordon, *Tales of Wo-Chi-Ca*, 167.

<sup>226</sup> Robeson FBI File Box 1A. 21. Robeson performed at multiple summer camps and his file contains reports from these various performances.

<sup>227</sup> Robeson FBI File Box 1A. 41.

<sup>228</sup> Jane Schreiber, “Camp Life at Kinderland,,” *Jewish Currents*, January 1973, Freidenreich collection Box 18 Folder 10, American Jewish Archives.

interested in the welfare of the community, cleaning up the slums, doing away with racial discrimination.”<sup>229</sup> These statements show the substantial impact radical camps had on campers’ attitudes and activism.

In addition to hearing speakers talk about racism, the camp administration educated students about civil rights by censoring their reading selections. Counselors did a whole seminar on the prejudice of comic books. Comic books were denounced as sneaky subterfuges for capitalism that mesmerized children with their attractive characters, fancy graphics and fantastical plots. Counselors would ask their cabins:

Have you ever noticed, when reading a comic, how handsome a hero is made to look? Does this mean that only handsome men can be heroes, or that ‘ugly’ people are thieves, murderers, robbers, etc.? Have you ever noticed the foreign, minority-group names given to the bad, and that the good receive only the plain, simple, Anglo-Saxon names? Most comics, instead of helping us to respect people of different backgrounds, prejudice against them. If we care at all about what our parents are doing we should try not to encourage for ourselves and our friends the prejudiced and undemocratic things that joke books would teach us. The children of the future should not grow up in the fantastic world of comics.<sup>230</sup>

Radosh remembered solemnly intoning as a young camper, “We pledge ourselves to combat the influence of jokes, comic books, newspapers, radio programs that make fun of any people.”<sup>231</sup> One counselor believed that he found a creative way to handle the issue of comic books, “My solution to the problem was to turn my group B boys loose with their comic books, swatting flies at rest period after lunch. This destroyed the comic books and got rid of the flies.”<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Robeson, FBI File Box 1.A. 41.

<sup>230</sup> Levine and Gordon, *Tales of Wo-Chi-Ca*, 107.

<sup>231</sup> Radosh, *Commies*, 18.

<sup>232</sup> Levine and Gordon, *Tales of Wo-Chi-Ca*, 107.



In addition to racial prejudice, at least Wo-Chi-Ca made an attempt to crack down on sexism as well. Horowitz recalled that even comments falling into the “boys will be boys” category were critiqued with political analysis. This political education happened one night after “the lights went out after taps, one of my bunkmates yelled ‘C-Cup’ into the darkness, provoking the response ‘Harriet,’ which was the name of a staffer. The counselor on duty came into the cabin to give us a lecture on male chauvinism.”<sup>233</sup>

To help convey camps’ messages of racial, class, and gender equality, folk songs and hootenannies were an important part of camp. Lyrics contained critiques of social ills and demanded change. Singing was integral to the camp experience and campers sang all the time, songs like “If I had a Hammer,” and “We Shall Overcome” that would become the anthems of the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>234</sup> At Camp Kinderland campers sang Negro spirituals accompanied by history lessons about civil rights abuses.<sup>235</sup> The use of song to comfort and motivate was a method student activists would use over and over again during their civil rights protests in the 1960s. Learning from their radical counselors and camp directors, campers viewed music as a form of battle and their lyrics as a type of weapon.<sup>236</sup> Outside of camp children started Folk Music Clubs to further nourish their lyrical activism.<sup>237</sup> In New York City these groups performed on street corners with the

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<sup>233</sup> Horowitz, *A Radical Son*, 64. The topic of chauvinism within the radical community is discussed in Chapter Three.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>235</sup> Jane Schreiber, “Camp Life at Kinderland,” *Jewish Currents*, January 1973, Freidenreich Collection, Box 18 Folder 10, American Jewish Archives.

<sup>236</sup> Levine and Gordon, *Tales of Wo-Chi-Ca*, 36.

<sup>237</sup> Rotolo, *A Freewheelin’ Time*, 16.

American Youth Chorus to earn money for children in China.<sup>238</sup> RDB Dexter Jeffries remembered, “Our songs were intended to raise consciousness. If they didn’t there was something wrong with them. The music we were exposed to at camp always harkened back to historical struggles for freedom, democracy, and justice.”<sup>239</sup>

While campers might have been supportive of American ideals, it was partially their song selections that made the general public suspicious of their patriotism. Even though campers sang songs that promoted national and world peace, the composers and lyricists were often controversial radicals. A camp favorite was “The World Youth Song,” by the Soviet composer Dmitri Shostakovich that promised a better tomorrow when all would live in peace and harmony under socialism. The lyrics proclaimed:

Everywhere the youth are singing  
Freedom’s Song, Freedom’s Song, Freedom’s Song  
We are the Youth  
And the World Acclaims our Song of Truth.

This piece was sung at the Communist Festival of World Youth held each year in a Communist country.<sup>240</sup> The campers also proudly sang Chinese Communist anthems such as “Chee Lai” or the “Song of the Volunteers,” with its ode to Mao’s troops: “We will follow you forever, till China will be free.”<sup>241</sup> While these song selections were infuriating to those outside the Old Left community, the campers loved the sense of international connection it gave them to other young radical activists around the world.

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<sup>238</sup> Ernest Lieberman, “American Youth Chorus Feeds 3000 Chinese Children,” *The Youth Monthly* 1, no.1 (1942) Wo-Chi-Ca collection, Tamiment Library, New York University.

<sup>239</sup> Dexter Jeffries, *Triple Exposure: Black, Jewish, and Red in the 1950s* (New York: Kensington Publishing, 2003), 199.

<sup>240</sup> Radosh, *Commies*, 21

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

The camp directors who introduced these songs to their campers were drawing upon a musical network and protest method promoted by the Communist Party during the Depression. While the Party did not adopt this mode of protest until the 1930s, folk music itself has long been of a radical, protesting nature. Famous activist Pete Seeger, himself an RDB of an earlier generation, said he was a “link in a chain” that connected an American tradition of singing for reform.<sup>242</sup> Folk songs became important when New York communists active in the North Carolina and Appalachian coal fields were exposed to traditional Southern folk singing and realized it was used for political purposes to inspire, support, and comfort striking workers and their families. Paul C. Mishler asserted, “folk songs became one of the most important mediums through which Communists connected their world traditions and culture to the United States.”<sup>243</sup> The majority of the songs were about labor unrest with titles like “The Big Fat Boss and the Workers” and “I am a Union Woman.”<sup>244</sup> Many of the performers were either members of or sympathetic to the Communist Party, and the Depression made union struggles a dominant and popular theme. Though the situation was dour, lyricists managed to retain a sense of humor:

What can be more sheiky  
 Than a well-dressed Bolshevik?  
 What can be more Rooshian  
 Than a little Revolution?<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>242</sup>Two other Weaver members were RDBs and attended the Workers’ Children’s Camp. (Levine and Gordon, *Tales of Wo-Chi-Ca*,” 226.

<sup>243</sup>Mahler, *Raising Reds*, 7.

<sup>244</sup>Gillian Mitchell, *The North American Folk Music Revival: Nation and Identity in the United States and Canada, 1945 – 1980* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007), 55-57.

<sup>245</sup>Richmond, *A Long View from the Left*, 126.

Seeger took these folk songs and introduced them to a wider audience when he dropped out of Harvard in 1938 at the age of 19 to join a Young Communist League artist group in NYC.<sup>246</sup> This group of musicians traveled to union strike meetings and performed for the workers, supporting their protests for safe working conditions and fair pay. Seeger and his fellow musicians also performed at Left wing fundraisers, sometimes for young radicals' parents under government investigation for their affiliation with Old Left organizations.<sup>247</sup> Seeger sang "If I had a Hammer" at a benefit for the eleven Communist Party leaders on trial in 1948.<sup>248</sup> His group before the Weavers, the Almanacs, performed at Madison Square Garden for a large rally supporting twenty thousand striking Transport Workers Union members.<sup>249</sup> Seeger composed protest songs for the Harry Bridges Defense Committee to raise money for Bridges, who was the head of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union under government investigation for Communist Party connections. In addition to the Bridges songs, Seeger took the words of anarchist Nicola Sacco's last letter to his son in 1927 before his controversial execution and set them to music. Due to Seeger's activism and his decision to sing anti-war songs and pro-union ballads he was effectively blacklisted from the radio and television by the

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<sup>246</sup> Mitchell, *The North American Folk Music Revival*, 59; Pete Seeger, *Where Have All the Flowers Gone: A Singer's Stories, Songs, Seeds, and Robberies* (Sing Out: Bethlehem, PA, 1993), 15.

<sup>247</sup> Seeger, *Where Have All the Flowers Gone*, 19.

<sup>248</sup> David Dunaway, *How Can I Keep From Singing: Pete Seeger* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1981), 161.

<sup>249</sup> Seeger, *How Can I Keep From Singing*, 83.

1950s.<sup>250</sup> As a result, Seeger was forced to sing at radical schools and camps in order to forward his message and support his family.<sup>251</sup>

In many ways Seeger's folk music foreshadowed the themes of hope and change to be adopted in the 1960s. Young leftists were attracted to this musical genre as children and would enthusiastically embrace its messages in college. At a 1963 Newport Folk Festival these pro-union songs were still being sung to an appreciative audience and their popularity would only increase as the decade continued.<sup>252</sup> Seeger's optimistic, analytical, pluralistic, and inclusive mentality appealed to idealistic leftists ready to save the world from itself.<sup>253</sup> RDB Eleanor Walden, who was born in Greenwich Village and met Pete Seeger and other folk artists in Washington Square Park, remembered, "The authentic folk songs and contemporary political songs they sang so passionately influenced me. These singers and songwriters maintained, in their songs, a culture of resistance."<sup>254</sup> Walden went on to help found Bernice Reagon Johnson's Atlanta Folk Music Festival in the 1966.

Along with the appeal of its message, it was also Seeger himself and the time he spent at radical summer camps and schools that attracted young activists.<sup>255</sup> At the camps Seeger was always singing lyrics that asked them to question authority and think for

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<sup>250</sup> Seeger, *Where Have All the Flowers Gone*, 24, 92.

<sup>251</sup> Dunaway, *How Can I Keep From Singing*, 38.

<sup>252</sup> Mishler, *Raising Reds*, 7.

<sup>253</sup> Mitchell, *The North American Folk Music Revival*, 2.

<sup>254</sup> Eleanor Walden, "The Civil Rights Movement Veterans," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/walden.htm>, (accessed August 9, 2010).

<sup>255</sup> Seeger, *How Can I Keep From Singing*, 192.

themselves. Even songs as innocuous as the “Children’s Declaration of Independence” and “Be Kind To Your Parents (Even Though They Don’t Deserve It)” had an anti-authority message. One of the lines from Children’s Declaration of Independence states, “I will just do nothing at all, I will not eat my vegetables.”<sup>256</sup> To his young leftist audience Seeger sang lullabies of world peace, the brotherhood and sisterhood of all races, and the innate goodness in all mankind. Idealistic campers, suffering from their own troubled childhood experiences, desperately wanted to believe these concepts.<sup>257</sup> From their radical summer camps to civil rights and New Left protests, activists in college still thought of Seeger as a “John Henry-like figure, the man who fought the machinery of blacklisting.”<sup>258</sup> RDB Ronald Radosh, who after the 1960s became a staunch conservative but was once a camper at Camp Woodland and 1960s activist, remembered watching Seeger perform. Radosh asserted, “I am convinced that much of the radicalism that Woodlanders would carry with them in the later years came from the illusions they developed as a result of the weekly sing-alongs with Seeger. Songs are weapons, he often said.”<sup>259</sup>

Just as African Americans found inspiration and healing in their hymns and spirituals during civil rights protests, radical college students recall how labor songs provided the same emotional ballast. One of the songs they sang with gusto as children and then used later in the Sixties was the song “We Shall Not Be Moved.”

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>259</sup> Radosh, *Commies*, 17.

## We Shall Not Be Moved<sup>260</sup>

We shall not -  
We shall not be moved.  
We shall not -  
We shall not be moved.  
Just like a tree that's standing by the water,  
We shall not be moved.

We're buildin' one big union -  
We shall not be moved.  
We're buildin' one big union -  
We shall not be moved.  
Just like a tree that's standing by the water,  
We shall not be moved.

Democracy forever -  
We shall not be moved.  
Democracy forever -  
We shall not be moved.  
Just like a tree that's standing by the water,  
We shall not be moved.

They lyrics were pertinent to the labor movement in the early 1900s and they were just as important during the Sixties. RDB Marge Frantz, whose family braved the southern backlash against their radical ideals and whose father initiated the Southern Conference for Human Welfare in 1938, said this about singing, “Our movement was a singing movement: we didn’t listen to others sing, we all sang together. The singing not only lifted our spirits, it empowered us.”<sup>261</sup> For young activists from the Left, radical

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<sup>260</sup> The song “We Shall Not Be Moved” was also popular during the Civil Rights Movement, just like the unofficial anthem “We shall overcome.”

<sup>261</sup> Marge Frantz, “Teachings of Marx for Girls and Boys Infiltrates Alabama,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left in Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998, 52.

organizations were like their churches and the protest songs like their hymns.<sup>262</sup> Many happy childhood memories include these concerts and singing times. RDB Norah Chase, who was a member of Earl Robinson's children's choruses and sang with Pete Seeger and Paul Robeson, said, "I lived for those concerts, which reaffirmed my faith in the future and my sense of community. We would yell for Pete to sing 'Wimowheh' the way others would soon yell for Elvis Presley."<sup>263</sup>

Music was a way to communicate values and show young people what was important without sitting down and spelling it out in a didactic lecture.<sup>264</sup> Folk music was also a type of code to identify other leftists at school. Children would cautiously ask potential friends, "What singers do you like, what songs do you know?" Music was an integral part of young activists' lives and supported their determination that they would bring positive change to the world. The songs they learned at camp often came from the folk music used by the Communist Party during the Depression to mobilize exploited workers. Memories of hootenannies and folk singers were some of activists' favorite childhood experiences. The songs about unity and equality bonded them together and inspired future participation in social movements. Lyrical activism inspired them to continue protesting when the situation seemed hopeless or dangerous. Young leftists would draw upon these roots and these lyrics during their protests in the 1960s.

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<sup>262</sup>Frantz, "*Teachings of Marx for Girls and Boys Infiltrates Alabama*," 53.

<sup>263</sup>Mishler, *Raising Reds*, 275.

<sup>264</sup>Marianne Ware, "December 1947," in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 66.



## **Conclusion**

As shown, the atmosphere that surrounded children of the Old Left was both one of paranoia and oppression, and that of solidarity and encouragement. Many had parents who were arrested or investigated by government committees, particularly those whose parents were in Communist Party leadership positions. Children themselves were victims of physical and verbal abuse. Even the young leftists who lived in radical enclaves could not escape the public humiliation and fear of the postwar years. As comforting as places like the Coops were, children's sense of safety and security was shattered by the execution of the Rosenbergs that proved the government was willing to kill subversives. This traumatized children of Old Left families, and RDBs in particular, who saw themselves as potentially in the same situation as the Rosenberg orphans. The experience of coming home to find their father fired due to his political inclinations or their mother arrested for her work with the Communist Party made children highly alert to the hypocrisies of the nation's justice system. Young radicals' convictions to change America and provide fair and equal treatment for all United States citizens was based on their first-hand experience with persecution. These lessons learned early in their childhood were instrumental in motivating their activism in the 1960s. The demands for equal rights, participatory democracy, and world peace supported by Sixties protest organizations were the same values children of the Old Left learned at an early age.

## **Chapter Four: Childhood Agency during the Postwar Years**

### **Introduction**

From birth the children of the Old Left were conscripted into fighting American classism and racism. Their enlistment was mandatory. Young leftists make comments like “Politics was part of my life-blood”; [politics] was my mother’s milk”; “It never occurred to me not to be interested.”<sup>1</sup> From an early age radical youths were instructed on how to change America for the better. Regardless of their parents’ position with in the Communist Party or other radical organizations, the majority of young activists mentioned the sense of responsibility their parents passed along to them. RDB Sheli (last name withheld), whose parents were rank-and-file workers in the Fur and Leatherworkers Union, said she was spoon-fed radicalism.<sup>2</sup> RDB Bernie (last name withheld) commented, “I grew up being weaned on a bottle, [that] bottle was my Marxist Bible.”<sup>3</sup> RDB Eleanor Walden remembered, “I come from a revolutionary family. My father was an organizer for the IWW... My lullabies were the songs from the Wobblies' Little Red Songbook. As a cultural activist I was simply continuing the ‘family business.’”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Margaret M. Braungart and Richard Braungart, “The Life-Course Development of Left Wing and Right Wing Youth Activist Leaders from the 1960s,” *Political Psychology* 11, no. 2 (1990): 260.

<sup>2</sup>Sheli (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 31.

<sup>3</sup>Bernie (last name withheld), ““Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 37.

<sup>4</sup>Eleanor Walden, “The Civil Rights Movement Veterans,” *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/walden.htm>, (accessed August 9, 2010).

Old Left parents viewed their offspring as the torchbearers for change. When young leftists protested in Sixties social movements, they were continuing the strategies and embracing the radical ideals they had learned in childhood, and the sense of inevitable progress that would come from these values. As a result children from the Old Left are a tangible link between the ideologies and activism of their parents' generation and New Left. Radical youths were raised to become the next soldiers in the fight for world revolution. Roslyn (last name withheld) firmly stated, "What the whole [leftist] experience meant for me is that I've never seen myself as becoming political. You were."<sup>5</sup>

To understand how Old Left values were passed along to the New Left requires looking at both children and their parents. Studying the ways adults conceptualized childhood and instructed their children gives the parental perspective on young radicals' upbringing. Examining how children perceived these instructions and accepted or rejected these lessons shows both their agency and their continuation of Old Left methods and ideals. Childhood historians N. Ray Hiner and Joseph Hawes study the social, cultural, and psychological influences and pressures of adult values on the younger generations. Within the radical community, "Children, like members of all social groups, [were] assigned both implicit and explicit roles in American society and culture."<sup>6</sup> Hays and Hawes examine these different influences and compare them to children's lives. This process allows historians to study how young people accepted or rejected their assigned

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<sup>5</sup>Roslyn (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1982," 14.

<sup>6</sup>N. Ray Hiner and Joseph M. Hawes "History of Childhood: United States," in *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood: In History and Society*, Paula Fass, ed. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 427.

roles. RDBs' and their radical peers' special responsibility was to resist and combat negative aspects of American society, the racism, class inequalities, and materialism. This duty could be accomplished through protests, petitions, education of others, and the rejection of society's materialism and racism. For many young leftists their commitment to improving society was also tied to their Jewish roots and the American Jewish tradition of civil rights activism.

Old Left parents had a completely unique vision of childhood from that of their contemporaries raised outside radical communities. In postwar America, the nuclear family, and particularly children, became the focal point of American society. Parents raised during the Depression and war years wanted their kids to enjoy life without the pressures and limitations they had experienced. Parents' focus on their children was so extreme sociologist William H. Whyte described America during this time as a filiarchy, a society increasingly dominated by the young. In this system childless couples were viewed as objects of pity, with childlessness symbolizing maladjustment and parenthood representing maturity and success.<sup>7</sup>

In comparison, some leftists were so focused on ushering in a socialist revolution their members felt raising children was not a viable option. The Communist Party, in particular, encouraged its members not to have children. Many communists dedicated to political activism took it for granted they would not have a family, feeling it was morally wrong and logistically cumbersome for a professional revolutionary to be a parent. Party members believed it was wrong to bring children into a pre-revolutionary world where society's injustice and persecution put them at risk. Other parents thought that with the

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<sup>7</sup>Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2006), 227.

revolution just around the corner, why not wait to have children in the new world order.<sup>8</sup>

When Gil Green was discussing marriage with his future wife, he informed her that he was a committed revolutionary in the struggle for socialism and that meant they would have to “forego the luxury of children.”<sup>9</sup>

When Green told the Party’s National Chairman William Z. Foster that he and his wife had decided to have children, Foster said, “You’re making a mistake. A revolutionist should never be burdened with children.”<sup>10</sup> Karl Knobler remembered his parents’ decision to have children lessened their political organizing. He stated, “People with kids don’t have time to be revolutionaries.”<sup>11</sup> As a result of the mentality exemplified by Foster, abortion was commonplace in the Party and Communist doctors performed the service for a small fee.<sup>12</sup> When members did have children, they were at risk of being thrown out of the Party.<sup>13</sup>

As Knobler noted, having children did hamper leftists’ activism. Peggy Dennis wrote in her memoir *The Autobiography of an American Communist* that in 1929 she was

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<sup>8</sup> Emily (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 51.

<sup>9</sup> Gil Green *Cold War Fugitive: A Personal Story of the McCarthy* (New York: International Publishers, 1984), 4.

<sup>10</sup> Green, *Cold War Fugitive*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Karl Knobler, Interview with the Author, 4, September, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1952), 325. Chambers states that his decision to have children and the Party’s disapproval of parenthood led to his break with the Party (326). For more on this topic, please see Dorothy Stetson’s *Abortion, Politics, Women’s Movements, and the Democratic State: A Comparative Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> Knobler, Interview with the Author, 4, September, 2010.

the first leader of her generation to have a baby. Dennis had been immersed in Party work since her first soapbox speeches at age 13. By the time she was in her twenties she was a skilled activist and orator. As a result, the Party regarded her pregnancy with interest to see if a woman could be a wife, a mother, and a leader. Dennis had been raised to reject standard gender roles, preferring to focus on politics and activism. However, her husband Eugene wanted a baby and after much discussion Dennis finally agreed to start a family. Upon telling her feminist mother about the baby, Peggy's mother replied, "The pity of it is it will change your life, not his" and she was right. After having a baby Dennis was never as involved in Party leadership.<sup>14</sup> Reluctant to have more children, Dennis had two abortions before having her second son, Gene.<sup>15</sup>

Party women's rejection of, or ambivalence to, parenthood was antithetical to society's claim that a woman's primary role was that of mother. During this time, women were under intense pressure to have children and some felt like social pariahs until expecting their first baby. Ruth Rosen emphasizes this sense of child bearing obligation in her study of the 1960s women's movement, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America*. Rosen includes this statement from poet Adrienne Rich:

As soon as I was visibly and clearly pregnant I felt, for the first time in my adolescent and adult-life, not-guilty. The atmosphere of approval in which I bathed – even by strangers on the street, it seemed – was like an aura I carried

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<sup>14</sup>Peggy Dennis, *The Autobiography of an American Communist: A Personal View of Political Life, 1925 – 1975* (Westport: Lawrence Hill & Co., 1977), 36, 37.

<sup>15</sup>Dennis, *The Autobiography of an American Communist*, 101.

with me, in which doubts, fears, misgivings, met with absolute denial. *This is what women have always done.*<sup>16</sup>

While it is obvious that many women in radical organizations chose to have children, their attitudes about children and women's roles as mothers differed from those of the larger society. Instead of being encouraged to start a family, they were told that children could be a distraction from their dedication to the Party and radical politics.

Once children were born, radical parents viewed their children differently from many parents in America. The majority of Americans viewed their children as what sociologist Vivian Zelizer called "the priceless child."<sup>17</sup> Most non-leftist parents conceptualized childhood as a time of innocence and vulnerability. Children needed to be sheltered and protected from the outside world and its negativity.<sup>18</sup> Concerned parents attempted to create a buffer of activities and events that cloistered their children from dangerous influences. Middle class mothers served as full-time leisure coordinators, camp counselors, and chauffeurs to keep their children busy and insulated from harm.<sup>19</sup> Historian RDB Deborah Gerson wrote in her article "'Is Family Devotion Now Subversive?' Familialism Against McCarthyism'" that a "culture committed to containment of communism abroad developed a 'domestic version of containment' in the

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<sup>16</sup>Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Change America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 13.

<sup>17</sup>Paula Fass, "Children and Globalization," *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 4 (2003): 966.

<sup>18</sup>Fass, "Children and Globalization," 967.

<sup>19</sup>Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 277.

home, where ‘potentially dangerous social forces of the new age might be tamed.’”<sup>20</sup> As a result of all this chauffeuring and control, during the 1950s young people were “tarred with the epithet, ‘fat, dumb, and happy.’”<sup>21</sup> Obviously this description does not include the entirety of American youth during this period. As shown by Leerom Medovoi’s *Rebels: Youth and the Cold War*, this decade was also one of teenage delinquency and rebellion.<sup>22</sup> In addition, young African Americans were also challenging the status quo by protesting and picketing racist laws in the South. What differentiates leftists from other rebellious youth is radicals’ protests focused on Old Left causes concerning working class rights, racial equality, and nuclear disarmament. That is not to say all children from Old Left families participated in these protests. Just like the youth studied in Medovoi’s book, young leftists also rebelled against their parents. This rebellion will be discussed later in the chapter.

### **Radical Parents and their Children**

While many of their suburban counterparts were cocooned in a kaleidoscope of activities, children from the Old Left were neither the center nor circumference of their parents’ lives. Activist parents did not kowtow to their children’s demands or lavish extravagant amounts of time on children’s extracurricular activities. Victor Rabinowitz stated in his autobiography *Unrepentant Leftist* that his wife continued her activism when

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<sup>20</sup> Deborah A. Gerson, “‘Is Family Devotion Now Subversive?’ Familialism Against McCarthyism” in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, Joanne Meyerowitz, ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 155.

<sup>21</sup> Mintz, *Huck’s Raft*, 311.

<sup>22</sup> Just like the young people in Medovoi’s book, children from the Old Left also rebelled against their parents. Young leftists’ rebellion will be discussed later in the chapter.



“she wasn’t *interrupted* [my emphasis] by the creation and care of the children.”<sup>23</sup>

Rabinowitz’ use of the word “interrupted” indicates the couples’ perception of parenthood as hindrance to their activism. Rabinowitz, an absent father who worked and traveled frequently, admitted, “Both of our kids were wonderful and I’m sorry I didn’t see more of them.”<sup>24</sup> RDB Max (last name withheld) recalled the intensity of Party involvement for postwar adults, saying members worked seven days and seven nights a week.<sup>25</sup> RDB Molly (last name withheld) remembered that as a parent, she and her husband would make the political decisions and the children just had to survive with the outcomes.<sup>26</sup> RDB Linn’s (last name withheld) mother adopted all the “bourgeois” tricks so that she would have more time to do her political work. She used formula instead of breast-feeding. She hired a diaper service. She put a sign in the elevator that said, “Do not knock. I’m taking a nap.” Linn remembered her mother set up her life so her family would take a minimal amount of her time. Linn’s mother informed her children, “You and your brother are a unit; me and my husband are a unit. We’ll take care of your physical needs, but basically you are going to have to fend for yourselves. We come first.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Victor Rabinowitz, *Unrepentant Leftist: A Lawyers Memoir* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 91.

<sup>24</sup> Rabinowitz *Unrepentant Leftist*, 91, 94.

<sup>25</sup> Max (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 51.

<sup>26</sup> Molly (last name withheld), “Families: Raising Children 1982,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 66.

<sup>27</sup> Albert Vetere Lannon, “Commiebastid,” in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 76.

There are a few examples where parents' lack of awareness about their families and myopic focus on their activism that were particularly damaging to children. As adults, these individuals recall the pain of neglect they felt as children. RDB Albert Lannon remembered that, after being plucked out and deposited in one neighborhood after another by the Party, "I felt like I was constantly the new kid on the block, the outsider from someplace else. I sought love and attention from my parents to compensate for the isolation, the sense of not belonging anywhere, but they were busy organizing, mobilizing, going to meetings, combating repression."<sup>28</sup> Starved for attention, Lannon started acting out, drinking, attempting muggings in Central Park, fighting, smoking, etc., but he recalled that his parents were too "preoccupied with the rise of fascism, the trial, and inner-party battles over decisions to send various party leaders 'underground' to notice."<sup>29</sup> Instead of taking an interest in their child and finding the reasons for his rebellious behavior, they chose to ignore it or ascribe it to teenage experimentation.

Undoubtedly one of the worst examples of parental neglect belongs to RDB Maxine DeFelice, who in the early 1950s was sexually harassed and possibly raped when in middle school (she has since blocked out the memory) by a group of young teenage boys. After the horrific event she came home two hours late. Her parents did not even notice she was missing and when she tried to talk to her mother about the attack, her mother angrily said, "We're having a meeting, can't you see? You know better than to interrupt a meeting. Go to your bedroom!" and turned back to the group discussing the strike for the next day. DeFelice remembered, "Withdrawn, resigned, and sad I went to

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<sup>28</sup>Lannon, "Commiebastid," 99.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 99.

my room, changed my clothes, sat down on my spot on the floor and proceeded to read. Sometime later I crawled under my bed where I spent the night. No one knew, no one noticed.”<sup>30</sup> While this is an extreme case, it illustrates that in some scenarios parents’ focus on politics and activism was detrimental to their children.

This is not to say that Old Left parents were intentionally callous and cruel. Even the most dedicated parents found it difficult to put their children in potential danger. This was the case for devoted labor and peace activist Trudy Orris when her 16-year-old son Peter insisted on accompanying her on a Freedom Ride to Gwynne Oaks, Maryland, in 1963. Orris related, “My son wanted to be arrested...and I wanted him to go to school.”<sup>31</sup> Many tried to be good parents, as demonstrated by Leonard Boudin, the famous leftist lawyer who defended Paul Robeson when the State Department confiscated his passport. Boudin commented that he and his wife cared a lot about their daughter, raised her in a loving atmosphere, and were devoted parents.<sup>32</sup> Some families were even successful at combining both politics and the family. RDB Stephanie (last name withheld) remembered that her “mom and dad were loving parents who didn’t put the movement ahead of their family but rather joined their family and politics to the benefit of both.”<sup>33</sup> Dedication to family time was impossible when parents went underground or were incarcerated, but

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<sup>30</sup>Maxine DeFelice, “Southern Discomfort,” in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 92.

<sup>31</sup>Debra Shultz, *Going South: Jewish Women in the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 15.

<sup>32</sup>Leonard Boudin, Oral History Collection, Columbia University (1983), Folder 10: 342.

<sup>33</sup>Stephanie Allan, “When Life Was a Party,” in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 121.

they tried to sustain relationships with frequent letters home and jail visits.<sup>34</sup> Parents dedicated to their political work often worried their children would not understand their commitment. Their fears were valid, as many young radicals did feel abandoned by parents who prioritized political activism over family obligations.

Regardless of parents' love for their children, leftists knew their activism meant missing important years of parent/child bonding, violated their children's rights "wholesale," and caused them to grow up much too fast.<sup>35</sup> For young radicals whose parents went underground or into hiding to avoid arrest the loss of togetherness was particularly painful. In a sense these parents were disappeared, the children having no knowledge of their mother or father's whereabouts, when they would return or even if they were alive. Sometimes parents went underground for four or five years.<sup>36</sup> If a child was relatively young when his parent went into hiding, it was difficult for them to even remember their mother or father. After being underground for five years starting when his son was three, Gil Green hoped his child still knew him. When Green was finally reunited with his son, he asked, "Do you recognize me?" His son replied, "I think I do, Dad."<sup>37</sup>

Green understood that his children lived in a constant state of fear and insecurity because of his activism. He acknowledged, "I know that each of my three children was affected by the trauma of those years. And I am certain this is also true of thousands of

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<sup>34</sup> Green, *Cold War Fugitive*, 166.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>36</sup> Marge (last name withheld), Phil (last name withheld), Sheila (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1983," 37, 50, 52.

<sup>37</sup> Green, *Cold War Fugitive*, 165.

other children whose parents were victimized during that shameful episode in our nation's history.”<sup>38</sup> Regardless of this understanding, parents did not stop their political activism. George (last name withheld) who was a member of the IWO and an active labor movement organizer, had his name mentioned during the McCarthy trials numerous times. Even though his daughter was attacked at school, he continued his activism.<sup>39</sup> Alan (last name withheld) recalled, “I think our parents, all of them, believed so much in the struggle, in what was important for the whole world, that what was important for their kids was kind of down the list of things, or they didn't know how to deal with it... They wanted to lead a movement, save the world, fight fascism, fight McCarthyism.”<sup>40</sup> For radical parents, the ends of socialist revolution justified the means of an unhappy family life.

To understand adults' validation for their actions, it is important to realize the depth of emotional, moral, and intellectual commitment many Party member parents had to leftist ideals. It is also important to remember there were varying levels of commitment to radical organizations, but for those deeply involved in Party, the movement was their life's work. Nathan Glazer explained in *The Social Basis of American Communism* that “To be a Communist means, ideally, and in large measure in reality, to be enlisted as a soldier in an organization. One hesitates to call it a ‘cause,’ ... Yet it acts on those committed to it as powerfully as any cause, any movement, has in the past.”<sup>41</sup> Philip

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<sup>38</sup> Green, *Cold War Fugitive*, 71.

<sup>39</sup> George (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 23.

<sup>40</sup> Alan (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 24.

<sup>41</sup> Nathan Glazer, *The Social Basis of American Communism* (New York: Harcourt, 1961), 4.

Selznick in his study *The Organizational Weapon: A Study of Bolshevik Strategy and Tactics* (1979) wrote that members must be “emotionally dedicated, physically mobile, and prepared to sacrifice time, career, and life itself. Such a pursuit seriously affects family life, education, recreation, and other sectors of experience which are usually relatively independent.”<sup>42</sup> RDB Lenny (last name withheld) said his parents’ whole life was centered and structured by their commitment to the International Workers Order and the Jewish People’s Fraternal Order.<sup>43</sup>

While most parents of any political party feel a sense of responsibility to pass their respective morals and principles down to their children, radicals approached their political beliefs and the process of transmitting them to next generation with religious devotion. Communist Party member Howard Fast stated, “We were...like a priesthood, we were dedicated to the brotherhood of man.”<sup>44</sup> When Jessica Mitford went door to door with comrades inviting workers to Communist meetings, she said they had the same zeal as Christian missionaries. Mitford and her comrades believed they were canvassing to change and save lives.<sup>45</sup>

Children recognized the practically religious role the Party played in their parents’ psyche. RDB Alix Dobkin remembered, “Like any good church, the Party had for thirty years provided its constituency with a moral center, a philosophical structure, and an

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<sup>42</sup> Philip Selznick, *The Organizational Weapon: A Study of Bolshevik Strategy and Tactics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952), 25.

<sup>43</sup> Lenny (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 54.

<sup>44</sup> Howard Fast, *Being Red* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990), 138.

<sup>45</sup> Jessica Mitford, *A Fine Old Conflict* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 65; Fast, *Being Red*, 70.

energetic, like-minded community.”<sup>46</sup> Her father was so dedicated to the Party a worried friend thought he should see a shrink.<sup>47</sup> RDB Dave Horowitz remembered, “I understood early that my parents’ political religion was really the center of their moral life. This meant – without their necessarily intending it – that the condition of their parental love was that I embrace their political faith....”<sup>48</sup>

Selznick believed the Party’s most important theoretical argument was the inevitability of socialism. He described this sense of missionary zeal and communist morale as “A belief in ultimate triumph, or at least in the consistency of action with the basic forces of history (a secularized form of “God’s Will”), seems to be a necessary condition for high morale in apocalyptic movements.”<sup>49</sup> Children raised in Old Left homes adopted the same zealous belief that their efforts would inevitably bring progress. Like their parents, they were ready to change the world for the better. Parents set a high precedent of commitment to the movement when they sacrificed their jobs, financial security, family relationships, and even personal safety to stand behind radical ideologies feared and hated by the rest of America. These dedicated individuals believed they were doing this not only for themselves, but also for their children and all future generations. For them it was not a selfish act; it was for the improvement of all humanity, the brotherhood of man.

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<sup>46</sup> Alix Dobkin, *My Red Blood: A Memoir of Growing Up Communist, Coming onto the Greenwich Village Folk Scene, and Coming Out in the Feminist Movement* (New York: Alyson Books, 2009), 99.

<sup>47</sup> Dobkin, *My Red Blood*, 7.

<sup>48</sup> David Horowitz, *Radical Son: A Generational Odyssey* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 44, 49.

<sup>49</sup> Selznick, *The Organizational Weapon*, 40.

Regardless of the unselfishness that motivated adults' prioritization of activism over children, young radicals still felt alienated from their parents. This is particularly true when parents who had been underground or incarcerated attempted to reinsert themselves into their family's lives. Absent parents often faced children's resentment and disconnect. When James E. Jackson returned to normal life after five years of hiding his family had changed in his absence. His wife Esther remembered, "'Well, there were difficulties...I had been making all the decisions on everything for the family, and he used to get a little irritated and say we would walk a half a block ahead of him all the time. We'd forget [he was there].'"<sup>50</sup> Other children fought constantly with the returned parent or were completely withdrawn.<sup>51</sup> While many children believed in leftist causes, they still longed for a more normal lifestyle. These desires are recorded in reminiscences where children describe the pressure and pain experienced while young. RDB Sally Belfrage, whose parents were threatened with deportation wrote later in life "I felt like I'd been born grown up and was now seeking childhood, the safety of being warm and fed and told what to do."<sup>52</sup>

RBD Carl Bernstein remembered feeling ashamed and threatened because his father was too intellectual and refused to watch sports until all the teams were integrated.<sup>53</sup> RDB David Horowitz regretted that he could not talk about something as

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<sup>50</sup> Gerson, *"Is Family Devotion Now Subversive?,"* 166.

<sup>51</sup> Dennis, *The Autobiography of an American Communist*, 220 and Green, *Cold War Fugitive*, 166.

<sup>52</sup> Sally Belfrage, *Un-American Activities: A Memoir of the Fifties* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994) 20.

<sup>53</sup> Carl Bernstein, *Loyalties: A Son's Memoir* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 13, 15, 33.



normal as baseball with his father, who considered it a form of capitalist manipulation, an elaborate plan to sell wheaties and exploit people.<sup>54</sup> Sometimes holidays were also a contentious issue between parents and children. RDB Alix Dobkin could not celebrate Mother's Day because her mother thought it was a cynical, phony holiday that sentimentalized motherhood and whose only purpose was to sell flowers and candy.<sup>55</sup> Certainly this type of parental censorship is not unique to Old Left children and their parents. Members of other social movements or religious groups, like the Amish or Quakers, have imposed comparable restrictions on their children regarding participation in America's social norms. However, young leftists were not only restricted from their involvement in the consumer culture or consumption of products produced by racist corporations, they were also supposed to combat it head on through protests, pickets, and class discussions.

Many young radicals especially wished for a more normal family life when their parents were underground or under investigation. Gene Dennis, Jr., whose father was imprisoned Communist Party General Secretary Eugene Dennis, wished his father were out of jail. Dennis was scared to visit his father in prison and emotionally, mentally, and physically strained by his father's six and half year incarceration.<sup>56</sup> Children like Dennis whose parents were jailed or in hiding felt abandoned by one parent and forced to emotionally support the other. Dennis remembered the burden of raising himself and

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<sup>54</sup> Horowitz, *A Radical Son*, 57.

<sup>55</sup> Dobkin, *My Red Blood*, 25.

<sup>56</sup> Dennis, *The Autobiography of an American Communist*, 184, 193, 198.

taking care of his mother, a responsibility assigned him by his father at the time of his arrest.<sup>57</sup> He described his experience in a poem entitled 1955: Second Childhood:

1955: Second Childhood

I did real good  
while you were gone.  
Took care of mom,  
was the man of the house:  
Bought her the presents you described in your letters—  
the ones the censors  
sensed  
were all right.

I did real good  
while you were gone.  
Stood proud  
by the prison gates.  
Heard you shiver inside.  
Watched your hair  
bleach ice white  
in the jailhouse light.

I did real good:  
Swallowed tears  
in the park when  
Richie beat on me  
for being the Commie's kid  
didn't let the FBI men  
ask me questions  
when they'd follow  
me home.

While you were gone  
I grew up fast,  
too fast  
to be so old  
at the age of twelve.

I hope you can  
see the difference  
when you get out tomorrow  
after all these years.  
I hope you can see

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<sup>57</sup> Gene Dennis, "Introducing Ourselves 1982," 39.

behind my grownup eyes  
and know  
I need you home so  
I can be a kid  
again,  
If it's not too late.<sup>58</sup>

Even though Bernstein, Horowitz, Dobkin and Dennis were unhappy about their parents' activism, that did not keep them from participating in their own protests as children and becoming activists during the 1960s. Nevertheless, even if the dedication to activism remained strong in young radicals, that does not mean they agreed with adults' prioritization of politics over parenting. Even during the 1980s when conference participants met to discuss their childhood experiences, feelings of bitterness remained. At the reunion RDB Larry (last name withheld) stated "The feelings I have are fear and resentment toward my parents for dogmatism and for having to fight my parents' political battles without being asked."<sup>59</sup> The extent and style of parenting children experienced was the antithesis of standard postwar practices. Children in Old Left families were under just as much control as their peers in non-leftist families, just within a different social structure and set of values. Autonomy was allowed with regards to children's activism and unilateral protest organizations they set up, but it had to be within the standard of leftist values. Thinking back on their radical youths, individuals commented that it was difficult to be child "rebels" in the traditional sense, since their normal activities were considered rebellious and radical to society. Robert Meeropol explained, "How do you rebel against parents who are almost communist if not communists...[that] totally

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<sup>58</sup>Dennis," *Introducing Ourselves* 1983," 39.

<sup>59</sup>Larry (last name withheld), *"Introducing Ourselves* 1982," 22. During the rest of the conference Larry never mentioned whether or not he had been politically active during the Sixties.

rejected everything that is capitalist... somewhat of a dilemma.”<sup>60</sup> Like their non-leftist peers who rebelled against their parents, some children of the Left rebelled by adopting standard social practices. Carl Bernstein remembered rebelling against his parents by accusing them of being atheist Communists who squelched his religiosity and refused to let him be Jewish. After many family arguments, Bernstein was allowed a Bar Mitzvah.<sup>61</sup> RDB Larry (last name withheld) who was enrolled in leftist youth groups while in primary school, rebelled against his parents by being apolitical in high school, college, and even as a graduate student.<sup>62</sup>

### **The Function of Children in the Old Left**

This section examines the ways young radicals fulfilled their parents’ expectations as mini-revolutionaries. It looks not only at how children obediently followed in their parents footsteps at marches and picket lines, but also young radicals’ agency in planning and implementing their own protest activities without their parents help. Part of what encouraged children’s self-perception of being mature activists was their parents’ child rearing methods. Parents treated their children like adults and young leftists called their parents by their first names.<sup>63</sup> Parents discussed the gamut of topics with their children, from politics to sexuality. In a display of disdain for contemporary social restrictions, parents encouraged very different ideas about sex than the rest of

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<sup>60</sup>Robert Meeropol, “Beginning the Exploration: Opening Presentation 1983,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 8.

<sup>61</sup>Bernstein, From *Loyalties*, 203.

<sup>62</sup>Larry (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 22.

<sup>63</sup>Mitford, *A Fine Old Conflict*, 39.

society. Children were told sex was beautiful and normal, an experience to share with someone you cared about, as long as you had protection, regardless of marital status. On occasions when daughters got pregnant, when possible mothers would help arrange for a sympathetic family doctor to perform an abortion.<sup>64</sup> At times, non-leftists noticed the stark differences between their own upbringing and that of activists raised by radical parents. A young Free Speech Movement participant who married an RDB commented that because her husband's parents were radical intellectuals, the rest of the kids thought he was lucky. She stated:

For years, people in their crowd agreed that Jeff was the least fucked-up person around. He had never had to rebel against his parents' values. He was not sexually inhibited or burdened with guilt. He was not jealous. He nearly had an affair with his sister. He did not have bourgeois hangups about privacy, neatness, body odor, and hair.<sup>65</sup>

While this example is certainly not indicative of all young leftists' experiences, it shows an extreme example of the ways parents' activism affected their children's upbringing.

This different type of parenting was most obvious in their directives to challenge authority figures that misrepresented or challenged the Left and its goals. This could be accompanied by the most rigid adherence for orthodoxy, a demand particularly true for children attending public schools. When RDB Lucy's (last name withheld) Social Studies teacher said, "In Communist China they never smile." Lucy recalled, "I couldn't control myself, 'You have got to be kidding.' I got sent from the room and had to talk with the

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<sup>64</sup>Sara Davidson, *Loose Change* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1977), 30, 31.

<sup>65</sup>Davidson, *Loose Change*, 82.

principal.”<sup>66</sup> Many children from Old Left families had a problem with the pledge of allegiance and refused to say the line “One nation under God.”<sup>67</sup> RDB Faye (last name withheld) was kicked out of the room for not saluting the flag.<sup>68</sup> Teachers were so determined to denounce un-American behavior and classroom insubordination was reported to the FBI. RDB Ernst Benjamin discovered an entry in his federal file that documented the times in high school when he did not salute the flag.<sup>69</sup>

Regardless of persecution, some young leftists publicly announced their radical inclinations. Amy Swerdlow, who later became a co-founder of Women Strike For Peace, remembered that starting at the age of six her parents made her stand up in class and inform the teacher she would be out of school on May Day because it was a workers’ holiday. She remembered, “the truant officer coming each May Day and my father dramatically expelling him from the apartment, shouting indignantly, ‘Take me to court!’”<sup>70</sup> Later, in junior high, Swerdlow had an even more humiliating experience. She recalled, “my stomach churned and I thought I would faint as I had to stand up on the auditorium stage and refuse a bronze medal for coming in third in a potato race with the

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<sup>66</sup> Lucy (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 55.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 14. J (first and last name withheld) Email with Author, 9, September, 2010.

<sup>68</sup> Ernst Benjamin, “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 60.

<sup>69</sup> Marvin Caplan, “Trenton Terrace Remembered: Life in a “Leftist Nest” *Washington History* 6, no. 1 (1994), 53.

<sup>70</sup> Amy Swerdlow, “A Child of the Old, Old Left,” in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 250.

statement ‘I cannot accept a medal from William Randolph Hearst.’”<sup>71</sup> At school, RDB Gina (last name withheld), Gina’s sister, and her cousins were told not to say the Pledge of Allegiance and not to take part in civil defense drills. Some young radicals challenged authority figures with great enthusiasm. Gina remembered, “we’d love for the teachers to come up and say they were going to call our parents. We’d say ‘Go ahead.’”<sup>72</sup>

At times children’s homework gave away their political beliefs. Judy Plapinger wrote her eighth grade history term paper about the Rosenbergs’ lack of a fair trial.<sup>73</sup> RDB Susan (last name withheld) remembered in the fifth grade when she was assigned a Social Studies paper on the Incas. Her father provided an additional book to use. When Susan said she did not have time to include his suggested source, her father accused her of “ ‘Stereoscopic vision. You have to have different viewpoints. This is a Marxist history of Central America.’ I said, ‘None of the other kids have to read a Marxist...!’ He said, ‘You’ll appreciate it later.’”<sup>74</sup> Parents also inserted themselves into the PTA. The Fraads’ mother openly opposed corporal punishment in the classroom, air raid drills, teachers’ loyalty oaths, and patriotic assemblies. Once when a teacher smashed a Fraad daughter’s head into the blackboard for suggesting that the tradition of the Yule Log was

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<sup>71</sup> Swerdlow, “A Child of the Old, Old Left,” 250.

<sup>72</sup> Gina (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 4.

<sup>73</sup> Judy Plapinger, Email with the Author, 7, September, 2010.

<sup>74</sup> Susan (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 59.

to toast Santa Claus, Mrs. Fraad protested and from that time on, if the teacher wanted to shove children she first had to ask, “May I touch you?”<sup>75</sup>

For young radicals attending public schools, and for those educated at progressive schools and Jewish schools, the most important training they received was from their parents. These ideological lessons stressed that, regardless of what the outside world said, as leftist activists they were members of an important, unique, and elite cohort. RDB Danny (last name withheld), stated, “My family always drummed into us that we were special, and not explicitly, that we were better because we had a social consciousness where other people didn’t.”<sup>76</sup> Carted around to meetings and protests, young leftists heard the speeches, witnessed the organizing efforts, and saw the results of radical activism. RDB Bettina Aptheker remembered that she was encouraged, starting at the age of six, to picket with placards and sign petitions at political rallies. Aptheker recalled, “my parents taught me that it was possible – and necessary – to be part of a movement to affect change in the world.”<sup>77</sup> For some, this sense of pride still exists. At the reunion in 1983 RDB Rachel Fast Ben-Avi stated she “was privileged to grow up in the company of the men and women in the communist movement. Though they may be faulted for

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<sup>75</sup> Rosalyn Fraad Baxandall and Harriet Fraad, “Red Sisters of the Bourgeoisie,” in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 101.

<sup>76</sup> Danny (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 22.

<sup>77</sup> Bettina Aptheker, *Intimate Politics: How I Grew Up Red, Fought for Free Speech, and Became A Feminist Rebel* (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2006), 3.



naiveté, for denial, they were special – smart and principled, courageous, analytical and thoughtful, fair-minded.”<sup>78</sup>

Even when the outside world was slandering, beating, arresting, and deporting members of Old Left communities, many radical youths still felt a sense of hope and inevitable triumph. In order to continue demonstrating under such oppressive circumstances, individuals needed to be convinced that they were fighting on the virtuous, victorious side. Like their parents, young leftists expressed an almost religious sense of participating in a cosmic fight of good versus evil. RDB Henry (last name withheld) remembered “A feeling that we were absolutely the winners, that the world was on our side. We were winning. That was an enormous feeling, that we might be in the minority locally but on a world scale, we were winners.”<sup>79</sup> Children raised in these families had a sense of certainty and enthusiasm about their work, even though they were being persecuted for their efforts. RDB Gail (last name withheld), who started protesting when she was three, and whose prominent Party member father had to go underground for several years, remembered that in her childhood “it was exciting and I loved being a communist. It was really thrilling. Yes, we had a support system definitely. And we were special. We were gonna change the world. There was no doubt in my mind.”<sup>80</sup>

Radical parents encouraged this theme of success. RDB Tamara’s (last name withheld) mother would always start sentences with the phrase, “After the revolution, I

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<sup>78</sup> Lillian Carlson, “A California Girlhood,” in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 25.

<sup>79</sup> Gail (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 41.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 41.

plan to...”<sup>81</sup> This feeling of inevitable victory was echoed by Old Left children who concluded, “When you were a child, you felt cosmically that you were on the right side and that most of the world was on the right side: third world people, Chinese people, all the Russians.”<sup>82</sup> RDB Suze Rotolo said, “We believed we could change perceptions and politics and the social order of things.”<sup>83</sup>

Buoyed by their own optimism, young leftists also had the support of their radical heroes. Paul Robeson addressed a group of Wo-Chi-Ca campers with this motivational message:

I come to you not to tell you things, but to get strength from you. When I see you I know what I am fighting for and you can bet your life that I will be there to the very last moment... I know what I have to do. It is important that I know the faith that you have in me... You drive me ahead. You make me rededicate myself to the struggle. I assure you and you know I mean it from my heart: I shall struggle against fascism for you. We will wipe it from the earth. From the smallest of you, remember that we have a great, great responsibility to build the kind of world that we want to live in. I am proud to be here.<sup>84</sup>

Parents constantly reminded children that their special roles as revolutionaries came with a great deal of responsibility. As a result young radicals felt their value was determined by their contribution to society. Robert Meeropol remembered, “You could not be a worthwhile human being unless you were helping other people and yourself to

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<sup>81</sup>Tamara (last name withheld), “The Next Generation 1983,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 89.

<sup>82</sup>Mark (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 61.

<sup>83</sup>Suze Rotolo, *A Freewheelin’ Time: A Memoir of Greenwich Village in the Sixties* (New York: Broadway Books, 2008), 10.

<sup>84</sup>June Levine and Gene Gordon, *Tales of Wo-Chi-Ca: Blacks, Whites, and Reds at Camp* (San Rafael, CA: Avon Springs Press, 2002), 66, 67.

make a better place. That was clear and I still feel that to some degree [today].”<sup>85</sup> Many Old Left children expressed this sentiment and sense of responsibility. RDB Henry (last name withheld) recalled about his childhood lessons, “How much of what we learned was that good politics was doing something for other people? If you didn’t do it, you weren’t holding up your end of things. You should feel guilty.”<sup>86</sup> This sense of worth being determined by one’s degree of activism is still entrenched in individuals’ psyche. Susan (last name withheld) admits that even in her adult life she has, “This idea that if I’m not being a political activist each day that I have not demonstrated my worth. I didn’t notice how much I had that so wrapped up in my sense of being a valuable creature on earth until I stopped.”<sup>87</sup>

In order to ensure children learned and retained these lessons, parents were constantly instructing them about the theoretical ideals and practical methods of fomenting social and political change. Families differed in their methods for transmitting these lessons, but the message was consistently the same. Some lessons came directly through ideological or intellectual discussions with their parents or other relatives. Doug (last name withheld) remembered, “Our family gatherings were filled with huge political arguments and debates, which would go on for hours and hours, about when the revolution was going to come, how it was going to come...That was what I brought to my own political work.”<sup>88</sup> The Fraad sisters’ recalled, “Most of our socialist upbringing was caught rather than formally taught. But we had moments of explicit, inspiring

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<sup>85</sup> Meeropol, “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 62.

<sup>86</sup> Henry (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 62.

<sup>87</sup> Susan (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 59.

<sup>88</sup> Doug (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 56.

political indoctrination, usually spurred on by alcohol. Father could be quite didactic and indignant about the “bourgeois crap” that we received in school or from the media.”<sup>89</sup>

RDB Faye (last name withheld) learned about politics talking with her father while cooking dinner.<sup>90</sup> RDB Gina (last name withheld) recalled, “My parents would always share their beliefs with us, not so much in rhetoric, but in the way they lived with other people, a sense of sharing.”<sup>91</sup> RDB Gene Dennis responded to “gentle parental persuasions to Justice, Equality, and Peace.”<sup>92</sup> Heather Baum received storybooks about Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglas, and Nancy Hanks from her mother to read starting at the age of seven.<sup>93</sup> Mitch’s mother (last name withheld) would give him economic lessons about the monopoly of capitalism when he was 10 years old. Instead of accepting what his teachers taught or the cover of *Readers Digest* told him, Mitch believed his mother’s interpretation of world events.<sup>94</sup> RDB Peter Shapiro remembered “If I heard something in school that didn’t make any sense to me, I’d go to [my father] and he’d explain my ear off about it.”<sup>95</sup>

RDB Sheli (last name withheld) said she was spoon-fed politics from her working-class parents. Her father was a union organizer for the Fur and Leatherworkers

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<sup>89</sup> Baxandall and Fraad, “Red Sisters of the Bourgeoisie, 96.

<sup>90</sup> Faye (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 60.

<sup>91</sup> Gina (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 14.

<sup>92</sup> Gene Dennis, “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 40.

<sup>93</sup> Heather Baum, “The Civil Rights Movement Veterans,” *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/baum1.htm>, (accessed August 21, 2010).

<sup>94</sup> Mitch (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 57, 64.

<sup>95</sup> Peter Shapiro, Oral History Collection, Columbia University (1984), Folder 1: 2.

and dedicated his life and that of his daughter to the union. As a child she read books about movement heroes or heroines and tried to emulate their behavior.<sup>96</sup> RDB Allan's (last name withheld) parents were also active leaders, and Allan felt like he was a soldier in the movement at the age of three or four. While a young boy, Allan remembered watching "Wagon Train" and being terrified when the Native Americans were about to kill Clint McCullough. His father had the opposite reaction and came into the room yelling, "Burn the bastard! He stole your land!"<sup>97</sup> RDB Linn Shapiro remembered that everyday choices "to say People's Republic of China when classmates said Red China or to refuse to drink Coco-Cola because the company supported segregationist White Citizens Councils. For those in the CP – the personal had always been the political."<sup>98</sup>

This was especially true if parents were members of the Communist Party where national and international events influenced what RDBs read, spoke, wore, ate, and of course, thought. These lessons were not always welcomed by children who at times felt overwhelmed with the responsibility their parents gave them. RDB Laura (last name withheld) recalled, "I had the experience of being preached at all the time, intimidated, not able to express who I really was, and yet expected to be very brave and heroic and stand up for things, which I did the best I could at eleven and twelve."<sup>99</sup> For many young radicals, the daily interplay of family meals, simple household conversations and lectures

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<sup>96</sup> Sheli (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1982," 26.

<sup>97</sup> Alan (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1982," 24.

<sup>98</sup> Linn Shapiro, "Opening Presentation 1983," 9. In *Red Feminism* Kate Weigand states that the idea of consciousness raising groups in the women's movement were introduced by RDBs and the concept that the personal is political (Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 12, 26.

<sup>99</sup> Laura (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1982," 17.

that transmitted political ideals were experienced on a daily basis. In addition to these lessons, children were warned about the persecution that accompanied political activism. Many adults thought it was important to emphasize this point so children would be alert to societal ills and the history of persecution against activists. When he was arrested, Gil Green believed his children had in some ways been prepared for this moment by the families' participation in demonstrations and conversations about police brutality, lynchings, political arrests and frame ups.<sup>100</sup>

While some parents gave explicit lessons to their children, other parents believed their children should have the right to decide whether or not to participate in the Left. Victor Rabinowitz provided an example of how he let his daughter choose what she believed in, instead of dictating the terms to her. Rabinowitz explained that "When Joni was about six or seven, she asked me whether I believed in God. I told her I didn't but that she could make up her own mind. She addressed the same question to [her mother] and got the same answer."<sup>101</sup> Similarly Leonard Boudin alleged he and his wife refused to bring up their children in any particular way other than in a warm, friendly atmosphere.<sup>102</sup> While some parents might not have been specifically teaching children about the evils of racism, the fact that both Rabinowitz and Boudin were civil rights lawyers working for unions and representing blacklisted Party members like Paul Robeson most likely educated their children about leftist values.<sup>103</sup> This could also be the

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<sup>100</sup> Green, *Cold War Fugitive*, 3.

<sup>101</sup> Rabinowitz, *Unrepentant Leftist*, 94.

<sup>102</sup> Boudin, Oral History Collection, Columbia University, Folder 10: 342.

<sup>103</sup> Later in the Sixties both Joni Rabinowitz and Kathy Boudin were active participants in the Civil Rights Movement.

two men's romanticized version of fatherhood, since they both acknowledge they were not that involved in their children's lives.

With the proliferation of diverse teaching methods and lessons, historians question how much of children's value system is established by choice or by force. Young radicals state that their parents' lessons and example greatly influenced how they understood American society.<sup>104</sup> In his autobiography, David Horowitz, who now resides at the extreme opposite of the political spectrum than during his youth, has this to say about children's acceptance of their parents' ideology. He stated:

What was my own choice? In the beginning, I hardly had one...My instruction was in the environment I moved in and the air I breathed – the headlines in the *Daily Worker* carefully folded under the *New York Times*; the titles of the political books narrated on the shelves (*Stalingrad*, *Scottsboro Boy*, *The Plot Against the Peace*); and the adult concerns that surfaced in my parents' conversations with friends. It emanated from festivities like a benefit for the Spanish Civil War vets, which would elicit simple explanations of the cause, and from the epithets my father hurled at the "ruling class" enemy – *sonofabitch*, *hypocrite*, *bastard* – which, in a backhanded way, added up to a social creed.<sup>105</sup>

Because young activists were seen as foot soldiers with an important mission, they did not have the luxury of other children to make childish mistakes. Horowitz remembered when he was little he and his friends would shoplift from Woolworths. On one occasion a family member caught Horowitz and his friend. The individual said he understood the children were just playing around, but "you two young men do not have the luxury of other children your age. Unlike their parents, yours have dedicated themselves to an important struggle, to make the world a better place for everyone...

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<sup>104</sup> Shultz, *Going South*, 15.

<sup>105</sup> Horowitz, *Radical Son*, 44, 49.

That is your special burden.”<sup>106</sup> Children from Old Left families were taught they were the chosen few, the remnant that would lead America out of its exploitive capitalist system and into the promised land of equality. As such, they did not have the luxury of other children to misbehave. They had to recognize their role as mature and dedicated activists.

Parents had another way to use their children as a medium for protest against the social and cultural status quo of post-war America. Children were raised to reject the values and fads of their peers. Parents refused to adopt the consumerist, materialistic behavior of the general public. As a result their children were expected to reject a youth market that was becoming increasingly more powerful and dominant during the post-war years. The radical community viewed US capitalism and its resulting consumerism as bourgeois exploitation of the working class. With this unpopular perspective, the Left rejected an economy that was not only thriving, but also focusing on youth as its new market. As the late 1950s and 1960s saw the first wave of baby boomers become teenagers, advertisers recognized adolescents’ buying potential and began specifically targeting young people with a variety of products. Music, make-up, magazines, clothes, soda pop, and cars were heavily advertised as marketing experts capitalized on this growing consumer group. Radio, TV, movies, and magazines directed most of their commercials to teenagers.<sup>107</sup> This is not to say that children of the progressive left were

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>107</sup> Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 93; Howard P. Chudacoff, “Adolescence and Youth,” in *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood: In History and Society*, Paula Fass, ed. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 18. See also Jon Savage’s *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture* (New York: Viking, 2007).



the only young people who had to negotiate issues of consumerism with their parents, but the reasons behind Old Left parents' dismissal of this consumerism were different.

Young radicals were not uniform in their rejection of consumer culture, nor were their parents unanimous in what they did or did not allow their children to do. Some young leftists rejected these advertising affronts and lived in a unique subculture in American society. They read different books, newspapers, and magazines. Sally Belfrage, whose father co-founded *The Guardian* in 1948, remembered that she did not know the other non-leftist children's games or songs. Instead of learning about pop culture, radicals read about the Scottsboro boys, the Seventh World Congress, the Haymarket Martyrs and the Comintern. RDBs and their peers often watched different movies and plays and had different hobbies. They also dressed differently, wearing the wrong styles and colors due to their parents' "red-lining" American popular culture that they held in contempt.<sup>108</sup>

Belfrage recalled that at school most students had lots of clothes while she only had one outfit, a mismatched skirt and sweater. She remembered that her parents "refused to get interested in the most important thing in American life: appearances."<sup>109</sup> Some parents prevented the purchase of frivolous things. For example, the Fraad sisters could not buy junk food, soda, potato chips or nickel candies. Though of an earlier time, Ruth Hunter's father would not let his children wear makeup, silk stockings, or go to parties, which he contemptuously labeled Bourgeoisie luxuries.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Baxandall and Fraad, "Red Sisters of the Bourgeoisie," 96.

<sup>109</sup> Belfrage, *Un-American Activities*, 12.

<sup>110</sup> Ruth Hunter, "Red Diapers to Protest Banners," in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 29.

Young radicals' apartments and homes even looked different. Many children lived in rent-controlled apartments decorated with bright folk art and stocked with political books, Weavers records, and ethnic food.<sup>111</sup> While other young people listened to Elvis Presley or the Everly Brothers, Old Left children played anti-war records and woke up to parents singing the International, "Arise, ye prisoner of starvation...Arise, ye wretched of the earth."<sup>112</sup> This cultural politicization was just as offensive to the outside world as children's activism. Knowing the social and legal fallout that could come from their politically radical possessions, some houses disguised their leftist reading material and music, afraid of FBI raids. RDB Margot Adler remembered 78-ppm albums with Bach labels on the outside and communist songs from Hans Eisler and Bertolt Brecht hiding inside.<sup>113</sup>

Parents' demand to rebuff the market's baubles and enticements was at times a tough dictate for RDBs to follow. RDB Linn Shapiro stated "The goal of changing American society by ending capitalism is the basis of the oppositional identity shared by RDBs. Embracing our heritage, choosing to be like our parents, requires that we reject[ed] some of the society's greatest values."<sup>114</sup> Of course not all leftists had uniform restrictions or rules, and the strictest parents were usually Party members. Some radicals' parents were union leaders, activists in numerous front organizations, and civil rights

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<sup>111</sup> Belfrage, *Un-American*, 119.

<sup>112</sup> Josh Kornbluh, *Red Diaper Baby: Three Comic Monologues* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1996), 3.

<sup>113</sup> Margot Adler, *Heretic's Heart: A Journey Through Spirit and Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 27.

<sup>114</sup> Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, "Introduction," in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 2.

lawyers whose perspective was more focused on progressive reform and building a better New Deal, rather than Marxism and ending capitalism. But during the McCarthy era, even these goals smacked of subversion. As a result, children of these more moderate leftists still championed values of greater class and racial equality that differed from the societal norm and when they took steps to support these goals, they distinguished themselves from their peers. Thus as this above quote shows, in adopting their parents' activism, children chose to follow in their parents' footsteps. This created a generational link between the Old Left and the New Left that connected the Sixties protest organizations with those that came before. For many activist leaders in the 1960s, the continuation of politics from their youth provided a sense of identity.

### **Split Identity**

As a result of being revolutionaries and refusing to accept the prevailing social norms, children of the Old Left occupied two worlds. One environment was the radical community, while the other was a judgmental and hostile American public. Old Left parents had also faced the dilemma of being both a revolutionary and an American, so this phenomenon was nothing new to the radical activists. However in comparison to the adults who had enjoyed some acceptance during the Poplar Front era of the 1930s, the postwar generation, especially after the early origins of the Cold War, had only witnessed radicals as persona non grata. It would have been nearly impossible for young leftists to understand that during the Popular Front, the same individuals being interrogated by the

government were respected in some political and social circles.<sup>115</sup> Thus the postwar generation of young leftists never had the experience of feeling accepted or valued by America, even if for a limited period of time.

As discussed in Chapter Three, radical summer camps were some of the few places children could let down their guards and feel safe. The rest of the time, young activists were living a split existence. RDB Gina (last name withheld) remembered that “There was both a sense of pride and also a schizophrenic sense: you’re proud of your background and yet always trying to keep it private.”<sup>116</sup> Several individuals use the term schizophrenia. RDB Jeannie (last name withheld) stated, “It was a very schizophrenic existence. I went along growing up through elementary school, junior high school, feeling different and isolated in a lot of ways.”<sup>117</sup> Other conference participants concurred, RDB Robert Meeropol said, “I had the image of my personality and my life being like an onion, with all these layers, and each layer was a complete personality.”<sup>118</sup> It was hard for parents to explain this divided experience to their children. A mother who raised children in the Fifties stated that those who “went through the McCarthy period...had to teach our children... to be ambivalent and separate and keep the two aspects of [their] life distinct.”<sup>119</sup> Children needed to be both secretive and proud. To the radical community, young leftists were visionaries who refused to accept the restriction

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<sup>115</sup> Paul Mishler, *Raising Reds: The Young Pioneers, Radical Summer Camps, and Communist Political Culture in the United States*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 3.

<sup>116</sup> Gina (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 14.

<sup>117</sup> Jeannie (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 45.

<sup>118</sup> Meeropol, “Beginning the Exploration: Opening Presentation 1983,” 9.

<sup>119</sup> Lorraine (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 18.

of the McCarthy era. Though many of them embraced this position, they also found it stressful and overwhelming.

Even more than the actual physical or verbal harassment, what really frustrated young radicals was the public's perception of them as Un-American. In comparison, children of the Old Left felt they were even more patriotic than the rest of American teenagers because they were fighting for the distinctly American values of liberty and justice. RDB Dexter Jeffries argued that all the songs young leftists sang declared how America was the promised land, it simply needed refinement with "a little economic redistribution of the wealth, as described in *The Banks are Made of Marble*, or with a response to the symbolic nationwide call for social justice in *If I Had A Hammer*... America could truly be 'the land of the free and the home of the brave.'"<sup>120</sup>

RDB Debbie Amis Bell joined the Communist Party as a teenager in the 1950s to secure constitutional rights of racial equality, peace, and a comfortable standard of living for all people. She did not join the Party in protest of American ideals, but in support of them.<sup>121</sup> For these young radicals there was a sense of wanting to help America and to make America a better place. As a result of this dedication, children of the Old Left felt this desire made them even more American than the hypocrites who were accusing them of being unpatriotic.<sup>122</sup> A similar argument would be made during the 1960s when

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<sup>120</sup>Dexter Jeffries, *Triple Exposure: Black, Jewish and Red in the 1950s* (New York: Kensington Pub., 2003), 199.

<sup>121</sup>Debbie Amis Bell, "A Young Communist," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, Faith Holsaert and Dorothy Zellner, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 56.

<sup>122</sup>This feeling of deep connection between the party and America could have come from the Popular Front mentality from the mid-1930s. The Party began directly

student protestors asserted they were actually supporting, not rejecting, American ideals with their activism.

This sense of a divided identity was especially challenging for young activists during adolescence. When childhood and youth historians examine the idea of identity crisis as it applies to teenagers they often refer to psychologist Erik Erikson's studies on adolescence. Erikson asserted that teenagers' sexual awareness and physiological changes makes adolescence a period of experimentation. This experimentation can result in a reevaluation of goals, values, and relationships with peers and institutions. As a result of all these changes, teenagers can feel lost and confused during this period of their lives.<sup>123</sup> Erikson's description of adolescent identity crisis described a period that is challenging for most young people. When the stress of being a teenager was added to young leftists' additional issues of being a subversive American, a citizen of the world, a Communist-supporter, a radical, etc, their sense of anxiety was heightened beyond that of ordinary teenagers.

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associating itself with America with Earl Bowder's 1936 campaign motto, "Communism is Twentieth-Century Americanism." Thus Communism and American ideals went together like baseball and apple pie. This focus on combining American experience seamlessly with Communism gave RDBs the impression that in fighting their leftist battles they were specifically fighting for a better America, not trying to overthrow America and create a whole new country (Julia Michenberg and Philip Nel, eds., *tales for little rebels: a collection of radical children's literature* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 170). For more on this topic please see Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the twentieth-Century* (New York: Verso, 1996); Chris Vials, *Realism for the Masses: Aesthetics, Popular Front Pluralism, and U.S. Culture, 1935 – 1947* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2009); Sara Halprin, *Seema's Show: A Life on the Left* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005); Fraser Ottanelli, *The Communist Party of the United States from the Depression to World War II* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991); Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas, eds., *The Immigrant Left in the United States* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

<sup>123</sup> Chudacoff, "Adolescence and Youth," 17.

One of the important survival techniques children of the Old Left developed for dealing with this identity challenge was to build a strong radical identity within their radical communities. Grounding themselves in the history and values of the Left meant dealing with issues of class and gender within the radical community. Most young radicals had several generations of working class activists on their family tree, grandfathers who were Bolshevik supporters and escaped from Siberia to come to the United States or mothers who were active in Poland, Lithuania, Palestine, Italy, Yugoslavia, or Russia.<sup>124</sup> These relatives were Socialists, Trotskyites, Communists, trade unionists or unaffiliated radicals.<sup>125</sup> Many children's parents, whether Communist or Socialist party members, worked for unions. They were involved in the Fur and Leatherworks Union, the Teachers Union, Transport Workers Union, I.W.O., the Jewish People's Fraternal Order, Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Union, the College Teachers Union, I.W.W., the Hat, Cap, and Millinery Workers of America, the Trade Union Unity League, suffrage organizations and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup>Braungart and Braungart, "The Life-Course Development of Left Wing and Right Wing Youth Activist Leaders from the 1960s," 255. Kaplan and Shapiro, *Red Diaper Babies*, 45, 33, 43, 13. Rotolo, *A Freewheelin' Time*, 14, 30.

<sup>125</sup>Emily (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1983," 48. The differences of political allegiance led to some tension between family members who romantically dabbled in oppositional groups. Emily had a great aunt who tried to poison her father because he converted her mom to a Trotskyite ("Introducing Ourselves 1983," 48).

<sup>126</sup>"Introducing Ourselves 1982, 1983," 43, 13, 20, 49, 54; J. Anthony, *Don't Shoot -- We Are Your Children* (New York: Random House, 1971), 14; Radosh, *Commies*, 2, 4; Braungart and Braungart, "The Life-Course Development of Left Wing and Right Wing Youth Activist Leaders from the 1960s," 255; See Tony Michel's *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University

While many of their grandparents and great-grandparents started out working class, by the post-war years some families had climbed into a higher economic bracket or progressed to leadership positions. RDB Henry (last name withheld) remembered there were real class differences within the Communist Party with a distinct upper echelon reserved for top-level party leaders.<sup>127</sup> This hierarchy created decidedly different experiences for children. RDBs raised in households of leading party officials with relative job security or by parents who had jobs in companies supported by the Party had fewer financial and safety concerns during the McCarthy era. Economically secure, if necessary these families could move to remote rural areas and wait out the storm.<sup>128</sup> The ability to flee persecution was resented by those radical families without the financial means to escape.<sup>129</sup> In addition to relocation, some families had the means to live in more secure, accepting locations. Party lawyer Victor Rabinowitz's family lived in a well-to-do Jewish neighborhood in Flatbush that was relatively removed from the public hysteria of the McCarthy era.<sup>130</sup>

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Press, 2005) for an explanation of the Jewish immigrant community's embrace of socialism upon arriving in America. Michels shows how these new immigrants did not bring socialism with them, as previous studies have asserted, but instead enthusiastically accepted it as a result of their attempts to adjust to their new lives, and their interactions with Lower East Side Socialist German immigrants who introduced them to socialism. This study traces the beginning, golden years, and decline of socialism in the Jewish Community. Studying RDBs, the majority of whom were Jewish, shows how these roots continued to grow after the 1920s decline Michels documents.

<sup>127</sup> Henry (last name withheld), "Making Choices: Class Issues 1983," in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 103.

<sup>128</sup> Henry (last name withheld), "Making Choices: Class Issues," 106.

<sup>129</sup> Roslyn (last name withheld), "Making Choices: Class Issues 1983," 105.

<sup>130</sup> Rabinowitz, *Unrepentant Leftist*, 91



For those whose parents had financial security, the McCarthy period was not quite as terrifying. For example, RDB Henry (last name withheld) did not experience much fear or persecution in his childhood. His father taught at progressive schools and the family was fairly ensconced in a radical bubble. Both parents were native born and could not be threatened with deportation, so the FBI left the family alone. As a result of these circumstances the Fifties did not have the same fear for Henry's family as it did for others.<sup>131</sup> Because of a class cushion, a few young radicals reminisce about the post-war years with great bombast, RDBs Rosalyn Fraad Baxandall and Harriet Fraad recalled, "As red diaper kids we reacted to the McCarthy period with bravado... We threw Tampax at the FBI agents who parked outside of our home for two days after my father refused to speak with them. We giggled dirty words into the phone when told it was tapped"<sup>132</sup> The Fraad girls, whose father was a doctor, were more financially insulated than many children whose parents lost their jobs for their communist connections.

Other Old Left families lived near the poverty line. Many of these households had parents who were blacklisted and could not find employment. Some families received eviction notices moments after their subpoenas arrived. RDB Gina (last name withheld) knew at the age of five that the FBI were harassing the landlord to terminate her parents' lease. For a year before they were evicted she and her siblings had to tiptoe around the apartment so the landlord could not accuse them of being noisy.<sup>133</sup> The stratification of

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<sup>131</sup> Henry (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1982," 26.

<sup>132</sup> Baxandall and Fraad, "Red Sisters of the Bourgeoisie," 100.

<sup>133</sup> Gina (last name withheld), "Families: Our Radical Foremothers," in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 80.

families and the financial differences between households made it difficult for RDBs to reconcile the Party's pro-working class rhetoric with reality. Young radicals witnessed economic inequalities within in the Party and commented on the hypocrisy of Party ideals professed but not practiced. RDB W (first and last name withheld) was from a family where both parents were factory workers. When she was twelve or thirteen, W visited the home of a Party leader where she noticed the expensive artwork and beautiful furniture in the house that was very different from her own accommodations. Upon hearing that the Party leader's daughter went to a private school, W grew jealous. Unable to suppress her indignation, she walked up to the father and had the following exchange, "Oh, you believe in inherited privilege," W accused. He said, "What are you talking about?" W said, "You're not sending me to private school. You're sending your daughter to private school." He said, " Well, at this time in history, etc., etc. etc."<sup>134</sup> W remembered, "I thought he was the biggest hypocrite I had ever encountered. It made me very bitter..."<sup>135</sup>

RDB Sheli (last name withheld), whose parents were working class, remembers Party leaders became a separate class, regardless of original class status, and that leadership equaled elitism.<sup>136</sup> Some parents were vocal about their disdain for this hierarchical system and their opinions influenced their children. RDB Diane's (last name withheld) family grew up in a low-income Black housing project doing political work and was evicted when her father refused to sign a loyalty-oath.<sup>137</sup> Her mother was one of

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<sup>134</sup>W (first and last name withheld) , "Introducing Ourselves 1982," 30.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid.,30.

<sup>136</sup>Sheli (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1982," 31.

<sup>137</sup>Diane (last name withheld) "Introducing Ourselves 1982," 31. The family was evicted when Diane was five or six.

the “Rosie’s” in the film “Rosie the Riveter” and was a proud blue-collar laborer who despised middle class communists. Diane’s mother would not let her daughter wear certain types of shoes or carry certain brands of pocketbooks because working class girls could not afford and should not purchase such items.

Parents’ refusal to change class status sometimes went to the extreme, as seen with RDB Roberta (last name withheld) whose grandfather prevented his sons from accepting scholarships to attend university. Her grandfather stated, “You will remain members of the working class. You will not go to college.”<sup>138</sup> Similarly, RDB Toni’s (last name withheld) father was an immigrant who came to the United State in 1921. When looking for work he decided against becoming a contractor because he wanted to remain in the working class and be unionized.<sup>139</sup> When the family was starving, her father refused to be promoted at the factory or to work non-union hours.<sup>140</sup>

As parents were subpoenaed, children saw their non-leftist friends drift away. RDB Mindy Fried remembered that after her parents’ investigation, her circle of friends outside of the radical community changed from those in the middleclass to those in the working class. Fried said it was very confusing because the middle class friends never said, “The reason why this is happening is because our parents are saying we can’t hang

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<sup>138</sup> Roberta (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 38.

<sup>139</sup> Toni (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 31. Toni remembers in her own home where her family was very poor and her father was an extremely dedicated member of the Party. There was dismay and bitterness toward the old Party members who sold out and bought stocks and invested themselves in the system they had originally been trying to fight (*Red Diaper Babies*, 105).

<sup>140</sup> Sonia Jaffe Robbins, “What Did I Know and When Did I Know It?” in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 105.

out anymore.”<sup>141</sup> Instead, during those difficult teenage years of hypersensitivity, Fried was convinced her friends abandoned her because she was stupid and ugly.<sup>142</sup> This issue of class values cost young radicals friendships and self-esteem.

For those in the middle class, the Party’s hypocritical statements lauding the working class were also confusing. RDB Henry (last name withheld) recalled a cousin raised in an economically stable Communist Party family. Even though the parents admired the working class, the bottom line was “god forbid he should fail out of school and have to join the working class! At one point late in my college years, let’s just say I had the opportunity of not going to college and joining the working class. The Party forces literally mobilized to get me back into school because the revolution needs doctors.”<sup>143</sup> When parents strove for middle class financial security, it often left children confused. How could they value the working class, the group they were supposed to support and empower, when their parents avoided being members of that group? Henry (last name withheld) said, “The biggest mixed message that I got was a feeling that my allegiance was to the working people and to the working class but I had better become a professional.”<sup>144</sup> This emphasis on becoming a member of the professional class was a value prevalent in American Jewish families which valued upward social mobility through education. It also shows the Party’s middle class membership that joined in large

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<sup>141</sup>Fried, “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 11.

<sup>142</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>143</sup>Henry (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 32.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., 28.

numbers during the Popular Front era. For RDBs coming from both a Jewish and radical background, it was difficult to reconcile the two value systems.<sup>145</sup>

As a result of the Party's class rhetoric RDB W (first and last name withheld) was ashamed of her family's middleclass status, of having a full meal when she knew others were starving. Her friends would come over to visit and she would be embarrassed of her ping-pong table. There was even a period in her life when she dressed in second-hand clothes even though she could afford new ones. W attempted to reject her economic security in whatever way possible and felt the question of class guilt was a very interesting one that "screwed her up for a while."<sup>146</sup> Kathy Boudin, infamous member of the Weather Underground, had a similar reaction to her economic security. Biographer Susan Braudy explained Boudin, "claimed her birth to a family of well-to-do whites as an agonizing defect to be obliterated by rationalization, violence, and self-deprivation. Kathy wanted above all somehow to discipline her mind and body into being a member of the black working class."<sup>147</sup> When the adult Boudins joined with other leftist parents to start the integrated Downtown Community School, the founders made a rule that forbade displays of wealth. During the school day, students traveled to coal mines and watched union elections celebrating the working class. At the end of the day, when parents drove up in their fancy cars wearing minks to pick up their children, they were

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<sup>145</sup> For more on this topic, please see Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Michael Straub's *Torn At the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

<sup>146</sup> W (first and last name withheld) "Introducing Ourselves 1982," 31.

<sup>147</sup> Susan Braudy, *Family Circle: The Boudins and the Aristocracy of the Left* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 5.

embarrassed and shocked by their parents' lack of class-consciousness.<sup>148</sup> It was not until the Sixties that activists learned leftist children from every class were having similar questions about classism in the Party. During the Fifties when RDBs realized the hypocrisy of party doctrine and their parents' actions, they were unable to do anything about it other than feel uncomfortable with the situation.<sup>149</sup> When they were able to start their own organizations in the Sixties, RDBs denounced classism within the Party and society. Boudin in particular is an example of an RDB who rejected her parents' comfortable standard of living by dressing in rumpled and out of fashion clothes as soon as she was in college.<sup>150</sup>

### **Sexism and Understanding of Gender Roles**

In addition to understanding class differences within their radical community, radical youths also had to wrestle with sexism and gender equality. Gendered divisions of labor, education, responsibility, and respect influenced children's development and understandings of self-worth. As children historians argue, young people are capable of rational thought and thus do not believe or do everything they are told. As active agents, children determine the schema that decides their gendered beliefs and behaviors.<sup>151</sup> To understand the process children use to create their own conceptions of gender, historians examine individuals' agency as they accept or reject gendered social and cultural

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<sup>148</sup> Kathy Boudin's parents helped start the Downtown Community School. The Meeropol boys and Gene Dennis also went there (Braudy, *Family Circle*, 42, 43, 67).

<sup>149</sup> W (first and last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1982," 30.

<sup>150</sup> Braudy, *Family Circle*, 43.

<sup>151</sup> Deborah Gorham, "Gendering" in *Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood in History*, Paula Fass, ed., <http://www.faqs.org/childhood/Fa-Gr/Gendering.html> and Society, (accessed November 18, 2010).

attempts to regulate their activities and behavior.<sup>152</sup> Young leftists' participation in gendered activities and perceptions about gender equality was another area of their lives differentiated them from the rest of their contemporaries.

For mainstream Americans, gendered spheres of activities and interests dominated the Fifties. Childrearing methods constantly emphasized and enforced gender distinctions. Magazine articles with the titles "Raise Your Girl to be a Wife" and "How to raise Better Husbands" demanded parents' prompt response to signs of masculine behavior in girls and sissiness in boys.<sup>153</sup> Most parents followed experts' advice and kept girls in the domestic sphere and boys outside playing "manly" games. Not surprisingly, young radicals' parents had a different concept of gender than that of their peers. Activism and leadership were not limited to a particular gender, but demanded of all children. As a result, girls were expected to participate in activities considered "unladylike."<sup>154</sup> Daughters were encouraged to yell at scabs, confront racist authority figures and challenge their teachers.<sup>155</sup> Their behavior was the antithesis of how young girls were supposed to conduct themselves in postwar America.

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<sup>152</sup>Lynn S. Liben, Rebecca S. Bigler, Diane N. Ruble, Carol Lynn Martin, and Kimberly K. Powlishta, "The Developmental Course of Gender Differentiation: Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Evaluating Constructs and Pathways," *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development* 67, no. 2, (2002): 4, 8, 9. See also Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representations of Women* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995); Tamar Jacobson, ed. *Perspectives on Gender in Early Childhood* (St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press, 2011); Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880 – 1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

<sup>153</sup>Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 281.

<sup>154</sup>Mishler, *Raising Reds*, 13.

<sup>155</sup>Rabinowitz, *Unrepentant Leftist*, 94.

This belief that girls were equally as capable of activism as boys was based on the Left's support, at least in theory, of gender equality. In her book *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation*, Kate Weigand traces the history of women's rights activism in the Party. In the 1940s, women attempted to expand the Party's traditionally narrow Marxist understanding of women's oppression that focused solely on economic structures. These women explained their inferior status was the result of male supremacy that damaged both individual and structural relations between genders. Most importantly, they demanded the Party put its theoretical commitment to gender equality into practice at all levels of the progressive movement.<sup>156</sup> In an article about leftist families in postwar America, Deborah A. Gerson stated that the Party maintained a level of respect and participation for women unparalleled in the dominant culture or in either major political party.<sup>157</sup> However, while this progressive element might have been present, Kate Weigand makes it clear that while women were demanding and struggling for greater equality in the Party, they achieved only small victories. Though the Party encouraged women and men to identify and condemn sexism in their organized activities, personal relationships, and family lives, it was predominantly lip service without actual enforcement. This is not to say the Party did not have more progressive policies than most 1950s organizations at the time. However, it was not the gender equality they espoused. Weigand stated, "It goes without saying that

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<sup>156</sup> Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 2.

<sup>157</sup> Gerson, "Is Family Devotion Now Subversive?," 155.



progressive women's struggles of the 1940s and 1950s did not even come close to eradicating gender inequality among American Communists and their supporters.”<sup>158</sup>

While in some ways radical organizations gave women the opportunity to be activists and rise to leadership position, at the same time it did not accommodate their needs as mothers. For example, the Party never consistently provided childcare or understood the importance of allowing mothers time with their children. As a result it was painful for women to choose between their activist work and their children. RDBs witnessed this struggle. RDB Roberta (last name withheld) criticized the Party's tendency to allow women to be leaders, giving them opportunities not found at that time in society, but concurrently denied certain aspects of their special needs that had to be considered to support their activism and attendance at meetings. Roberta believed, “On the one hand, acceptance of women in the political struggle, and on the other hand, nonacceptance. My mother was told when she wanted to stay home with me, ‘Where are your politics?’”<sup>159</sup>

Other women suffered from this lack of Party support for their roles as activists and parents. RDB Kim Chernin's mother, Rose, would put the family's dinner in a pot on the stove before she left for work to ensure she was not neglecting her role as wife and mother. While that might seemed like a good solution at the time, later in life Rose felt guilty about her activism and was afraid she was not a good mother.<sup>160</sup> Rose

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<sup>158</sup>Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 2.

<sup>159</sup>Roberta (last name withheld), “Our Mothers, Ourselves 1982,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 74.

<sup>160</sup>Kim Chernin, *In My Mother's House*, (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1983), 4.

remembered that as she gained a more prominent role in the Party, “For a woman in this position it is very hard to care for a small child. You are always haunted by the idea she is suffering because of your involvement...Always you are worried.”<sup>161</sup> Emily’s (last name withheld) mother expressed the same remorse. When Emily told her mother she was gay, her mother said, “It’s my fault because I wasn’t home. I was out leafleting. I could be for every progressive cause or group, but look what I’ve done. There’s something wrong with you and it’s because I was so politically active. I wasn’t a good mother. I did all these things for myself.”<sup>162</sup> Peggy and Eugene Dennis were so dedicated to Party activities that after taking their son Tim with them in the Thirties to the USSR to work for the Russian government, they agreed to leave, potentially forever, the four-year-old boy in a Party Children’s Home so they could return to the United States and continue their work in America.<sup>163</sup>

During childhood, RDBs heard the Party’s espousing of gender equality and then observed the gamut of gender dynamics within their own homes. That is not to say all families struggled with the problem of gender inequality. One side of the spectrum witnessed mothers who were the dominant radical in their families. In Kim Chernin’s household, her mother was the main activist and when she was arrested Kim’s father

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<sup>161</sup> Chernin, *In My Mother’s House*, 156.

<sup>162</sup> Emily (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 52.

<sup>163</sup> Dennis, *The Autobiography of an American Communist*, 77, 118. The Dennis’ visited their son, Tim, one other time after their first departure. They would go another 13 years before seeing him again and when they finally met their grown-up son year later, now a Soviet journalist, Premier Khrushchev who arranged the visit informed the Dennis’ that “We are very proud of Tim. He is ours, you know” (246).

stayed home and took care of the household.<sup>164</sup> Robert Meeropol described his mother as the main politico during his childhood. He remembered that she was a very strong organizer with lots of character, a “minor Emma Goldman.”<sup>165</sup> And even though Roberta (last name withheld) was sad her mother was not home more and her first memory was looking up at a stove with huge soup pots simmering to feed striking workers, she was impressed by women’s contribution to the Party. RDB Edith (last name withheld) recalled:

When I was growing up I was very proud of my mother. I was very different from all of the children on the block. Their mothers lit candles Friday night. They baked all these wonderful things... The only thing my mother knew how to make was bread pudding. She used to say that she can’t spend her time in the kitchen. There were too many important things.<sup>166</sup>

For many young leftists from the gamut of Old Left organizations, it was difficult to reconcile leftist idealism with the conflicting behavior of their parents. While the above examples show women could be full-time activists, most families accepted the traditional ideal of a June Cleaver who stayed home while the husband was the breadwinner. But even in these more conventional scenarios, children knew that their mothers had at one time been activists in their own right. Mothers often told their children about their radical pasts to encourage the next generation of activists.<sup>167</sup> When

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<sup>164</sup> Chernin, *In My Mothers’ House*, 30.

<sup>165</sup> Meeropol, “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 62.

<sup>166</sup> Edith (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 44.

<sup>167</sup> Sophie Melvin (Deborah Gerson’s mother) was arrested for her leadership role, possibly for striking an officer, in the textile workers’ strike in Gastonia, NC at the age of nineteen in 1929. In 1951, at the time of her husband’s arrest, she was working part-time, the primary caretaker of her two children, and distant from the centers of

the government viewed these women as threats to national security and the FBI came looking for former activists, children knew their mothers' stories were true.<sup>168</sup>

Even if mothers were still politically active in the public sphere, their participation outside the home rarely changed the gender dynamics within the family. The ways in which their parents interacted was very telling to the children. Phil (last name withheld) remembered that the Left culture did not deal well with the "men and women issue." Regardless of ideological statements supporting gender equality, many children recall their fathers making the majority of decisions in the family. Phil (last name withheld) compared the relationship dynamic to a joke about a man and woman who got married and the wife says, "We made some decisions. My husband will decide all the major issues and I'll decide all the minor ones."<sup>169</sup> RDB Harriet Fraad recalled that her father made decisions unilaterally without consulting her mother, only sticking to the ideal of collective decision making outside of the home. RDB Carole (last name withheld) remembered the lessons she learned from observing her parents' interactions:

You can get one intellectual or verbal message, but you also get a subliminal message about how someone is being treated. If your mother's work is not valued in the same way as your father's, that has an impact on how you think about your own work. No matter how much my father said, 'You can do anything you want to do; you're going to college, you're going to do this and you're going to do that,' to the degree that that didn't happen to my mother, that her opinion wasn't respected at the table in the same way as my father's, I got the message very clearly.<sup>170</sup>

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struggle within the CP ("Is Family Devotion Now Subversive?" Familialism Against McCarthyism" Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

<sup>168</sup> Braudy, *Family Circle*, xxi, 27,38.

<sup>169</sup> Phil (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1983," 52.

<sup>170</sup> Carole (last name withheld), "Our Mothers, Ourselves 1982," 77.

Even though Kathy's (last name withheld) father was always propounding equality, going so far as to show her the Bible and telling her it was a book written by men to oppress women, the gender dynamics in their house was still typical of the 1950s nuclear family. RDB Debra's (last name withheld) father would cook and clean, even when he came home from a long day's work, but he was intellectually arrogant and did not support her mother emotionally.<sup>171</sup> Children picked up on these mixed messages and it influenced their perception of women in Old Left organizations. Bettina Aptheker knew that while there were important men and women intellectuals at Party meetings, but she "came to feel, however, that the men were the history. The conversation that seemed to count flowed from and around their ideas, their experiences. The women seemed to me to be on the periphery, circulating, listening, commenting."<sup>172</sup> Aptheker, who went on to become a leader in the Free Speech Movement, ultimately did not accept her early observation that men were the important activists while women were meant to remain on the outskirts.

Young radicals also observed a tension between parents regarding who could be more active in their Old Left organizations. Often arguments revolved around the man always attending the meetings while the woman had to stay home. RDB Lenore's (last name withheld) mother, who had been a radical in Lithuania and a runner for the Communist Party when she was a little girl, was married to the chairman of the *FREIHEIT* committee who raised thousands and thousands of dollars for the newspaper. He was in the IWW, marched, protested, fought, and had been jailed a number of times.

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<sup>171</sup> Lannon, "Commiebastid," 76.

<sup>172</sup> Aptheker, *Intimate Politics*, 15.

The father was the major politico of the family while his equally radical wife unhappily stayed with the children.<sup>173</sup> Lenore remembered, “She was constantly angry that my father was at meetings and leaving her at home. She really didn’t want to be a mother. She wanted to be a revolutionary. She was forced into the position of having to stay home to take care of kids.”<sup>174</sup> Dennis believed the very structure of the Communist Party hierarchy excluded mothers, “The very few women who reached any leadership position had over the years, neither children nor a permanent personal relationship...To comply with the methods governing party work, a woman had to be willing or able to relegate the children to an around-the-clock surrogate parent.”<sup>175</sup>

To cope with their exclusion from activism, some women aggrandized their husband’s contributions to help validate their forced removal from the political to the domestic sphere. Trumpeting their husbands’ crucial contributions to the Party, a contribution impossible without a wife’s doting support, made them feel better about their involuntary exit from Party life. Though a Party member herself and one time organizer, eventually RDB Elaine’s (last name withheld) mother became a stay-at-home mother while her husband worked as a lawyer for the Party. Elaine said her mother “Romanticized my father’s involvement and made it seem as if he would have been a major lawyer in the country if it weren’t for his political activities, which is about as far from the truth as it could have been.”<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Lenore (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 43.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>175</sup> Gerson, ““Is Family Devotion Now Subversive?,”” 170.

<sup>176</sup> Elaine (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983”, 58.

At times the Party responded to women's demands for child care support or a more equal distribution of parenting responsibilities. In 1947 the National Leadership planned a special women's dinner meeting where the men cooked the food, served the meal, watched the children, and washed the dishes. While the men worked, the women listened to Margaret Cowl discuss "the role of women today," talked about issues affecting women, and promised to sell 100 subscriptions to the *Worker*. While impressive, these types of events were rare and did not continue.<sup>177</sup> *Red Feminism* clearly documents that by 1948 the Communist Party leadership had no desire or plans to significantly change the organization's orientation toward women.<sup>178</sup> Women's most effective work occurred during the 1930s. By the time young radicals were growing up in the postwar years, the liberation movement had lost momentum and even the Party's semblance of support for gender equality stopped.<sup>179</sup>

The Party's chauvinistic attitude was particularly demonstrated by the disproportionate amount of "grunt work" assigned to women. Many mothers handed out flyers, organized fundraisers, and sold radical publications.<sup>180</sup> RDB Debra (last name withheld) remembered her mother pushing her in the stroller with all the leaflets piled up at one end.<sup>181</sup> This type of Party work was not particularly valued and it certainly was not the type that resulted in promotions to leadership roles. Even party leaders recognized

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<sup>177</sup>Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 74.

<sup>178</sup>*Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>179</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>180</sup>Ellen Beener, Interview with the Author, 9 September, 2010.

<sup>181</sup>Debra (last name withheld), "Families: Our Mothers, Ourselves, 1982" 76.

the unfairness of the situation. Leader A.E Hudson commented that women “carry so much of the dirty work and get so little of the glory.”<sup>182</sup> RDB Carole (last name withheld) remembered about her mother, “It wasn’t just that her work wasn’t treated as intellectual. There was a certain way in which it wasn’t even respected or seen for what it was. My feeling was that her work was not valued. She became much more self-doubting over the years. She became more hesitant, quiet, less willing to put out her views.”<sup>183</sup> This is similar to what happened in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) where the women were not respected as men’s intellectual equals and felt uncomfortable speaking at the meetings.<sup>184</sup>

While distributing leaflets or selling papers was not glamorous or valued as advanced political work, it was an important organizing activity that attracted new members to leftist politics.<sup>185</sup> Frustrated with their lack of clout in the Party, women joined groups outside the organization, such as Women Strike for Peace. In most cases, they were scolded for working with women’s groups because these organizations were seen as too insular.<sup>186</sup> RDB Lois (last name withheld) remembered that as a young girl she sensed the Party’s sexism against organizations specifically for women. She recalled, “That was what we picked up by osmosis, at least I did, that ‘women’s’ issues were

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<sup>182</sup> Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 72.

<sup>183</sup> Carole (last name withheld), “Families: Our Mothers, Ourselves, 1982,” 75.

<sup>184</sup> For more information about women’s roles in the New Left please see Sara Evans’ *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).

<sup>185</sup> Linn (last name withheld), “Families: Our Mothers, Ourselves, 1982,” 76.

<sup>186</sup> Lois (last name withheld), “Families: Our Mothers, Ourselves, 1982,” 75.



narrow and that there were broader things to work for.”<sup>187</sup> Years later in the civil rights movement and New Left, RDB daughters experienced the same sexist exclusion from leadership positions and heard the same demands to stop discussing women’s problems and instead focus on other issues. Many white women in Student for a Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and SDS were treated as second-class members and passed over for leadership positions. Fed up with sexist treatment, a large number of SDS women left to start their own organizations that addressed and combated sexism.<sup>188</sup>

The arena where the leftist community had no qualms bending gender roles was the area of family finances. Many mothers assumed the families’ financial responsibility even though women’s breadwinner employment options were limited at the time. Children watched their mothers’ struggle to support the family because fathers were not paid for their activism or had been blacklisted from most job opportunities. Many of these working women resented their roles as breadwinner while their husband was essentially a volunteer activist.<sup>189</sup> RDB Beth’s (last name withheld) family had little money, and her mother felt a lot of pressure to get a job because her husband, a union organizer, was not making enough to support the family. Beth’s mother did not want to work, and felt the man of the family should bring in enough support so the woman could focus on properly raising the next generation of activists. As a result, “There was a lot of divisiveness and a lot of hurt and tension and anger and unhappiness in their relationship. Part of it was out

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>188</sup> Rosen, *The World Split*, 109-111. See Kate Weigand’s *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women’s Liberation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

<sup>189</sup> Fast, *Being Red*, 134.

of the difference between the life he wanted to live and the kind of life she wanted.”<sup>190</sup>

In RDB Bettina Aptheker’s experience, her father studied African American history and was entrenched in Party work while her mother had a steady job and supported the family throughout the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>191</sup>

Women also had to assume full responsibility for the family after husbands were arrested or went underground. When Party leaders decided who would go into hiding, they never considered what the situation would do to the individuals’ families. As a result, when Party loyalty conflicted with familial bonds, it put wives into extremely challenging situations.<sup>192</sup> Some wives challenged these Party dictates. Lillian Green protested her husband’s decision to go underground asking, “But why you, why not someone without young children?”<sup>193</sup> Just as Old Left parents recognized the strain their activism placed on their children, they realized how awful the situation would be for their spouses. Eugene Dennis told his wife, “It would be rough on you and The Kid. It’s the FBI, not the local police...They’ll hassle you hard.”<sup>194</sup> Howard Fast wrote about being constantly tailed by the FBI and the effect it had on his marriage, “We were beginning to live with fear and suspicion that in time became a rasp, abrading my relationship with Bette, cutting into our love, causing us to drink too much, to explode into anger at each

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<sup>190</sup> Beth (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 59.

<sup>191</sup> Aptheker, *Intimate Politics*, 2, 13.

<sup>192</sup> Gerson, ““Is Family Devotion Now Subversive?,”” 163.

<sup>193</sup> Green, *Cold War Fugitive*, 59.

<sup>194</sup> Dennis, *The Autobiography of an American Communist*, 208.

other too often...”<sup>195</sup> Regarding the extremity of his situation, Gil Green wrote in hindsight, “There was, however, one real hero in our family. It was my wife Lil. For more than a decade she carried the full burden of the family, being both mother and father to the children and earning a living at the same time.”<sup>196</sup> In addition to his wife’s resentment and sacrifice, Green’s son Danny also protested and accused his father of being “concerned with the rights of the whole world, but what about my rights?”<sup>197</sup> RDB Morris (last name withheld) described the Party leadership’s mentality as, “if you save the world it doesn’t matter if you sacrifice your relative.”<sup>198</sup>

The fact that the majority of individuals who went underground were male left a sexist impression on some young radicals. RDB Gail (last name withheld) remembered her father was prominent in the Party and went underground in the early 1950s. To her it felt very chauvinistic that men were the big heroes and permitted to abandon their families. As a result, Gail’s mother, and many like her, were left with small children, almost no money, and could only see their husbands once or twice a year if that.<sup>199</sup> RDB Deborah Gerson, whose father was convicted under the Smith Act for intending to overthrow the government, wrote that the FBI attacked fugitives’ relatives with a “doggedness born of ideological fervor.”<sup>200</sup> She asserted that the FBI demonstrated a rare sophistication in its assessment of gender-based attacks. Since the family’s male

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<sup>195</sup>Fast, *Being Red* Fast, 179.

<sup>196</sup>Green, *Cold War Fugitive*, viii. Three years after his return Lillian Green died of cancer.

<sup>197</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>198</sup>Morris (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 38.

<sup>199</sup>Gail (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 41.

<sup>200</sup>Gerson, “Is Family Devotion Now Subversive?,” 152.

security figure was absent, they attacked the families at their point of female vulnerability: in the home, in childcare centers and summer camps, on the job.<sup>201</sup> Lillian Green had eight agents personally assigned to her who followed her constantly. These men made certain she was fired from her job, lost her car insurance, and then was unable to find a buyer for her car. One day Green was so desperate for work she angrily confronted an agent and told him she had three children to feed.<sup>202</sup> Undeterred, the FBI would also pay the Greens frequent home visits. The agents would say, “We know you’d rather have him [Green] alive then dead... You don’t want to see [Green] dead, do you?”<sup>203</sup> Though at first alone in their struggles, women finally began supporting each other with the Family of Smith Act Victims support group in 1951 which raised money for the impoverished families. Women pledged to organize a movement to fight back, to offer mutual support to other women, and to help their children feel stronger by seeing and knowing other peers going through the same thing.<sup>204</sup> Pamphlets were mailed out that featured photographs of Smith Act children to help raise sympathy and support. Donations were used to buy birthday presents, pay for summer camp, and allow children to visit their parents incarcerated in different states.<sup>205</sup> The effectiveness of the

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 152

<sup>202</sup> Green, *Cold War Fugitive*, 80.

<sup>203</sup> Green, “Forbidden Books on Trial,” 84; “Smith Act Victims” *Families of Smith Act Victims* (New York: Self Defense of Committee of the 17 Smith Act Victims, 1952), 7.

<sup>204</sup> Gail (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 41.

<sup>204</sup> Gerson, ““Is Family Devotion Now Subversive?,”” 157.

<sup>205</sup> Gerson, “Is Family Devotion Now Subversive,” 151.

organization was proved by its placement on the Attorney General's list of subversive organizations in 1953.<sup>206</sup>

Women whose husbands were incarcerated or in hiding struggled to abandon the Party's non-personal, non-emotive *modus operandi* that discouraged support groups. Faced with financial, emotional, social, and political ruin, these women needed strong friendships and empathetic listeners, but they found it hard to reach out to each other on a personal level. Even as a child, RDB Susan (last name withheld) noticed that no one ever wanted to talk about feelings, just about ideas and objects.<sup>207</sup> RDB Carole (last name withheld) remembered Party members never "really talk about or support each other in more personal things that go on in their lives. My perception is that it was partly due to the feeling of people in the Party that you don't deal with personal issues, that no one wants to know about them."<sup>208</sup>

Children observed their mothers' struggles with Party sexism, attempts to support families on a single income, and being boxed out of leadership positions. Though women

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<sup>206</sup>Ibid., 152.

<sup>207</sup>Dorothy Zellner, "Proletaria and ME: A Memoir in Progress," in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 80.

<sup>208</sup>Carole (last name withheld), "Families: Our Mothers, Ourselves, 1982," 78. The wall finally cracked when Peggy Dennis, traveling the country to raise support for the imprisoned men, met with organizers in San Francisco. After her speech Nancy Bridge, wife of Harry Bridge who was in charge of the I.L.W.U. and had evaded two governmental deportation threats, finally bitterly asked, "You make it sound like you are all amazons of strength and paragons of objectivity... Tell me, aren't you ever afraid? Don't you ever lay in your bed at night and cry?" to which the no longer stoic Dennis finally admitted, "Yes, I'm afraid. And I cry at night. But I've got to keep fighting back. And we all need each other, fighting together, otherwise we will all drown together in an ocean of tears (Dennis, *The Autobiography of an American Communist*), 211, 212, 214, 218.

were disgusted with sexism in the leftist organizations, that did not deter their dedication to leftist causes. Mothers made sure children were involved in their activism, even if they were less flamboyant contributions. They showed their daughters that even when confined to the domestic sphere, women could still be political. RDB W's (first and last name withheld) mother held Women's Peace Party meetings at her home. As a young girl W felt like a member of the group when she helped stuff envelopes.<sup>209</sup> RDB Linda Dehnad was proud of her mother for supporting the Scottsboro boys and would help address envelopes for the cause. Dehnad remembered thinking, "I hope they don't mind my handwriting...I just felt honored to be asked to do something like that."<sup>210</sup> Both RDB Debra (last name withheld) and RDB Lois (last name withheld) remembered their mothers being their primary role models in terms of political activism.

Though young radicals noticed their mothers' exclusion from the Party and organizational leadership positions, that did not diminish respect for their mothers' activism. Children understood the different, valuable components women contributed to the movement. In Carole's (last name withheld) family, her mother was involved in community work and organizing. Even though her father always worked as the union organizer, wrote for the union papers and was the politically intellectual one who handed down the theory and information, it was Carole's mother who was the role model for society, instilling humanitarian values in her children. Similarly, RDB Lois (last name withheld) remembered that the women exemplified the correct way to behave while the

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<sup>209</sup>Zellner, "Proletaria and Me: A Memoir in Progress," 83.

<sup>210</sup>Linda Dehnad, "The Civil Rights Movement Veterans," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/nars/jimlind1.htm>, (accessed October 19, 2010).

men exemplified the theory.<sup>211</sup> Carole recalled, “If my mother didn’t quite have all the explanations and was a little bit condescended to because of that, in terms of everyday dealings, hers was clearly the model of how you should treat other human beings.”<sup>212</sup> RDB Roberta (last name withheld) said, “I have much more positive feelings about the role that women played than men. They were more human, in general, and there wasn’t that much rigidly enforced ideology among the women I knew.”<sup>213</sup> RDB Mickey Flacks, who during the Sixties was active with several radical organizations, confirmed that her involvement as a child in Women’s Strike for Peace “was very important to me, and I was always conscious of it and was more comfortable with the women in SDS, who had a better sense of total life and were not as intense and narrow as the men.”<sup>214</sup>

Radical daughters did not just witness the sexist treatment of their mothers. They experienced this same treatment from both the Party and male relatives, particularly in regards to education and aspirations about education. RDB Valerie (last name withheld) remembered that her father did not teach her any of the intellectual theory because she was a girl and was not smart enough to handle it. Instead he waited and taught it to her husband. Valerie said, “because politics was the important part of life, it was for the men, and women helped out...I think there was an assumption that women could not do the hard intellectual analysis; therefore, I studied math. That was wonderful; of course I

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<sup>211</sup> Lois (last name withheld), “Families: Our Mothers, Ourselves, 1982,” 78.

<sup>212</sup> Carole (last name withheld), “Families: Adolescents in the ‘50s,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 75.

<sup>213</sup> Roberta (last name withheld), “Families: Adolescents in the ‘50s,” 74.

<sup>214</sup> Braungart and Braungart, “The Life-Course Development of Left Wing and Right Wing Youth Activist Leaders from the 1960s,” 263.

could do that. But the real stuff was not for us.”<sup>215</sup> RDB Susan (last name withheld) always felt she was fighting for some revolution that did not include her as a woman, that women were always taking care of the men who developed dangerously lofty and abstract visions that prevented a feeling of inclusion for both genders.<sup>216</sup> She commented that being a RDB was harder for girls than boys because there were more “contradictions for women than for men. It’s smoother for men. There are less contradictions between theory and reality.”<sup>217</sup> Karen (last name withheld) agreed that girls’ experiences with the Party were more challenging. She argued the pressure on women during the 1950s to conform with an image of fragile femininity did not encourage the mental toughness necessary for young activists. Being courageous was a necessity if one was going to survive the bullying and persecution of a Left childhood. Radical daughters had to break down gender restrictions to survive their childhood.<sup>218</sup>

Though children were impressed with their mothers’ activism, almost all agreed that Party policy was damaging to families. In hindsight RDB Bernard (last name withheld) concluded that the Party’s concept of men always attending the meetings and women being stuck at home was not only bad for families, but bad for politics as well. He argued that politics run by people who do not understand how important family life is or how hard it is to raise children are not connected to reality.<sup>219</sup> Women took their disapproval a step farther to condemn the sexist treatment they experienced and

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<sup>215</sup> Valerie (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves, 1983,” 52.

<sup>216</sup> Susan (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 61.

<sup>217</sup> Susan (last name withheld), “Families: Our Radical Foremothers,” 82

<sup>218</sup> Karen (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves, 1983,” 53, 54.

<sup>219</sup> Bernard (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1983,” 62.



witnessed in the Party. RDBs observed this treatment in a variety of environments: sometimes the woman was in charge by choice, sometimes by necessity, and sometimes the woman was not allowed to participate in radical activism to the degree she would have liked.

Regardless of the situation, children observed their mothers' desire to be active in political organizations. Some saw their mothers protest against the federal government, run radical organizations while the male leadership was in jail or underground, and hold rallies and fundraisers to raise awareness about legal injustices. Many children drew strength from these examples and later during the 1960s would count on their mothers to support their participation and even sometimes join them in the Civil Rights Movement and New Left. These examples of women's activism, learned early in life, especially influenced daughters' attitudes and self-conceptions about their ability to protest and change the world.<sup>220</sup> Heather Baum asserted that her mother and the strong women in her life shaped her into an effective activist.<sup>221</sup> When daughters went on to become important leaders in the Free Speech Movement and SDS, some were mirroring the leadership roles they witnessed in childhood, and others were rebelling against the sexist environment of their youth. The extent of this influence will be shown in Chapters Five and Six that examine young radicals' activism in Sixties organizations.

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<sup>220</sup>Phyllis Moen, Mary Ann Erikson, Donna Dempster-McClain, "Their Mother's Daughters? The Intergenerational transmission of Gender Attitudes in a World of Changing Roles," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 59, no. 2, (1997): 282.

<sup>221</sup>Heather Baum, "The Civil Rights Movement Veterans," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/baum1.htm>, (accessed August 21, 2010).

## Activism

Some of the most important contributions children from the Old Left made to the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left was their mobilizing skills and protest methods. Young radicals learned these strategies by contributing to their parents' activism efforts and starting their own demonstrations. Adults expected children to be involved in the struggle against classism and racism and young leftists lived up to their expectations. RDB Karl Knobler remembered going to meetings with other young activists where "No one said anything other than, 'Are you going on the next march?'"<sup>222</sup> Judy Plapinger recalled that "Whenever and wherever I went, I gave "lectures" on civil rights and against the war in Vietnam--whether people wanted to hear them or not! As a child, I had absolute conviction and clarity about my beliefs, and didn't mind saying so."<sup>223</sup> Focusing specifically on children of the Old Left's activism shows how young radicals both fulfilled their parents' wishes and created a sense of their own activist identity. An examination also demonstrates how young leftists' early activism was a foundational period that prepared them for future protest activities in the 1960s.

As shown by looking at Old Left summer camps, racial equality was a dominant theme in radical communities. The most effective way for parents to emphasize this fact was through their own activism. Parents' fight for racial equality was very influential in their children's lives. RDBs and their leftist peers met African Americans dedicated to civil rights, notable leaders such as Langston Hughes, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Mary Church

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<sup>222</sup> Knobler, Interview with the Author, 4, September, 2010.

<sup>223</sup> Plapinger, Email with the Author, 7, September, 2010.

Terrell.<sup>224</sup> Young radicals watched their parents take on racist public school boards by joining the PTA and demanding the school recognize Negro History Week.<sup>225</sup> On other occasions they saw their parents publicly protest racism when they made scenes in restaurants if their African American friends were denied service.<sup>226</sup> Parents made sure their children were aware of racism and its economic and social ramifications. RDB Eric Foner, son of parents blacklisted in the 1950s, was home-schooled about urban poverty and injustice. His mother took him to inner-city neighborhoods to witness poverty first hand. As a result of this education Foner's parents expected him to be an active participant during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement.<sup>227</sup> During a time period when "nigger" and "boy" were acceptable terms for African Americans, most Old Left parents refused to let their children use these derogatory names.

Examples of parental civil rights activism permeated their lives. Mothers were members of the Congress of American Women, a Communist Party affiliated group that lasted from 1946 to 1950, that worked for integrating public swimming pools, cosponsored a grassroots nationwide campaign against lynching, established its own anti-lynching committee, and publicized recent lynchings and what steps women could take to

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<sup>224</sup> See Susan Braudy, *Family Circle: The Boudins and the Aristocracy of the Left* (New York: Knopf, 2003); Kim Chernin, *In My Mother's House: A Memoir* (New York: Harper & Row, 1991); Marvin Kaplan, "Trenton Terrace Remembered: Life in a 'Leftist Nest'" *Washington History* 6, no. 1 (1994).

<sup>225</sup> Radosh, *Commies*, 11. J (First and Last name withheld) Email with the Author, 9, September, 2010.

<sup>226</sup> Ann Kimmage, "Growing Up in Exile," in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 185.

<sup>227</sup> Eric Foner, *Who Owns History?: Rethinking The Past In A Changing World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002) 4,5.

stop them.<sup>228</sup> Parents chaired civil rights organizations with national leaders like Coretta Scott King and went down South to challenge segregation in public transportation.<sup>229</sup> Old Left mothers and fathers tried to unionize parts of Mississippi during the Depression and experienced the harsh realities of Jim Crow.<sup>230</sup> Bruce Hartford's father was such an effective organizer in Mississippi in the 1930s that the Klan often tried to run him out of each town he visited.<sup>231</sup>

Activist parents inspired their children to take up the same cause. RDB Maxine Frantz's father, Joe Gelders, was deeply involved in efforts to unionize sharecroppers in Alabama. As Frantz's father became a more prominent and respected member of the Party, in the 1930s Frantz's house became the "rest and recreation spot for a number of weary young revolutionaries who had come South to change the world, an earlier and smaller version of Mississippi Summer."<sup>232</sup> Once her father was brutally beaten by thugs for trying to win the release of a Party organizer jailed for the possession of seditious literature. The Gelders stayed in Alabama despite the attacks, death threats, crosses burnt in the front yard, and shots fired into the living room. As a result of his dedication to civil

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<sup>228</sup>Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 47, 60.

<sup>229</sup>Fatima Cortez, "The Civil Rights Movement Veterans," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/cortezf.htm>, (accessed September 27, 2010); Adler, *Heretic's Heart*, 18.

<sup>230</sup>Jane Adams in *Prairie Power: Voices of 1960s Midwestern Student Protest*, Robbie Liberman, ed. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 58.

<sup>231</sup>Bruce Hartford, "The Civil Rights Movement Veterans," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/hartford.htm>, (accessed November 23, 2010).

<sup>232</sup>Maxine Frantz, "Teachings of Marx for Girls and Boys Infiltrates Alabama," in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 47, 48.

rights, Gelders was instrumental in organizing the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, the first large interracial organization in the South since Reconstruction.<sup>233</sup> With an example like this, Maxine could not wait to join the struggle for racial equality. During her participation in the Sixties she witnessed the same type of terrorist tactics of beatings and burning crosses that had been used against her father.

Like Maxine, children often assisted their parents' efforts to raise awareness about Jim Crow. RDB Gilda Zwerman remembered in 1964 her mother decided to "terrorize" the white lower-middle class neighborhood adjacent to Brownsville by advocating "forced" integration and community control of schools by black parents.<sup>234</sup> David Loud's mother worked for the Morningside Heights Community and the two went door to door in Harlem collecting information about the rats, clogged sewers, and rickety stairs. She presented these safety infractions to the city council.<sup>235</sup> RDB Fatima Cortez's entire family was active in the New York City Commission on Human Rights and did a lot of testing for discrimination.<sup>236</sup> Rich (last name withheld), who was a member of an integrated baseball team, would go around the wealthy neighborhoods collecting money for CORE with the support of his parents.<sup>237</sup> RDB Lucy (last name withheld) grew up in an integrated neighborhood and later a Jewish middle class community. She often was ridiculed by her suburban friends and called a "commie" because she refused to go into

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<sup>233</sup> Frantz, "Teachings of Marx for Girls and Boys Infiltrates Alabama," 53.

<sup>234</sup> Zwerman, "The Little Red Superego," 148.

<sup>235</sup> Lukas, *Don't Shoot*, 14.

<sup>236</sup> Fatima Cortez, Email with the Author, September 6, 2010.

<sup>237</sup> Rich (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves, 1983," 56.

segregated restaurants.<sup>238</sup> Eleanor Raskin's mother, Annie Stein, worked with Mary Church Terrell to integrate Washington DC's restaurants. Eleanor and her brother would help their mother picket, describing the experience as "At first it could be fun, but it was embarrassing, and day after day, it got boring."<sup>239</sup>

The type of activism young leftists participated in ran the gamut of causes. Emphasizing the differences between children of the Old Left and the status quo, Shapiro explained that while "Most second graders don't know about the White House, [Rosenbergs], etc – RDBs were picketing in front of the White House, protesting the killing of the Rosenbergs, collecting money for CORE, boycotting Coca-Cola, working in local elections, marching to ban the bomb."<sup>240</sup> As they became more experienced, young activists started to organize their own protests. At first RDB Eric (last name withheld) had only participated in events accompanied by a parent. He vividly remembered going with his mother and an African American friend to a segregated park in one of the western suburbs of Chicago where his mother made a ruckus because Eric's friend was refused admittance. Eric wrote that "Most of my memories as a kid in grammar school had to do with issues related to segregation and desegregation."<sup>241</sup> By the time he reached high school, Eric was fully dedicated to the cause and started his own protests.

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<sup>238</sup>Lucy (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves, 1983," 55.

<sup>239</sup>Thai Jones, *A Radical Line: From the Labor Movement to the Weather Underground, One Family's Century of Conscience* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 21. Kenneth Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 96, 101.

<sup>240</sup>Linn Shapiro, "Beginning the Exploration: Taking Over the Family Business," in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 1.

<sup>241</sup>Eric (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves, 1983," 51.

He worked to integrate skating rinks with fellow activists by visiting various locations and creating enough controversy that it turned into a legal case. One case spent seven years in the courts and Eric was out of college before it settled and the rink was integrated.<sup>242</sup>

Many young leftists also started protests at their public schools. Mitch (last name withheld) recalled, “I organized people in eighth grade to put peace buttons on in class.”<sup>243</sup> Doug (last name withheld) stated:

I’ve considered myself a socialist since eighth grade. That caused titters among my teachers, but I probably made more consistent predictions about my life than anybody else who was in eighth grade who thought they were going to be firemen and airplane pilots. In ninth grade I said I was going to be a revolutionary.<sup>244</sup>

Sometimes children of the Old Left participated in school employee strikes. RDB Lisa (last name withheld) recalled, “I was the only kid in my high school to go out on the picket line with the janitors. I refused to cross the picket line and I hung out in 20 degree below weather. I went to marches. I wore black armbands.”<sup>245</sup> David Horowitz remembered his first political act was at the age of ten when he developed a passion for politics and was eager to change his immediate world. Near his house were sandlots that ran alongside railroad tracks. Though this area was dangerous, it was also the only place for kids to play. After getting scolded by his father for disobediendly going there after a

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<sup>242</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>243</sup>Mitch (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves, 1983,” 58.

<sup>244</sup>Doug (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves, 1983,” 56.

<sup>245</sup>Lisa (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves, 1982,” 3.

child had been killed, Horowitz went door-to-door gathering signatures for a petition asking the mayor to make a public park where it was safe to play.<sup>246</sup>

Many young radicals also started protesting against Vietnam during their childhood. Mindy (last name withheld) said, “When I got to high school, I did start getting involved. I was anti-Vietnam.”<sup>247</sup> For many children anti-war activism was supported by their parents, which gave them extra support. RDB Jennifer (last name withheld) stated, “I never had to rebel as a kid. My parents were so far ahead of me, I didn’t have to say, ‘I’m going to go down to Washington and protest the Vietnam War.’ They were [already] teaching me what was wrong about it.”<sup>248</sup> RDB Ira (last name withheld) remembered, “As early as ten or eleven...I did organizing work in sixth grade around the issue of the war. And of course I went to a lot of anti-war demonstrations.” Ira continued, “By the time I was twelve, I consciously thought of myself as part of the Anti-war Movement...I was eight at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis...It was very clear in my mind that the U.S. was part of the problem.”<sup>249</sup> Though children’s first exposure to activism might have been through parents’ lessons and protests, many young leftists started creating groups independent from those of their parents. There were public demonstrations, protests in school, discussions with peers, and product boycotts. This

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<sup>246</sup> Horowitz, *A Radical Son*, 48

<sup>247</sup> Mindy (last name withheld), “Beginning the Exploration: Opening Presentation 1983,” 11.

<sup>248</sup> Jennifer (last name withheld) “Introducing Ourselves, 1982,” 28.

<sup>249</sup> Ira (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves, 1982,” 20.



type of high school activism is not usually included in studies of anti-Vietnam protests.<sup>250</sup>

Another function parents saw for their children was to live in lower income neighborhoods and share progressive values with minority groups. For Communists, the Party's conscious decision to integrate segregated neighborhoods kept families moving regularly from community to community. As a result of their parents' activism, children grew up in minority neighborhoods and went to integrated schools and played with African American or Latino children.<sup>251</sup> Considering the outcry after the *Brown v. Board* decision, RDBs and their radical peers' voluntary school integration was unprecedented. Fraad said, "We learned multiculturalism and racial integration long before they became liberal icons of political correctness."<sup>252</sup> RDB Faye (last name withheld) recalled being politically aware from the age of four. One of her first memories was "when I was in kindergarten, this little (at the time) Negro girl was jumping over people's heads to get to the water fountain. She kicked me in the head accidentally. I remember thinking, 'You shouldn't cry because she's a Negro,' not knowing where that came from."<sup>253</sup> Being integrationist trailblazers was not an easy role for children and their efforts resulted in

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<sup>250</sup>Teenagers' participation in the anti-war movement is not included in the majority of studies about the New Left (see Tom Well, *The War Within: America's Battle Over Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994). In addition, as mentioned in Chapter One, most of the books that look specifically at these cases are not focused on the students themselves. See Ian Haney-Lopez, *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice* (Cambridge Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2003), Kermit Hall; John Patrick, *The Pursuit of Justice: Supreme Court Decisions that Shaped America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Marc Gilbert, *The Vietnam War on Campus: Other Voices, More Distant Drums* (Westport, CN.: Praeger, 2001).

<sup>251</sup>Zwerman, "The Little Red Superego," 25.

<sup>252</sup>Baxandall and Fraad, "Red Sisters of the Bourgeoisie," 100.

<sup>253</sup>Faye (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves, 1983," 60.

backlash from other whites. In addition, minority students did not always appreciate young radicals' integration efforts. This was very confusing for the Old Left children because they were supporting racial equality. For example, in junior high African American students repeatedly beat up RDB Debra (last name withheld), who lived in a racially mixed neighborhood. Her parents would try to explain that there were socioeconomic reasons behind her assailants' actions, but for Debra, "It didn't mean anything to me...I couldn't understand that people were having hard times and that's what brought that about. I was just miserable."<sup>254</sup> Regardless of this negative experience, Debra was still very active in the Civil Rights Movement during high school and on through college.<sup>255</sup> RDB Larry (last name withheld) grew up in several Mexican-American communities and African American communities. He lived in rough neighborhoods and got attacked a lot. He remembered that when he came home and told his parents, "'The Mexican kids beat me up.' I'd get this little rap about how the third world people are oppressed. There wasn't any attempt to teach me self-defense or why I was experiencing this."<sup>256</sup> For kids whose parents were integrating minority neighborhoods, many of them felt especially isolated and alone without the supportive atmosphere of the Coops, liberal neighborhoods or the progressive schools other children of Old Left families enjoyed.<sup>257</sup> Parents' inability to explain connections between what their children were experiencing and how it fit into the larger struggle for civil rights was

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<sup>254</sup> Debra (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves, 1982," 25.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>256</sup> Larry (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves, 1982," 22.

<sup>257</sup> Debra (last name withheld), Diane (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves, 1982," 27, 25.

partly due to their children's age. Gil Green referenced children's difficulty understanding the larger issues at hand by asking "how much of all this could they really grasp, viewing the absurd adult world through the kaleidoscopic fantasy lens of a child's imagination?"<sup>258</sup>

Even when not living in minority communities, the majority of young radicals were harassed or physically assaulted because of their activism. The worst of it happened in public spaces, particularly en route to school or in the classroom. RDB Maxine Defelice recalled walking to school and being stoned by adults who called her "nigger lover" She remembered, "I ran as fast as I could the two miles to school. I don't remember much of those days except the fear that gripped me every time I left for school. The stoning happened more than once...I knew we were part of an important struggle. I knew I couldn't complain to anyone, and I knew I had to run fast."<sup>259</sup> RDB Ann Kimmage was beat up both on the way home and at school. Kids yelled, "Commie, commie, go home. We don't want to play with any Reds on the playground!"<sup>260</sup>

During middle school David Horowitz was surrounded by a group of seniors who were bigger than he was. Suddenly,

the leader of the group grabbed my arm and shoved me against the wall, while another took the dangling cord of an auditorium drape and slipped it around my neck. Pulling the cord tight, he shouted, "*His father's a Red. String him up!*" Another hissed: '*Send him back to Russia!*' I struggled to free myself, but was too embarrassed to cry out. Nobody among the hundreds of people in the room

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<sup>258</sup> Green *Cold War Fugitive*, 3.

<sup>259</sup> Maxine DeFelice, "Southern Discomfort," in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 91.

<sup>260</sup> Ann Kimmage, "Growing Up in Exile," Kaplan and Shapiro, eds., *Red Diapers*, 3.

seemed to be aware of my plight. Nobody cared...It was the worst moment of the McCarthy era.<sup>261</sup>

RDB Alan (last name withheld) remembered being en route to a Paul Robeson concert when angry bystanders attacked his bus. Though proud of participating at such a young age, he acknowledged that activism had “its good and bad points. It’s one thing to confront a mob when you’re grown up and you know what you’re doing. At four and a half it’s a little tough to be in a bus with the windows crashing in for going to see Paul Robeson.”<sup>262</sup> Though scared, Alan never stopped being an activist. When a little older he went on to integrate Levittown, PA and faced more mobs.<sup>263</sup> David Horowitz remembered going to protest parades where kids would jeer and throw stuff at him and Horowitz would think, “But we are doing this for you!”<sup>264</sup>

### **Non-Activists from Old Left Backgrounds**

While many children from Old Left families became activists, there were some young radicals who completely rejected their parents’ politics. While this dissertation focuses on those who went on to become active participants in social movement during their youth and college, it is worthwhile to point out that not all children were enthusiastic participants. RDB Kathy Boudin’s mother described her son Michael Boudin as the biggest genius of the family and called him “My son the rebel” because he consistently rejected the family’s radicalism. After college Michael could not even abide

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<sup>261</sup> Horowitz, *A Radical Son*, 73.

<sup>262</sup> Alan (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves, 1982,” 24.

<sup>263</sup> Alan (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves, 1982,” 24.

<sup>264</sup> Horowitz, *A Radical Son*, 57.

liberalism and became a conservative judge of the prestigious United States Court of Appeals in Massachusetts, appointed by President George W. Bush.<sup>265</sup> RDB Suze Rotolo's sister did not want to be an activists and refused to protest or march.<sup>266</sup> RDB Lisa (last name withheld), who had been raised solely around other young radicals, remembered "One person I met in college was the son of someone who had been blacklisted in Hollywood. He was red, white and blue down the line. He was so embittered. It's ironic to me that he didn't take it out on the people who did the blacklisting, but on himself, on the victim."<sup>267</sup>

RDB Kim Chernin who attended Berkeley in the Sixties refused to participate in the Free Speech Movement. Chernin remembered going over to observe the demonstrations out of curiosity and watched the strikes that emptied classrooms and libraries. Though interested enough to check out what was happening, she refused to participate with her generation of activists. Cherin recalled, "I found myself refusing to do what I knew my mother would have done. While the others marched I went into the library and sat there for several hours, reading Nietzsche and listening to the muted sounds of the students chanting outside the window."<sup>268</sup>

It is hard to define why some children were a new branch on the family tree of activists while their siblings refused to take root. RDB Mitch (last name withheld) noted that "My parents were intensely political. Politics always in the house. And I'm very political. My brother couldn't give a shit. We grew up in the same house. Didn't hit him.

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<sup>265</sup> Braudy, *Family Circle*, xvi.

<sup>266</sup> Rotolo, *A Freewheelin' Time*, 32.

<sup>267</sup> Lisa (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves, 1982," 35.

<sup>268</sup> Chernin, *In My Mother's House*, 291.

You go into his house, he has the TV on. The most mindless TV imaginable.”<sup>269</sup> While some children certainly rejected their parents’ activism and resented the time and thought it took away from their children, the majority of children from the Old Left accepted their parents’ activism and actually became dedicated activists in their own right during their childhood and in the social movements of the 1960s.

### **Conclusion**

Old Left parents viewed their children differently than other adults during the postwar years. While the majority of parents were sheltering their children from the dangers and contentious issues confronting society, radical parents prodded and pushed their children into activism. Those on the Left saw their offspring as the next generation of activists who would continue their struggle against capitalism, racism, and classism. The Old Left instilled future members of the New Left with the ideals and values that would sustain and motivate them in the 1960s. Understanding how Old Left parents perceived their children’s role in society and how they understood what it meant to be a child allows historians to better understand what motivated student radicals’ participation in the Civil Rights Movement and New Left. Children raised in Old Left families were experienced activists by the time they reached college. They had demonstrated against segregated restaurants, refused to participate in civil defense drills, and protested against the war in Vietnam. They were persecuted for their beliefs, but remained dedicated

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<sup>269</sup> Mitch (last name withheld), “Families: Raising Children 1982,” 69.

activists. They were both following the direction of their parents, but also taking the lessons they had learned and creating their own organizations and protests.

Children raised in Communist Party families also learned about the Party's hypocrisy regarding gender and class equality. RDBs were confused by the rhetoric that lauded the working class, but valued the Party elite behind closed doors. RDBs, especially daughters, witnessed the chauvinism and sexist treatment of women within their families and radical organizations. They witnessed the way their mothers were treated as second-class members and felt the sting of sexism in their personal lives. While some RDB women rose into the leadership ranks, on the whole this sexist treatment would continue during the Civil Rights Movement and New Left until women started their own organizations to combat gender inequality.

While many young leftists were proud of their parents and all they were doing to help improve America, children felt neglected due to their parents' activism. This sense of abandonment translated into resentment, or even a complete rejection of their parents' principles and a refusal to participate in Sixties organizations. For others, it was a cause of bitterness but did not stop their activism. They absorbed their parents' values and commitments although resenting the neglect that sometimes accompanied it. Many proudly continued in their parents' footsteps, determined to bring about positive change in America, and created a concrete generational connection between the Old Left and the New Left.

## **Chapter Five: Children of the Old Left and the Civil Rights Movement**

### **Introduction**

Most civil rights workers did not fall under the category “Communist-atheist-nigger-loving-bearded-Jew.”<sup>1</sup> While this epithet, delivered in 1964 by a white Mississippian before the start of Freedom Summer, does not apply to the majority of white workers in the movement, it aptly describes many of those who came from Old Left families. With their history of civil rights activism, many young leftists were drawn to the movement. RDB Debbie Amis Bell, whose family organized support for the Scottsboro Boys, stated, “Like a divining rod leads to water, my background led me to the Civil Rights Movement.”<sup>2</sup> As a result of their childhood participation in the movement, radicals arrived in the South with mobilizing and protesting skills honed at a young age. Their grade school days spent duplicating and distributing leaflets, joining picket lines, squaring off against opponents and plastering telephone poles with posters prepared radicals to make their important contributions to the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>3</sup> As a result they were some of the key white participants in Congress of Racial Equality

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Marsh, *God’s Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 70.

<sup>2</sup> Debbie Amis Bell, “A Young Communist,” in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, Faith Holsaert and Dorothy Zellner, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 55.

<sup>3</sup> Bell, “A Young Communist,” 57; Cathy Cade “Caught in the Middle,” in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, Faith Holsaert and Dorothy Zellner, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 206.



(CORE) and the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).<sup>4</sup> Children from the Old Left contributed at every level, from the strategic planning down to the grunt work of field canvassers.

In addition to the skills radical participants brought with them, their unique experience as a part of a persecuted community during the McCarthy era and the leftist education they received from their parents and progressive institutions also set them apart from other whites.<sup>5</sup> In contrast to most volunteers, when children from the Old Left arrived in the South they were not surprised by police brutality, vigilante justice, and the region's complete disregard of federal laws. While their childhood run-ins with police officers and FBI agents were terrifying, they were also educational. Leftists knew the violence that could accompany nonviolent protests. Barbara Brandt, who worked in SNCC's Atlanta office, explained why the violence did not surprise her. She stated, "I

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<sup>4</sup>It is beyond the scope of this project to determine exactly how many children from the Old Left were involved in the Movement. The only available statistics regarding participants' political affiliation is from the Freedom Summer application forms and they only represent a three month period. These forms asked students if they were from a "Socialist or other leftist organization" with 14% of the applicants (107 students) replying in the affirmative (compared to only 13% (91 students) who said they were from a Democrat or Republican party affiliate). Since the form did not ask students to specify which leftist organization they were associated with, it is impossible to determine which Old Left organization they associated with. The percentage of those who identified themselves with the Left might also be misleadingly low considering some participants might not have wanted to identify themselves with the Left while HUAC or other government agencies were still investigating Communists. The Freedom Summer applications also leave out participants who might not be members of Socialist or leftist organizations, but were raised by Party member parents or by parents who were members of Party-associated civil organizations or unions, as well as parents who were fellow travelers. McAdams does cite that 90% of those who came to Freedom Summer had prior activist experience, and leftists certainly helped contribute to this high percentage of previous involvement. For more on these statistics, please see Doug McAdam's *Freedom Summer* 50, 51

<sup>5</sup>Victoria Oritz, Email with the Author, 11, November, 2010.

had already been in peace demonstrations in New York City where I saw mounted police charge in and beat up nonviolent demonstrators.”<sup>6</sup>

Another element that set participants from Old Left backgrounds apart from others was their exposure to African American history and socioeconomic racism. Radicals were schooled at an early age about the discrimination prevalent in America. Arriving with this knowledge they were horrified, but not incapacitated, by the Jim Crow South. Many already knew about the economic exploitation that permeated the region, and subsequently were not surprised by the abject poverty and living conditions of most Southern blacks. Unlike many white volunteers raised in segregated neighborhoods who attended predominantly white universities, RDBs and their radical peers already knew the terror of living in America as a targeted minority. Thus, upon arrival in the South they could start mobilizing communities more quickly, as opposed to spending days, sometimes weeks, acclimating to the environment of oppression and racism that permeated the South.<sup>7</sup> This is not to say radicals were immune to the poverty or culture of violence that permeated the South, but they were able to keep working regardless of the circumstances.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast to other whites, leftists also experienced different treatment from white southerners themselves. Radicals were particularly hated and feared by white

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<sup>6</sup> Barbara Brandt “We Weren’t the Bad Guys” in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, Faith Holsaert and Dorothy Zellner, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 428.

<sup>7</sup> Seth Cagin and Philip Dray, *We Are Not Afraid: The Story of Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney, and the Civil Rights Campaign for Mississippi*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 49.

<sup>8</sup> Bob Zellner and Constance Curry, *The Wrong Side of Murder Creek: A White Southerner in the Freedom Movement* (Montgomery: NewSouth Books, 2008), 31.

supremacists for their Old Left roots and, when appropriate, the combination of being from the Old Left and Jewish. Due to the South's zealous anti-Communist and devoutly Christian climate, young leftists were specifically targeted as especially vile activists, seen by the expanded version of the opening quotation, "every Communist-atheist-nigger-loving-bearded -Jew-sonofabitch who comes down here looking for trouble is gonna find it!"<sup>9</sup> Children from Old Left backgrounds, recognized as skilled and effective activists, were quickly identified and targeted by members of the KKK and other white supremacy groups.

Radicals also had differing experiences when it came to interacting with the African American community. Coming from Old Left families that stressed the cause of racial equality, leftist participants had more prior experience living and working with African Americans than many white participants. Radicals were raised in African American neighborhoods, had African American friends, and were educated about African American history. RDB Dorothy Zellner stated, "'Equality for the Negro People' had been an axiom of my upbringing as the child... therefore, unlike most white Americans, I actually knew something of black history. I had even glimpsed both the great Paul Robeson and W.E.B. DuBois in person."<sup>10</sup> RDB Victoria Ortiz, who worked for CORE's Jackson Mississippi Project from 1964 to 1965 stated, "my upbringing and exposure to diverse populations, my conviction that segregation was wrong, that racial

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<sup>9</sup> Marsh, *God's Long Summer*, 70.

<sup>10</sup> Dorothy Zellner, "My Real Vocation" in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, Faith Holsaert and Dorothy Zellner, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 311.

equality was urgently needed were powerful energies I brought with me to Mississippi and...helped me in the way I went about my daily life as a civil rights worker.”<sup>11</sup>

Like African American civil rights activists, leftists were proponents of a “beloved community” ideal that would unite all races and classes into one harmonious group. However, while radicals’ social and ideological connections with African Americans were strong, they differed on religious theology. As shown by the high level of Jewish representation in Old Left organizations, many participants from this background were practicing Jews or secular Jews. Those not of Jewish heritage were often atheist. Thus these individuals had to learn how to work within a movement that was deeply steeped in religious theology and symbolism. During their activism in the South, RDBs attended African American churches, sermonized from the pulpit, followed Christian non-violent ideology, and registered voters for a political system they viewed as corrupt. Leftists’ ability to find common ground regardless of theological or political differences introduces unexplored dynamics and tensions within the movement.

### **Historiography**

Notwithstanding radicals’ unique and important contributions, general studies of the Civil Rights Movement rarely mention children from Old Left backgrounds. Since the 1960s when the first books about the movement were written, the historiography has excluded RDBs and their radical peers. Howard Zinn’s *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*, published in 1964, attempted to distance the organization from Communism and explain

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<sup>11</sup> Ortiz, Email with the Author, 11, November, 2010.

away “rickety” connections between SNCC and the Party.<sup>12</sup> In his efforts to save SNCC from further red baiting, Zinn left out radicals’ important contributions. Later studies, such as Clayborne Carson’s *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (1981) describe the ties between Communists and SNCC, even explaining how some civil rights activists became interested in socialism. However while Carson made clear correlation between the Communist influence and SNCC, he does not mention RDBs’ connections to the Communist movement and how radicals’ presence influenced the organizations and other white participants.<sup>13</sup>

Studies that look specifically at white participants only mention activists’ political background in passing. Mary Rothschild’s *A Case of Black and White* (1982) includes a generic political breakdown of whites without discussing how these differences affected or influenced the workers.<sup>14</sup> The most comprehensive study of white participants in the movement is Doug McAdam’s *Freedom Summer* (1988). While McAdam’s research is thorough, he admits that he makes generalizations. His statements that participants “for the most part were liberals, not radicals; reformers rather than revolutionaries,” and that

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<sup>12</sup>Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 272.

<sup>13</sup>Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981). Carson does mention in his section on the New Left that Joni Rabinowitz was the daughter of a man who had represented the Cuban government, but he never states that she was a RDB or what that meant about her motivation for activism or her prior activism (181).

<sup>14</sup>Mary Rothschild, *A Case of Black and White: Northern Volunteers and the Southern Freedom Summer, 1964 – 1965* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1982), 32, 36.

“the vast majority were radicalized by the events of the mid to late Sixties” are true, but they leave children from the Old Left out of the equation.<sup>15</sup>

McAdam also makes the assertion that volunteers understood that the United States was flawed, but thought these imperfections were aberrations, not inherent weaknesses within the system. Most whites, McAdam wrote, felt once America corrected these implementation problems, classism and racism would end.<sup>16</sup> This definition excludes many of the radical activists. While it is important to note that the children of fellow traveler families embraced a reformist radicalism, one that believed in electoral politics, unionism, civil rights and civil liberties legislation, and thought expansions in the welfare state would make for a new and different America, not all radicals did. There were also radicals who viewed socioeconomic poverty and racism as inherent weaknesses of a flawed political system. RDB Dorothy Zellner encountered SNCC members who had total, unwavering belief in American democracy and were fighting for access to what this democracy had promised them. Zellner recalled, “Politically the SNCC folk felt the house was basically sound...At the time, my more leftist friends pointed out that such faith in the federal government was misplaced.”<sup>17</sup>

These leftists did not want to fix an imperfectly implemented political status quo; they wanted to replace capitalism with socialism.<sup>18</sup> As a result of their childhood

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<sup>15</sup> Doug McAdams, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 5.

<sup>16</sup> McAdams, *Freedom Summer*, 2.

<sup>17</sup> Zellner, “My Real Vocation,” 317.

<sup>18</sup> The majority of individuals who argued that radical changes, not reform, were necessary to end racism came from card-carrying Community Party parents. However there were participants from fellow traveler, Socialist, and other Old Left organizational

educations, some leftists differed from the white participants who “Having accepted the essential goodness of the United States... were appalled to learn that there was trouble in paradise.”<sup>19</sup> Many radicals, on the other hand, “had almost no faith in either the ability or the desire of the United States government to effect change,” while those reformist in orientation believed politicians in government that desired change were grossly outweighed by those who did not.<sup>20</sup> Including leftists’ perspective changes our perception of civil rights activists as positive, idealistic pro-capitalist baby boomers and shows that many organization leaders and a disproportionate number of participants were a radicalized minority. Lastly, McAdams writes that white volunteers were raised in the “sterile propriety of their Northern upbringing,” a description that excludes Old Left families’ counter-culture, community-oriented childhoods.<sup>21</sup>

Radical activists are also primarily left out of studies that focus specifically on women, a major omission considering women from Old Left backgrounds like Dorothy Zellner, Joni Rabinowitz, and Faith Holsaert were important contributors in different civil rights organizations. Lynne Olson’s *Freedom’s Daughters: The Unsung Heroines of the CRM from 1830 to 1970* (2001) has a section on white participants in SNCC that groups all the white students together into one category without examining differences in

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backgrounds that felt the same way. For more information, please see *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, Faith Holsaert and Dorothy Zellner, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010); *Prairie Power: Voices of 1960s Midwestern Student Protest*, Robbie Liberman, ed. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), Doug McAdam’s *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>19</sup> McAdams, *Freedom Summer*, 20.

<sup>20</sup> Rothschild, *A Case of Black and White*, 38.

<sup>21</sup> McAdams, *Freedom Summer*, 92.

upbringing or politics. The same omissions are found in Vicki Crawford's *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941 – 1965* (1990), Peter Ling's *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement* (2004), and Davis Houck's *Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954 – 1965* (2009).

Historians looking to expand the field's understanding of civil rights workers include children of the Old Left, but their arguments do not necessitate critical analysis about the ways participants' differing backgrounds motivated or shaped their contributions to the movement. Debra Schultz's *Going South: Jewish Women in the Civil Rights Movement* (2001) explored how several RDB women felt about their participation in the movement, the ways they reacted to black women, black men, and the rural South. While Schultz does show the crucial roles RDBs played in the movement, she does not interrogate how the participants' variety of childhood experiences resulted in different understandings, motivations, contributions, and goals. Instead, Schultz examines how the Holocaust and progressive Jewish values motivated women's participation in the movement.<sup>22</sup>

Thomas Sugrue's *Sweet Land Of Liberty* (2008) also includes radicals in his discussion of the civil rights activism. Sugrue explains how the North, with its history of radical movements and activism, influenced the southern struggle. He even goes so far as to state that in order to understand the history of civil rights, indeed to understand modern

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<sup>22</sup>It is important to note that Schultz's argument does not necessitate making distinctions between the different childhood experiences. This dissertation expands on the important groundwork she's established looked at Jewish women's contributions to the movement.



America itself, the northern contribution to civil rights must be taken into account.<sup>23</sup>

After stating the importance of the North's contributions, *Sweet Land of Liberty* emphasized the Communist and Socialist Parties' important contributions by describing how radicals instructed and encouraged civil rights groups from the 1930s through the postwar era.<sup>24</sup> While Sugrue ably demonstrated northern radicals' contributions to the southern Civil Rights Movement, he does not connect adults' activism prior to the Sixties with their children who supported civil rights organizations during the 1960s.

Though radicals have been left out of much of the civil rights historiography, their inclusion would provide a more comprehensive, complicated understanding of white activists. Children from Old Left families, with their unique upbringing, history of activism, childhood education, exposure to injustice, and outcast status provide another perspective on the activists in the Civil Rights Movement. This chapter will examine the differences between leftist participants and non-leftist activists by looking at several different components. The first section focuses on radicals' interactions within the black community, with other non-Jewish white participants, and with Jewish participants. Next it highlights specific examples of leftist leadership with Mickey Schwerner and Dorothy Miller Zellner. Lastly this chapter looks at the range of radicals' contributions in the South and in the North.

### **Leftists and the African American Community**

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<sup>23</sup>Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), xvi.

<sup>24</sup>Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, xix.

Radicals' early dedication to bettering America was a cause shared by the African American community and a sentiment that resonated with both groups. Like RDBs and their leftist peers, black civil rights workers felt they had a special responsibility to help America live up to its high ideals. This sentiment was demonstrated when the Southern Christian Leadership Conference chose for its motto: "To save the soul of America." In addition to their early dedication to racial equality, leftists were also familiar with and supportive of what Dr. King would call the "Beloved Community" far earlier than other white participants.<sup>25</sup> While most white activists were introduced to the concept of a beloved community during the Sixties, making comments that for the first time they "experienced the strength and inspiration of an organized and determined community willing to risk so much to make fundamental change."<sup>26</sup> Activists from Old Left backgrounds learned about the same concept during their youth from parents, progressive schools, and radical summer camps.<sup>27</sup> Thomas Sugrue wrote in *Sweet Land of Liberty* "The left-religious faith in the "beloved community" or the "imminent Kingdom of God" and the secular [s]ocialist vision of a society free from capitalist domination reflected a shared "here and now" commitment to social change."<sup>28</sup> Both groups were dedicated to racial equality and actively implementing change in their daily lives.

While much of middle class white America was raised in suburban nuclear family enclaves, children from Old Left backgrounds had experienced glimpses of this beloved

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<sup>25</sup> Marsh, *God's Long Summer*, 29.

<sup>26</sup> Karen Jo Koonan, "The Civil Rights Movement Veterans," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/koonank.htm>, (accessed September 27, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> Marsh, *God's Long Summer*, 29.

<sup>28</sup> Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 43.

community concept during their upbringing at integrated summer camps, progressive schools, party organizations, and urban community neighborhoods that introduced the concept of interracial harmony. Growing up in these unique environments had a lasting impression on young radicals.<sup>29</sup> RDB Sarah (last name withheld) understood that the support and acceptance she experienced in her own community could apply to the outside world.<sup>30</sup> As a result of his nurturing community, RDB Barry (last name withheld) felt a sense of brotherhood with all peoples.<sup>31</sup> Due to this early focus on building, sustaining, and sharing a sense of community that included people regardless of race, leftists were deeply committed and very familiar with Dr. King and SNCC's idea of a Beloved Community. They had been raised with this ideal, nurtured in what one activist described as a "kind of mystic brotherhood."<sup>32</sup> Reasserting their dedication during the Sixties, radicals united with civil rights organizations that emphasized the same goal.

While RDBs and their Old Left peers enthusiastically embraced the concept of a beloved brotherhood, they differed from both their fellow white and African American activists in foreseeing how that ideal was going to happen and to what end it would serve. As McAdam stated, most white participants were primarily "liberals, not radicals;

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<sup>29</sup>Linn Shapiro, "Beginning the Exploration: Taking Over the Family Business," in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 1.

<sup>30</sup>Sarah (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1982," in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 27.

<sup>31</sup>Barry (last name withheld), "Introducing Ourselves 1982," 29.

<sup>32</sup>Shapiro, "Beginning the Exploration: Taking Over the Family Business," 4.

reformers rather than revolutionaries.”<sup>33</sup> Leftists, however, included radicals and revolutionaries who believed equality would come with the overthrow of capitalism and the installation of socialism. While radicals did not press for socialism in their daily work, their focus being civil rights, voter registration, and integration, it was the ideology underlying their activism. Their ultimate goal was to end racism and segregation in order to unite workers as a necessary precursor to class struggle.<sup>34</sup> Thus while leftists had the same values as SNCC and the other organizations for the present situation, their end objectives were different.

SNCC’s goal was opportunity and equal treatment in America’s political, economic, and social status system. The organization was originally focused on reform, not revolution. Leftists, in comparison, had been taught that capitalism was corrupt and must be replaced with communism or socialism. Activists from the Old Left backgrounds wanted to overthrow a political and economic system that by its very nature suppressed minority groups and the working class. This perspective was re-enforced when leftists saw how classism kept some African Americans from joining the movement.<sup>35</sup> Eleanor Walden commented, “My essential disappointment with the Civil Rights Movement was that it did not develop the capacity to fight capitalism, which, by its nature of exploitation for profit, is the root of racism.”<sup>36</sup> Radicals had been criticizing these components of

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<sup>33</sup> McAdams, *Freedom Summer*, 5.

<sup>34</sup> Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 147.

<sup>35</sup> Hunter Bear, “The Civil Rights Movement Veterans,” *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/nars/hunteri.htm#bearleft>, (accessed March 7, 2010).

<sup>36</sup> Eleanor Walden, “The Civil Rights Movement Veterans,” *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/walden.htm>, (accessed August 9, 2010).

American society since they were children and for some it was hard to remain patient waiting for others make the same connections.

Regardless of their political and cultural differences, civil rights activists were able to bond through common goals of a Beloved Community and racial equality. This bond was strengthened by both groups' reliance on singing and songs to rally their spirits and motivate their activism. For the African American communities, singing hymns and gospel songs was a staple of comfort and inspiration. Leftists were also raised on anthems promising love and peace. While the rest of white America was singing along to Elvis or the Everly Brothers, radicals were listening to Pete Seeger and Paul Robeson's activist ballads. The same childhood song lyrics and melodies that assured young leftists that a better world was coming motivated them during their 1960s activism.

The reliance on music to sustain a movement was steeped in the Left tradition.<sup>37</sup> More than other white participants, leftists appreciated the power and sustaining quality of music. In comparison to the non-leftists whites that showed up at training workshops not knowing the songs to sing, the lyrics to the songs being sung, nor the importance of singing, children raised in Old Left families were entrenched in the folk music culture of protest.<sup>38</sup> As children they were raised on stories of music's ability to inspire a crowd or stop physical violence. An example of songs' ability to protect activists occurred at the Peekskill Riots in 1949. Many young radicals were either at the event, had relatives in attendance or heard about it from their parents. These riots were anti-communist, anti-

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<sup>37</sup> Ronald Radosh, *Commies: A Journey Through the Old Left, the New Left, and the Leftover Left* (San Francisco: Encounter, 2001), 65.

<sup>38</sup> Sally Belfrage, *Freedom Summer* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1965,) 3.

black, and anti-Semitic. Locals in the Peekskill area, a region with a strong KKK following, were infuriated that Paul Robeson was to perform an outdoor concert. Robeson was a hero of the Left for his strong pro-labor stance and his support of civil rights. He was a particular favorite of young leftists who idolized him. As a result of his politics, Robeson was black listed by the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) for his outspoken condemnation of the investigatory board and McCarthy.

The general public condemned Robeson's concert as an Un-American activity. The local paper, *The Peekskill Evening Star*, denounced the event, calling Robeson "violently and loudly pro-Russian" and encouraged people to make their feelings about Communism felt.<sup>39</sup> On August 27, 1949, Howard Fast who was a well-known communist, novelist, and master of ceremonies, arrived to make sure the sound system and lights were in working order. While at first the atmosphere was calm, as it got closer to curtain call Fast learned a mob of hundreds was gathering at the site. Within moments Fast and his crew were attacked with billyclubs, brass knuckles, and rocks. During the assault the group became cornered and faced a mob who shouted, "We'll finish Hitler's job!" and "Give us Robeson. We'll lynch the nigger up!" Fast was being beaten brutally, and as he deflected blows someone yelled, "They're killing Fast, God damn it!" With no other resources, no protection, and no help on the way, Fast, limping with torn clothes, began to sing a labor union protest song. The concertgoers locked arms to form a line and joined him. "We shall not – we shall not be moved! We shall not – we shall not be moved! Just like a tree that's standing by the water, We shall not be moved." In an account of the night, David King Dunaway wrote, "As the [attackers] closed in, they met

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<sup>39</sup>David Dunaway, *How Can I Keep From Singing: Pete Seeger* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1981), 3.

a new resistance. Emboldened by the music, concertgoers halted their retreat. Joining arms and singing gave them an extra measure of courage. They fended off the attackers for two more hours.”<sup>40</sup>

Seeger and his group, the Weavers, wrote a ballad recounting the Peekskill Riot, entitled “Hold the Line”:

Hold the line!  
Hold the line!  
As we held the line at Peekskill  
We will hold it everywhere.

The grounds were all surrounded by a band of gallant men,  
Shoulder to shoulder, no fascist could get in,  
The music of the people was heard for miles around,  
Well guarded by the workers, their courage made us proud.

Then without any warning the rocks began to come,  
The cops and troopers laughed to see the damage that was done,  
They ran us through the gauntlet, to their everlasting shame  
And the cowards there who attacked us, damnation to their name!<sup>41</sup>

Many young radicals knew of this valiant attempt to peacefully confront and disarm attackers with song. Some children had even been at the concert and witnessed the officers’ and troopers’ refusal to stop the attack on the peaceful concertgoers. Seeing how song could sustain and protect activists gave young leftists hope that similar efforts would work on their behalf. RDB Bruce Hartford, son of labor union organizers, remembered a march in Grenada, Mississippi, where 500 Klansman were surrounding a group of two or three hundred protestors. Recalling this scenario, Hartford said, “I saw us do non-violent things...that to this day are just unbelievable to me... some of the time —

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<sup>40</sup>Dunaway, *How Can I Keep from Singing?*” 5-7.

<sup>41</sup>Pete Seeger, *Where Have All the Flowers Gone: A Singer’s Stories, Songs, Seeds and Robberies* (Sing Out Corporation: Bethlehem, PA, 1993), 36.

not always — we could literally hold them off by the quality of our singing. We could create a psychic wall that they could not breach, even though they wanted to.”<sup>42</sup> Leftists believed in the power of song to protect them. As a result when children from Old Left backgrounds came to the South, they were ready to sing. RDB Barbara Brandt remembered, “We always sang and shouted and clapped. At our freedom meetings, the church rocked and we sang those old songs taken from the labor movement like, ‘Which Side Are You On?’”<sup>43</sup> Hunter Bear, who started his civil rights activism as a teenager in Flagstaff, AZ, protesting segregated schools, recalled that his most vivid memory from the movement was singing “We Shall Overcome” the night before a dangerous demonstration “which involved [putting ourselves] on the line the next day, or even marching out into the arms of the police, singing that, convinced that ultimately a better world was coming.”<sup>44</sup>

The Left’s most famous contribution to the movement was the unofficial civil rights anthem, “We Shall Overcome.” Originally a gospel song that came out of African American churches, it evolved into a freedom song as early as 1945 when it was used during a food and tobacco workers’ strike in Charleston, SC that lasted five and a half months through a rough, rainy, and cold winter.<sup>45</sup> Highlander Folk School musician

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<sup>42</sup> Bruce Hartford, “Non-Violence in Grenada,” *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/nars/bruce1.htm>, (accessed November 23, 2010).

<sup>43</sup> Brandt, “We Weren’t the Bad Guys,” 432.

<sup>44</sup> Bear, “The Civil Rights Movement Veterans.”

<sup>45</sup> Guy Carawan and Candie Carawan, eds., *Sing for Freedom: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement through its Songs* (Bethlehem, PA: Sing Out Corporation, 1990), 204. The Communist Party made inroads into the South during the Depression era and managed to radicalize small groups of workers. For more information about their efforts please see Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans*,



Guy Carawan introduced the song to the movement at the founding conference of SNCC. Several weeks later in Tennessee Carawan held a “Sing For Freedom” workshop at Highlander Folk School for 75 singers, teachers, and activists that taught participants the repertoire students would sing throughout the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>46</sup> These songs included, “We Shall Not Be Moved,” “Keep Your Eyes on the Prize,” “I’m Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table,” and “This Little Light of Mine.” Carawan took labor union songs and tailored them to the present civil rights struggle, as seen with “Which Side are You On?” that originally written for striking miners.

Which Side Are You On?  
Come all you bourgeois black men with all your excess fat.  
A few days in the community jail will take care of that.  
Oh which side are you on, boys, which side are you on.  
Come all you northern liberals  
Take a Klansman out to lunch  
But when you dine, instead of wine  
You should serve nonviolent punch.<sup>47</sup>

These songs, which were hybrids of labor protests and church spirituals, caught on immediately with the participants.<sup>48</sup> One of the most famous songs, “We Shall Overcome,” became the rallying cry for the entire movement, and was so recognizable as

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1917 – 36 (Jackson, MI: University of Mississippi, 1998); Paul Moreno, *Black Americans and Organized Labor: A New History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006); Gerald Home, *Black Liberation/Red Scare: Ben Davis and the Communist Party* (Newark, DE, 1994); Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

<sup>46</sup> Joe Street, *The Culture War in the Civil Rights Movement* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 21.

<sup>47</sup> Albert Kahn, *The Game of Death: Effects of the Cold War on Our Children* (New York: Cameron & Kahn, 1953), 217.

<sup>48</sup> Aimee Horton, *The Highlander Folk School: A History of its Major Programs, 1932 – 1961* (Brooklyn: Carlson Pub., 1989), 242.

the ethos of civil rights activism that President Johnson used the lyrics in his nationally televised speech following the 1965 Bloody Sunday march in Selma, AL.

The power of song to comfort and sustain the workers cannot be over emphasized. Even though many young leftists were not religious and did not relate to the religious overtones of the Civil Rights Movement, they loved the music. Alix Dobkin explained that despite her,

diehard, lifelong aversion to religion and its symbols, when the people sang songs I knew...I joined in heart and soul. This community was organized and sustained through the church and I respected this, and understood that the words to a song might be gospel, but their meaning was 'Freedom.' Civil rights workers adapted the union songs that had traditionally served as 'spirituals' for the community I was raised in, and as I joined in with the familiar chorus of 'Which Side Are You On?' I felt an evolutionary circle revolving within me, leaving me more strengthened by my past, and more deeply connected.<sup>49</sup>

As a non-leftists not yet introduced to this type of music, Mario Savio, later a leader of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, remembered the impact the songs had on him. He recalled that the group would sing about how "we'll never turn back, ain't gonna turn around. That was the point at which it all came real for me. That is, I'd chosen sides for the rest of my life. It's a very simple event, and it doesn't, probably, mean anything to anybody else. But it meant a lot to me."<sup>50</sup> Activists and church members sang before, during, and after protests. They sang while in jail, they sang outside jails, they sang when they were discouraged, when they were elated, when they were tired, and when one of

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<sup>49</sup> Alix Dobkin, *My Red Blood: A Memoir of Growing Up Communist, Coming onto the Greenwich Village Folk Scene, and Coming Out in the Feminist Movement* (New York: Alyson Books, 2009), 199.

<sup>50</sup> Mario Savio, Oral History Collection, Columbia University (1985), Folder 1:37-38.

their own had died.<sup>51</sup> Singing was the lifeblood of the movement and provided a way to build bonds between disparate groups and cement their commitment to the cause. As people from such different backgrounds worked together and hit snags in their plans, they used singing to smooth rough edges and sooth nerves. Sally Belfrage remembered the tense mood in Oxford during Freedom Summer's training workshops, "No one seems quite certain what to do but the singing fills the gaps."<sup>52</sup> The songs learned at that Oxford training session sustained the volunteers all summer.<sup>53</sup> Southern policemen realized the value of singing and the way it sustained activists' morale and courage. After a mass arrest in Albany, Georgia, the chief of police shouted at the incarcerated protestors, "I don't want no damn singing and no damn praying."<sup>54</sup>

Children from the Old Left recruited their favorite Pete Seeger to the movement and set up concerts for him to come sing with the civil rights groups, events that tangibly connected the music of the Left with the black communities and other white participants. Often escorted to gigs by his leftist fans, Seeger's presence helped make the disparate groups feel connected, welcomed, and unified in a fight against a common enemy.<sup>55</sup> Savio experienced the power of Seeger's singing during Freedom Summer when Seeger came to play for the group stationed in McComb. Using Savio as an example shows how

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<sup>51</sup> In the documentary *Eyes on the Prize*, the segment entitled "Mississippi: Is This America?" has footage of James Chaney's funeral and shows the mourners singing "We Shall Overcome."

<sup>52</sup> Marsh, *God's Long Summer*, 30.

<sup>53</sup> Tracy Sogerman, *Stranger At the Gates: A Summer in Mississippi* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966), 17.

<sup>54</sup> Kahn, *The game of Death: Effects of the Cold War on Our Children*, 58.

<sup>55</sup> Zellner and Curry, *The Wrong Side of Murder Creek*, 270, 271.

non-leftists experienced, some for the first time, the sense of community and support young leftists felt when they listened to Seeger's music in their youth. Now that non-radicals were part of a targeted group, they finally understood how uplifting and powerful music could be, how it united a community of activists, and how those who sang about a brighter future had such a powerful impact on fellow participants. Savio stated:

We were just a few people, see, in McComb...It was like being visited by the U.S.O...That was the point at which I felt fully accepted somehow... there I was, In McComb, Mississippi, and here Pete Seeger was coming to sing for us. And I felt somehow that I'd become a part of that community...I wondered – over the years, I've thought about thanking Seeger. You know, writing him a note. I never had, and God, you know it's sort of dumb of me. It meant something to me. It really meant a lot to me for him to come and sing for us.<sup>56</sup>

For Savio and many participants, this powerful singing bonded the black community, the volunteers, and leftist participants into the Beloved Community. Bob Moses stated, "Singing is the backbone and the balm of the movement."<sup>57</sup> Children from the Old Left supported this singing movement through artists like Pete Seeger, Peter, Paul and fellow-leftist Mary and the Folk Music Caravan that traveled around Mississippi during Freedom Summer. RDB Alix Dobkin, who started protesting segregation at an early age and later became a member of the Caravan group, believed, "My generation learned to champion civil rights, social justice, and peace through singing together."<sup>58</sup>

Protest songs were also important because of their ability to convey the emotions and experiences of volunteers in the South to their supporters. RDB Eleanor Walden, who as a child was sung to sleep with lullabies from the International Workers of the

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<sup>56</sup> Mario Savio, Oral History Collection, Columbia University (1985), Folder 1: 34.

<sup>57</sup> Dobkin, *My Red Blood*, 198.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 193.

World's songbook, loved singing with Bernice Johnson Reagan, the founder of Sweet Honey in the Rock. Walden and Johnson organized the Atlanta Folk Music society and a folk festival. It was so successful they were officially thanked in a letter from then Governor Jimmy Carter for, "Peacefully integrating the Georgia State Parks."<sup>59</sup> Walden also went on SNCC and the Southern Students Organizing Committee's (SSOC) integrated southern college cultural tour, the first of its kind.<sup>60</sup>

While music was a helpful tool to unite activists, there were still many differences between the white volunteers that affected their civil rights activism and experience. One of the main differences was the degree of interaction children from Old Left families had already had with African Americans. For non-leftists, many had only interacted with African Americans as service workers, not as associates and friends.<sup>61</sup> RDBs and their radical peers, in comparison, were more likely to have grown up in integrated neighborhoods, attended integrated schools, supported civil rights causes, and have friendships with African Americans. Radical parents emphasized African Americans'

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<sup>59</sup>Eleanor Walden, "The Civil Rights Movement Veterans," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/walden.htm>, (accessed August 9, 2010).

<sup>60</sup>Walden, "The Civil Rights Movement Veterans." The Southern Students Organizing Committee was an organization of white southerners who recruited other southern whites for the Civil Rights Movement. The SSOC enthusiastically embraced its southern roots, as seen with its symbol of showing a black and white hand clasped in front of a Confederate Flag, its newsletter entitled *New Rebel*, and its founding chapter called "We'll Take Our Stand." The group hoped its obvious display of pride in their culture would appeal to whites uninterested in the movement. SSOC saw itself as a progressive homeland in the South that not only supported civil rights, but also the growing anti-war movement and women's liberation movement. For more about the organization please see Gregg Mitchell, *Struggle for a Better South: The Southern Student Organizing Committee, 1964 – 1969* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

<sup>61</sup>Elizabeth Sutherland, *Letters from Mississippi* (New York: New York American Library, 1966), 6,7; Debra Schultz, *Going South: Jewish Women in the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 156.

struggles for equality as one of their main goals and expected their children to support the cause. An example of this expectancy occurred in Jane Adam's family. Adam's mother had organized Southern Tenant Farmers' Union in Missouri during the Depression for the Socialist party and in the forties and fifties helped organize the first NAACP in Murphysboro, IL. When Jane asked her parents what she should do during the summer of 1964 they answered, "This is a no-brainer Jane. Go to Mississippi."<sup>62</sup>

While civil rights in the postwar years was an important issue for radical organizations in general, for the Communist Party no other issue in American society was given more continuous attention than that of racism and its connections to socioeconomic poverty.<sup>63</sup> In the North between the 1930s and mid-1940s it was practically impossible to find a civil rights cause that did not contain Communist and progressive members. At rallies black churchwomen shared the platform with Communists and Socialists. Thomas Sugrue, in *Sweet Land of Liberty*, argued these alliances "gave participants in the struggle for black equality a collective voice that was far more powerful than that of individual leaders and organizations."<sup>64</sup> Communist Party members were trained in parliamentary skills, adept at the art of organizing, ubiquitous writers, avid protestors, determined promoters, and masters of grunt work.<sup>65</sup> Radicals were tireless in their advocacy of civil

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<sup>62</sup>Jane Adams in *Prairie Power: Voices of 1960s Midwestern Student Protest*, Robbie Liberman, ed. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 58.

<sup>63</sup>Wilson Record, *The Negro and the Communist Party* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951), 15; Wilson Record, *Race and Radicalism: The NAACP and the Communist Party in Conflict* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964), 1.

<sup>64</sup>Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), 22.

<sup>65</sup>Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 23.

rights and where there were adult activists, there were also their children. Daily interactions between whites and blacks was common occurrence in radical households.

RDB Carl Bernstein remembered his family's Sunday visits to African American friends. Unlike most non-leftist white participants, Bernstein stated that "There had always been Negroes in and out of our house, and from the outset I had been taught that for them life was defined by struggle and filled with injustice."<sup>66</sup> RDB Bruce Hartford made a similar comment, "Black people were part of the family friendship circle. You're a kid, you go to your parents' friends' homes, people come to dinner, and it was all races. You go to a 'progressive' summer camp that's all races. This was no big deal to me, it was our norm."<sup>67</sup> RDB Eric Foner cited family trips with his mother to inner city neighborhoods as the motivation for later participating in the movement.<sup>68</sup> Heather Baum, whose family was constantly organizing and hosting fundraisers and other civil rights activities, became a CORE member while in middle school because Movement heroes "were often present at these heady events, and I was awe struck...By 1963, I was fearless — and though under age, wild horses could not keep me away from The Movement. Still in high school in 1964 I broke all of the rules and went to Jackson."<sup>69</sup> Baum remained committed to her work in the South, continuing her activism with SNCC until 1965 when whites – including leftists - were asked to leave the organization.

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<sup>66</sup> Carl Bernstein, *Loyalties: A Son's Memoir* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 94.

<sup>67</sup> Bruce Hartford "Los Angeles – Race Relations," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/nars/bruce1.htm>, (accessed November 23, 2010).

<sup>68</sup> Eric Foner, *Who Owns History?: Rethinking The Past In A Changing World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002) 4,5.

<sup>69</sup> Heather Baum, "The Civil Rights Movement Veterans," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/baum1.htm>, (accessed August 21, 2010).

### **Leftists and Non-Leftists**

Children from the Old Left were some of the few white participants who had studied the African American experience in the United States. Even non-radicals active in other social protest movements were ignorant of Jim Crow's stranglehold on the South. Tom Hayden who was the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) representative during Freedom Summer, remembered that his awareness of racism and racial violence did not start until he was actually in the South covering the protests. Hayden attended an all-white high school and "had no sense of racism. I only learned later that we had moved out of downtown Detroit because blacks were moving in. The Little Rock school crisis and the Montgomery bus boycott both happened during high school; both went right by me."<sup>70</sup>

Without a history of activism, many white students were motivated by their religious faith. Cold War society emphasized the importance of religiosity, which could help explain the numerous participants who cited Christian values as the impetus for their participation. Radical youths worked with other white volunteers who were deeply religious and valued their theology enough to risk their lives for their beliefs. In some ways children of the Old Left, who compared their parents' dedication to leftist politics in terms of religious devotion, could understand this theological commitment. Non-leftists' explanations for their participation in the movement show the connection between their

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<sup>70</sup>Tom Hayden, *Reunion: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1988), 14.



activism and their religious beliefs.<sup>71</sup> Chude Parker Allen, a devout Christian, believed she was doing God's will when she volunteered for Freedom Summer. She stated "I didn't expect God to protect me from harm, but I truly believed He would be with me helping me to endure whatever happened. If my dying or being beaten or jailed would help save the United States from the sin of racism, I was willing."<sup>72</sup> Maria Gitlin wrote in a "Letter From Movement Boot Camp" that God was acting in history by leading the Civil Rights Movement. Gitlin explained it was faith "that enables people to endure [on] one meal a day, four hours sleep, and one change of clothes. And they can still sing and shout praises."<sup>73</sup> Terry Sullivan, in an article to his church, showed his dedication to the cause, regardless of the persecution it would entail. He wrote, "As the Church is watered by the blood of her martyrs, so social movements...for the Negro grew and [will]

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<sup>71</sup> Joan Browning, "The Civil Rights Movement Veterans," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/nars/brownnar.htm>, (accessed May 9, 2010). For more about the how religion motivated civil rights activists, please see the following books on Christian Existentialism and studies of Christianity and the civil rights movements: Milton Hunnex, *Existentialism and Christian Belief* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969); John Macquarrie's *Studies in Christian Existentialism: Lectures and Essays* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1966); Charles Marsh, *God's Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008) Paul Harvey's *Freedom's Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War Through the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Rosetta Ross, *Witnessing and Testifying: Black Women, Religion, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); Nancy Robertson, *Christian Sisters, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906 – 46* (Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Kimberly Little's *You Must Be From the North: Southern White Women in the Memphis Civil Rights Movement* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009).

<sup>72</sup> Chude Pam Parker Allen, "The Civil Rights Movement Veterans," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/info/chudexp.htm>, (accessed May 9, 2010).

<sup>73</sup> Maria Gitlin "Letters from Movement Boot Camp" *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/nars/gitin.htm>, (accessed August 9, 2010).

ultimately succeed by the suffering and hardship of [church] members.”<sup>74</sup>

For other non-leftist activists, religion was not the sole motivation for participation. Some whites knew participating in the movement was an outlet for rebelling against conformity and the sterility of the 1950s. David Gilbert described how he and other activists came to the movement through their enthusiasm for rock and roll. Gilbert said the music “made me feel involved with black people, even though I wasn’t in direct relationship, because I could identify with the music and stuff.”<sup>75</sup> Gilbert felt a lot of Americans were doing the same thing by absorbing black culture and identification through the music. He explained, “I just sort of felt like, yes, these people are speaking for me and we’re all human beings and I felt a real identification. Being more sexually explicit and alive seemed healthy and a good thing to be.”<sup>76</sup> As Gilbert expanded his cultural horizons in the Fifties through his musical selections, he was more receptive to participating in the Civil Rights Movement in the Sixties.<sup>77</sup> Other white activists expressed a similar sentiment about the importance of black popular music to the movement. Sue Thrasher said she felt Elvis was responsible for white involvement in the South. Presley taught white kids it was okay to do things that black people did, that they used to think was dirty.<sup>78</sup> These quotes imply that some non-leftists may have exoticized interacting with African Americans and this too might have motivated their

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<sup>74</sup>Terry Sullivan, “The Civil Rights Movement Veterans,” *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/riders/frvain.htm>, (accessed August 21, 2010).

<sup>75</sup>David Gilbert, Oral History Collection, Columbia University (1987), Folder 1: 18.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, Folder 1:18

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, Folder 1:18

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, Folder 1:18, 19.

involvement.<sup>79</sup>

Radicals and non-radicals differed in their motivation for participating in the movement. Non-leftists went for religious or rebellious reasons, while children from the Old Left enlisted to continue a cause they had supported since childhood. These differences in motivation resulted in the differences of skill levels the two groups brought to the movement. Because of their early activism, leftists were prepared and practiced at protest methods. This distinction was obvious to individuals within the civil rights organizations and local southerners who noticed radicals' activist skills. Children from Old Left families had practical knowledge gained while leafleting for the Scottsboro Boys, picketing segregated facilities, and supporting Paul Robeson during his HUAC investigations. Tom Hayden referenced leftists' experienced, enthusiastic protest methods when he attended a demonstration against a segregated lunch counter. Hayden remembered,

The marchers...were singing old labor songs I didn't recognize. The singing was spirited; the songs were suddenly relevant. I felt an affinity with them for the first time, but still I remained an aspiring *Daily* writer, not yet thinking of myself as an activist. I enjoyed expressing myself in words, but I was not comfortable carrying a picket sign.<sup>80</sup>

Terry Sullivan remembered hearing helpful lectures on labor organizing while

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<sup>79</sup>For more on this subject, please see Vicki Crawford, *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941-1965* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Pub., 1990); Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).

<sup>80</sup>Hayden, *Reunion*, 32

incarcerated at Parchman Prison during the Freedom Rides.<sup>81</sup> RDB Joni Rabinowitz expanded her didactic lessons beyond just her fellow inmates when she had discussions with her jailers while incarcerated in an Albany, Georgia jail.<sup>82</sup>

Leaders of civil rights organizations also acknowledged the experienced protest methods known to leftists. As a result, many were important contributors, as seen with Dorothy Zellner, Joni Rabinowitz, Fatima Cortez, Linda Dehnad, and Mickey Schwerner. Many of the other participants recognized in the radicals' work the same skills and methods they had learned at the Highlander Folk School. For non-radicals, some of the most successful participants, like Martin Luther King, Jr., John Lewis and Rosa Parks, had attended Highlander to learn activist techniques similar to those children with Old Left backgrounds learned from their parents.<sup>83</sup> Highlander, cofounded by socialist Myles Horton in 1932, taught non-leftists mobilization techniques and protest skills they never learned as children.<sup>84</sup> Activists used strategies developed by Communists in 1929 at some of the first protest sit-ins. From these early efforts and through trial and error, activists had developed and perfected strategies of mobilizing, protest, and litigation that were used in the southern movement.<sup>85</sup> Located in Tennessee, Highlander laid the groundwork for the movement by teaching the next generation the methods of effective

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<sup>81</sup>Terry Sullivan, "The Freedom Rides," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/riders/frvain.htm>, (accessed August 21, 2010).

<sup>82</sup>Victor Rabinowitz, *Unrepentant Leftist: A Lawyers Memoir* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 257.

<sup>83</sup>Zellner, *The Wrong Side of Murder Creek*, 101, Street, *The Culture War in the Civil Rights Movement*, 17.

<sup>84</sup>Street, *The Culture War in the Civil Rights Movement*, 15

<sup>85</sup>Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 159.

protest, fundraising, and community support.<sup>86</sup>

One of Highlander's earliest non-leftist student attendees was Bob Zellner, who went on to become a respected leader in SNCC. Zellner quickly realized that Highlander had sparked or assisted a number of important social movements and hoped Horton could help him learn how to sustain an interracial movement.<sup>87</sup> Inspired by his studies at the school, Zellner designated his time there as one of the most exciting of his life. At Highlander Zellner learned the valuable lessons of being "cool under fire and mak[ing] good decisions...being in a storm of violence and emotions binds people...if you are being shot at together, you tend to become brothers and sisters quickly."<sup>88</sup>

While some non-leftists like Zellner were making the effort to become educated activists, most whites who volunteered for the movement were idealistic suburbanites who knew it would be dangerous, but other than that had little idea about what they were getting into. In an effort to weed out the most unprepared volunteers, attempts were made to keep whites out who did not grasp the enormity and depth of the situation. Respected leftists in the movement like RDB Dorothy Zellner were entrusted with this selection process. While on the East Coast, Zellner ran the New England SNCC office on the Harvard campus and as a seasoned activist, Zellner knew what to look for in an effective

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<sup>86</sup>Street, *The Culture War in the Civil Rights Movement*, 11. Horton, *The Highlander Folk School*, 201, 241.

<sup>87</sup>Zellner, *The Wrong Side of Murder Creek*, 101.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, 108.

worker. Throughout the interviewing process she made sure to reject anyone looking for a fun, exciting time or to “visit the natives.”<sup>89</sup>

During Freedom Summer, children from Old Left families who had already been working in the South prior to 1964 were also asked to help train the incoming group of white students volunteers. The influx of white participants inevitably created tension in the organization, but this tension was exacerbated by the naivety of whites that had little or no activist experience. Radicals were quick to note the differences between the established white activists and the novices. Sally Belfrage clearly remembered the distinction between the “radically inclined and sandaled sophisticates from New York and California and ...the girls from Wichita who have very straight teeth and say ‘nifty,’ ‘grisly,’ and ‘neat.’”<sup>90</sup> While not all leftists came with the same activist experiences or abilities, non-leftists like Bob Zellner noticed many leftists’ confidence and capabilities. Zellner described these individuals as “smart, efficient, and outspoken.”<sup>91</sup> While not all radicals met this depiction, many did. For example, RDB Joni Rabinowitz was remembered as assertive and gutsy. Within weeks of her assignment to the predominantly male Albany Movement staff, she began challenging the subservient status of women in SNCC. One of her reports on the subject stated “The attitude around here toward keeping

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<sup>89</sup>Bob Zellner “Remembered,” *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/nars/zellner1.htm>, (accessed November 18, 2010).; Schultz, *Going South*, 61.

<sup>90</sup>Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 4,5

<sup>91</sup>Zellner, *The Wrong Side of Murder Creek*, 242.

the house neat (as well as the general attitude toward the inferiority and ‘proper place’ of women) is disgusting and also terribly depressing.”<sup>92</sup>

Knowledgeable activists took it upon themselves to teach novices how to protest, create pamphlets, speak to an audience, and share advice learned from their own hard-won victories.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, children from Old Left families were worried that untrained whites would hurt the movement through unintended racism or lack of experience. Veteran participants were horrified by unintentionally harmful reports such as one in the *Harvard Crimson* that portrayed white activists as naive, inconsiderate, and ineffective. One article described a bejeweled young beauty “bouncing confidently along a Georgia road to a sharecropper’s shack, exhorting the awed and worried Negro who opened the door to register, insisting that he call her by her first name.”<sup>94</sup> As dedicated activists with a decade of work under their belts, it was painful for leftists to have untrained neophytes giving the impression that whites were not effective participants.

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<sup>92</sup>Sara Evans, *Personal Politics*, 77. Rabinowitz’ report addressed the differences of perception between black and white women regarding sexism in the movement. For more on this subject and the historiographical debate over black and white women in the movement, please see: Cynthia Griggs Fleming, *Soon We Will Not Cry: The Liberation of Ruby Doris Smith Robinson* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998); *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001); Vicki Crawford, *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941-1965* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Pub., 1990); Doug McAdam’s *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).

<sup>93</sup>Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, xviii. While leftists played important roles in the organizations, not all of them came to the South able to give rousing speeches that mobilized other participants. Faith Holsaert learned how to speak in front of groups during her time with SNCC when Charles Sherrod challenged her to be bolder (Debra Schultz, Email with Author, June 7, 2010).

<sup>94</sup>Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*, 182.

That is not to say that radicals did not have their own issues to work through. At times radicals had to remember they were working in communities where racism and socioeconomic poverty limited individuals' activist abilities. RDB Fatima Cortez explained,

the second and third generation activists like myself were sometimes a pain in the butt because we saw things as what should just 'be' without effort...we forgot that the rest of the world had some steps to take before registering to vote like learning how to read and write. It was a humbling experience. Louisiana folks gave me the best education in humanity I could ever have had.<sup>95</sup>

Participants from Old Left backgrounds also had to deal with volunteers who were uncomfortable with the leftist associations of civil rights groups. David Gilbert exemplified the hesitancy non-radicals felt when dealing with an organization with Old Left connections. Gilbert remembered that after arriving at Columbia University he headed straight over to sign up with the CORE chapter. The group was led by white students and Gilbert remembered the head guy introduced himself as the Chairman, and Gilbert's first thought was "why do these radicals do stuff to alienate people? Why does he have to call himself chairman? That sounds like the Soviets. They have a chairman. He should be president."<sup>96</sup> The Red hysteria from the post World War Two still lingered in Gilbert's head, showing the powerful intellectual force anti-communism had on children. As a result of being raised in that paranoid atmosphere, when Gilbert heard people say "comrade," he understood it as a sinister word. He recalled that the anti-communist mentality of the postwar period "was an incredibly powerful force. And even to myself, as someone who was really looking to get active and opening my

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<sup>95</sup> Fatima Cortez, Email with the Author, 10, May, 2010.

<sup>96</sup> Gilbert, Oral History Collection, Folder 1: 23.



consciousness in a million ways, just the word chairman, and then you think of the word “comrade” as this terrible, sinister thing. But I did get involved in CORE.”<sup>97</sup>

When whites joined organizations they attended brief orientation and training sessions before they headed south. CORE and SNCC were blunt about the danger and difficulties civil rights activism entailed. Bob Moses, arguably one of SNCC’s most important leaders, knew the effect the South would have on whites and the need to dampen their idealistic goals with a touch of realism. He told the volunteers at a Freedom Summer Oxford orientation meeting, “Maybe we’re not going to get very many people registered this summer. Maybe, even, we’re not going to get very many people into freedom schools. Maybe all we’re going to do is live through this summer. In Mississippi, that will be so much!”<sup>98</sup> RDB Hunter Bear, a seasoned labor activist, understood Moses’ statement that simply surviving would be a victory. Bear was in Jackson when Herbert Lee was shot for trying to pay the poll tax. He described the environment as,

the cruelest situation that I'd ever seen in the United States. And I must say that [Mississippi] was another country. I mean, it was absolutely unbelievable. By this time, masses of vigilante types, Klan types, had come, from all over the South. Confederate flags were everywhere, the American flag was *persona non grata*, and any American flags were being destroyed hither and yon [by the Klan and cops].<sup>99</sup>

Upon their arrival in the South, many non-leftists had difficulty adjusting to the environment. One young participant wrote home to his parents, “We have all lived under the increasing weight of fear and the struggle to come to terms with the possibility of

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., Folder 1: 23, 24.

<sup>98</sup> Cagin and Dray, *We Are Not Afraid*, 30.

<sup>99</sup> Bear, “The Mass Movement.”

death consumes much of our emotional energy.”<sup>100</sup> Another sheltered volunteer remembered crying herself to sleep every night because “I was just seeing too much, feeling too much. Things weren’t supposed to be like this. I was just a mess.”<sup>101</sup> Sara Evans wrote that female SNCC participants were “Middle-class women [who] learned to live with an intensity of fear they had never known before.”<sup>102</sup> The lack of most non-leftists’ knowledge of racism or activism was at times frustrating to both the African Americans and activists from Old Left backgrounds. Volunteers’ struggle to function in this oppressive environment was not always due to a lack of experience or naïveté. Mississippi was tantamount to a foreign country with its totalitarian regime and vigilante justice. But most non-leftists’ lack of exposure or knowledge about African American history or socioeconomic poverty prior to their stay in the South exacerbated this issue.

While children from Old Left families never experienced the extent of danger threatening the black community, they, too, had been raised in an environment of fear. They knew what it was like to suddenly have a parent disappear with no explanation or legal recourse, for threatening figures to follow them at night, to learn their family members had been fired for social activism. Though not tantamount to what they would live through in the South, leftist activists did have a thicker skin and more exposure to the type of vigilante justice practiced in the South than most suburban recruits.<sup>103</sup> RDB Alix Dobkin remembered local law enforcement officers conspicuously documented her first

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<sup>100</sup> Sutherland, *Letters from Mississippi*, 15.

<sup>101</sup> McAdams, *Freedom Summer*, 88.

<sup>102</sup> Sara Evans, *The Personal is Political: Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 72.

<sup>103</sup> Mary Winstead, *Back to Mississippi: A Personal Journey Through the Events That Changed America in 1964* (New York: Theia, 2002), 291.

venture into the South. As she met with SNCC workers, across the street an unmarked Sheriff's car, a Justice Department deputy, and a Jackson police car kept watch. When one of the workers asked if she was worried about the surveillance Dobkin, whose family the FBI followed for years, responded that she was not worried, she was used to it.<sup>104</sup> This was undoubtedly a bit of bravado on Dobkin's part, since being followed by racist police had a higher potential of physical danger than being trailed by federal agents, but the fact that activists were being targeted was no surprise to Dobkin.

While radicals might not have already experienced the inhumanity they would witness in the South, at least they were prepared for the lack of help they would receive from local, state, and federal law enforcement officers. This was not the case for other white activists raised in protective suburban environments. After hearing harrowing accounts of beatings, listening to lectures on safety procedures, and told it was safer to be in jail with racist inmates than released after dark, many whites still remained naively unaware. RDB Sally Belfrage remembered driving down to Mississippi with a carload of students and as her dread increased, she heard the driver tell the person in the front seat, "I don't know what all the fuss is about...It's still the United States of America."<sup>105</sup> Belfrage, whose father had been deported for his political activism when she was young, fully realized the dangerous situation the students were heading towards. The driver, an engineering student from a family so Republican its last child had been christened "Barry G, " had no conception of what he was getting into.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>Dobkin, *My Red Blood*, 196.

<sup>105</sup>Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 29

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*, 29

Without any experience or knowledge of law authorities' extralegal operations, when non-leftists arrived in the South they were horrified and shocked by the region's vigilante justice. Even more disturbing was the FBI's refusal to act within its legal authority to stop violent crimes. Volunteers reacted in disbelief as the majority of agents simply observed and took notes during brutal beatings and illegal arrests. The local police force was free to trump up driving citations, throw volunteers in jail, attack protestors, charge exorbitant fines, and impound activists' cars.<sup>107</sup> SNCCers watched judges at the bench turn their backs on civil rights attorneys and firemen sit in their trucks as African Americans' houses burned to the ground.<sup>108</sup> While this type of behavior did not surprise participants from the Old Left who as children had witnessed HUAC kangaroo courts accuse their parents of being enemy spies, it was shocking to non-leftists. McAdams found in his research of Freedom Summer participants that "Perhaps what shocked the volunteers most was the depth of federal complicity in maintaining Mississippi's system of segregation."<sup>109</sup> He provided a table in his book that shows the effect of Freedom Summer on the volunteer's perception of various government agencies. Of the 197 participants he surveyed, 73% said their experience lowered their estimate of the FBI.<sup>110</sup>

Children from the Old Left were undoubtedly part of that 27% whose opinion of the federal agency did not change. These activists, who already had a very low opinion of the FBI, were not surprised by their actions. But the effect on the non-leftists was

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., xv, 120.

<sup>108</sup> Lisa Cozzens, "Freedom Rides," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.watson.org/~lisa/blackhistory/civilrights-55-65/freeride.html>, (accessed October 19, 2010); Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 120.

<sup>109</sup> McAdams, *Freedom Summer*, 127.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 129.

traumatic. Karen Jo Koonan described how many non-leftist volunteers were shaken during the summer as they witnessed for the first time the moral bankruptcy of America's political, social, and justice system. Volunteers realized the country was facing a problem more serious and widespread than just a few ignorant racists. Activists now understood racism was deeply ingrained in the political, economic, and social makeup of the United States. Koonan wrote that in Mississippi she experienced for the first time "political violence and government indifference at best and complicity at worst."<sup>111</sup>

While white activists were in the South, parents constantly worried about their safety, particularly after the disappearance of the three civil rights workers in June of 1964. All parents were fearful for their children's security regardless of their personal commitment to civil rights. But for non-leftists, whose parents did not support their children, it was painful to go against their family's wishes. Chude Allen remarked that her parents did not want her to volunteer for SNCC and tried to change her mind, "I knew my parents were terrified for my safety, but ... If they denied their permission, they would refute all they professed to believe about God and justice and love."<sup>112</sup> Marie Gertge remembered, "At 19, against the wishes of my family in Colorado, I carried my sense of human rights [south] and will always recall my experience of the highlight of my activism."<sup>113</sup> Pam Parker wrote a letter to her church "Why I Am Going to Mississippi"

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<sup>111</sup> Karen Jo Koonan, "The Civil Rights Movement Veterans," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/koonank.htm>.

<sup>112</sup> Chude Pam Parker Allen, "The Civil Rights Movement Veterans," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/info/chudexp.htm>.

<sup>113</sup> E. Marie Gertge, "The Civil Rights Movement Veterans," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/marieg.htm>, (accessed November 18, 2010).

that thanked family and friends for their prayerful support even though they could not understand her actions.<sup>114</sup>

At times Old Left parents visited non-left families in hopes of explaining why their children were participating in the movement. Jane Adams, who was working in Harmony community in Leake County during the summer of 1964, roomed with a non-leftist young woman whose parents had disowned her. Adams' folks tried to convince the roommate's parent that Freedom Summer was a respectable, positive endeavor and they should welcome their daughter back into their home.<sup>115</sup>

In contrast, for the most part, children from the Old Left had the advantage of their parents' approval for their activism while non-leftists had to deal with their parents' condemnation and anger. Though anxious for their children's wellbeing, radical parents expected their families to be involved in the movement. Young leftists were raised with their parents' example of civil rights activism and they knew it was their duty and privilege to support civil rights organizations. RDB Debbie Amis Bell stated that her mother, "made a considerable contribution to fighting racism through her community work...She raised her children with this same spirit, and all five of us played some part in the CRM."<sup>116</sup> RDB Bruce Hartford remembered when he "became active in the movement — intellectually, ideologically, politically, my family situation was much better than many of other civil rights workers whose families disowned them, whose

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<sup>114</sup>Parker, "The Civil Rights Movement Veterans."

<sup>115</sup>Adams in *Prairie Power*, 59.

<sup>116</sup>Bell, "A Young Communist," 56.

attitude was: "How dare you?"<sup>117</sup> RDB Daniel Safran remembered his parents being "thrilled to see him carry on the values they cherished and said so often... They [regularly] asked for updates and praised me for my efforts."<sup>118</sup> After RDB Dorothy Zellner was arrested after a protest, her father proudly showed his friends a newspaper clipping of Dorothy in jail.<sup>119</sup> RDB W (first and last name withheld) always felt her parents' encouragement of her activism while Melissa's (last name withheld) family was so supportive, friends would come to her house and tell her how lucky she was to have such enlightened parents.<sup>120</sup> RDB Fatima Cortez's parents paid for her airfare to the South and told her to always call collect while she was participating in the movement.<sup>121</sup> RDB Victoria Oritz, whose mother helped fundraise for civil rights organizations, stated, "My mother was completely and absolutely behind our decision to go to Mississippi. I am sure she was scared because of the threat of violence, but she never conveyed anything but total support. She was very proud of us."<sup>122</sup> RDB Joanne Grant, Joni Rabinowitz's mother, helped found the New York Friends of SNCC and was very active in fundraising and general support. Grant also wrote articles in *The Guardian* supporting

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<sup>117</sup> Bruce Hartford, "Family," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement, Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/nars/bruce1.htm>, (accessed November 23, 2010).

<sup>118</sup> Daniel Safran, Email with the Author, 23, November, 2010.

<sup>119</sup> Zellner, "My Real Vocation," 314.

<sup>120</sup> W (first name and last name withheld, "Introducing Ourselves 1982," Melissa (last name withheld), "The Politics of Relationships," in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 29, 86.

<sup>121</sup> Cortez, Email with the Author, 10, May, 2010.

<sup>122</sup> Oritz, Email with the Author, 11, November, 2010.

the movement and in a *New York Times* poll of national college campuses she was voted as one of three writers whom students read most regularly. In addition to her work in the North, Grant also taught at a Jackson, MS Freedom School in 1964.<sup>123</sup>

Old Left parents did not view activism as a gendered activity, but demanded it of their children regardless of sex. During childhood, leftist daughters witnessed mothers financially support families, challenge party sexism, demonstrate, protest, and be incarcerated. They saw their moms stand up to strangers, neighbors, police, and even the FBI to protect their families. Inspired by their mothers' activism, bolstered by their own childhood participation, and empowered by their dedication to improve society, female radicals were highly dedicated workers and prominent leaders during the 1960s. RDB Fatima Cortez explained after watching her mom work with Coretta Scott King and serve as the chairwoman of Northwest New York CORE that she was determined to make her own contributions. Cortez helped her mom create banners for the March on Washington and signed up with CORE for Freedom Summer right after high school graduation. Later during her time in the South, Cortez started a newsletter called "Freedom News" that documented CORE activities in Northern and Southern Louisiana, created the Freedom Schools in Jonesboro and Monroe, registered voters, canvassed the local neighborhoods, and spoke at church services.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Joanne Grant, "Peek Around the Mountain" in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, Faith Holsaert and Dorothy Zellner, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 304, 307. The two other authors polled in the top three were C. Wright Mills, Herbert Marcuse.

<sup>124</sup> Fatima Cortez, "The Civil Rights Movement Veterans," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/cortezf.htm>; Email with the Author, 10, May, 2010.



### **Radical Contributions**

The majority of non-leftist whites who participated in civil rights organizations joined during Freedom Summer 1964. Prior to this project, activists from Old Left backgrounds were trailblazers and often the first whites working in the different civil rights organizations across the South. At the age of nineteen RDB Faith Holsaert was one of the first white women to join SNCC and do field work with the Albany Project and the only white woman working in southwest Georgia during SNCC's precursor to the much larger Freedom Summer movement. Holsaert had been demonstrating against segregation since high school and was committed to SNCC. During the summer, Holsaert canvassed, recorded data, and worked with high school students to establish a voter registration campaign.<sup>125</sup> Holsaert returned in the summer of 1963 and felt skilled enough to start her own registration program with another woman 35 miles away from Albany. While on their own the two women were often followed by racists who circled them with shotguns slung over their shoulders.<sup>126</sup> Like Holsaert, RDB Harriet Tanzman was also a trailblazer in her region. Other than one other white woman, Tanzman was the only white worker in Selma, Alabama before the nation focused on the city after the Selma march of 1965.<sup>127</sup>

One of the most famous leftist activists was RDB Joni Rabinowitz, daughter of well-known Communist lawyer Victor Rabinowitz, who defended Fidel Castro, Alger

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<sup>125</sup> Schultz, *Going South*, 45, 46, 48.

<sup>126</sup> Faith Holsaert, "Resistance U" in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 189.

<sup>127</sup> Schultz, *Going South*, 82

Hiss, Paul Robeson, and later Fidel Castro. Daughter and father joined forces when Joni was arrested in 1963 in Albany for allegedly violating the rights of a federal juror when the local SNCC group, ignorant of the man's status as a juror, targeted his store as the site of a boycott. Even though Joni was not even at the boycott protest (another SNCC member was picketing that day) she was targeted because of her Jewish background and her radical, leftist father. In addition to being arrested when she was absent from the scene of the crime, Rabinowitz, the only white defendant, was named the ringleader of the group and indicted for "inciting the colored population to acts of war and violence against the white population," a charge that carried a five year sentence.<sup>128</sup> While in jail the Albany Nine, as they came to be called, held a hunger strike to protest their arrest.<sup>129</sup> In a letter home Joni informed her parents, "I might not write for awhile 'cause I'm getting weak from not eating...people are talking about a 60-day sentence...I don't think I could make it – it's rough and we've only been in almost 8 days."<sup>130</sup> When Victor Rabinowitz came to defend his daughter, he brought his partner Leonard Boudin, whose daughter Kathy was also involved in the Civil Rights Movement. The two lawyers presented a case built upon extensive documentation of the racist and improper selection of the jury and Joni was eventually acquitted.<sup>131</sup>

For leftists without famous radical lineages, RDB Dorothy Zellner is probably the best-known contributor after Mickey Schwerner. Like Schwerner, Zellner drew from a

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<sup>128</sup>Ibid., 51, 54.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., *Going South*, 52. According to Joni Rabinowitz's cell mate Miriam Cohen, Rabinowitz introduced this strategy to get out of jail so she could visit her boyfriend.

<sup>130</sup>Rabinowitz, *Unrepentant Leftist*, 257.

<sup>131</sup>Holsaert, "Resistance U," 190, 192, 193.

history of childhood activism that prepared her for future contributions as a key participant in SNCC. While a child, Zellner protested during the 1950s against racism, the Rosenberg conviction, and the incarceration of the Smith Act victims.<sup>132</sup> Individuals who later joined SNCC after meeting Zellner described her as a “sophisticated and worldly woman.”<sup>133</sup> Non-leftist Jane Bond Moore said she learned about politics and class warfare while working with Zellner in the Atlanta SNCC office and was impressed by her determination to picket the Cuban Missile Crisis even though it brought the wrath of Southern Regional Council (SRC) down on her.<sup>134</sup> In the summer of 1960 Zellner went for nonviolent training with CORE and was arrested on her first day of demonstrating. When she joined SNCC James Forman immediately noticed Zellner’s potential and put her right to work.<sup>135</sup> Zellner was instrumental in the production of SNCC’s newspaper, *The Student Voice* through her work with Julian Bond. This publication was crucial to the life of SNCC and was one of the main ways SNCC exposed southern injustice and brutality to the organization’s northern supporters. It also helped unify the community, built morale among the workers, and help activists feel their work

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<sup>132</sup> Dorothy M. Zellner, “Proletariat and Me: A Memoir in Progress,” in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 82.

<sup>133</sup> Jane Bond Moore “A SNCC Blue Book” in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, Faith Holsaert and Dorothy Zellner, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010). 327.

<sup>134</sup> Moore “A SNCC Blue Book,” 329. Zellner originally started her activism with the Southern Regional Council (SRC), one of the movement’s introductory channels through which civil rights organizations transitioned students into more direct civil rights involvement.

<sup>135</sup> Schultz, *Going South*, 6, 33.

was reaching a larger audience concerned about their safety and their success.<sup>136</sup> While Zellner's important work and access to the inner circle of SNCC leadership was partially due to her role as Julian Bond's "deputy" and her husband Bob Zellner's leading role in the organization, she would not have been selected to fill such important positions if she did not bring the skills and experience necessary to fulfill that role.

Zellner described her time in the Civil Rights Movement as the most "horrible, most miserable nerve-wracking experiences."<sup>137</sup> At one protest in Danville, VA in August 1963 dubbed "Bloody Monday" because of a brutal attack that left 48 of the 65 demonstrators injured. High-power hoses were turned on the protestors, hoses with such force they knocked participants' shoes off. Zellner, caught in the spray, was literally washed under a car. When Zellner crawled out from beneath the vehicle a police officer bludgeoned her on the head with his baton.<sup>138</sup> Danny Lyon, SNCC's staff photographer, took a picture of a dazed, barefooted-Zellner holding a bandage to her head while giving an affidavit to James Forman.<sup>139</sup>

In addition to her fieldwork, Zellner served as the deputy of communications for director Julian Bond. As a result it was her job to work shifts on the WATS line in the SNCC base of operations office in Greenwood, MS, keep track of all the workers on the

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 71.

<sup>138</sup> Danny Lyon, *Memories of the Southern Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 63; Zellner, *The Wrong Side of Murder Creek*, 236.

<sup>139</sup> Lyon, *Memories of the Southern Civil Rights Movement*, 64.

Freedom Summer projects, and establish public relations with northern donors.<sup>140</sup> In her position Zellner heard about the bomb threats, mass arrests, physical harassment, beatings, mob violence, and gun wounds that occurred during Freedom Summer. The project's casualty list for those three months in 1964 included four workers killed, four critically wounded, 37 churches bombed or burned, and 30 homes or businesses torched or bombed, and 1,000 arrests. Another volunteer described the atmosphere of summer 1964 as the, "heart of darkness, the undying core of racist resistance, where even the bravest protestors sucked in fear with every breath."<sup>141</sup> Even though it was the hardest experience of her life, Zellner persisted with her work, drawing on her radical roots for support and strength.<sup>142</sup> As a child activist during the McCarthy era she had been dismayed when her efforts to stop the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenbergs. Confronted with the same threats of failure during her civil rights activism, Zellner persisted in her efforts regardless of setbacks and danger.

While some leftists played more prominent roles, others were rank-and-file workers. RDB Victoria Ortiz went down to Mississippi after Freedom Summer at the beginning of September when many northern students headed back to campus for fall semester. She and her husband started and taught at a number of Freedom Schools and opened a library in the offices of the Jackson Project that featured a collection of books on liberation and revolutions. Ortiz remembered that in addition to the local residents, students from nearby colleges and university would come to checkout books too liberal to

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<sup>140</sup>Zellner, *The Wrong Side of Murder Creek*, 253. Zellner "My Real Vocation," 322.

<sup>141</sup>Hayden, *Reunion*, 53.

<sup>142</sup>Schultz, *Going South*, 71.

be included in their official repositories. While teaching at the Freedom Schools, Ortiz used the educational methods of her alma maters, the Downtown Community School and Elisabeth Irwin High School. Freedom School teachers and students addressed each other by their first names to stress the democratic equality of the classroom and students were taught to question everything. Ortiz stated, “I’m sure that non-RDB Freedom School teachers were interactive, dynamic, innovative etc., but I am certain that my own personal propensities to that style were definitely encouraged by my own experience at schools that had valued that teaching style.”<sup>143</sup>

### **Jewish Radicals**

Ortiz, Rabinowitz, Zellner and other leftists demonstrate the variety of white participants attracted to the Civil Rights Movement. Thus to categorize white workers as a homogenous group overlooks the diversity of civil rights activists and fails to explain why white supremacy groups, the Ku Klux Klan in particular, were so enraged by leftists’ presence in the South. The Klan specifically targeted participants from Old Left families because of their radical politics and activist background. To understand the KKK’s multilayered hatred of leftists requires looking specifically at the heavy representation of Jews. Jewish activists were a disproportionately high contingent of the white participants in civil rights organizations. Nearly half of the civil rights attorneys who went south were Jews, more than half of the white Freedom Riders were Jews, and nearly two-thirds of the white Freedom Summer volunteers were Jews. The Jewish community was also

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<sup>143</sup> Ortiz, Email with the Author, 11, November, 2010.

financially committed to the movement and generously donated to NAACP, CORE, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and other civil rights organizations.<sup>144</sup>

Michael Staub in his book *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (2002) discussed social activism in the Jewish community that persisted long after it was in their economic interest to do so.<sup>145</sup> Staub examined how this commitment divided the Jewish community between those who felt a commitment to exploited groups, and those who believed Jews should confine their activism to their own community. For those Jews who continued to support liberal causes, historians attribute this disproportionate participation by Jewish activists to Jewish traditions that emphasize an obligation to help oppressed people.<sup>146</sup> Others attribute it to a history of involvement in the Socialist Party and the Communist movement since and before immigration to the United States. Regardless of the diversity of their political commitments, Jewish participants were united in their support of the Old Left and this activism separated them from the predominantly Christian community.<sup>147</sup>

While most secular Jews learned these values from secular schools, radical literature, or their Old Left parents, practicing Jews heard it from religious sources or the liberal summer camps they attended. After the foundational civil rights demonstrations in the 1950s, supportive rabbis told their congregations to get involved in the protests. This

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<sup>144</sup> Samuel Heilman, *Portrait of American Jews: The Last Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 85, 86.

<sup>145</sup> Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 5.

<sup>146</sup> Cheryl Greenberg, "Negotiating Coalition: Black and Jewish Civil Rights Agencies in the Twentieth Century," in *Struggles in the Promised Land: Toward a History of Black-Jewish Relations in the United States*, Jack Salzman and Cornel West, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 478.

<sup>147</sup> Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 57, 60.

1958 sermon from a Virginia pulpit admonished, “When those who are not afraid to speak...sound like a voice crying in the wilderness - it is our moral obligation as Jews not to desist from being a light unto the nation...I am afraid of silence...I will not be silenced!...The Jew cannot remain silent to injustice.”<sup>148</sup> Leftists, and non-leftists were joined in their knowledge of historical Jewish activism and a sense of duty to participate in the struggle for equal rights. Staub argued this sense of responsibility was a powerful belief in Jewish culture, even if it was not factually true and did not animate all Jews. Regardless of its historical accuracy, it was a significant influence on young liberal and radical Jewish activists.<sup>149</sup>

However, while Jewish youths from the Old Left enjoyed the support of their radical communities, non-leftists often did not. Staub documents how non-radical Jews coming of age in the Fifties and Sixties were bombarded with mixed messages about whether or not to participate in social activism. The rise of a “liberal anticommunist consensus” ostracized the Jewish Left from the Jewish community as suspected communists were purged from all major Jewish organizations. Conservative Jewish groups stated that Jewishness and Communism were incompatible and increasingly called into questions the activist connection between the Jewish and African American communities, as seen with their mixed reaction to the Brown v. Board ruling.<sup>150</sup> While in the North, Jews continued their civil rights activism, few in the South were willing to

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<sup>148</sup> P. Allen Krause, “Rabbis and Negro Rights in the South, 1954-1967,” in *Strangers and Neighbors: Relations Between Blacks and Jews in the United States*, Maurianne Adams and John Bracey, eds. (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 547.

<sup>149</sup> Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 115, 141.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 10, 22, 52, 54.



align themselves with desegregation efforts, fearful of receiving a communist taint. As a result of the southern liberal and conservative Jews' retraction from civil rights causes, radical Jews were bitter critics of Jews in the South.<sup>151</sup>

Non-leftist Jews who decided to participate in the Civil Rights Movement regardless of their parents' and communities' support ranged from Orthodox to atheist. And while the non-radicals and radicals might have shared the same cultural values, at times they differed in their motivation for participating. With their involvement, non-leftists felt they finally could act on values learned since childhood. Leftists, on the other hand, felt they had been fighting for these values for years. Their experience had prepped them for Sixties activism while other Jews were just starting to get involved. David Gilbert, who was raised in an upper-middle class Jewish family, exemplified this newness to activism:

[I] grew up assuming things like food, shelter, good education, medical care, that that's what everyone got in American democracy...I grew up taking religion seriously. I grew up taking what they taught about democracy seriously... And then the Civil Rights Movement started and I said, wait a second, this isn't a democracy and it isn't equal opportunity... I'd never been in touch or even knew anybody that came from the Old Left or what that meant. I guess a lot of people in New York grew up knowing people like that. I didn't.<sup>152</sup>

Whether from radical or liberal parents, Jewish participants were a minority in the Christian South where Jews made up less than one percent of the population. While white supremacy groups like the KKK were rabidly anti-Semitic, the rest of the white community had a somewhat ambivalent attitude toward Jews. Due to the South's Protestant fundamentalism that had its roots in the Old Testament, on occasion Jews were

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<sup>151</sup> Schultz, *Going South*, 9.

<sup>152</sup> Gilbert, Oral History Collection, Folder 1: 1, 2, 5.

lauded as God's chosen people.<sup>153</sup> There are even accounts of devout Christians embracing, Jews and venerating them as members of the original biblical race. On the other hand, Jews were also vilified as Christ killers and faced anti-Semitism from both the white and black communities.<sup>154</sup> As a result, Jewish participants were especially weary of going to the South. Don Jelinek stated, "Mississippi was Nazi Germany with a Southern accent and I was a Jew voluntarily flying to the crematorium."<sup>155</sup>

Recognizing the region's anti-Semitism, Freedom Summer organizers worried about Jews' safety in Southern society. As a result, participants were questioned during training if they were Jewish in order to prepare them for the extra animosity specifically directed at them.<sup>156</sup> Mendy Samstein, a SNCC worker so effective Stokely Carmichael called him one in a million, knew white southerners would hate him because of his Jewishness.<sup>157</sup> Like many Jews, Samstein still volunteered for Freedom Summer. He explained his decision as, "I've made my peace with the situation. If you want the program to be successful, you have to go where the people are."<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>154</sup> Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 28.

<sup>155</sup> Don Jelinek, "Wall Street Lawyer Goes South," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/nars/jelinek.htm>, (accessed March 7, 2010).

<sup>156</sup> Sandra Adickes *The Legacy of a Freedom School* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 48, 67.

<sup>157</sup> Douglas Martin, "Mendy Samstein, 68, Dies; Championed Civil Rights" *New York Times*, 25 January, 2007. [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/25/obituaries/25samstein.html?\\_r=2&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/25/obituaries/25samstein.html?_r=2&oref=slogin), (accessed May 9, 2010).

<sup>158</sup> Adickes, *Legacy of a Freedom School*, 48.

Jewish participants also attracted animosity from some African Americans. Religious differences at times caused tension between the volunteers and African American communities, making the topic a taboo subject during SNCC activities. Sandra Adickes found her Freedom School students were uncomfortable discussing anti-Semitism. In class the students were reading Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, which contained anti-Semitic statements. When Adickes tried to get her class to discuss the subject, the students hesitated. During her time in Hattiesburg, Adickes had heard anti-Semitic comments, but she believed the comments were made "based on very little knowledge of Jews, despite the existence of a significant Jewish population in Hattiesburg and the presence of many Jewish volunteers in Hattiesburg and in the rest of Mississippi."<sup>159</sup> While Adickes said the students' reluctance to discuss the matter was unclear to her, perhaps the children were reluctant to admit they were familiar with similar slurs.

One group who publically and enthusiastically acknowledged their anti-Semitism was the Klan. The KKK's hatred of Jews was second only to their hatred of African Americans. White Knights feared Jewish domination, in many ways seeing their expulsion from the South as tantamount to a Holy Crusade.<sup>160</sup> Prior to the arrival of the civil rights activists the KKK had relatively few Jewish targets. Jews in the South were less than one percent of the total population with approximately 200,000 Jews in the region.<sup>161</sup> The majority were middle or upper-middle class merchants who depended on

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>160</sup> Marsh, *God's Long Hot Summer*, 8, 50.

<sup>161</sup> Krause, "Rabbis and Negro Rights in the South, 1954 – 1967," 540.

the larger community for their financial security.<sup>162</sup> To intimidate Jews, the KKK torched synagogues and harassed local rabbis while the Christian community silently looked on, doing little to stop the violence.<sup>163</sup> In fact, from the years 1954 to 1959, ten percent of the region's bombings occurred at Jewish community centers, rabbis' houses, and synagogues.<sup>164</sup> Melissa Fay Greene's *Temple Bombing* describes the destruction of Atlanta's oldest synagogue by white supremacists after Rabbi Rothschild publicly supported the 1954 *Brown v. Board* ruling. While there were those in southern Jewish communities who sympathized with African Americans in the Fifties and Sixties, most were hesitant to publicly support their cause. Jewish communities' small numbers kept Jews' participation in the movement to individual acts instead of group efforts. In his work *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights*, Clive Webb stated "Although privately many Jews opposed segregation, publicly they allowed their silence to be taken as an uncritical endorsement of the status quo."<sup>165</sup> Northern Jewish activists resented what they perceived as southern Jews' support of Jim Crow and berated them for their lack of participation in the movement. For Jewish leftists, who often attributed their Jewish culture and historical fight for civil rights as their motivation for activism, it was especially discouraging. Dorothy Zellner remembered working for CORE in New Orleans and visiting religious groups to ask for their support for civil rights. When

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<sup>162</sup> Seth Forman, "The Unbearable Whiteness of Being Jewish: Desegregation in the South and the Crisis of Jewish liberation," in *Strangers and Neighbors: Relations Between Blacks and Jews in the United States* by Maurianne Adams and John Bracey, eds. (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 620.

<sup>163</sup> Marsh, *God's Long Summer*, 104, 105.

<sup>164</sup> Schultz, *Going South*, 95.

<sup>165</sup> Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, xv.

speaking with the local rabbi she said, “‘Rabbi, I’m Jewish. I’m down here to help.’”  
When the rabbi told her to “get out,” Zellner remembered that made her a “very bitter  
girl, very bitter.”<sup>166</sup>

When encountering southern Jews’ reluctance to support civil rights, leftists refused to capitulate and maintained their activist stance. RDB Carl Bernstein witnessed first hand southern Jews’ refusal to help desegregation efforts and the effect his activism had on the wider Jewish community. As a practicing Jew, Bernstein was admitted into the largest Jewish youth organization in the world, Aleph Zadik Aleph (AZA). During a train trip to the organization’s summer convention in the Great Smokey Mountains, Bernstein, who by then was president of the international organization, had an opportunity to contrast his Old Left activism with that of the local southern Jewish community. When the group’s train broke down, the delegates decided to eat at the local station’s “Blacks Only” diner. A white cop arrived and ordered them to leave. Bernstein and his group refused to go. The policeman was soon backed by a large contingent of the Greensboro police force that threatened to arrest the entire group. Bernstein announced to his friends that those who did not want to be arrested should get back on the train, but nobody moved. Bernstein was trembling but remained seated, even when the chief of police brought in a well-known Jewish woman from the area who told the group they were endangering the Jewish community and urged them back onto the train. Bernstein remembered, “Again, I said that anybody who didn’t want to be arrested should get back

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<sup>166</sup>Schultz, *Going South*, 97.

on the train. Nobody moved. For the next four hours, the cops just watched, until the train got repaired. Then we reboarded, and, triumphant, headed for Hendersonville.”<sup>167</sup>

In his book, Webb described the type of southern Jew who urged Bernstein and the students to reboard the train. He writes “By always watching themselves and never engaging in activities that might antagonize members of the dominant society, [they] hoped to avoid public discomfort.”<sup>168</sup> As a result of southern Jews’ attitude toward civil rights, the police chief in Greensboro was accustomed to Jews who obediently accepted the racial status quo. The officers’ interaction with a strident leftist who refused to accept Jim Crow laws and inspired his Jewish peers to do the same provided a different example of Jewish behavior.

Interestingly, Bernstein’s activism also highlighted national Jewish organizations’ reluctance to publically support civil rights. Bernstein’s confrontation in North Carolina was brought to the attention of AZA’s parent organization, B’nai B’rith. B’nai B’rith was the largest Jewish fraternal organization in the world and had many southern members. Up until this point, the organization had carefully avoided the question of segregation and avoided any direct action that involved confrontation with segregation rules or law officials. As a result, news traveled quickly about Bernstein’s protest in the train station and by the next morning the national office was informed. That same day Bernstein was summoned before the adult leadership of the convention. During the meeting he informed the board that Jewish youth felt strongly about civil rights. Bernstein remembers that his activism was “a scandal – there really is no other word for it – because B’nai B’rith had

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<sup>167</sup> Carl Bernstein, *Loyalties: A Son’s Memoir* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 152.

<sup>168</sup> Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, xiv, xv.

assiduously limited its role to passing resolutions and encouraging quiet community work by its Anti-Defamation League. Nothing more.”<sup>169</sup> Not long after Bernstein’s actions B’nai B’rith passed resolutions affirming the organization’s commitment to civil rights.<sup>170</sup> While Bernstein’s activism and his defense of racial equality were not the sole reason for the organization’s change in policy, it did influence their decision to openly support the movement. Bernstein brought his confrontational Old Left activism to a Jewish organization that was more comfortable with covert support.

As the Civil Rights Movement grew and Jewish RDBs and their radical peers rose to more prominent positions, the Klan became convinced the movement was a Jewish Communist conspiracy to take over the South. As self-appointed defenders of Christianity, the KKK was determined to ward off the invaders. With this in mind Imperial Wizard Sam Bower, who considered himself deeply religious and hated pagan academics, believed God sanctioned the Knights’ attacks on civil rights workers.<sup>171</sup> With the arrival of Jewish activists in his communities for Freedom Summer, Bowers declared a Holy War. His address to the local KKK encouraged the attack to come on three Freedom Summer workers; Mickey Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney. Bower advised, “We must counterattack the individual leaders at night...Any personal attacks on the enemy should be carefully planned to include *only* the leaders...of the

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<sup>169</sup> Bernstein, *Loyalties*, 153. For a history of the B’nai B’rith, please see Deborah Dash Moore, *B’nai B’rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981). While Moore does not directly reference this case, she does look at the organization’s initial reluctance to publically support the Civil Rights Movement.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>171</sup> Marsh, *God’s Long Hot Summer*, 3,4.

enemy forces. These attacks...should, of course, be as severe as circumstances and conditions will permit.”<sup>172</sup> Knowing that soon the activists would be coming south for Freedom Summer, that spring the KKK stepped up its recruiting efforts. In April of 1964, the Klan distributed a pamphlet explaining the organization to potential members. The publication concluded with this apocalyptic declaration, “The issue is clearly one of personal, physical, SELF-DEFENSE or DEATH for the American Anglo-Saxons... We need your help right away. Get your Bible and PRAY! You will hear from us.”<sup>173</sup> Jews and leftists were seen as threats to “pure Americanism” and Bowers’ calls to action were answered throughout the South.<sup>174</sup>

By the 1960s the KKK’s infiltration of legislative and judicial politics on the state, municipal, and country level allowed Klan members to act with impunity. SNCC volunteers quickly realized the extent of Klan power when they drove into smaller cities and were greeted by signs that said, “The KKK welcomes you to...”<sup>175</sup> Kathleen Blee wrote in her study *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* that, starting in the Twenties and until the Klan’s demise in the 1970s, “The Klan’s power was devastating precisely because it was so well integrated into the normal everyday life of white Protestants.”<sup>176</sup> This integration was exemplified by the Klan’s representation in local law enforcement offices. The Neshoba County sheriff, Cecil Price, who arrested

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<sup>172</sup>Ibid., 66.

<sup>173</sup>Cagin and Dray, *We Are Not Afraid*, 165.

<sup>174</sup>Nancy Maclean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 5.

<sup>175</sup>Zellner, *The Wrong Side of Murder Creek*, 152.

<sup>176</sup>Kathleen Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 3, 176.



Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner, was a member of the Klan. Price was responsible for notifying the local Klan leader Edgar Ray Killen who then masterminded the death of the three men.<sup>177</sup>

For participants, the real danger came when activists were both Jewish and from Old Left families. Equal in their hatred to Jews were white supremacists' hatred of Communists. Freedom Summer training simulations of mob attacks included the epithet "Communist bastards" to acquaint participants with the accusation.<sup>178</sup> RDBs' radical connections in particular made it possible to smear the entire movement as a communist conspiracy. Repeatedly the white communities accused local protestors of being bamboozled by Jewish communists. Southerners even labeled the disappearance of Schwerner, Goodman and Chaney as a Communist hoax.<sup>179</sup> All civil rights activities were attributed to Russia and the Soviets' goal of invading America.<sup>180</sup> KKK propaganda played on pre-existing Communist fears and named the Klan as the sole organization capable of destroying the enemy. The White Knights claimed Reds were sent south to kill Christians, a socialist take-over was eminent, and a "nigger-communist invasion" was mobilizing at the border.<sup>181</sup> To heighten fears, various newspapers

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<sup>177</sup> Howard Ball, *Justice in Mississippi: The Murder Trial of Edgar Ray Killen* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 36. Not until 2005 were any men convicted for the murders.

<sup>178</sup> Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 19.

<sup>179</sup> Florence Mars, *Witness in Philadelphia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 89, 90.

<sup>180</sup> Mars, *Witness in Philadelphia*, xvi, xvii, 55, 81, 120.

<sup>181</sup> Foy Dan Valentine, *A Historical Study of Southern Baptists and Race Relations 1917 – 1947* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 129.

frequently warned “The Reds are coming.”<sup>182</sup> Locals were inflamed by the propaganda, connecting their anti-Communism with anti-Semitism.

As a result of the media blitz, the South was on the lookout for Jewish leftists. Law enforcement officers constantly asked civil rights workers if they were Party members. RDB Bruce Hartford remembered one time when the sheriff questioned if he were a Communist. Hartford asked the cop what he meant by that term. The sheriff replied, “A communist is a damn New York kike that wants our nigras to register!” Hartford stated that except for the fact that he was from Los Angeles, the sheriff had identified him correctly.<sup>183</sup> When harassers called the different SNCC headquarters the caller would inquire if they were talking to a Communist, convinced the entire organization was full of activists from the Old Left.<sup>184</sup>

The extra persecution activists with Old Left backgrounds faced was exemplified by the killing of RDB Mickey Schwerner, RDB Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney during Freedom Summer. The murders show both the depth of the KKK’s hatred for radical Jews and the organization’s recognition of leftists’ effective activism. Bowers personally approved of Schwerner’s murder, hoping it would scare away northern activists who were meddling in southern affairs. After Schwerner was killed, Bower “appeared ‘gleeful,’ elated that his Christian patriots had successfully, ‘planned and

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<sup>182</sup> Marsh, *God’s Long Hot Summer*, 71, 59, 65, 100.

<sup>183</sup> Bruce Hartford, “Sheriff Jim Clark and the Commie,” *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/nars/bruce1.htm>, (accessed November 23, 2010).

<sup>184</sup> Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 115.

carried out the execution of a Jew.’”<sup>185</sup> Schwerner’s murder removed the highest placed white activist in the entire South.<sup>186</sup>

The lives of Schwerner and Goodman were similar to many children from Old Left families. Mickey Schwerner attended Walden School with his fellow radical peers.<sup>187</sup> He was the son of Nathan Schwerner who was a partner in a wig manufacturing company and a member of the War Resisters League. Anne Schwerner, his mother, was a high school biology teacher.<sup>188</sup> Schwerner’s parents supported racial equality and took their children to Negro Baseball League games to cheer on the players.<sup>189</sup> After briefly attending Michigan State University, Schwerner graduated from Cornell University and went on to do graduate work at the School of Social Work at Columbia University. In 1963 he was a member of CORE’s Lower East Side office. With his wife Rita, also an activist, he was hired by CORE to open community centers in Mississippi’s Meridian County. He was the first white activist in the area.<sup>190</sup>

Upon the Schwerners’ arrival in Meridan, the KKK immediately tagged Mickey as a successful troublemaker and interfered with his programs. When arrested and jailed for blocking a crosswalk, the police encouraged the other men in Schwerner’s cell to beat

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<sup>185</sup> Marsh, *God’s Long Summer*, 69.

<sup>186</sup> William Huie, *Three Lives in Mississippi* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 44.

<sup>187</sup> Cagin and Seth, *We Are Not Afraid*, 52

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>189</sup> Susan Klopfer, Fred Klopfer, Barry Klopfer, *Where Rebels Roost: Mississippi Civil Rights Revisited* (Fort Madison, IW: M.S. Orr Klopfer, 2006), 438.

<sup>190</sup> Huie, *Three Lives in Mississippi*, 44, 45.

him up.<sup>191</sup> As Schwerner made inroads into the black community, the Klan photographed Schwerner's car and broadcast its license number and description throughout the county. Knights let it be known they "were laying wait for that bearded Red Jew agitator. We will get him the next time he comes in here."<sup>192</sup> In addition to the vehicle identification, Klansmen pointed Schwerner out to each other so they would know if he were ever an easy target.<sup>193</sup>

Regardless of harassments and threats, Schwerner continued to impress locals with his dedication to their cause. He told local activists at the Mount Zion church that before there was equality between the races, "someone may have to die...I may be the one, but if I do, [pointing to the Sunday School students in the front pew he said] it will be better for these little children."<sup>194</sup> With the help of James Chaney, an experienced local African American activist, he hoped to open a Freedom School. During his time in Mississippi Schwerner's oversight of six counties and construction of a Community Center gave him, as a white man, unprecedented responsibility.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>191</sup>Rita L. Schwerner, "July 29, 1964, Deposition, Hinds County, Mississippi," in *Women and the civil rights movement, 1954-1965*, Davis Houck and David Dixon, eds. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 266.

<sup>192</sup>MIBURN, 21, September, 1964, FBI, Part 1, File 79: 25, <http://vault.fbi.gov/Mississippi%20Burning%20%28MIBURN%29%20Case/Mississippi%20Burning%20%28MIBURN%29%20Case%20Part%201%20of%209/view>, (accessed May 9, 2010).

<sup>193</sup>MIBURN, 21, September, 1964, FBI, Part 4 File 79: 418.

<sup>194</sup>Mars, *Witness in Philadelphia*, 165.

<sup>195</sup>Huie *Three Lives in Mississippi*, 44, 45. Cagin and Seth, *We Are Not Afraid, 141*; Some activists even stated that Schwerner was so influential and successful, that other SNCC and CORE workers adopted his style of dress, foregoing the customary Sunday School attire of the sit-ins and Freedom Riders in favor of the denim overalls and

While the KKK was angry over Schwerner's community center and voter registration, his worst offense was encouraging blacks to attend white churches. To the KKK the purity of the white church was as important as guarding white females.<sup>196</sup> Incensed by Schwerner's activism, his Jewishness, his politics, his beard (the Klan called him "Goatee" or "Whiskers") the KKK set fire to the local Mount Zion Church and brutally attacked its members to set a trap. Schwerner felt responsible for the torching, knowing it was the KKK's hatred of him that motivated the crime.<sup>197</sup> As Freedom Summer plans solidified and southern animosity intensified, Schwerner knew he was in danger. When he and Rita visited his father for a two-day trip in March he confided to his dad he was a "marked man."<sup>198</sup>

Several months later, in June, Andrew Goodman showed up at Oxford, Ohio for his Freedom Summer training workshop. Like Schwerner, Goodman was from New York and attended Walden School. His parents were friends with novelist and Communist Howard Fast and they had been members together in the Communist front League Against War and Fascism organized in 1933. The family bravely challenged the intimidating atmosphere of the Fifties, making it a point to retain friendships with those investigated by HUAC. The Goodmans fraternized with a "who's who" of the Left; Alger Hiss, the blacklisted actor Zero Mostel, and attorney Martin Popper, counsel for the

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Chambray work shirts that fit in more with the working class black communities. This became the unofficial uniform of Freedom Summer. (Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 9).

<sup>196</sup> Marsh, *God's Long, Hot Summer*, 82.

<sup>197</sup> Cagin and Dray, *We Are Not Afraid*, 2,6,13,27.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 268.

Hollywood 10.<sup>199</sup> Goodman learned at an early age the value of free speech, the evil of supplying former Communists' names to investigatory committees, and the need to combat racism and classism. A very active young man, Goodman was a counselor at the Old Left Kittatinny Camp for working class children, attended Bayard Rustin's Youth March for Integrated Schools, and protested New York's World Fair.<sup>200</sup>

Schwerner, who was in charge of helping train the new volunteers before going south, immediately observed and was impressed by Goodman's calm confidence and political awareness.<sup>201</sup> Fellow leader Bob Zellner noted that Goodman seemed more sophisticated and knowledgeable than the other recruits. Zellner even remarked that Andrew seemed to be "an exceptional person."<sup>202</sup> It is possible Schwerner and Goodman bonded over their similar backgrounds. With roughly 14% of Freedom Summer participants coming from Socialist or other leftist organizations, the radicals in the group were a minority that stuck together.<sup>203</sup> Originally Goodman was assigned to be a Freedom School teacher in Vicksburg. But when word arrived about the torched Mt. Zion church, Schwerner realized he would need an experienced and poised activist to run the Freedom School in Meridian. He chose Goodman, who agreed to switch projects. When Goodman arrived in Meridian, it was his first and only day volunteering for CORE. By nightfall he, Schwerner, and Chaney were dead.

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>202</sup> Zellner, *The Wrong Side of Murder Creek*, 247.

<sup>203</sup> Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 50.

Leftists were such a liability that organizations like the SRC and the NAACP refused to let volunteers with politically radical backgrounds participate and went to great lengths to separate themselves from Communists. When Paul Robeson made his infamous 1949 statement that oppressed African Americans should not fight against the USSR, the NAACP's mouthpiece the *Crisis* ripped into Robeson and rejected him as a spokesperson for African Americans.<sup>204</sup> In addition to excluding individuals, civil rights organizations also turned away such helpful organizations as the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) for fear of being tainted red.<sup>205</sup> The NLG was the first integrated bar association and had been at the forefront of civil liberties cases since the 1930s.<sup>206</sup> Even with its credentials of helping activists fight illegal court cases, the NLG's offers of assistance were refused.

On an individual level, red baiting affected leftist activists. RDB Dorothy Zellner protested the Cuban Missile crisis while working at the SRC. Not long after, she was fired because, as she remembered, "the FBI came around [mentioning her leftist background]. And of course the SRC claimed [the dismissal] had nothing to do with that, but it did."<sup>207</sup> RDB Debbie Amis Bell never revealed her Communist Party membership to SNCC, but she felt it resulted in her expulsion from SNCC because no movement lawyers would take her case and the organization had no choice but to let her go. Bell's

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<sup>204</sup> Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 27, 33.

<sup>205</sup> Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 146

<sup>206</sup> J. Clay Smith, Jr. and Thurgood Marshall, *Emancipation: The Making of the Black Lawyer, 1844 – 1944* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 550; Larry Cefclair and Steven Englund, *The Inquisition of Hollywood: Politics in the Film Communist, 1930 – 1960* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 263.

<sup>207</sup> Schultz, *Going South*, 33.

situation was unique because she was actually a card-carrying member of the Communist Party and considered a legal liability. Activists who simply came from Old Left backgrounds were not excluded.<sup>208</sup>

Parents of non-leftists feared that their children would become tainted by the presence of radicals in the movement. Cathy Cade, whose father was violently against her participation in the SNCC, later learned from her mother that “What worried Daddy as much as your physical safety was that, being a rabid Republican, he was sure you would become a Communist.”<sup>209</sup> Cade’s father was so terrified about his daughter’s political purity that he came down to post Cathy’s bail when she participated in Joni Rabinowitz’s hunger strike while in prison. Prior to her release, Cathy liked to hear stories about Joni’s father Victor Rabinowitz’s activism during the McCarthy Era. This made her dad especially worried and he schmoozed with the local law enforcement officers and collected data about Joni. Cade’s dad then sent the information he accumulated on the Rabinowitizes and their radical influences in the movement to the FBI and law officials in the South.<sup>210</sup>

Even though the SRC, the NAACP, and movement lawyers rejected leftists and their presence worried parents, for the most part SNCC enthusiastically welcomed their involvement. This was attributable to the bravery of Ella Baker, who helped establish SNCC’s ideological platform during its rudimentary stages in 1960. When Bob Moses,

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<sup>208</sup> Bell “A Young Communist,” 60.

<sup>209</sup> Cathy Cade, “The Civil Rights Movement Veterans,” *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/nars/cadec.htm#cademftmam>, (accessed October 19, 2010).

<sup>210</sup> Cade, “The Civil Rights Movement Veterans.”



alternately called Jesus Christ and a Red, was accused of being a Communist by other participants and was pressured to leave, Baker refused to allow red baiting.<sup>211</sup> Her decision to retain Moses was crucial to the success of SNCC as Moses went on to become one of the group's most effective and respected workers. Remembering SNCC's brave stand, Pat Watters, a liberal journalist writing in 1970, acknowledged his own reluctance to accept political radicals. He was one of the many liberal participants genuinely worried the taint of communism would be attached to the movement. He remembered,

We talked seriously in 1964...about whether there had been 'infiltration,' or even –dread thought! – a 'takeover' ... the consensus was that no 'takeover' or even real infiltration had occurred, but that SNCC was endangering the reputation of the movement by refusing to deny it, or even to discuss the question. This was the most exasperating thing of all – their stubborn insistence that if a person believed in integration and was willing to work with them, even risk his life, his past or even present political persuasion made no difference.<sup>212</sup>

When asked why SNCC remained strong in its stance to accept participants from Old Left backgrounds, James Forman, SNCC's Executive Secretary, stated, "We decided that the so-called fights of the Thirties and Forties were not really our fights, although some tried to impose them on us."<sup>213</sup> In an effort to bolster public support, SNCC alerted its members and financial contributors about the red baiting and persecution they experienced in the South. Newsletters were sent out warning Friends of SNCC not to fall prey to southern slander and suspicion. Forman sent a mailing to thousands of SNCC

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<sup>211</sup>Cagin and Dray, *We Are Not Afraid*, 88. Interestingly, Bob Moses was roommates with Bob Cohen, a RDB folksinger, while Moses taught at the Horace Mann School in 1961 (139).

<sup>212</sup>Pat Watters, *Down to Now: Reflections on the Southern Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971), 305, 306.

<sup>213</sup>James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 383.

supporters with a copy of this letter from the local chairman of the National States'

Rights Party:

Mr. Lewis:

June 16, 1964

It is to the credit of the majority of your race in the Dayton area that they had good enough sense to stay away from your Communist race-mixing attempt on Sunday, June 14<sup>th</sup>. They are beginning to wake up to the fact that is immoral, unjust, stupid, against the Laws of Nature (each to his OWN KIND), and absolutely Communist-dictated.

For your information, we had observers at your Communistic "song-fest" and were kept regularly informed as to the actions and general stupidity, not only of the members of your race, but also of the morally rotten outcasts of the White race that went with you. These "White Negroes" are the rottenest of the race-mixing criminals. All race-mixers will some day be brought to justice for their crimes against humanity and all future generations, and since race-mixing is morally more CRIMINAL than MURDER, it would give me great satisfaction if I were selected to sit on such a jury. You are right about one thing – this is going to be a long, hot summer – but the "heat" will be applied to the race-mixing TRASH by the DECENT people who do not believe in racial mongrelization through racial prostitution, which is in violations of all concepts of justice, decency, and Common Sense. When your Communist-oriented GOONS get to Mississippi, I hope they get their just dues as infiltrators [*sic*] of an enemy power, which they will be in FACT.

Charles J. Benner  
Chairman, Unit 42

National States Rights Party.<sup>214</sup>

This letter shows the attacks SNCC endured for their refusal to flush all radical participants from their ranks. Even if the organization had acquiesced to such a measure, most likely communist accusations would have continued. The fact that SNCC refused to condone red baiting made them an even better target.

Since some participants did come from politically radical backgrounds, to an extent the allegations of outside communist agitators were correct. The majority of leftists were out-of-state activists who came to the South with their Old Left politics and

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<sup>214</sup>McAdams, *Freedom Summer*, 149.

helped African Americans fight for enfranchisement and equality as citizens. While leftists realized the accusations' accuracy, other white participants did not think they had a grain of truth. Non-leftist Peter de Lissovoy remembered that:

The Civil Rights Movement was also very much a war of words...the white people were always talking trash...They were always saying something to this effect [that we were communists]. It used to amaze me how often they resorted to such a — to me — bizarre accusation; it was a favorite of theirs...I guess the idea was that it was we "outside agitators" from the North who were communists trying to bamboozle the "good Nigras" of the crackers' fond imagination into communist revolution.<sup>215</sup>

Most white participants did not know there was a history of the Old Left's intervention in the South. Of course children from Old Left families knew of the 1930s attempts to support African American workers, some had parents who had participated in the efforts, but non-leftists were unaware of the historical connection.<sup>216</sup>

Later, de Lissovoy realized there had been some truth in the Southerners' accusations. He stated:

There was some echo of the 1930s there maybe, for the older crackers, that went over my head, to give them the benefit of the doubt. My historical readings after

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<sup>215</sup> Peter de Lissovoy, " 'Outside Agitator' and Other Terms of the Times: Remembering James Daniels," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/nars/peter1.htm>, (accessed March 7, 2010).

<sup>216</sup> During the Depression, the Communist Party unionized southern sharecroppers, demanded fair distribution of jobs and relief aid, defended the Scottsboro Boys, and campaigned against lynchings. The 6th Comintern Congress' declaration in 1928 that African Americans in the rural South were an oppressed nation within a nation, and thus entitled to the rights of self-determination, spurred the Party's efforts towards racial equality. For more about the Party's efforts to include African Americans see Mark Solomon, *Red and Black: Communism and Afro-Americans, 1929 – 1935* (New York: Garland Pub., 1988); Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917 – 1936* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998); Robin Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe, Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Glenda Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919 – 1950* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009).

the fact suggest that for them the link between advocacy of rights for black people and communist revolution was not just something they made up... but there actually were leftwing organizers in the South in the thirties mostly in the union movement who must have been trying to help black people. But to link us young kids to that...just seemed pathetic... We were too young to remember the Red Scare and all of that.<sup>217</sup>

De Lissovoy, not from an Old Left background, might have been too young or too sheltered to remember the Red Scare paranoia that struck post-World War Two. Children raised in these families who were persecuted for their political beliefs, not only remembered the harassment but also used it as motivation for their participation in the Civil Rights Movement. Leftists reacted to these accusations in different ways. Some responded with bravado, like RDB Bruce Hartford who informed the sheriff that he certainly was, except for the New York part, "'A communist...damn New York kike that wants our nigras to register!'"<sup>218</sup> As mentioned earlier, others realized their affiliation with the Old Left would cause trouble for civil rights organization and resulted in expulsions. Most leftists tabled their political radicalism and accepted SNCC's political programs that called for reform, not revolution.

### **Radical Participation in the North**

Leftists who stayed in the North played just as important a role keeping civil rights organizations funded and in the news as those who were on the ground in the South. Their efforts were important contributions to the movement, often securing the necessary financial support for CORE's offices or SNCC's Freedom Schools. Like those

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<sup>217</sup> de Lissovoy, "'Outside Agitator' and Other Terms of the Times."

<sup>218</sup> Hartford, "Sheriff Jim Clark and the Commie".

who went south, northern activists were building on a history of protest. Even though their families were not in the South, parents still expected their children to participate. RDB Ellen Beener remembered civil rights flyers stuck on her family's refrigerator door advertising important protests. Beener recalled that if she "got lazy and wanted to go to the beach [her parents] would say, 'Are you crazy, there's a march to go to, get up!'"<sup>219</sup> Children from Old Left backgrounds supported a variety of organizations and events. RDB Deborah Dash Moore picketed at Woolworths and at the State House in Boston after the four little girls were killed in the 1963 bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church.<sup>220</sup> RDB Daniel Safran joined the NAACP and in the early '60s helped organize pickets at Woolworth stores in Philadelphia. He also worked for the American Friends Service Committee organizing Fair Housing Groups in the Washington DC suburbs and participated in the local chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. In addition Safran helped found the Action Coordinating Committee to End Segregation in the Suburbs (ACCESS) that picketed the owners of large apartment building developments that practiced discrimination.<sup>221</sup>

Leftists were members of Harlem's Parents Committee for Better Education in the early 1950s that demanded the implementation of *Brown v. Board* in its own neighborhoods.<sup>222</sup> RDB R (first and last name withheld) was an organizer and writer for

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<sup>219</sup> Ellen Beener, Interview with the Author, 9 September, 2010.

<sup>220</sup> Deborah Dash Moore, Email with the Author, 6, September, 2010.

<sup>221</sup> Daniel Safran, Email with the Author, 23, November, 2010.

<sup>222</sup> Please see Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodward, eds., *Freedom North: Black Struggles Outside the South, 1940 – 1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) for more about Harlem's Parents Committee for Better Education.

Harlem's CORE chapter.<sup>223</sup> RDB J (first and last name withheld) helped the CORE office fight for fair housing compliances in Harlem by sitting in at City Hall and the Governor's New York City Office.<sup>224</sup> Radicals were members of the New York City Commission on Human Rights that conducted housing testing for discrimination.<sup>225</sup> Many leftists participated in civil rights marches in New York and Washington, D.C., particularly the March on Washington.<sup>226</sup>

This work in the North supported Southern civil rights struggles. RDB Suze Rotolo, who began her civil rights work with Bayard Rustin's Youth March for Integrated Schools in 1958, had the important job of keeping track of Freedom Riders who were arrested or hospitalized.<sup>227</sup> It was imperative that the national office knew the whereabouts of each Freedom Rider to prevent SNCC workers from languishing in southern jails for months with no hope of release. Rotolo's work also included sending out mailings and cataloging incoming donations. After the vicious beating of a white Freedom Rider was captured on film and broadcast around the world, Rotolo said there was a tangible shift in the office atmosphere. She remembered, "You just knew that the

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<sup>223</sup> A (first name and last name withheld), Email with the Author, 1, September, 2010.

<sup>224</sup> J (first and last name withheld) Email with the Author, 9, September 2010.

<sup>225</sup> Cortez, Email with the Author, 10, May, 2010.

<sup>226</sup> Karl Knobler, Interview with the Author, 4, September, 2010; Beener, Interview with the Author, 9 September, 2010; Judy Plapinger, Email with the Author, 7, September, 2010; J (first and last name withheld) Email with the Author, 9, September 2010.

<sup>227</sup> Suze Rotolo, *A Freewheelin' Time: A Memoir of Greenwich Village in the Sixties* (New York: Broadway Books, 2008), 50.

civil rights movement had gone to another level – at last attention would be paid...Civil rights was on everyone's mind.”<sup>228</sup>

Leftists chose not to go south for various reasons. RDB Linda Dehnad felt she did not have the nerves for surviving Mississippi. She called the New York SNCC office and asked them how she could help them instead. SNCC said they needed housing for participants when they came to the city and always could use more funds. In response Dehnad started the Riverside Friends of SNCC and got her neighbors involved to help raise money. At the request of James Forman she also worked on the steering committee of the Friends of SNCC. Dehnad remembered the commitment and intensity of being involved in the movement, even though she was hundreds of miles away. In particular she recalled, “On Bloody Sunday, my dining room was filled with people. We were watching T.V. We just turned on the news. So we're watching the news and there, and somebody said, "Oh my God. That's John [Lewis]. Within 10 minutes, my house was empty. They grabbed their stuff and they went.”<sup>229</sup>

Some leftists decided to stay on the East Coast to raise awareness on their college campuses. RDB Kathy Boudin, whose father Leonard Boudin was Paul Robeson's lawyer, remained at Bryn Mawr during the early Sixties. Boudin soon realized that the student body was ignorant about civil rights and it was her duty to enlighten them. Through group discussions and demonstrations she challenged students to abandon their romanticized perceptions of America and learn about socioeconomic racism. Boudin's

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<sup>228</sup> Rotolo, *A Free Wheelin' Time*, 89.

<sup>229</sup> Linda Dehnad, “Interview/conversation Jimmy Rogers, Linda Dehnad, and Bruce Hartford – Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement meeting, June, 2001,” *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/nars/jimlind1.htm>, (accessed October 19, 2010).

aggressive and persistent efforts influenced many students. Her most ambitious project was in 1964 hosting a conference entitled “Second American Revolution” that featured prominent friends of her parents giving seminars on current race relations in the United States. Speakers extended an invitation included James Forman, director of SNCC and James Farmer, director of CORE and movie mogul Lou Pollak.<sup>230</sup>

Boudin’s activism included her Old Left values of both racial equality and workers’ rights. One of her first activities was to organize the dorms’ African American maids to protest for better working conditions.<sup>231</sup> The disparity between classes was a lesson most young leftists learned, and Boudin had organized against it during high school when she formed a group to paint houses in Harlem.<sup>232</sup> This work continued in college with the maids’ strike and when she helped picket public elementary schools in Chester, PN. Boudin wrote in the college newspaper that, “Twelve hundred Negro children crowd through [Franklin’s] entrance doors every morning. There are no fire escapes, two toilets, and a basement coal bin is the gymnasium. Three classes are held in the boiler room of the housing project.”<sup>233</sup> Even when other students did not want to hear about it, Boudin constantly reminded them of racist class privilege.

Boudin was not the only child from the Old Left at the Seven Sisters starting civil rights protests. Nancy Elaine Stoller was the daughter of progressive New York Jews. Though raised in Virginia, her parents were staunch defenders of desegregation and racial

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<sup>230</sup> Susan Braudy, *Family Circle: The Boudins and the Aristocracy of the Left* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 129; Boudin, Oral History Collection, Folder 10: 345.

<sup>231</sup> Boudin, Oral History Collection, Columbia University, Folder 10: 345.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., Folder 10: 345.

<sup>233</sup> Braudy, *Family Circle*, 131.



equality. When Stoller entered Bryn Mawr as a freshman in 1960, she organized sympathy pickets for the Woolworth sit-ins. Undaunted by the scolding she received from the Dean, Stoller founded a civil rights group on campus. She was also active in Washington DC's Nonviolent Action Group, the Boston Action Group, the Freedom Centers on Virginia's Prince Edward County, The Northern Student Movement, People Against Racism and SNCC. In 1964 she dropped out of grad school to work full time for the SNCC in Arkansas where she coordinated all the Freedom Centers.<sup>234</sup>

On the West Coast, activists from Old Left families started their own groups within the larger civil rights organizations. RDB Bruce Hartford described himself as a nonviolent "militant." In 1963 he decided some of the Los Angeles CORE leadership were too closely aligned with the Democratic Party and too conservative. As a result, 15 to 20 members joined Hartford and formed the Non-Violent Action Committee (N-VAC).<sup>235</sup> The group launched a direct action campaign against housing and schooling integration. They protested Bank of America, Van deKamps Bakery, and other businesses' discriminatory employment practices. The N-VAC members were often jailed for their picketing and sit-ins. Hartford concluded, "Some said that California was 'different' from the South, but after experiencing the tender mercies of the LAPD and a

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<sup>234</sup> Nancy Elaine Stoller, "Bowling in Prince Georges County, Maryland, *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/stoller.htm>, (accessed September 27, 2010).

<sup>235</sup> Bruce Hartford, "A White Mob Comes to Watts," *Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement*, <http://www.crmvet.org/nars/bruce1.htm>, (accessed November 23, 2010).

restaurant owner who hired a mob of white teenagers to attack our picket line in the heart of Watts, I'm not so sure that the difference is as great as folks imagine.”<sup>236</sup>

Some leftists started out on their home turf and then felt experienced enough to head south. RDB Harriet Tanzman was a history major at the University of Wisconsin, a member of the W.E.B. DuBois Club and a volunteer with the local CORE chapter. After hearing about the Freedom Rides she wanted to go south, but was still too afraid. When she heard Diane Nash demand the continuance of the Freedom Rides regardless of the Kennedy administration's request for termination, she was incredibly impressed with Nash's courage. Tanzman also heard Gloria Richardson, a powerhouse civil rights organizer in Cambridge, MD, speak at a rally. Richardson was fighting school segregation and had endured violence and death threats. Tanzman remembered Richardson, “basically invited us. She said that there's work to be done and you could participate.”<sup>237</sup> That is exactly what Tanzman did. The following summer and fall she juggled her academic studies and began to organize locally. After Kennedy's assassination Tanzman took her scholarship money and went south to help revitalize the Atlanta sit-in movement.<sup>238</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Whether it was in the South or other parts of the country, activists from Old Left backgrounds played important roles as leaders and participants in the Civil Rights Movement. Noted for their protesting and mobilizing skills, leftists drew on their childhood experiences to help in the fight for racial equality. Looking at this unique

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<sup>236</sup>Hartford “A White Mob Comes to Watts.”

<sup>237</sup>Schultz, *Going South*, 8.

<sup>238</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

group complicates our understanding of white student activism. Most studies lump white participants into one monolithic group or make broad generalizations that leave out the radical activists that started organizations, were in leadership positions, or joined the movement. These participants had experiences that differed substantially from those of non-leftist participants. Radicals had different connections and contentions with the African American Christian community. On one hand leftists and blacks were united in their history of a beloved community and use of song, but on the other hand the deeply religious nature of the movement was difficult for some.

Activists with ties to the Old Left were also radically different from the majority of white Christian participants who came ignorant of socioeconomic racism, were horrified by vigilante justice, and lacked parental support for their activism. Being from a radical background differentiated Jewish leftists from non-leftists Jews as well. Though both groups had been raised with similar ideals and a shared history of Jewish activism, radical participants had demonstrated these principles since childhood while non-radical civil rights workers in the Sixties were eager to execute them for the first time.

Civil rights activists and white supremacists both noticed the unique, valuable contributions leftists brought to the movement. Children from Old Left families were such skilled activists they were especially targeted by the KKK, as seen with Mickey Schwerner. The Klan hated Schwerner for his Jewishness and radical roots. The South's fear of a communist invasion painted every activist red and endangered the movement. Regardless of this liability, SNCC and CORE welcomed RDBs and their radical peers into their organizations. Leftists who did not work in the South were important leaders on the East and West coast where they supported SNCC and CORE. This unique group of

activists with Old Left roots made a valuable and unique contribution to the movement and including their story in the civil rights historiography complicates and expands our understanding of white activism.

## **Chapter Six: Pickets, Protests, and Social Movement Politics**

### **Introduction**

When children from Old Left families headed to college in the late Fifties and early Sixties, they brought more baggage than most other college students. These young radicals came with knowledge of protest methods, networking skills, and mobilization techniques. Given the rise of civil rights activism and then the development of a student movement, many arrived eager to continue their childhood activism, connect with other activists, and even start their own organizations. These RDBs and their radical peers were matriculating at the right historical moment. At the turn of the decade, universities were becoming suitable sites for renewed activism and left wing activism. McCarthyism had loosened its grip on America, baby boomers were starting to question the postwar era's timid conservatism, and an unprecedented number of students lived on college campuses that were growing rapidly in size and scale. As leftists started or joined organizations, they incorporated Old Left values of racial equality, working class rights, anti-imperialism, and anti-war activism into the new groups.

To start and nurture the protest groups, radicals utilized important mobilization techniques learned during childhood. During this foundational period, Alan Haber, whose father was Socialist, Sharon Jeffrey, whose mother was a key member of the United Auto Workers (UAW), and RDBs like Robert Ross, Steve Max, and Richard Flacks made important contributions that would influence New Left organization for the next ten years. Though small and isolated in the beginning, by the end of the decade, organizations that were led by young leftists influenced the social and political decisions of the American government and the wider population.

With the growing Civil Rights Movement in the South and the escalation of US military involvement in Vietnam, many non-leftist baby boomers also became interested, for the first time in their lives, in social protest. Campuses were the ideal location for student radicals to recruit members into protest organizations. Activists used the university system itself as an example of the corruption, greed, and immorality crippling society. After World War Two, universities rose to a central position of leadership and research in America's political, military and economic affairs. Universities competed for government grants to fund their research facilities while professors and graduate students, sometimes unknowingly, worked on projects to develop scientific processes and create new weapons for the military. In the social sciences, faculty researched foreign cultures and developed strategies for political control, indoctrination and manipulation.<sup>1</sup>

Ironically, as universities worked assiduously to develop weapons and policies to counter the international communist threat, college campuses soon became new centers for a growing radical movement in America. Jeremi Suri writes in his book *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (2005) "The language of dissent, formulated during the early years of university expansion, provided the critical tools for men and women to challenge state power."<sup>2</sup> The government's desire to educate young people meant more and more students were enrolled at universities. While at school these students learned about their world, country, and government. For many, they did not like some of what they discovered and, together with the contagion of peer mobilization on

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<sup>1</sup> Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Random House, 1973), 22.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 89.

campuses, it resulted in their broad protest against the very government that had encouraged and even helped finance their education.<sup>3</sup>

In the early part of the Sixties, children from Old Left families were united in their vision of what the New Left should look like. Unfortunately this united vision did not last. Just as they were instrumental in building up the movement, leftists were influential in tearing it down. Once again in leadership positions at the end of the decade, children from the Old Left helped dismantle the New Left as effectively as they helped build it. Originally united around their shared vision of how to adapt and implement Old Left values, leftists now disagreed strongly over tactics and strategies, theory and agency. Members debated whether they should focus on campus organizing or take their skills out into the wider community. They argued over which group was the key agency of change, the working class, youth, African Americans, college students, Third World people, or the urban poor. They discussed whether their protests should be in the form of marches, the burning of draft cards, confrontations with ROTC recruiters, or outright offensives against the police. During each of the theoretical twists and turns these organizations experienced, particularly in SDS, leftists were co-authors and co-leaders.

Leftists' spiral into sectarianism and violence was motivated by the same disillusionment and frustration that sent other activists down the same path.<sup>4</sup> The escalation of the Vietnam War convinced leftists that dismantling America's current

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<sup>3</sup> See Kenneth Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era* (New York: New York University Press, 1993) and Heineman, *Put Your Body Upon the Wheels: Student Revolt in the 1960s* (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Barry Bluestone, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan (June 1980), 22.

political and economic system was the only solution to the country's present state of moral bankruptcy. Activists from the Old Left, who were raised with an almost religious devotion to progressive change in America, were devastated by the lack of impact their efforts were having on American politics or foreign policy. In desperation many became almost frantic in their attempts to redeem the situation. Jeffrey, when asked in an interview why they turned to violence, answered, "Frustration. We had set it up and we didn't succeed... We had expectations that we were going to change the world... we believed we were right, our organization was right."<sup>5</sup> Theoretical about-faces shook SDS as new policies, usually antithetical to their predecessors, were introduced on a continual basis and naysayers were often attacked for lack of revolutionary fervor.

Just as radicals had drawn on their Old Left background during the early Sixties, during the latter part of the decade leftists continued to draw upon their childhood experiences as a foundation for their activism, spouting Marxist-Leninist theory, expelling groups that did not support certain positions, and directing the movement underground.<sup>6</sup> Thus while children from Old Left backgrounds were no longer united in their goals or methods, they still drew upon their Old Left background to support their activism and were involved in key decisions at leadership levels. Regardless of their theoretical belief, they were supporting their childhood goal of trying to change the world for the better. Just like when they were young, once again RDBs and their radical peers were willing to stick to their activism regardless of law enforcement abuse, government repression, and an escalating war that was a horrific quagmire. At each stage of the New

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<sup>5</sup> Jeffrey, Bentley Historical Library, 10.

<sup>6</sup> Barry Bluestone, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan (June, 1980), 21, 24.



Left, radicals, just as they had during childhood, supported causes that ran counter to the majority of the American public's values. They were also, like some of the older generation, willing to sacrifice their reputations, their bodies, and even their lives for what they perceived as a higher cause.

Near the end of the Sixties, as the political and social state of America continued to worsen and the situation was perceived as increasingly hopeless, the New Left ironically adopted the failed strategies of the Old Left with students' embrace of the factionalism, the isolationism, and the move underground that had helped incapacitate the Left after World War Two. As a result of SDS's policy decisions, in 1970 after the shootings at Kent State, when the largest student protest in American history shook the country, New Left leaders were unable to capitalize on this moment.<sup>7</sup> Never before had the New Left come so close to accomplishing its goal of a powerful student movement in America. However, due to the policy decisions leftists made and the strategies they pushed through SDS in the last years of the Sixties, the New Left was too fractured and weak to do anything but observe the mass protests. Perhaps the greatest irony is that children from Old Left backgrounds were at least partially both the creators and destroyers of a powerful student movement that, if correctly harnessed, could have influenced American political and foreign policy.

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<sup>7</sup>Historians estimate that around 4 million students protested after the shootings. As campus unrest escalated, over 900 American colleges and universities closed during the student strikes (For more about the Kent State shooting, please see Kenneth Hieneman, *Put Your Bodies Upon the Wheels: Student Revolt in the 1960s* (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 2001). For more information about SDS's inability to capitalize on the 1970 protests, please see David Barber's *A Hard Rain Fell: SDS and Why It Failed* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008).

This chapter examines children of the Old Left's important contributions to the New Left by discussing the different ways young radicals participated in the movement. First it will look at the key roles leftists played in starting organizations and writing mission statements that influenced student activism throughout the rest of the decade. This will also include looking at the unique set of skills radicals contributed to these organizations and how they were instrumental in attracting other leftists to the organizations, as well as inspiring non-leftists, like Tom Hayden and Mark Rudd, to join. With regards to SDS, the study shows how initially children from Old Left families were united in their ideological goals and protest strategies but, like the rest of the SDS membership, young leftists also spiraled off into numerous directions as the organization split into different theoretical camps. In addition the chapter will also show the differences between leftists and non-leftists with regards to their protest experience, fear of government repression, and degree of parental support. It also examines how Jewish radicals differed from Jewish non-radicals, a difference revealed in their response to the New Left's anti-Zionism following the Six Day War in 1967. The last part of the chapter explains in greater depth how studying these activists from leftist background demonstrates a certain degree of continuity between the Old Left and New Left.

### **Historiography**

As a result of the important roles leftists played in the trajectory of the New Left and the degree of continuity they demonstrate between the Old Left and New Left, activists from radical backgrounds should be included in studies of student movements in the Sixties. While studies on the New Left mention when a participant came from an Old

Left background, or offer short biographical blurbs about their connections to leftist organizations, historians never explain why being raised in these families was important and how childhood experiences contributed to radicals' activism during and after college. By failing to probe these connections, scholars overlook the significant influence that these individuals exerted as a leaven in the New Left. Studies of this decade do not recognize RDBs' and their leftist peers' contributions to every major statement or position paper produced during the period, nor their important leadership role in local organizations. In addition, studies do not examine how politicized childhood activism made them different from activists from non-Old Left households. Also of note is the different reaction of many Jewish leftists from non-leftist Jews regarding the 1967 Convention of the National Conference for New Politics where an anti-Zionist platform was adopted. Jewish participants from Old Left backgrounds came out of a secular Jewish radical milieu and were influenced by it to choose politics over ethnicity, and radical politics over pro-Zionist politics.

While there are not any books that specifically address leftists' contributions to the New Left, the historiography does include memoirs produced by RDBs and other radicals that show the variety of contributions activists made to the New Left. These accounts vary in their perspectives, most showing positive contributions and a few painting leftists, particularly RDBs, as deluded, conniving manipulators.<sup>8</sup> Positive

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<sup>8</sup>RDBs Bettina Aptheker and Margot Adler's memoirs, and many like them, describe how young radicals took lessons from the Old Left and tried to transform them into something new and fresh for the 1960s. In stark comparison, autobiographies by former activists David Horowitz and Ronald Radosh depict children raised in Party households as puppet masters who tricked other participants into working for a Soviet-controlled America. While celebratory works like Aptheker and Adler require critical analysis, Horowitz and Radosh's memoirs are equally problematic. Because Horowitz

portrayals emphasize that children of the Old Left were American-born activists raised in an American world with American ideals and values. From their parents they learned acceptable channels for change, such as the vote, strikes, and boycotts, to bring about social and political improvements. Raised in America, and now venturing forward on their own, these kids were neither agents for the Soviet politburo nor naïve, innocent children who suddenly rose up against America. Leftists supported America, just their version of it, which they felt was a truer representation of American values than society's racist, sexist, classist, version. Some of young leftists' ideological interpretations had been introduced, nourished, and supported by the Old Left. As a result of these connections and influences, as well as leftists' desire to improve upon what their parents had started, this group of young dedicated activists provides a sense of connection between the Old and New Left.<sup>9</sup>

In order to further understand how children of the Old Left contributed to the conversation and fit into the historiography, it is necessary to get an overview of the historiography of the Left. This field has gone through various phases and contains several branches: the Old Left, the New Left, and the connection between the two.

Starting with the Old Left, initially, the earliest works on the Communist Party in the

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and Radosh are now outspoken critics of the Left, their autobiographies depict young radicals as determined to turn New Left organizations into communist satellites. While there were elements of this type of behavior, grouping all leftists into this description is an inaccurate overstatement, especially considering the wide variety of radicals who participated in the movement and the multiple ways they contributed to the movement.

<sup>9</sup>For more on this topic, please see Bettina Aptheker, *Intimate Politics: How I Grew Up Red, Fought for Free Speech, and Became a Feminist Rebel* (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2006); Margot Adler, "My Life in the FSM" in *The Free Speech Movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Linn Shapiro and Judy Kaplan, *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left* (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985); Carl Bernstein, *Loyalties: A Son's Memoir* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989).

United States were laudatory. Written after the Progressive Era, authors were enthusiastic and optimistic about social change.<sup>10</sup> Not surprisingly during the McCarthy Era a backlash developed against the Left. Former radicals and liberals wrote critically about American Communism.<sup>11</sup> Studies during this time period also offered sociological explanations as to why different segments of society were drawn to the Party and how the Party maintained its membership and organization.<sup>12</sup>

During the Seventies and Eighties, scholars continued to evaluate the Communist Party in America. A new approach re-evaluated the Party's ability to form policies independent of, though still obedient to, the Comintern that were shaped by national

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<sup>10</sup>These works were often participant memoirs, such as William Foster's *Pages From A Worker's Life* (New York: International Publishers, 1939) and Joseph Freeman's *An American Testament: A Narrative of Rebels and Romantics* (New York: Octagon Books, 1936).

<sup>11</sup>Theodore Draper's *The Roots of American Communism* (New York: Viking Press, 1957) analyzes the Party's alien history, slavishness to Moscow, and failure in the United States. This work countered William Z. Foster's triumphant *History of the Communist Party in the United States* (New York: International Publishers, 1952). New Left historians continued Draper's failure theme when they wrote about the Party. There was also a school of thought prominent in the late 1970s and early 1980s that designated the Popular Front phase as an acceptable strategy for radical action in an unradical America. (See Max Gordon's "The Communist Party of the Nineteen-Thirties and the New Left" in *Socialist Revolution* 6 (January-March 1976); see also the discussion of "The New History of American Communism," by Kenneth Waltzer in *Reviews in American History*, 11:2 (June, 1983). Others negatively viewed the Party's manipulations of unions, civic organizations, and other Communist-affiliated groups. (See Harvey Klehr's *The Heyday of American Communism* (New York: Basic Books, 1984) Larry Ceplair's *Under the Shadow of War: Fascism, Anti-Fascism, and Marxists, 1918- 1939* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

<sup>12</sup>These subjects are addressed in Philip Selznick's *The Organizational Weapon: A Study of Bolshevik Strategy and Tactics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952); Nathan Glazer's *The Social Basis of American Communism* (New York: Harcourt, 1961); Harvey Klehr's *Communist Cadre: The Social Background of the American Communist Party Elite* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978); Aileen Kraditor's *Jimmy Higgins: The Mental World of the American Rank-And-File Communist, 1938 - 1958* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988).

experience.<sup>13</sup> These works were designated part of the “New History of American Communism” and included an intergenerational approach that covered the Party from the 1920s through 1950s and showed how the second generation of middle-class members gained secondary leadership roles.<sup>14</sup> As new studies were being published, historians interested in the Party formed the Historians of American Communism in 1982 to create a forum of discussion and debate for scholars who were interested in the Party or anti-Party organizations.

At the same time as new perspectives concerning the Old Left were being introduced in the Eighties, the New Left was coming under scrutiny. Historians writing about the New Left during the conservative 1970s through 1980s backlash faced a hostile media similar to what confronted scholars documenting Communism during the McCarthy era. As a result of the conservative political and social climate at the end of the century, historians had difficulty seeing the effectiveness and success of Sixties ideals. Early studies of the decade were predominantly failure narratives that traced the inception

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<sup>13</sup>These works included Maurice Isserman’s *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 1982); Steve Nelson, James R. Barret, and Rob Ruck’s *Steve Nelson, American Radical* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburg Press, 1981); Lowell Dyson’s *Red Harvest: The Communist Party and American Farmers* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982); Mark Naison’s *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005).

<sup>14</sup>For more on this topic, please see Kenneth Waltzer’s review “The New History of American Communism” (*Reviews in American History* 11 No.2, June 1983). Theodore Draper denounced the “New History” in his two-part series in *The New York Review of Books*, and again in his article “*The Life of the Party*” published in 1994. While the debate between the “new history of American Communism” and its naysayers continues, at the same time other historians have offered a third argument that states the Party was neither a puppet of the USSR or a legitimate American socialist organization, but instead a conglomeration of left-wing Rooseveltian liberals (For more about the “left-wing Rooseveltian liberals” please see James Weinstein’s *The Long Detour: The History And Future of The American Left* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003).

and defeat of 1960s values.<sup>15</sup>

However, historiographical debate developed as other scholars saw the time period as a success. Many of these works were written by former activists, though the trend started with non-participant Kirkpatrick Sale exhaustive study of the New Left in *SDS* (1974).<sup>16</sup> Todd Gitlin, a leftist activist who was at one time president of SDS, wrote in his *Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (1987) that despite “failures, limits, disasters, America’s political and cultural space would probably not have opened up as much as it did without the movement’s divine delirium.”<sup>17</sup> His perspective is very similar to Van Gosse and Richard Moser’s most recent work *The World the Sixties Made: Politics and Culture in Recent America* (2003).

In addition to arguing that the New Left was successful, historians also argued that it was a complete break from the Old. These studies insisted that the New Left was a completely unique and fresh movement that discarded the older generations’ outdated

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<sup>15</sup> For this perspective, please see Irwin Unger, *The Movement: A History of the American New Left, 1959 – 1972* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1974); Allen Matusow, *The Unraveling of America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984); Steven Fraser and Gary Gerstle, *Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order 1930 – 1980* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Kenneth Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement At American State Universities in the Vietnam Era* (New York: New York University Press, 1993) and *Put Your Bodies Upon the Wheels: Student Revolt in the 1960s* (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> For more on this perspective, please see Terry Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Todd Gitlin *Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1987); Van Gosse and Richard Moser, *The World the Sixties Made: Politics and Culture in Recent America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003); Paul Buhle, *Marxism in the United States: Remapping the History of the American Left* (London: Verso, 1987).

and ineffective theories and methods.<sup>18</sup> In rejection of the past, the New Left sprang phoenix-like from the fire.<sup>19</sup> In comparison to the “new birth” perspective, other historians believe the Old Left and New were a continuation of each other, that the terms “old” and “new” should be discarded as an inaccurate description of a Left with a continuous trajectory.

Surprisingly, throughout this historiographical debate of continuity, children of Old Left families are rarely cited as concrete evidence of this generational connection. Historians in who believe in the Left’s continuous trajectory are essentially arguing that the Old Left was not a failure, but a powerful catalyst that inspired the next generation’s activism.<sup>20</sup> Studies arguing a connection between the Old and New would benefit from the inclusion of young leftists. As children of Old Leftists, they are the physical and ideological connection between the two groups that show the influence, financial contributions, educational background, and parental support the Old Left provided its

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<sup>18</sup>For a more in depth article about this historiographical trend, please see Andrew Hunt’s article “How New Was the New Left?” in *The New Left Revisited*, John McMillian and Paul Buhle, eds., (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2003).

<sup>19</sup>For addition support of this argument, please see Allen Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984); Irwin Unger, *The Movement: A History of the American Left, 1959 – 1972* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), and Barbara Ehrenreich, “Legacies of the 1960s: New Rights and the New Lefts” in *Sights on the Sixties* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

<sup>20</sup>This perspective is argued in Van Gosse, *Where The Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of a New Left* (London: Verso, 1993); Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretive History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Paul Buhle, *The New Left Revisited* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2003); Peter Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); James Miller, *Democracy in the Streets: From the Port Huron to the Siege in Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).



children.<sup>21</sup>

Including activists from radical backgrounds into the social history of the Left contributes to the historiographical debate in numerous ways. Young leftists support the “New History of American Communism” argument by showing participants, whether raised inside or outside the Communist Party orbit, were virulently against the USSR and refused to let either the United States or USSR Communist Parties dictate their policies or programs.<sup>22</sup> In agreement with the stance that the Old Left was a complete break from the New Left, leftists strongly believed, if not actually achieved, that their student organizations severed ties with the Old Left by rejecting sectarianism, red baiting, and lockstep obedience to the Soviet Union. However, in agreement with historians who believe the New Left was simply the continuation of their parents’ generations, children of the Old Left show a connection with their parents’ generation through the Old Left values they incorporated into their student organizations. It also shows the ironic continuity of the two generations as the New Left devolved into factionalism, isolation,

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<sup>21</sup>For studies arguing the continuity, please see also Paul Lyon, *New Left, New Right, and the Legacy of the Sixties* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996); Geoff Andrews, Richard Cockett, Alan Hooper, and Michael Williams, *New Left, New Right and Beyond: Taking the Sixties Seriously* (Basingstoke, NH: Macmillan Press, 1999); John Andrew, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997); Rebecca Klatch, *A Generation Divided: The New Left, the New Right, and the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Van Gosse, *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America, and the Making of a New Left* (London: Verso, 1993); Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretive History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). The idea of the New Left springing to life from a zeitgeist gestation is also rejected by Maurice Isserman, *If I Had A Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); Joanne Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (1994) (Philadelphia: Temple University press, 1994).

<sup>22</sup>An exception to this would be Bettina Aptheker who was a member of the Party while a leader of the Free Speech Movement.

and its decision to go underground.

### **New Left Organizations**

In his exhaustive study of SDS, Kirkpatrick Sale described the organization as:

the catalyst, vanguard, and personification of that decade of defiance... It was initially responsible for opening up the left spectrum of politics in this country, introducing successively the concepts of participatory democracy, corporate liberalism, local organizing, student power, the new working class, revolutionary consciousness, and imperialism.<sup>23</sup>

Sale is not alone in his high estimation of SDS. Most studies of this era argue SDS provided the chief analytical and intellectual tools used by alienated college students during the decade. Students around the nation, whether at Ivy League institutions, land-grant state universities, or community colleges, started SDS chapters, especially during the early to mid-1960s. By the end of the decade there were roughly 75 chapters in the United States with close to 100,000 members.

Analysis of SDS will be broken up into four periods to show how young leftists contributed to each stage. From 1960 to 1962, what Sale categorized as the Reorganization period, children of the Left were for the most part united in their goals and methods. Al Haber, RDB Robert Ross, RDB Richard Flacks, Barry Bluestone, RDB Steve Max, RDB Paul Booth, and Sharon Jeffrey's work writing the Port Huron Statement exemplify this unity. These young radicals were instrumental in starting, growing, leading, and inspiring SDS and its members as the organization slowly spread out to other college campuses. The next stage of SDS, what Sale terms the "Reform" years from 1962 to 1965, introduced a variety of programs to help educate fellow

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<sup>23</sup>Sale, *SDS*, 8, 9.

students and the urban poor about the need for reform on both university campuses (for the students) and inner city communities (for the poor). During this period, radicals began to splinter into different groups as people debated whether activism should center on college campuses or in the community. Children of the Left participants mirrored these splits, as seen with Max's Political Education Project (PEP), Flack's Peace Research and Education Project (PREP), Jeffrey's Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP), and Todd Gitlin's support of campus activism.

During the "Resistance" period from 1965 to 1968, the individuals mentioned above were being replaced with what's been called the "Prairie Power." An influx of new, younger activists from the Midwest alongside the escalation of the Vietnam War led SDS to embrace increasingly confrontational protest methods. Some Old Guard, leftist leaders tried to keep their more theoretical, think tank projects afloat, as seen with Gitlin and Paul Booth's support of PREP, but these projects garnered little interest from new members. Instead, Prairie Power leftist leaders were determined to form their own theories and strategies. Again there was disagreement in the ranks as the new guard debated whether it was a "new working class" of student professionals or the traditional working class that needed to be organized. Regardless of the theoretical arguments, children of the Left continued to lead and participate as SDS struggled through these transitions and changes. Leftists' representation in leadership positions is demonstrated by Michael Ansara and David Loud's activism at Harvard's SDS and John Jacobs and Ted Gold's involvement at Columbia.

As the movement spiraled into its Revolution period, from 1968 to 1970, several children of the Left played a prominent role in the creation of the Weatherman, including

Jacobs, Gold, Naomi Jaffe, Mike Klonsky, Eleanor Raskin, and Kathy Boudin.<sup>24</sup> As the decade closed with the Revolution years, 1968-1970, once again activists raised on the Left were helping lead the organization, this time contributing to the destruction of SDS and its partial reincarnation as the Weathermen. This section will look at each of these stages and show key contributions young radicals made as political theorists, protest strategists, and membership recruiters. Leftists leaders were unique contributors to the New Left due to the depth of activist experience and knowledge they brought to the movement, their leadership roles, the theoretical contribution they made to every major position paper produced throughout the Sixties, and their influential policy decisions near the end of the decade that lead to the factionalism and flawed strategies that helped squander the potential of mass student protest movement.

From the beginning, leftists were instrumental in the creation of SDS. This is clearly seen when examining the founding members of the organization and how lessons learned during their childhood activism and as children of Old Left families influenced their contributions and plans for the new organization. The creation of SDS was the brainchild of Robert Alan Haber at the University of Michigan.<sup>25</sup> While this fact has

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<sup>24</sup>It was JJ's idea for the Weathermen to go underground as a clandestine guerrilla group in America (Kevin Gillies, "The Last Radical," *Vancouver Magazine*, November 1998, <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/computinghistory/1968/radical.html>, (accessed May 9, 2010).

<sup>25</sup>The Students for a Democratic Society developing at the University of Michigan is indicative of the environments that germinated activist organizations. Like the other campuses where major organizations developed, Michigan was entrenched in and financially supported by the military industrial complex with more NASA contracts than any other institution in the country (James Miller, *Democracy in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 25. Please also see Jeremi Suri and Rebecca Lowen, *Creating the Cold War University: The Transformation of Stanford* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Christopher

certainly been documented in numerous studies, no one has explained that this was not a coincidence, but that Haber, and other children from the Left, had specific and important skills crucial to the creation of SDS. Activists and historians alike cite Haber's "single-handed" creation of SDS and his ability, using organizational strategies learned through his work with Old Left youth groups, to "person by person, place by place, organization by organization" help turn the single-campus Ann Arbor group into a national organization.<sup>26</sup> In his memoir *Reunion*, Tom Hayden wrote that Haber's apartment was the meeting spot for all the leftist radicals at the university.<sup>27</sup> Before SDS had an office, activists gathered in Haber's living room which was filled with books on political and economic theory that he had studied to create his vision of a new student Left.<sup>28</sup>

Like much of SDS's early leadership, Haber had Old Left family connections and was raised by cause-oriented parents. Haber was the son of activist William Haber, who was a labor arbitrator, president of a Jewish vocational/labor organization, former League for Industrial Democracy (LID) member and personal friend of numerous labor leaders.<sup>31</sup> During the Depression, Haber's father worked in Washington D.C. and helped start the

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Simpson, *Universities and Empire: Monday and Politics in the Social Sciences During the Cold War* (New York: New Press, 1998).

<sup>26</sup> Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 102. Sale, *SDS*, 35. James Miller, *Democracy in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 71.

<sup>27</sup> Tom Hayden, *Reunion: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1988), 30.

<sup>28</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 35.

<sup>31</sup> Peter B. Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 12.

Social Security System.<sup>32</sup> As a result of his family's associations with the Left, Haber contributed several important skills to the creation of SDS. He had been raised with the understanding that he was to help bring positive change to the world. Like many children raised with Old Left values, Haber had been waiting for the opportunity to create an organization that could realize the Left's goals.<sup>33</sup> Haber's vision was to change America's flawed democracy into a, "radical universal solvent... that which would prove the critical edge for all that was wrong, and all that could be made right... this was the new movement he wanted to create."<sup>34</sup> In a break from the Old Left's focus on the working class as the revolutionary class, Haber believed, as he stated in the *Port Huron Statement*, that students, academics, and intellectuals were the new force for change.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to his dedication and eagerness to create an organization, like many activists from an Old Left background, Haber also had the activist skills necessary to start one. These skills were learned through his previous work with the Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID).<sup>36</sup> Haber took the archaic and rusty SLID branch of the LID and changed it into the empowered and inspired SDS.<sup>37</sup> Though ILD was barely functioning as an organization, it did provide its members with a "legacy of skills

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<sup>32</sup> Willis Frederick Dunbar and George May, *Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Erdmann Publishing Co., 1995), 578.

<sup>33</sup> Ross, Interview with Author, 24, January, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> Ross, Interview with Author, 24, January, 2011.

<sup>35</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 53.

<sup>36</sup> Sharon Jeffrey, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan (October, 1978), 4; Miller, *Democracy in the Streets*, 23.

<sup>37</sup> Jeffrey, Bentley Historical Library, 4; Francesca Polletta, *Freedom is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 124.

essential for all struggling organizations of the political outer world, a capacity for chapter building, pamphlet mongering, going with a shoestring budget and a horse collar load.”<sup>38</sup> Because of his work with the ailing LID and SLID, Haber knew to avoid membership requirements that would have limited SDS’ flexibility and expandability. His ability to convince the LID to change the organization’s name to SDS and abandon efforts to structure the new organization on a trade-union model that demanded membership dues and membership requirements was a complete break from Old Left tradition.<sup>39</sup> Haber’s efforts to recruit members, make joining easy, and present the group as approachable and relevant to the students was just a start.<sup>40</sup>

Some of the first members Haber recruited were from Old Left backgrounds. Knowing the history of the Left, Haber understood the skills his fellow radicals could contribute. Haber enlisted the talents of RDBs Paul Booth, Robert Ross, Mickey Flacks, Richard Flacks, and Steve Max to his organization. In addition he also recruited Sharon Jeffrey and Barry Bluestone, who came from Socialist trade union families affiliated with the UAW. SDS’s first National Executive Committee included Haber as chairman, Ross as vice-chairman, and Booth, Max, and Jeffrey as council members.<sup>41</sup> Though from different Old Left backgrounds, each of the new recruits brought important skills to the fledgling organization.

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<sup>38</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 16.

<sup>39</sup> Miller, *Democracy in the Streets*, 36.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Ross, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan (June, 1980), 9.

<sup>41</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 40.

Just to give an understanding of the contributions, unique to their background, that leftists contributed to the movement I have included some biographical information about several of them. Like many participants from similar radical backgrounds, a number of leftists had previous activist experience, had read classic works of Old Left theory, watched their parents suffer during the McCarthy era, were persecuted for their childhood activism, and since youth had championed Old Left values of integration, working class rights, and political activism. For example, Robert Ross, whose stepfather was a communist trade union organizer in the garment industry, attended a Communist Pioneer Youth Camp in the Hudson Valley where he learned about social causes. As a young camper he sang folk songs and union ballads, became committed to the idea of egalitarian racial integration, and developed a strong sense of responsibility to the working class and people struggling around the world for equality. Sharon Jeffrey said that by the time Ross was a freshman in college he was a well-versed intellectual and very well read.<sup>42</sup>

Richard and Mickey Flacks were New Yorkers who as teenagers were active in the Communist Party. Richard's parents were schoolteachers purged during the McCarthy period and Mickey's parents belonged to the Communist Party. Eager to contribute to radical organizations in the area, Mickey was happy to share the tactic of using balloons with notes attached, instead of flyers or handouts, to disseminate

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<sup>42</sup>Ross, Interview with Author, 24, January, 2011; Ross, Bentley Historical Library, 1,2; Jeffrey, Bentley Historical Library, 7.



information. She recalled, “It was very effective. People will turn down a leaflet, but they’ll never turn down a balloon. The hippies figured that out with their flowers.”<sup>43</sup>

Like the Flacks, Steve Max was raised by parents with Communist connections. Steve was the son of Alan Max, the managing editor of *The Daily Worker* until he broke with the party in the late 1950s. Steve was a member of the Communist Labor Youth League and while in high school was a community organizer, a free-lance agitator, and a trade-union activist.<sup>44</sup> Bluestone said Max was “a good Marxist scholar. Max might be one of the great ones...Max came out of a working class family and a working class movement. And on top of that, he was probably the best orator SDS ever had.”<sup>45</sup>

For Jeffrey, whose parents were active socialists and well-known trade-union organizers in Detroit’s UAW, talking politics was “like drinking milk.”<sup>46</sup> Jeffrey had been attending labor union meetings and marching on picket lines since she was five. While still in grade school she helped organize political campaigns, getting up at six-thirty in the morning on election days, opening the polls, working to get the vote out, distributing literature, closing the polls, and counting ballots. By high school she had organized other students to assist in the elections.<sup>47</sup>

Another activist who came from labor union roots was Barry Bluestone. Bluestone’s dad was Walter Reuther’s right-hand man. As a child his best friends were African Americans and while in high school Bluestone helped organize a chapter of

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<sup>43</sup> Mickey Flacks, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 4.

<sup>44</sup> Miller, *Democracy in the Streets*, 74.

<sup>45</sup> Bluestone, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 24.

<sup>46</sup> Miller, *Democracy in the Streets*, 32.

<sup>47</sup> Jeffrey, Bentley Historical Library, 1.

Congress Of Racial Equality (CORE). Bluestone frequently visited liberal organizations in the Detroit area and gave speeches about CORE to raise donations for the organization. His early efforts at public speaking gave him plenty of experience for the numerous speeches he gave while participating in SDS at University of Michigan.<sup>48</sup>

United in their shared values and experiences, radicals rejected the Old Left's historical sectarianism that previously had prevented Socialists, Communists, and other leftists from working together. This was an important contribution to the New Left and it was introduced by, and essentially only understood by, activists from Old Left backgrounds. Those raised outside radical households had no conception of what this value meant, since they were not brought up in the factionalism and infighting of the Old Left.<sup>49</sup>

RDB Richard Flacks wrote both of the sections in the Port Huron Statement that denounced sectarianism. During his childhood Flacks witnessed the tension and hostility that crippled the Left. In fact, initially Flacks was afraid to join SDS, thinking his Communist past made him a social pariah to a group that sprang from the Socialist ILD.<sup>50</sup> Once Flacks realized his fellow leftists' commitment to anti-sectarianism, Flacks

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<sup>48</sup>Bluestone, Bentley Historical Library, Introduction, 1-4.

<sup>49</sup>For more details about non-leftists' confusion regarding sectarianism, please see James Miller, *Democracy in the Streets: From the Port Huron to the Siege in Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

<sup>50</sup>Flacks had good reason to be worried. The Socialist LID considered Haber's willingness to incorporate RDBs into the organization foolhardy and dangerous. Determined to discipline the wayward activists, the LID fired Haber and the entire SDS staff several times and at one point padlocked the students out of their offices (Ross, Interview with the Author, 24, January, 2011; Bentley Historical Library, 9; Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left*, 68).

made sure to emphasize SDS' denunciation of red baiting and anti-Communism existed in its mission statement.<sup>51</sup>

In the section that addressed Anti-Communism and the Communist Party, Flacks stated that the Old Left's children would not repeat the historical failures of their parents' generation by kowtowing to the Soviet Union. As a teenager, Flacks, and many Party RDBs, listened to Khrushchev's famous 1956 speech denouncing Stalinism. As Stalin's crimes against the people were enumerated, RDBs became disgusted with the organization. Flacks remembered, "We just decided the Communist Party was dead as a positive force, that we had been betrayed by it, that they misled us, and that they couldn't possibly exercise leadership anymore."<sup>52</sup> As a result of this experience Flacks made sure the Port Huron Statement condemned the failed policies of the Party. On the other hand, it also condemned the witch-hunts of the McCarthy era by defining anti-Communism as a "major social problem" for anyone wanting to create a "more democratic America."

RDBs' and their fellow radicals' impressive activist skills attracted other important student members into the organizations. Robert Ross remembered, "Our new comrades were influenced by their own fresh perceptions, not by these old theories, but by us."<sup>53</sup> Todd Gitlin, who was raised with leftist values but not the activist component, stated that for individuals inclined to activism, RDBs were,

our first contacts with the forbidden world of wholesale political criticism. They had grown up breathing a left-wing air; their sense of being different, touched by

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<sup>51</sup> Richard Flacks, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, 9. Refusing to participate in red baiting was a personal issue for Flacks. Both of his parents were schoolteachers who lost their jobs during the McCarthy period as a result of their activism (Buhle, *The New Left Revisited*, 3).

<sup>52</sup> Richard Flacks, Bentley Historical Library, 2.

<sup>53</sup> Ross, Interview with Author, 24, January, 2011.

nobility and consecrated by persecution, was magnetic; they had a perch from which to criticize...The majority of the original New Leftists were not the children of Communist or socialist parents, but sometime in adolescence were touched, influenced, fascinated, by children who were.<sup>54</sup>

Several key non-leftist activists from the Sixties cite Old Left children as the people who motivated, inspired, and supported their activism. Specifically, two key non-radical activists who were drawn into social movements through radicals' influence were Mark Rudd at Columbia University and Tom Hayden at the University of Michigan.<sup>55</sup>

While SDS was determined to break with some components of the Old Left, they also embraced the values learned during childhood. Staying true to their Old Left roots, one of the groups that SDS focused on was the working class. The Port Huron Statement states that “only ‘genuine cooperation, locally, nationally, and internationally, between a new Left of young people and an awakening community of allies,’ consisting of campus activists, ‘labor, civil rights, and other liberal forces,’ could bring change.”<sup>56</sup> One of the first SDS’s manifestos Haber wrote concerned the link between the two groups, entitled “Students and Labor.”<sup>57</sup> To show solidarity with the working class, SDS supported a strike by the University of Michigan’s maintenance and cafeteria workers who wanted to form a union. RBD Robert Meeropol remembered encouraging other students to support

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<sup>54</sup>Gitlin, *Sixties*, 67.

<sup>55</sup>Leftists’ recruitment of non-leftists had happened before. Michael Harrington, one of the key Left youth activists of the 1950s, had been converted to socialism by “nine months of ideological debates” with fellow Yale Law School students who were from Old Left backgrounds (Arthur Liebman, *Jews and the Left* (New York: Wiley, 1979), 547).

<sup>56</sup>Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s*, 23.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 23. The pamphlet argued that unions were hindered by poor reputations on college campuses and called on SDS to educate students on the history and importance of labor unions .

the strikers by picketing and stopping delivery trucks that tried to cross the picket line in the middle of the night. Within a couple days the university capitulated.<sup>58</sup> Students also supported the unions on the picket line in 1962 when NYC newspaper workers went on strike.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to supporting the working class, one of the other leftist causes young radicals incorporated early on into their organizations was the fight for racial equality. Haber and SDS helped introduce the Civil Rights Movement to a northern audience, and Haber's support of and allegiance to the Civil Rights Movement was a key connection to the Old Left. Prior to the 1960s, Communists, Socialists, and most radical groups supported African Americans in their struggle for civil rights. Left organizations often stood alone in their support of racial equality, and they gained a favorable reputation in the African American communities for doing so. One of Haber's first programs as SDS's leader was to boycott Sears department stores because of racist hiring practices that broke the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organization's retail clerks'

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<sup>58</sup>Robert Meeropol, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan (June 1980), 2.

<sup>59</sup>Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s*, 16. The commitment between SDS and the unions increased as student activists continued to support Old Left organizations. RDB Paul Booth supported a major UAW strike against GM by recruiting close to two thousand students to join the picket lines, was a research director for the United Packinghouse Workers, became active in the National Conference for a New Politics, helped develop the School of Communist Organization in Chicago, worked for the Labor Workshop, and edited *New Directions in Labor*, a newsletter that covered the Labor Workshop's affairs (Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s*, 154; Miller, *Democracy in the Streets*, 226-229.)

union. The Sears case, Haber hoped, would “bring to the fore the natural alliance of labor and the civil rights movement.”<sup>60</sup>

To further traditional Left causes, Haber wanted to start a “civil rights of the North” convention in Ann Arbor. Together Haber and Jeffrey set about organizing the conference, one of the first of its kind. Jeffrey was instrumental in recruiting women students in her dormitory where she turned the communal restroom into her private union hall.<sup>61</sup> Haber and Jeffrey’s plans in early 1960 proved prophetic as the Greensboro sit-ins erupted on the national scene prior to the convention convening. Children of the Old Left saw the sit-ins, African American student activism, and the creation of SNCC in the South as a call to action. After the first sit-ins in Greensboro, NC, SDS immediately became involved in sympathy protests and sit-ins at local Kresge and Woolworth chain stores.<sup>62</sup> In his book *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* Thomas Sugrue documented the thousands of people who took to the streets throughout the North during the early 1960s.<sup>63</sup> Showing his commitment to civil rights, and the prominent role the movement would play in SDS, Haber also sent Tom Hayden south to cover the growing movement. The combination of Haber’s pro-civil rights speeches and newsletters coupled with Hayden’s presence in the South gave SDS strong moral authority and credibility.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s*, 12.

<sup>61</sup> Jeffrey, Bentley Historical Library, 5.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 3,5; Ross, Bentley Historical Library, 3; Anderson, *The Movement and The Sixties*, 61.

<sup>63</sup> Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 146.

<sup>64</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 36.

One last element children from the Old Left contributed from their leftist background, though they were convinced it was a new phenomenon, was the decision to abandon theoretical arguments and rhetoric in favor of “speaking American” and communicating forthrightly with their constituency in a clear, comprehensive language that was, in their eyes, another distinct change between the Old and New. Sharon Jeffrey believed one of SDS’ most important contributions to the movement was its ability to translate radical political philosophy into terms middle class Americans could understand. She explained this ability “was an enormous gift, because the old left people used to speak in language that would put anybody off. I had attended meetings of the student [Old] left groups and their rhetoric and actions put me off because they weren’t relevant. They sounded like the Russian Revolution.”<sup>65</sup> While this tactic of “speaking American” was actually used effectively by the Communist Party with particular success during the Popular Front phase, numerous RDBs and other leftists, such as Gitlin, mention this strategy as unique to 1960s organizations. It is possible leftists’ oversight of its historical usage is due to young activists’ ignorance of Depression era Party policies. After the Party’s postwar abandonment and condemnation of General Secretary Earl Browder’s Popular Front strategies that abandoned the Marxist-Leninist line, perhaps RDBs were not exposed to this type of organizing.<sup>66</sup>

At the end of the Reorganization period in 1962, children of the Left had played significant roles as catalysts and creators of the new organization. Young radicals were

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<sup>65</sup> Jeffrey, Bentley Historical Library, 7.

<sup>66</sup> Please see Kenneth Waltzer’s “The New History of American Communism” (*Reviews in American History* 11 No.2, (June 1983) for more information about the Communist Party’s developments during this period.

primarily responsible for SDS's policies of anti-sectarianism, emphasis on participatory democracy, focus on working class rights, and support of the Civil Rights Movement. As a result of introducing these concepts, leftists made important contributions to the ideological and theoretical foundations that shaped the New Left for the rest of the decade. Later in the decade, as the organization transitioned through various theoretical debates, the Port Huron Statement provided the underpinnings for those discussions and arguments. From the beginning, children of the Old Left had an important influence on the New Left.<sup>67</sup>

Though initially united after their Port Huron conference in the euphoria of creating a new organization, as the Reorganization years ended and the Reform period began, different projects started to split the young radicals into various coalitions. During this period from 1962 to 1965, SDS debated the effectiveness of several different strategies: whether to stay on university campuses and organize students, continue educational projects that published position papers, focus on electoral politics, or relocate to low income neighborhoods and organize the poor. Each position garnered support from young leftists, and while they had different ideas about which strategy would be most effective, there was mutual respect for the different groups. As seen during the Reorganization period, leftists were once again in leadership positions that introduced theories and strategies that would influence the rest of the decade. Gitlin, who in 1963 was elected president of SDS, pushed the Vietnam War as an issue and suggested members protest the visit of Southern Vietnam's president Ngo Dinh Diem's sister-in-

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<sup>67</sup> Leftists' commitment to the working class resurfaced with Mike Klonsky in 1968, and earlier in 1966 when National Secretary Greg Calvert readopted Haber's belief that students on university campuses would lead social change on a national scale.



law to Washington. While his focus on the war at this time was premature, it would become a major issue by 1965. Max started the Political Education Project (PEP), a small program within SDS that focused on reform politics and electoral action. In several years, young, leftist professionals and graduate students would continue Max's political work through organizations they started.

Richard Flacks created the Peace Research and Education Project (PREP) that published papers on peace, foreign policy, and ending nuclear proliferation. This type of educational programming would be repeated with the 1965 Teach-ins that educated college students about America's historical involvement in Vietnam.<sup>68</sup> With the help of Booth, Ross, and Haber, Flacks wrote *America and the New Era* that included a hostile analysis of Kennedy liberalism, stated the country was under attack from numerous new forces and announced America had reached a crisis stage as a result of Cold War policies.<sup>69</sup> Students needed to become increasingly radicalized.<sup>70</sup> While many felt Flacks' conclusions were true, some members were tired of writing position papers that focused solely on students' activism, and instead longed to get involved in direct community action.

As a result, by the summer of 1963 SDS began the Economic Research and Action Projects (ERAP) which sent members to selected cities to organize poor communities into self-help groups. The Weathermen would repeat this type of program when they sought to organize working class youth into the new vanguard of the

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<sup>68</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 82.

<sup>69</sup> Ross, Bentley Historical Library, 11.

<sup>70</sup> SDS, *America and the New Era*  
<http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/americanewera.pdf>

revolution. When ERAP was introduced, Max and Haber were against the idea. They felt the project was too vague, lacked direction, and would not be an effective strategy.

Nevertheless, both eventually contributed to the program.<sup>71</sup> Jeffrey, on the other hand, praised ERAP and enthusiastically signed up for the Cleveland project.<sup>72</sup> By the end of ERAP, Booth, Haber, Ross, Max, Max's brother Dan, and Kathy Boudin all participated at different locations.<sup>73</sup>

As 1964 transitioned to 1965, more disagreements split the group. But similar to the earliest SDS years, children of the Old Left were still co-leading the different factions. Some leftists, like Gitlin, wanted to focus on the draft and encourage protest against America's foreign policy. Others argued that draft deferment policies made the topic unattractive to students. Gitlin and Max continued emphasizing student protests, though Max maintained his belief that political organizing was the most effective strategy and continued his PEP work. Eventually Gitlin and Booth took over PREP and again pressed for draft evasion protests. When the rest of the leadership did not adopt this idea, Gitlin focused on protesting Chase Manhattan Bank's financial support of the South African apartheid government.<sup>74</sup> In the midst of all these directions, a new type of activist was streaming into SDS. Membership had been growing, but it boomed after the successful 1965 anti-war march on Washington that drew 25,000 participants and national media attention. Searching for an organization that would support the growing frustration and activism on college campuses drew many students to SDS.

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<sup>71</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 106.

<sup>72</sup> Jeffrey, Bentley Historical Library, 10,11.

<sup>73</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 110.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 153.

The transition into the “new New Left” happened in 1965 when the early SDS leaders, Haber, Flacks, Ross, Jeffrey, and Max now christened as “the Old Guard,” powerlessly witnessed the leadership mantle pass to a younger contingent of protestors. This Prairie Power group rose to prominence at the national convention in Kewadin, MI in June 1965.<sup>75</sup> Activists from this time period emphasized the differences between the Old Guard and Prairie Power. Ross explained that many of his peers came to the New Left through the Civil Rights Movement, and as a result they absorbed the Christian pacifism and social justice doctrines that created a “very gentle concern for the whole person.”<sup>76</sup> In comparison, Prairie Power came to the New Left from the anti-war movement, and this foundation started people off,

with a full dose – war crimes and Hitler. You just wanted to machine-gun down these war criminals. That was a just response...but it should have been tempered with political understanding and personal compassion. Frequently it wasn’t tempered with anything – there was a fuckin’ angry revulsion, and an attempt to directly translate that into politics.<sup>77</sup>

In addition to these differing mentalities, many also saw political differences as another break between the Old Guard and Prairie Power. Non-leftist Carl Davidson expressed this sentiment when he described how the Old Guard:

understood debates about YPSL, Socialist Party, and Popular Frontism from the Old Left. They had lived with that from the early years when SDS was a branch of the League for Industrial Democracy. They had rebelled against it, but they were still schooled in those things. Even after their break from it, they were still held back by it. They were still what you would call left social democrats, and we had a different politics. Ours was more undefined, more insurgent. There was something brazen about it. Then later on we called ourselves Communists. They would cringe at calling themselves Communists...We had made a much

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>76</sup> Ross, Bentley Historical Library, 16.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 16.

more decisive break with the Old Left than they had, maybe because we were never a part of it.<sup>78</sup>

This is a misperception of Prairie Power, since many of its leaders also came from Old Left families. Though younger than the Old Guard, children of the Left were also present with this “new New Left” generation of leaders and helped channel their desire for action into confrontational protests. While this group of radical leftists was raised in families with similar values, they, too, were as interested in theory as the Old Guard, creating some of the foundational position papers that come out of this period. While childhood activism might have set leftists apart from other SDS members, their feelings of alienation, disgust, and restlessness connected them with other Prairie Power participants. With the escalation of the war, growing militancy of the Black Power organizations, and general distrust of the US government, these leftists brought the same sense of desperation to SDS that helped inspire the multiple theoretical twists and turns that permeated this period.

As SDS’s focus on Vietnam intensified and the war became symbolic of all that was wrong with American politics, foreign policy, and society, leftists helped escalate the protests by introducing more confrontational demonstration strategies. This was particularly seen at two universities, Harvard and Columbia, where children from Old Left backgrounds increased the level of resistance and helped create some of the most famous protests of the decade.

RDB Mike Ansara was co-leader of the SDS chapter at Harvard with his fellow RDB roommate Dave Loud. The two were in charge of a Vietnam Educating Group that

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<sup>78</sup>Carl Davidson in *Prairie Power: Voices of 1960s Midwestern Student Protest*, Robbie Liberman, ed. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 49.

hosted a Vietnam teach-in to raise awareness on campus.<sup>79</sup> Capitalizing on growing student dissatisfaction with the war, in 1966 SDS discussed how to deal with the upcoming campus visit of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. Their first idea was to engage McNamara in a public debate with *Ramparts'* editor RDB Robert Scheer. When this request was denied, Ansara and Loud improvised a real-time public confrontation with the Secretary of Defense. Protestors sat down around McNamara's car as he was leaving and trapped him in a narrow backstreet. After Ansara told the cheering crowd, "Secretary McNamara has agreed to answer a few questions," Loud climbed on top of a nearby car and briefly debated McNamara.<sup>80</sup> Responsible for initiating and leading the confrontation, at its conclusion Ansara and Loud were instrumental in convincing the students to leave peacefully and avoid a violent confrontation with police.<sup>81</sup> A *New Left Notes* article reported that the "disciplined shock troops of the revolution turned and dispersed quickly" at Ansara's directing.<sup>82</sup> Ansara and Loud also led a 1967 demonstration where protestors trapped a visiting Dow Chemical campus recruiter in Mallinckrodt Hall.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Helen Garvey, *Rebels with a Cause*, Zeitgeist Films (2003).

<sup>80</sup> Kenneth Waltzer, comments with author, 29, August, 2011; William Bentinck-Smith, *The Harvard Book: Selection From Three Centuries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 153.

<sup>81</sup> Bentinck-Smith, *The Harvard Book*, 154.

<sup>82</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 304. For more about this event, please see Steven Kelman, "Trouble Under the Elms" in William Bentinck-Smith's *The Harvard Book: Selections from Three Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982).

<sup>83</sup> Richard Smith, *The Harvard Century: The Making of a University to a Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 246. Ansara went on in 1969 to convert the Boston's underground newspaper the *Old Mole* into a strike daily while Harvard students

An experienced activist, Ansara easily drew from his past protests to support his current activism. Prior to enrolling at college, Ansara was involved in civil rights work and protesting nuclear testing.<sup>84</sup> At the age of fourteen he helped boycott a Wonder Bread Factory in Roxbury that had racist hiring practices. As a result of the protestors' efforts, the factory employed African Americans.<sup>85</sup> Later during his freshmen year at college, Ansara supported Noel Day, an African American social worker, during her independent Congressional campaign.<sup>86</sup> Like many RDBs, Ansara came from a leftist second-generation immigrant family. His grandparents were Syrian-Lebanese immigrant peddlers in Lowell, MA and his father James was a leftist writer who served in World War Two to "fight fascism." In 1947, the year Mike was born, James was fired by the State Department after a HUAC investigation determined he was a threat to national security.<sup>87</sup>

As a result of his father's HUAC investigation, Ansara wanted to uncover perceived government corruption through a powerful, national Left media. After turning the *Old Mole*, an underground Cambridge newspaper, into a strike daily, Ansara wrote

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rebelled against the administration. (Jon Wiener, Oral History Collection, Columbia University (1988), Folder 2: 105.).

<sup>84</sup>Unknown, *Zeta Magazine*, The Institute for Social and Cultural Change, 1, 2 (1998): 1.

<sup>85</sup>Julie Masis, "Carlisle Neighbors Act Globally: Activist Organizes Effort to Guarantee Loans for South Africans," *The Boston Globe*, <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-8707145.html>, (accessed August 21, 2010).

<sup>86</sup>Jennifer Frost, *An Interracial Movement of the Poor: Community Organizing and the New Left* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 65.

<sup>87</sup>David Broder, *Changing of the Guard: Power and Leadership in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), 139; Medford Stranton Evans, *Blacklisted by History: The Untold Story of Senator Joseph McCarthy and His Fight Against America's Enemies* (New York: Crown Forum, 2007), 172.

editorials in a forthright, critical voice without references to the obtuse theory of the Old Left. During this period of increasing SDS resistance, the *Old Mole* did more than just report events. As editor Ansara was on the offensive, constantly bringing new revelations to the masses in an attempt to put the administration on the defensive. In order to keep the government on its toes, Ansara produced SDS initiatives that attacked and goaded administrators. To mobilize the campus, Ansara put out the first *Old Mole Strike Daily* with the headline “Reading the Mail of the Ruling Class.” This sensational article featured a memo documenting the faculties’ and administration’s duplicity regarding student policies.<sup>88</sup> His article declared, “many prestigious Harvard professors and administrators are deacons of the church of American empire. Their hands are bloody. The work they do ends in the murder of millions and the looting of the resources of the world. Official Harvard is a dynamo in the imperialist machine.”<sup>89</sup>

This imperialist machine had been identified and defined by Loud. For years Loud had been preparing a file about the United State’s involvement in Vietnam and he was eager to share his findings.<sup>90</sup> Loud made a crucial theoretical contribution to SDS

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<sup>88</sup>Jon Wiener, Oral History Collection, Columbia University (1988), Folder 2: 90, 107.

<sup>89</sup>“Education: The Radical Voice,” *Time*, April 18, 1969. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,844759,00.html>, (accessed September 21, 2010). While working with *Ramparts*, in 1967 Ansara exposed the CIA’s secret funding and manipulation of the National Student Association (NSA), one of the main college-aged protest organizations of the time. Participants respected Ansara’s skills, from his ability to uncover incriminating sources to his practical knowledge about publishing a newspaper. Fellow activists believed that Ansara was one of the greatest political thinkers of the movement. (Wiener, Oral History Collection, Folder 2: 85, 88, 109; Richard Arum, “Michael Ansara Calls for Creation of ‘New Left,’ *The Tufts Daily*, (29 November, 1982), 6.

<sup>90</sup>Robert A. Rafsky, “Guiding Goldberg Through Harvard: A Tense Drama that

when he co-wrote the 1967 pamphlet *U.S. Imperialism*. This document traced America's economic and political exploitation of Third World countries, particularly Vietnam. The pamphlet was used across the country to recruit members and it was a significant development for the organization because, for the first time, white students acknowledged America's flaws and identified "their enemy as the system and the system as imperialism."<sup>91</sup>

Like Ansara, the persecution of Loud's family during the 1950s helped inspire his activism. Though his father became disgusted with the Communist Party and withdrew after WWII, the Louds still received threatening phone calls, had glass scattered on their driveways, and found dead rats thrown at their door. Regardless of this harassment, as a child Loud protested segregated stores and attended peace marches with his parents. By high school he considered himself a "fairly orthodox Marxist" who was, thanks to his father, well informed about imperialism and American foreign policy.<sup>92</sup>

Similar to Ansara and Loud's leadership at Harvard, leftist radicals were also embracing and escalating SDS's combative approach on other university campuses. At Columbia RDBs were leading the charge against an administration that was exercising, in their opinion, restrictive, overbearing authority. Though the media recognized non-leftist Mark Rudd as the main spokesperson for the Columbia SDS "action faction," insiders knew it was Rudd's friend, RDB John Jacobs, or JJ, who was the crucial figure behind

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Ended in Dullness," *The Harvard Crimson* (23, February, 1967).

<sup>91</sup>Roger Lewis, *Outlaws in America: The Weather Underground: The Underground Press and Its Context* (London: Heinrich Hanau, 1972), 40.

<sup>92</sup>David Goldring (David Loud) in J. Anthony's *Don't Shoot – We Are Your Children!* (New York, Random House, 1971), 14,15,21, 27, 28, 31,39.



events, including the Columbia 1968 strike.<sup>93</sup> A determined activist, before there was a strong SDS chapter on campus Jacobs single-handedly organized and led a protest against the CIA recruiting at Columbia.<sup>94</sup> While Rudd grew up in a middleclass suburb as a “rich Jewish kid” whose parents’ lifelong goal was “the American dream of financial security,” JJ’s parents were Jewish leftists who were, in the words of his brother Robert, “political – socially aware, politically conscious progressives of the times.”<sup>95</sup> His father had been a respected journalist, one of the first Americans to report on the Spanish Civil War. While a teenager Jacobs became fascinated with the history of the Left, Marx, Lenin, the Russian Revolution, Cuba, Ché Guevara, and Castro. The summer before his freshman year at Columbia he worked for a leftist newspaper.<sup>96</sup> He also joined the May 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement right out of high school, which he described as a “mass front organization” for the Maoist Progressive Labor Party that denounced the draft and led a military resistance to the blockade of Cuba.<sup>97</sup>

Rudd commented that being with RDBs like JJ “challenged me to want something loftier: a utopia of freedom and justice and peace” and it was from these “red-diaper babies’ that I learned about ‘the struggle’ that had been going on for generations. I felt

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<sup>93</sup> See Susan Stern’s book *With the Weathermen: The Personal Journal of a Revolutionary Woman* (New York: Doubleday, 1975).

<sup>94</sup> Ron Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew: A History of the Weather Underground* (London: Verso, 1997), 9.

<sup>95</sup> Gillies, “The Last Radical”; Mark Rudd, *Underground: My Life with SDS and the Weathermen* (New York: William Morrow, 2009), 5, 15.

<sup>96</sup> Gillies, “The Last Radical.” Jacobs went underground with the Weathermen, was asked to leave the organization in 1970, and stayed underground until his death in 1997.

<sup>97</sup> Rudd, *Underground*, 14.

lucky among them, because they seemed to embody an idealism that had passed my family by.”<sup>98</sup> Rudd was attracted to the fire and enthusiasm of JJ’s activism and tried to mirror it. JJ set quite a precedent. One of his favorite activities was to give lectures on American imperialism that were “high-volume monologues that often shifted to yelling denouncements against colonialism, capitalism, and ended with a call for a national economic socialist system.”<sup>99</sup>

While Rudd was the front man for SDS, Jacobs operated in the shadows as “*eminence noire*.”<sup>100</sup> Rudd was the first to admit that RDB Jacobs was running the show. Rudd acknowledged, “[JJ] had brains, vision, and the ability to talk,” Rudd later said of his friend. “When he was ‘on,’ he was brilliant. Nobody else even came close.”<sup>101</sup> With Jacobs at the helm, RDBs pushed the Columbia chapter into a more radical stance, defeating an opposing faction within SDS that advocated incremental building of a mass movement. Instead, Jacobs called for militancy and small guerilla groups that mirrored those described by Jules Regis Debray in *Revolution in the Revolution?: Armed Struggle in Latin America*.<sup>102</sup> Debray’s description of guerilla struggle in Latin America was required reading for those in Jacob’s “action faction.” The action faction were the key instigators of the Columbia 1968 protests where student occupied several university

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<sup>98</sup> Rudd, *Underground*, 15.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>100</sup> Collier and Horowitz, “Destructive Generation,” 70, 71.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., “Destructive Generation,” 71.

<sup>102</sup> Rudd, *Underground*; 144. Please See Regis Debray’s *Revolution in the Revolution?: Armed Struggle in Latin America* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

buildings until violently removed by the New York City Police, the first time cops had ever been used on campus.

Though many activists influenced the daily flow of events at Columbia and issued communiqués, it was Jacobs who created the over-arching theory that drew all the components together with grand connections explaining how current political, social, and foreign policy developments fit into larger patterns connecting events at Columbia to the government, military, and Vietnam. His theory wove together the Tet offensive, LBJ's decision not to run for reelection and France's "revolutionary protests" that almost overran the de Gaulle government. As an RDB, Jacobs was quick to point out that the inherently flawed structure of the capitalist world system was crumbling and the students' strategically applied push could be the deathblow that sent it tumbling.

As different campuses progressively embraced this more confrontational approach, SDS leadership at the National Leadership level debated which theoretical ideology and protest methods were most effective for bringing change. Jane Adams replaced Booth, who burned out as national secretary in the Summer of 1966. Adams, the first woman to hold a national leadership position in SDS, was the daughter of Midwest Socialists and an experienced activist from Southern Illinois University who had organized students conferences in Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri against the war.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Jane Adams in, *Prairie Power: Voices of 1960s Midwestern Student Protest*, Robbie Liberman, ed. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 61.

While traveling she met Greg Calvert, the product of several generations of radical trade unionists, who was elected as the next National Secretary.<sup>104</sup> Calvert argued that students were an oppressed class and they were involved in a freedom fight not just for others, but for themselves as well. In the Spring of 1967 at a conference of 300 activists and scholars, Calvert's concept of students as "oppressed" members of American society paved the way for a new theoretical framework that defined students as the "new working class" of technicians, clericals, and professionals who would eventually run America. This idea, introduced in the Port Authority Statement that was co-written by RDB Ted Gold, explained that the new working class was a crucial contributor to America's increasingly high-tech, sophisticated society.<sup>105</sup> Because students would be working in these important jobs, they were responsible for the progress of modern American capitalism, the stabilization of society, and continued economic growth. As a result, if mobilized as a protest force, they had a great deal of clout.<sup>106</sup> These ideas supported Haber's initial statements set forth in the Port Huron Statement that identified students, the universities, and intellectuals as the catalyst for change but undergirded such thoughts with a new more systematic analysis and understanding.

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<sup>104</sup>Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 19; Tom Well's *The War Within: America's Battle Over Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 96.

<sup>105</sup>Ted Gold, along with David Gilbert, Terry Gilbert, and Bob Gottlieb, authored the Port Authority Statement (Carl Davidson, *Prairie Power*, 48). Jane Adams described them as "real educated, reading neo-Marxism and all that stuff" (Jane Adams *Prairie Power: Voices of 1960s Midwestern Student Protest*, Robbie Liberman, ed. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004, 72).

<sup>106</sup>Sale, *SDS*, 338.

Indicative of SDS's fickle nature when it came to theoretical platforms, by the fall of 1967 the organization had switched its emphasis on students as agents of change to a traditional Marxist-Leninist focus on the working class. After the Pentagon march that October mobilized nearly one hundred thousand protestors from a variety of organizations, age levels, occupations, and states, SDS leadership fantasized that a true coalition of the American Left was merging and it was no longer important to rely solely on students. Sale explained SDS's transition from a focus on college campuses to the working class was because its leaders found it too difficult to create and implement their own theories. Sale wrote student leaders preferred a ready-made theory that provided

an index to find the correct solution for your particular nagging problem. The feeling grew that what SDS lacked was a series of engraved ideological tablets along its organizational walls and a bearded 19<sup>th</sup> century portrait over the hearth. And the inevitable result was a turn toward the traditional stand-by, Marxism.<sup>107</sup>

This resurgence of the Old Left percolated into the New Left culture with the help of young leftists. Jane Adams remembered after intense political debates over organizational policies, the group would put their arms around each other, open their IWW little red songbooks, and sing old labor songs.<sup>108</sup> These songs came from children of the Old Left. When RBD Mike Klonsky was elected National Secretary in the summer of 1968, he "represented one of the largest of the new, proto-Marxist tendencies in SDS, non-Progressive Labor people who nonetheless supported the working class and emphasized community and factory organizing."<sup>109</sup> Klonsky's father had been a former organization secretary for the Party in Eastern Pennsylvania and Delaware, and later

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<sup>107</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 390.

<sup>108</sup> Adams, *Prairie Power*, 67.

<sup>109</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 469.

moved his family to the Southern California District Committee of the Party. Klonsky, one of the earliest SDS recruits out of California, organized the San Fernando Valley State College in the fall of 1965 into one of the more imaginative and active chapters in the state. Klonsky, with the assistance of fellow RDB Kathy Boudin, was instrumental in planning for protests at the 1968 Democratic National Convention. Klonsky told students “Dis here demonstration in Chicago that’s coming up in a week or so...youse guys had better be there cause this is de bigges’ thing yet in radical history.”<sup>110</sup> Drawing from his Old Left roots, Klonsky was determined to tip the organization toward the working class and wrote in his Revolutionary Youth Movement position statement that a renewed understanding of class consciousness and embrace of Marxism would bring about real change in America.<sup>111</sup>

As factions continued to mutate in SDS, particularly a contingent of Progressive Labor (PL) members emerged who were determined to remake SDS into their own image of hard line Maoists, sectarianism now divided the organization. The culmination of this factionalism was the 1968 split of SDS into the Weathermen while PL was left to control SDS. RDBs in particular helped to create the divide. Jacobs was credited as the principal author in the Weathermen Organization’s mission statement, “You Don’t Need A Weather Man to Know Which Way the Wind Blows.” This document provided the

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<sup>110</sup> Mike Klonsky quoted in Susan Stern’s *With the Weathermen: The Personal Journal of a Revolutionary Woman* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 26, 27.

<sup>111</sup> Mike Klonsky, “Toward a Revolutionary Youth Movement, (1968) [http://www.usasurvival.org/docs/Revolutionary\\_Youth\\_movement.pdf](http://www.usasurvival.org/docs/Revolutionary_Youth_movement.pdf) RYM statement, (accessed September 27, 2010).

theoretical foundation for the new organization.<sup>112</sup> Naomi Jaffe, Kathy Boudin, Eleanor Raskin, Jacobs, Ansara, Loud, and Klonsky all left SDS and joined the new organization. Eager to put their new strategies of aggressive protest into practice, Boudin and Jacobs helped plan the Weatherman's "Bring the War Home" 1969 protest in Chicago. In a futile attempt to strengthen their connection with high school-aged working class youth, Jaffee and Raskin also played prominent roles in recruitment events where Weathermen stormed into classrooms, climbed on desks, spray painted "OFF THE PIGS" on the blackboard, and yelled at the students to "drop out of their boring, hellish schools, leave their dehumanizing parents."<sup>113</sup> After the 1969 Flint War Council, the organization decided to go underground, a strategy introduced by JJ, to become a clandestine revolutionary fighting force.<sup>114</sup> While not all SDS members with Old Left backgrounds joined the Weathermen, many of the organization's members and a number of the prominent leaders were of radical lineage.

Regardless of the theoretical arguments or protest strategies SDS adopted, children of the Old Left were prominent in leadership positions. This was seen in the beginning of the decade with the Port Huron Statement when children of the Old Left were fundamentally united in their goals and protest strategies. This leadership dominance continued with their contributions to position papers like the *America and the New Era*, the Port Authority Statement, *U.S. Imperialism*, the Revolutionary Youth Movement, and the "You Don't Need A Weatherman To Know Which Way The Winds

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<sup>112</sup> *New Left Notes* Chicago: Underground Press Publications, (18 June, 1969), 3-8.

<sup>113</sup> Stern, *With the Weathermen*, 113.

<sup>114</sup> Gillies, "The Last Radical."

Blowing.” Though children of the Old Left perceived themselves as a distinct break from their parents’ generation, in reality they continued the Old Left’s traditional values, protest methods, Popular Front strategies, debilitating tendency to factionalism, and movement underground. What was perhaps the greatest irony about radicals’ participation was they had come so close to achieving some of the political and social changes they had struggled for since childhood. However, radicals’ unfortunate inability to recognize the warning signs of sectarianism and isolationism, Old Left policies they were personally acquainted with having witnessed their destructive effects as children, leftists helped lead SDS and the Weathermen down the same destructive path.

### **Free Speech Movement at Berkeley**

This section on the FSM looks briefly at the predominance of leftists in the leadership level of the Berkeley movement. In addition it uses examples from the FSM to show how children raised in Old Left families were specifically targeted by the public and joined the movement with a fear of law enforcement agents developed during childhood.<sup>115</sup>

After the administration’s crackdown on student activism in the fall of 1964, radicals were ready to mobilize the campus. Prior to this policy change, student organizations from Young American for Freedom to CORE handed out their literature

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<sup>115</sup>RDBs had been setting the stage for the FSM starting in the late 1950s and early 1960s. RDB graduate students Robert Scheer, Sol Stern, Maurice Zeitlin, and David Horowitz published the radical journal *Root and Branch*, started the magazine *Ramparts*, co-authored books celebrating Fidel Castro as a New Left hero, formed a TA union, and protested JFK’s visit to the campus (Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 95; Gosse, *Where the Boys Are*, 155; Robert Cohen “The Many Meanings of the FSM,” *The Free Speech Movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 11.)



and recruited members on campus. When the administration forbade this practice in September, RDB Jackie Goldberg quickly realized the ramifications of prohibiting students from setting up card tables at Bancroft and Telegraph, the site groups traditionally used to promote their organizations. Goldberg felt stripped of her first amendment rights and remembered thinking, “OH MY GOD! THE UNIVERSITY DECLARED WAR!” She was the first student to raise alarm about the new policy and immediately called her brother Art, a fellow activist on campus who planned to write an autobiography entitled, “Commiejewbeatnik.”<sup>116</sup>

An important ally, Art was president of SLATE, a leftist organization that dealt with causes as widespread as getting ROTC off campus, ending capital punishment, eliminating nuclear testing, and distributing free birth control. SLATE stood for a “slate” of candidates, “a lefty rival to the frat rats.”<sup>117</sup> The organization rejected the “sandbox” politics practiced by fraternity-oriented student body presidents and included both leftists and moderates.<sup>118</sup> To raise awareness about the University’s new policy, the Goldbergs divided the list of political groups on campus with Art taking the Left and Jackie taking the Right. Art and Jackie contacted every student organization, since they were all affected by the ban, and planned a meeting that very afternoon in Art’s apartment with each group represented to discuss strategy. Gathering various groups together was an historic event, usually the different organizations yelled at each other from their

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<sup>116</sup>Rorabaugh, *Berkeley At War*, 38, 39.

<sup>117</sup>Kate Coleman “Dressing for the Revolution,” in *The Free Speech Movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the 1960s*, Robert Cohen and Reginald Zelnik, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 185.

<sup>118</sup>Rorabaugh, *Berkeley At War*, 15.

respective card tables, but the Goldbergs knew a Popular Front strategy would give their organization the greatest clout.<sup>119</sup> Jackie remembered that the disparate group decided on the name the United Front, which she thought humorous. She chuckled about “the history of the phrase and its association during much of the twentieth century with left-wing, socialist, and Communist causes. But, unfortunately for the right, they did not know their history, so they accepted the name without objection.”<sup>120</sup>

Unlike many of the students they met with that afternoon, Jackie and Art were both experienced college activists.<sup>121</sup> Their parents belonged to the Communist Party and the children were raised in Sunnyside, NY, living in a Long Island neighborhood inhabited by many Party families.<sup>122</sup> When Art came to Berkeley, he immediately joined the nascent New Left and became the director of SLATE. While still in high school, Jackie refused to believe the sanitized history she received, knowing that “there wasn't equal opportunity for everybody in our society. I knew that African Americans...didn't

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<sup>119</sup> Jackie Goldberg “War Is Declared”, in *The Free Speech Movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the 1960s*, Robert Cohen and Reginald Zelnik, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 107.

<sup>120</sup> Goldberg “War Is Declared,” 107, 108.

<sup>121</sup> Jo Freeman, “The Berkeley Free Speech Movement,” in *Encyclopedia of American Social Movements*, Immanuel Ness, ed. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 1178-1182.

<sup>122</sup> David Horowitz, “Who Killed Betty Van Patter? A Letter From an Old Friend Stirs up Passions From One of the Most Disturbing, Yet Little-known, Crimes of the New Left Era. It Happened Exactly 25 Years Ago.” December, 13, 1999, [http://lists.village.virginia.edu/lists\\_archive/sixties-1/1008.html](http://lists.village.virginia.edu/lists_archive/sixties-1/1008.html), (accessed September 27, 2010).

have the same opportunities, I knew that Latinos didn't have the same opportunities.”<sup>123</sup>

Prior to her senior year at college and being a member of the FSM executive committee,

Goldberg participated in the Civil Rights Movement and was the co-chair of Campus

Women for Peace.<sup>124</sup> As a junior she was arrested at the Sheraton Palace Hotel civil

rights protest in San Francisco in 1963 when roughly 500 students were arrested for

protesting the hotel's racist hiring practices.<sup>125</sup> This event prepared her for police

clashes during the FSM.<sup>126</sup> In addition to her civil rights work, Goldberg also helped

Dean of Students Katherine Towle engineer a nondiscrimination clause in the bylaws of

all sororities at the university.<sup>127</sup> Expecting to increase her participation in social

activism, Goldberg stated prior to the 1964 school year that she was “happy and content

that my senior year at Cal is going to be one of better progress in organizing fellow

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<sup>123</sup> Jackie Goldberg, “Make Love, Not War,” National Security Archive, Cold War Interviews <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/interviews/episode-13/goldberg2.html>, (accessed August 9, 2010).

<sup>124</sup> Jackie Goldberg in *Berkeley in the Sixties Documentary*, directed by Mark Kitchell, (1990: New York, NY: First Run Features).

<sup>125</sup> For more about this event, please see Jo Freeman's article “From Freedom Now! to Free Speech: How the 1963-64 Bay Area Civil Rights Demonstrations Paved the Way to Campus Protest,” on her website <http://www.jofreeman.com/sixtiesprotest/baycivil.htm>, (accessed November 23, 2010).

A shorter version of this article is in *The Berkeley Free Speech Movement: Reflections on a Campus Rebellion*, Robert Cohen and Reginald Zelnik, ed. (University of California Press, 2002). This was a key event in the New Left history, Many of those arrested became active in the FSM.

<sup>126</sup> Goldberg “War Is Declared”, 105.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 107.

students to be politically involved.”<sup>128</sup> As the first spokesperson of the United Front and co-founder of FSM, she certainly was accomplishing her goal.<sup>129</sup>

Another RDB, Bettina Aptheker was also a crucial participant in FSM. The daughter of Old Left aristocracy, her father was noted Communist Herbert Aptheker, a prominent intellectual in the Party. Though an activist since childhood, Aptheker’s New Left participation started after hearing about the murders of Mickey Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James Chaney while on summer vacation from Berkeley. Immediately Aptheker organized demonstrations to demand greater police protection of civil rights workers. As FSM grew Aptheker helped form the new organization into a potent campus force. As confrontations between the FSM and the university power structure increased, Aptheker threw herself into the fray. She remembered, “I had little or no fear of administrative or professorial authority – in my childhood world of Communist demarcation the ‘class enemy’ was not to be respected but overthrown.”<sup>130</sup>

The days following the initial sit-in at Sproul Hall, when roughly 3,000 students surrounded a police car attempting to take a fellow activist to jail, were busy for Aptheker. She came up with the idea of an executive committee for the United Front that would encourage wider campus participation. All campus organizations were encouraged to send a representative, with the committee growing to over fifty members. Aptheker knew that including the range of students would not lessen the power of the core of leftist

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>130</sup> Bettina Aptheker “Gender Politics and the FSM: A Meditation Women and Freedom of Speech” in *The Free Speech Movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the 1960s*, Robert Cohen and Reginald Zelnik, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 131.

leaders, but expand their circle of influence. To ensure this happened, Aptheker created a steering committee, drawn from members of the Executive Committee, that would be responsible for the organization's day-to-day activities. Due to leftists' political acumen, they were able to gain the majority of positions on the Steering Committee and control events. In *Berkeley at War*, W.J. Rorabaugh noted that by drawing upon her Old Left roots, Aptheker's system in many ways patterned after the Communist Party's organizational strategies during the 1930s Popular Front era.<sup>131</sup>

Leftists often drew upon fellow radicals for assistance when starting organizations. These students from Old Left backgrounds were eager for activist opportunities and enrolled at campuses where they knew their skills would be put to work.<sup>132</sup> Margot Adler chose Berkeley after hearing about the civil rights protests at the Sheraton-Palace Hotel. She arrived on campus just as the FSM was starting. Though new to college and the campus, Adler was not new to political organizing. Her earlier participation in many political rallies and protests in New York prepared her for joining FSM. Adler recalled, "I thought the right to political advocacy seemed obvious, and I was soon handing out leaflets, attending rallies, and sitting behind tables filled with political literature – activities that were forbidden under the campus regulations."<sup>133</sup> Adler quickly became a member of the Executive Committee, her name was recorded by the administration for breaking school policy and she was summoned to appear before the

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<sup>131</sup>Rorabaugh, *Berkeley At War*, 23

<sup>132</sup>Rox Baxandall, "Another Madison Bohemian" in *History and the New Left: Madison, Wisconsin, 1950 – 1970* Paul Buhle, ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1990), 135; Margot Adler "My Life in the FSM," in *The Free Speech Movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the 1960s*, Robert Cohen and Reginald Zelnik, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 111; Rorabaugh, *Berkeley At War*, 28.

<sup>133</sup>Adler "My Life in the FSM," 111.

Dean along with four other movement leaders, two of which were also leftists. She participated in the Sproul sit-in, marched, picketed, and was booked at the Oakland police station.<sup>134</sup> Adler remembered, “The FSM gave me and many others a sense of personal power and control over our lives.”<sup>135</sup>

When leftists came to campus, in addition to the important activist techniques they brought, many also arrived with a paranoia of law enforcement officers and government investigations. Certainly non-leftist students were reluctant to be arrested or jailed, but they did not have a history of oppression tainting their perception of law enforcement officers. In comparison, as a result of their childhood experiences children of the Old Left were particularly alert to and felt threatened by government authorities and the police. Bettina Aptheker’s experiences illustrate this fear. Though Aptheker might not have feared the University’s administrative authority, she was terrified of federal agents. For many RDBs, the paranoia and terror that surrounded their childhood still permeated their lives. An example of this is shown by a brutal attack on Aptheker that she let go unreported for fear it would lead to political and personal retaliation from the government. In her autobiography Aptheker recounts a sexual assault that occurred while she was pregnant in jail and receiving a routine health checkup. A man dressed as a doctor came into Aptheker’s hospital room and raped her. Following the attack the assailant made it clear that if she called for help he would cause her to miscarry. After the

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 117-119, 121, 125.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 111.

man left, Aptheker was frantic about the safety of her baby, who did not move for hours.<sup>136</sup>

Aptheker did not speak about the attack for years, convinced that no one would believe her. She stated that she saw the attack as a perpetuation of the police violence that happened earlier when agents planted surveillance photos of Aptheker's lesbian relationship in her suitcase. She was convinced that "Disclosure of the one...would lead inexorably to the disclosure of the other. If I accused, they would retaliate. The results would be worse than the rape I had already survived."<sup>137</sup> Aptheker's paranoia exemplifies the perpetuation of young leftists' childhood fear regarding government and law officials. In Aptheker's case, she immediately connected the rapist to the government, a government agent, or at least someone who acted with the government's consent. Given the immense amount of negative publicity Aptheker received and the amount of people infuriated by her Communist Party membership, it is possible the attack was from an individual with no connection to the government. However Aptheker's paranoia immediately made her assume it was federally sanctioned, and as a result of this fear she never asked for extra protection, filed a report with the police, or even discussed the assault for years.

Aptheker was not the only radical paranoid about her activities. Though it has been years since their days as student activists, many radical New Left participants still fear negative repercussions as a result of their involvement. Ross was convinced his radical past and FBI files were the reasons he was denied tenure at Clark University in

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<sup>136</sup> Aptheker, *Intimate Politics*, 198.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

Worcester, MA in 1978.<sup>138</sup> RDB Roberta (last name withheld) also felt her past affected her current employment. She explained how the terror still remained and discussed its lingering effects at the RDB retreat. She said, “This year I wrote a proposal to work on my grandmother’s story, and I felt like I was coming out of the closet. I was very scared. Even though I have won tenure, it brought up a great deal of fear in me. That’s still always there.”<sup>139</sup> Marge (last name withheld) agreed with the sense of psychological burden that accompanied participating in these movements. She knew of many leftists who are either incarcerated, went insane, or committed suicide. Marge stated that in an effort of self-preservation, “an awful lot of people that I grew up with, including my brother...are totally non-political.”<sup>140</sup> When conducting oral histories for this dissertation, there were many interviewed who were at first hesitant to discuss their past activism until assured the material was for a dissertation and not some other type of investigation work.

### **Radical activists and Jewish Identity**

RDBs and their radical peers recruited leaders and members beyond their ranks for several reasons. There were not enough young leftists to fill the necessary organizational roles and they were committed to building a movement. Hayden and others were specifically chosen because of their connections to student newspapers or

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<sup>138</sup> Ross, Bentley Historical Library, 1. In 1979 the decision was reversed after a lengthy struggle.

<sup>139</sup> Roberta (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 33.

<sup>140</sup> Marge (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 36.



other networks that could attract members outside leftist groups. Another reason for these recruitment efforts was the need to expand the Left's activist base beyond the historical boundaries of its predominantly Jewish makeup. During the Sixties, the majority of leftists and other early New Left participants were Jewish. A large proportion of leaders within SDS, Al Haber, Todd Gitlin, Richard Flacks, Steve Max, Bob Ross, Mike Spiegel, Mike Klonsky, Kathy Boudin, Naomi Jaffe, Jane Adams, David Loud, John Jacobs and Mark Rudd, were Jewish. Somewhere between 30 and 50 percent of the SDS membership in the early to mid-Sixties was Jewish.<sup>141</sup> The same was true of the FSM in Berkeley where one-third of the participants were Jews. By the latter part of the decade Jews were presidents of the SDS chapters at Columbia University, the University of California, Berkeley, the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Northwestern University, and the University of Michigan's chapters.<sup>142</sup>

Jewish participants were conscious of Jewish over-representation in the group. In *Jews and the Left*, Arthur Liebman wrote that the disproportionate number of Jews was considered detrimental by leading activists in SDS. Liebman went so far as to state that "In fact, the Jewish presence was so large that it concerned and, at times, even embarrassed the SDS leadership."<sup>143</sup> Leftists in leadership positions were convinced that in order to ensure the success of their organization, they had to take it beyond the traditional social bases of the Left and open it up to a larger audience. Ross commented

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<sup>141</sup>Percy Cohen, *Jewish Radicals and Radical Jews* (London: Academic Press, 1980), 21; David Caute, *'68: The Year of the Barricades* (London: Paladin, 1988), 388, 389.

<sup>142</sup>Arthur Liebman, *Jews and the Left* (New York: Wiley, 1979), 541.

<sup>143</sup>Liebman, *Jews and the Left*, 541.

that Tom Hayden was the poster boy of the New Left because he represented “The iconic symbol [of] a Midwestern gentile, not an East Coast Social Democrat or Communist. Not part of that old European politics.”<sup>144</sup> This was also the case with non-leftist Carl Oglesby who became president in 1965. Haber, in his effort to expand SDS beyond his band of radicals, determinedly looked for new members who represented a greater cross-section of society. Jeffrey was a perfect recruiter for this type, she freely admitted, with her Midwest look and blond hair.<sup>145</sup> Ross explained that SDS leadership determined the organization’s viability by its Jew to gentile ratio. He stated:

When we developed knockout energetic chapters at Kansas, Colorado, Iowa, Texas, we knew we were breaking out of the ghetto. The Jewish people and the non-Jewish people knew that for better or worse the Left and Jewish history were vitally intertwined in America. Important symbolically and actually to broaden that story and narrative it had to expand past that. And as someone raised in a Jewish secular household I did not find that insulting or troubling at all, I agreed with it.<sup>146</sup>

Scholars argue the New Left’s determination to include gentiles was indicative of Jewish students’ psychological need to feel accepted by American society. Staub wrote that after World War Two, “Behaving Jewish, looking Jewish, and being Jewish were not credible or reasonable options” and young Jews were encouraged to assimilate as much as possible.<sup>147</sup> After observing the McCarthy era’s witch hunts that targeted leftist Jews,

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<sup>144</sup>Ross, Interview with Author, 24, January, 2011.

<sup>145</sup>Jeffrey, Bentley Historical Library, 5.

<sup>146</sup>Ross, Interview with Author, 24, January, 2011.

<sup>147</sup>Michael Staub, *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 11. For additional studies about Jewish identity, please see Kenneth Marcus, *Jewish Identity and Civil Rights in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); David Biale, Michael Galchinsky, and Susan Heschel (eds.) *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews,*

the execution of the Rosenbergs, and the persistent anti-Semitism in the South, Jews had legitimate reason to fear drawing attention to themselves.<sup>148</sup>

The Sixties started with accusations of increasing self-hatred among Jewish youth who strove for assimilation. This charge was particularly directed at New Left activists. In “The Oppression of America’s Jews” Aviva Cantor Zuckoff wrote that Jews during the Sixties were constantly asking the *goyim* for approval and validation of their causes. Every decision was evaluated by the question “what will the *goyim* say?”<sup>149</sup> Tired of being seen as unassimilated outsiders, Jewish activists in the 1960s wrestled with this sense of alienation by subverting their Jewishness and looking to the larger American society for approval of and membership in their New Left organizations. Jewish activists’ desire to be part of a more heterogeneous movement was demonstrated at the 1965 Kewadin SDS convention when participants cheered after the announcement that gentile members finally outnumbered Jews.<sup>150</sup> Jewish members regarded the higher gentile to Jew ratio as a turning point for the group. Finally Jews were part of an American

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*Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Deborah Dash Moore, *American Jewish Identity Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008).

<sup>148</sup> Justice Ruth Ginsberg, *The Jewish Americans*, produced by David Brubin (2008: Washington, D.C.: WETA).

<sup>149</sup> Aviva Cantor Zuckoff, “The Oppression of America’s Jews” in *Jewish Radicalism: A Selected Anthology*, Jack Nusan Porter and Peter Dreier, ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1973), 34.

<sup>150</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 204, 205. There is also a debate in *Studies on the Left* that focuses on Jewish identity in Norm Fruchter, “Arendt’s Eichmann and Jewish Identity,” *Studies on the Left* 5 no.1 (Winter 1965) and Morris U Schappes, “On Arendt’s Eichmann and Jewish Identity,” *Studies on the Left* 5 no.4 (Fall 1965). For more on the conflict over Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem* see Kirsten Fermaglich’s *American Dreams and Nazi Nightmares: Early Holocaust Consciousness and Liberal America, 1957 – 1965* (Waltham, Mass: Brandeis University Press, 2006) and Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983).

organization, not simply a Jewish one. While activists saw their participation in a more heterogeneous group as progress, other members of the Jewish community condemned New Left Jews for letting feelings of self-hatred prioritize other minority groups and causes ahead of their own.<sup>151</sup>

In comparison to non-radical Jews, Jewish RDBs in particular had long learned to put their religion on hold as a result of Party strategies started in the 1930s and 1940s. Because of this historical precedent, leftists did not experience the same feelings of alienation or desire assimilation that preoccupied non-leftist Jews. Young radicals certainly did feel alienated from American society, and while their Jewishness could have been part of it, leftists themselves often attributed their alienation to their radicalism. Thus, to some degree, activists from Old Left backgrounds' alienation did not always stem from an imposed outsider status, it was at times self-inflicted by their own decisions to support leftist causes. Certainly the Left was, as Ross stated, "vitally intertwined" with the Jewish community and it is hard to differentiate whether Jewish or political values motivated young leftists. But it is important to note that the majority of radicals' protests were under the auspices of political organizations, not religious or cultural ones, and in joining those political groups leftists pushed themselves to the periphery of American society with their activism.

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<sup>151</sup>For more on this topic, please see Michael Staub's *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). Some participants feel that it was simply the zeitgeist of the times that encouraged student activism. To quote a participant, "The times made me do this. These leftists had long submarined their identities as Jews and were instead Jewish radicals, secular Jews, non-Jewish Jews, in the parlance of Isaac Deutscher." (Kenneth Waltzer, Comments to Author, 15, August, 2011).

For leftists, part of the reason they desired “ordinary” students to join their movements was to defuse opponents’ arguments that the New Left was simply a reincarnation of the Communist Party, again a political, rather than religious or cultural association. When Bettina Aptheker strategized during the early days of the FSM, she knew non-leftists needed to be recruited to take the attention off her participation. Aptheker warned the group, “I’ve got a last name that’s dynamite.”<sup>152</sup> With the Left seen as a radical establishment, RDBs specifically recruited gentiles into the organization to avoid a political smear campaign.

Until developments in 1967, leftists’ and liberal Jews’ values of humanism and civil rights dovetailed smoothly. Though young radicals were drawn into the New Left primarily because of their radical roots, non-leftist Jews often attributed participation to their Jewish heritage. During an era of activism, young Jewish liberals felt their personal beliefs needed to be tangibly demonstrated in political action. For non-leftist activists who embraced their Jewish heritage at least to some degree, being Jewish meant a commitment to social justice.<sup>153</sup>

While most children of the Old Left acknowledged their Jewish heritage, it was often through a leftist lens that referenced how Jews supported the Left and what the Left

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<sup>152</sup>Roabaugh, *Berkeley at War*, 24.

<sup>153</sup>Albert Vorspan, “Vietnam and the Jewish Conscience” in *The Jewish 1960s: An American Sourcebook*, Michael Staub, ed. (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2004), 141. Please see Michel Staub’s *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).for more on this subject. Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 5, 49, 57, 60.

had done for Jews.<sup>154</sup> These activists came out of a secular radical milieu and were influenced by it. As a result, they often chose politics over ethnicity and also radical politics over pro-Zionist politics. This prioritization of allegiance was similar to the precedence they witnessed in their households while growing up. Miriam (last name withheld) stated that being an RDB, as opposed to her Jewish heritage, was the main motivating factor in her activism. She explained that her Jewishness was an important part of her identity, but that “It seemed that how you read the newspaper and how you decided which march to go on or what worry to handle first had to do with being a red diaper baby.”<sup>155</sup> Amy (last name withheld) agreed, “...the kind of values we’re talking about [were] not so much a result of the Jewishness in our background as the red diaper-ness.”<sup>156</sup>

Many young leftists were raised in families that prioritized radical politics before their religion or culture. Though families gathered on religious holidays, religious theology and cultural history were replaced by political debates. Discussion about Party platforms or mobilization tactics sapped the gatherings of their religious or even cultural meaning. Miriam (last name withheld) remembered, “I grew up in a radical family without a very strong religious sense at all...Family gatherings at Rosh Hashanah and Passover tended to have lots of political arguments and discussions that were not related

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<sup>154</sup> Aptheker, *Intimate Politics*, 56. A few leftists saw a clear connection between being Jewish and their leftist activism. See several examples in “Jewish Red Diaper Babies, 1983” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C: Red Diaper Productions, 1985).

<sup>155</sup> Miriam (last name withheld), “Jewish Red Diaper Babies, 1983,” 111.

<sup>156</sup> Amy (last name withheld), “Jewish Red Diaper Babies, 1983,” 111.

to the holiday at all.”<sup>157</sup> Barry Bluestone recalled declining an invitation to Passover with Walter Reuther by stating that he and his wife thought it was “hypocritical for us to come to a Seder where we were going to talk about the freedom of the Jews from the wicked Pharaoh, when, in fact, we’re holding the Vietnamese hostage and killing thousands a day.”<sup>158</sup>

After the Six-Day War, non-leftist Jews’ devotion to their cultural and religious heritage was ignited.<sup>159</sup> This renewed commitment motivated their outraged reaction to the 1967 Convention of the National Conference for New Politics where several thousand New Left radicals, Black power activists, and anti-war advocates condemned Israel’s Six-Day War as an “imperialist Zionist war.”<sup>160</sup> The convention’s denunciation of Israel’s War, which had happened barely a month earlier, infuriated Jewish delegates who walked out of the conference. Not only did conference members condemn Israel’s success in the Middle East, but following the convention Black Power organizations began supporting Al Fatah’s attempts to reclaim their land. New Leftists designated Palestinians as the Middle Eastern version of the Viet Cong, the besieged victims of an imperialist

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<sup>157</sup> Miriam (last name withheld), “Jewish Red Diaper Babies, 1983,” 111.

<sup>158</sup> Bluestone, Bentley Historical Library, 20.

<sup>159</sup> For more on this subject, please see Michel Staub’s *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

<sup>160</sup> Simon Hall, ““On the Tail of the Panther”: Black Power and the 1967 Convention of National Conference for New Politics,” *Journal of American Studies* 37, no. 1 (2003): 66. Delegates approved this statement, part of a 13-point platform presented by the Black Caucus, with a three to one vote margin.

master.<sup>161</sup> Jews in the New Left perceived these attacks on Israel and Zionism as a direct attack against Jews as a whole. As a result an impassable breach between the New Left and the Jewish community grew as Jewish participants withdrew membership and financial support from SDS, SNCC, the Black Panthers, and other organizations.<sup>162</sup>

While many non-leftist Jews abandoned these groups and started their own Radical Jewish Union, most Jews from Old Left backgrounds continued to support the New Left.<sup>163</sup> Radicals' prioritization of the Left over their Jewishness ended their allegiance with other Jews in the movement and Jews who remained with the New Left were accused of displaying "self-hatred." Young leftists who supported anti-Zionist organizations, challenged the legitimacy of an Israeli state, or questioned Israel's foreign policy were declared to have a "'masochistic relationship with Jewishness.'" <sup>164</sup> Social democratic scholar and staunch Israel supporter Seymour Lipset, former national chairman of the Young People's Socialist League who left the Socialist Party in 1960, condemned Jewish leftists who, "exhibit familiar forms of Jewish self-hatred, of so-called

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<sup>161</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, "'The Socialism of Fools': The Left, the Jews and Israel" in *The New Left and the Jews*, Mordecai Chertoff, ed. (New York: Pitman, 1971), 119.

<sup>162</sup> Jack Nusan Porter and Peter Dreier, "Introduction: The Roots of Jewish Radicalism" in *Jewish Radicalism: A Selected Anthology*, Jack Nusan Porter and Peter Dreier, eds. (New York: Grove Press, 1973), xxiv.

<sup>163</sup> These leftists chose their radical roots over their Jewish heritage and supported Black Power. They also tended in the evolution of SDS toward the militant action radicalism of the Weather Underground.

<sup>164</sup> Glenn, "The Vogue of Jewish Self-Hatred in Post": 122; Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 201.



Jewish anti-semitism... Self-hatred is becoming a major problem for the American Jewish community.”<sup>165</sup>

Though some leftists left student organizations, many chose to stay with the New Left. Jackie and Art Goldberg, David Horowitz, Naomi Jaffe, Barry Bluestone, Bettina Aptheker, John Jacobs, Mike Ansara, and countless other radicals supported SDS, the Black Panthers, and later the Weathermen.<sup>166</sup> Because leftists chose their politics over religion, they were particularly disgusted with former New Leftists who subordinated their radicalism to their Jewishness. Radicals noted, with contempt, that many American Jewish “peaceniks” prior to the Six-Day War were originally opposed to America’s involvement in Vietnam and now kept silent for fear of losing government support for Israel.<sup>167</sup> It is important to clarify that all activists from Old Left backgrounds were not anti-Israel. Horowitz wrote articles for *Ramparts* that argued the reasonableness of the Palestinians’ demands, but also attested to the right of an Israeli state. But, unlike the former peaceniks, children from Old Left backgrounds refused to let religious or cultural ties create a conflict of interest. One RDB found it impossible to be a leftist, anti-Israel,

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<sup>165</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, “‘The Socialism of Fools’: The Left, the Jews and Israel” in *The New Left and the Jews*, Mordecai Chertoff, ed. (New York: Pitman, 1971), 123; Patricia Sullivan, “Political Scientist Seymour Lipset, 84; Studied Democracy and U.S. Culture” *Washington Post*, (4, January 2007) <http://www.washingtonpost.com>, (accessed November 18, 2010).; Joe Enskenz, “Remembering Seymour Lipset, ‘Most Cited’ Political Scientist,” *The Jerusalem Post* (14, January, 2007) <http://fr.jpost.com>, (accessed August 21, 2010).

<sup>166</sup> While many radicals did continue to support the New Left, a few came out stridently against their former organizations and colleagues. Please see “To Uncle Tom and Other Jews” in *Jewish Radicalism: A Selected Anthology*, Jack Nusan Porter and Peter Dreier, eds. (New York: Grove Press, 1973).

<sup>167</sup> Balfour Brickner, “Vietnam and the Jewish Community” in *The Jewish 1960s: An American Sourcebook*, Michael Staub, ed. (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2004), 160.

and still Jewish. So she chose to be a leftist.<sup>168</sup> Many leftists made the same choice and this division has since continued to affect American leftist politics.<sup>169</sup>

### **Contributing to the Historiography:**

#### **Continuity and Disconnect between the Old and New Left**

Children from the Old Left demonstrate a degree of continuity between their parents' generation and the New Left. Similar to the previous generation, young radicals had a sense of almost messianic duty and commitment to their causes and were convinced that progress was inevitable. David Horowitz embodied this mentality during his college years. He was completely convinced he could "influence history if given the chance."<sup>170</sup> This mentality exemplifies the ideological connection between the generations; the belief that the Left had a commitment to, and inevitably would bring about, a socialist revolution. This was undoubtedly the most important shared characteristic between the two generations because it motivated their extreme commitment to the Left. RBD Robert Meeropol was taught that "You were not a worthwhile human being unless you were helping other people and yourself to make the world a better place."<sup>171</sup>

Another connection between the Old and New Left, was their focus on the same causes and the similarities between the organizing techniques they used to support those causes. Participants from Old Left backgrounds stood out to non-radicals as a result of

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<sup>168</sup> Norma (last name withheld), "Jewish Red Diaper Babies, 1983," 113.

<sup>169</sup> Horowitz, "Who Killed Betty Van Patter?"; Aptheker, *Intimate Politics*, 463; Horowitz, *Radical Son*, 228, 227, 276; Rosa (last name withheld), *Red Diaper Babies*, 116; Bluestone, Bentley Historical Library, 13; Liebman, *Jews and the Left*, 569.

<sup>170</sup> Horowitz, *A Radical Son*, 124

<sup>171</sup> Robert Meeropol, "Introducing Ourselves, 1983", 62.

their knowledge about political analysis, election strategy, debating skills, organizational techniques, writing, defining, and communicating to large groups. Non-leftists also noted their staunch commitment to their causes, high energy, articulate arguments, theoretical background, and efficient mobilization methods.<sup>172</sup> Non-leftists described participants from Old Left backgrounds as “articulate,” “well-versed in left doctrine,” “concerned,” “heavyweight” “solid” “visionary” “bright,” “knowledgeable,” “dedicated,” “born organizer,” “great talent,” and “precocious.”<sup>173</sup>

Another Old Left technique young radicals adopted that showed the connection between the two groups was their strategy to burrow from within pre-existing organizations and gain control of the group. Just as the Communist Party sent its members to infiltrate other liberal organizations and try to manipulate the group’s agenda, Ronald Radosh, a student leader at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, knew of leftists who practiced the same methods. Radicals often chose to work quietly, as not to draw negative and violent attention to themselves, within the framework of other organizations with compatible goals. These groups were often smaller, local organizations that focused on civil rights, anti-nuclear armament, or the peace movement. Radosh acknowledged leftists were not evil manipulators, explaining “The words used to describe this activity – ‘infiltration’ and ‘burrowing from within’ – have essentially

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<sup>172</sup> Margaret M. Braungart and Richard Braungart, “The Life-Course Development of Left Wing and Right Wing Youth Activist Leaders from the 1960s” *Political Psychology* 11, no. 2 (1990): 263, 264; Miller, *Democracy in the Streets*, 161; Ross, Bentley Historical library, 1;

<sup>173</sup> Anderson, *The Movement and The Sixties*, 61; Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope and Days of Rage*, 102, 111, 124; Hayden, *Reunion*, 31.

negative connotation and are as such unjust. For we were not so much as using those organizations for our own ends as we were helping them fulfill their stated aims.”<sup>174</sup>

In addition to burrowing, leftists used other Old Left tactics such as block voting, developing multiple levels of leadership, and eliminating the competition with persuasive and intense debates.<sup>175</sup> Richard Flacks, who was a member of the Labor Youth League, described his decision to join the Young Democrats as “the theory [that] if we could be part of these existing political organizations, we could encourage them to do good things.”<sup>176</sup> Barry Bluestone, Robert Ross, and Sharon Jeffrey were all elected to University of Michigan’s Student Government Council to pass SDS’s political programs. Young radicals had a noticeable effect on the Council. Ross remembered when he proposed a resolution at a student government meeting that condemned the Bay of Pigs invasion, “On the first vote it was defeated. I started sentence-by-sentence parliamentary maneuvering to get it back. We finally got the resolution passed.”<sup>177</sup> Ross also joined the National Student Association to raise issues important to SDS. In their leadership positions as FSM Executive Committee members, Bettina Aptheker, Jackie Goldberg, Art Goldberg, Margot Adler, and Jerry Rubin, also showed leftist leadership as they influenced the rhetoric and values of other FSM members.

Another connection between the Old and New Left was radicals’ decision to “speak American,” even if advocating values that came out of the Old Left. Mirroring the

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<sup>174</sup>Radosh, *Commies*, 53

<sup>175</sup>Jeffrey, Bentley Historical Library, 1; Farber, *Chicago* '68, 64

<sup>176</sup>Richard Flacks, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan (June 1980), 10. Flacks was elected president of the Young Democrats.

<sup>177</sup>Ross, Bentley Historical Library, 5.

Popular Front tactics of the 1930s, Richard Flacks explained that the New Left was not “going to say socialism, because socialism meant either social-democracy or Stalinism, but we were looking for the same social framework that the ideal of socialism stood for. A new term was desirable – hence, participatory democracy.”<sup>178</sup> Ross agreed, stating, “participatory democracy was a way to say socialism with an American accent.”<sup>179</sup> In addition to this similarity, leftists used protest songs to support their organizations’ efforts. During rallies, FSM activists often led mass sing-a-longs with old union numbers from the 1930s.<sup>180</sup>

The Old Left also contributed to the continuity between the two generations with their support of student organizations. Parents recognized the dedication and commitment of their children, having demonstrated the same zealous activism during their own youth.<sup>181</sup> Doug’s (last name withheld) parents made it clear that they supported his activism, telling him, “It doesn’t matter what anybody else says; you go and tell people what’s right.”<sup>182</sup> Victoria Ortiz was a member of Student Committee for Travel to Cuba and in 1963 helped fellow activists organize a visit. Though the press condemned the trip,

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<sup>178</sup> Richard Flacks, Bentley Historical Library, 11.

<sup>179</sup> Ross, Bentley Historical Library, 10.

<sup>180</sup> Rorabaugh, *Berkeley At War*, 28.

<sup>181</sup> Like their children, the older generation had also been student rebels. As young radicals they created a national, influential protest movement that molded the political discourse on college campuses for more than a decade. No generation before them had ever been as effective organizers, and only their children could match their impact on student politics in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Robert Cohen, *When The Old Left Was Young: Student Radicals and America’s First Mass Student Movement, 1929 – 1941* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), xiii.) Parents were not always supportive of what form their children’s activism took, but they were supportive of their involvement in the New Left.

<sup>182</sup> Doug (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982”, 36.

Ortiz said her mom compiled a scrapbook of newspaper and magazine clippings recording politicians' reactions and throughout the whole event remained her daughter's biggest fan.<sup>183</sup> Lewis Siegelbaum, who participated in demonstrations at Columbia University, said his parents showed their support for his activism through conversations with his father. Siegelbaum's father was the co-convener of a parents' support group for student activists. Driving at least half a dozen times from his home on Long Island into New York City, Siegelbaum's father and other parents tried to figure out ways to support their children's protests against the Vietnam War.<sup>184</sup> Judy Plapinger's mother supported her son's anti-war protests by saying if he was drafted she would move the family to Canada.<sup>185</sup> Jeffrey remembered the strong support of her parents, and through them, the labor unions. She stated about her activism, "They loved it. They sent telegrams congratulating me on being in jail... They were very supportive... [me] being politically active was fulfilling their dreams."<sup>186</sup>

At times parents showed their support by participating in organization events. Haber's parents attended the Port Huron Conference and his father, who was by 1965 the Dean of the University of Michigan, helped organize the first teach-in about the Vietnam War.<sup>187</sup> Jennifer (last name withheld) stated that sometimes she would show up at

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<sup>183</sup> Victoria Ortiz, Email with the Author, 14, September, 2010.

<sup>184</sup> Lewis Siegelbaum, Interview with the Author, 5, September, 2010; Email with the Author, 18, October, 2011.

<sup>185</sup> Judy Plapinger, Interview with the Author, 7, September, 2010.

<sup>186</sup> Jeffrey, Bentley Historical Library, 14.

<sup>187</sup> William Haber, Bentley Historical Museum, University of Michigan (October, 1979), 6, 12. Haber believed portions of the Port Huron Statement were drafted in his library at home.

protests to find her parents already there.<sup>188</sup> As a graduate student, Deborah Dash Moore participated in the 1968 protests at Columbia with her mother, while her father printed and distributed flyers.<sup>189</sup> Maggie Levenstein remembered walking rent-control picket lines with her mother in Cambridge.<sup>190</sup> Eleanor Raskin went with her mother to an anti-war protest at the Pentagon. Eleanor watched her mother, Annie, who had been a dedicated activist her entire life, scale a wire fence and yell wild curses at the building.<sup>191</sup> While in her third year of law school at Columbia, Eleanor coauthored *The Bust Book: What to Do Until the Lawyer Comes* with RDB Kathy Boudin. The publication was priced at fifty cents and sold more than 50,000 copies. The chapters explained what to expect during arrest, arraignment, bail and the trial. Of special note was the advice Eleanor's mother had shared about preparing for a demonstration. Annie Stein had informed her daughter that *The New York Times* "although not useful for any other purpose, makes a very hard object when rolled up lengthwise and folded in half, and unlike other weapons, is inconspicuous and not incriminating."<sup>192</sup> The day Eleanor was arrested for her participation in the 1968 Columbia protests and jailed, Annie, was "worried sick and proud as hell."<sup>193</sup> When Bettina Aptheker went on a FSM tour across

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<sup>188</sup> Ruth Hunter, "From Red Diapers to Protest Banners" in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 28.

<sup>189</sup> Deborah Dash Moore, Email with the Author, 6, September, 2010.

<sup>190</sup> Maggie Levenstein, "Introducing Ourselves 1982," 7.

<sup>191</sup> Jones, *A Radical Line*, 163.

<sup>192</sup> Jones, *A Radical Line*, 199.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

the country, she gave a talk to her parents' local Communist Party group. She recalled that her "parents were so proud, their faces flung open with pride."<sup>194</sup>

In addition to their emotional support and attendance at rallies, parents were also instrumental in providing or raising funds for their children's organizations. Jeffrey's mother, Mildred Jeffrey, was one of the top officials with the UAW and the community relations director of the International. Mildred successfully prodded student activists to apply for labor funding and relayed many favorable reviews about SDS to her superiors with descriptions that touted SDS as "the most important student organization in the country."<sup>195</sup> Mildred also secured a \$10,000 grant from the union to employ Haber as a fulltime organizer.<sup>196</sup> As the organization grew, the UAW leaders and the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO contributed to SDS' finances and let them use their printing presses and meeting halls. After the group finalized the Port Huron Statement, the Packinghouse Workers printed thousands of copies. On one occasion, ILD executive director Jack Conway urged his associates to contribute to SDS stating, "I have been especially impressed with the work of Students for a Democratic Society. This deeply committed group of a young people who labored effectively in the civil rights struggle now seeks to extend their activities beyond civil rights issues into other areas."<sup>197</sup> On another occasion, Walter Reuther praised SDS as "the vanguard student organization

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<sup>194</sup> Aptheker, *Intimate Politics*, 153. After the Greenwich Townhouse bombings when members of the Weathermen were on the FBI's 10 Most Wanted List which meant another way parents supported their children was by protecting them from the FBI (Ayres, *Fugitive Days*, 221.)

<sup>195</sup> Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s*, 11.

<sup>196</sup> Hayden, *Rebel*, 29, 114.

<sup>197</sup> Levy, *The New Left and Labor in the 1960s*, 11.14.



dedicated to forces of progress in America.”<sup>198</sup> After receiving their second grant, \$5,000 from UAW to start ERAP, SDS often continued to ask for funds, at one point requesting \$76,000 to start a program of community unions across the country.

While there were many ways the Old and New Left were connected, there were also differences between the two groups. Though appreciative of the Old Left’s financial and emotional support, many student activists felt their parents’ generation had abandoned their ideals and activism during the McCarthy era. This was particularly true for leftists in the Weathermen organization. The Weathermen, one of the most violent New Left organizations of the decade, demanded its participants throw away any bourgeois values that hindered their complete dedication to revolution in America. Radicals felt the Old Left’s conforming to convention had hindered their parents’ effectiveness. In order to show their break with the older generation and its values, Weathermen shoplifted, stole credit cards, lied to parents, smashed monogamy, and did copious amounts of drugs. Some members were even ordered to sever all communication and ties with their families. RDB Naomi Jaffe explained her dedication to the Weatherman and this destructive lifestyle as:

we have to do things sometimes to benefit the movement, even though we may not want to do them. My whole life has been built around the revolution. My parents dedicated their lives to the movement, but they did it all wrong. They were too soft. We can turn this into a great socialist country.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>199</sup> Larry Grathwohl, *Bringing Down America: An FBI Informer with the Weathermen* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1976), 91, 92.

In agreement with this assessment, Weathermen Elaine Stein believed the Old Left had sold out and bought into the capitalist system.<sup>200</sup> Many Weathermen denounced the stodgy, theoretically minded Old Left and were determined to implement changes the older generation only talked and read about.<sup>201</sup>

Children of the Old Left were also determined to differ from their parents' behavior when faced with federal investigations. Unlike their parents, they refused to cower before investigatory committees, but voiced their opinions all the more boisterously and confrontationally. When taken to court, the new approach was to speak nonsense to power. RDB Jerry Rubin, co-founder of the Yippies, demonstrated one of the most extreme examples of this method during HUAC hearings in 1967 and 1968.<sup>202</sup> When Rubin appeared before the committee he refused to plead the Fifth Amendment or pretend he was a civil liberties democrat. Instead he appeared in knee breeches and a three-cornered hat, and said he was an "American revolutionary" and proudly declared

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<sup>200</sup> Peggy Dennis, "Memories from the '20s," in *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 28.

<sup>201</sup> Susan Braudy, *Family Circle: The Boudins and the Aristocracy of the Left* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 19.

<sup>202</sup> Jerry Rubin's father was a truck driver and business agent of the Teamsters. Rubin went to Berkeley in 1964 where he became a full-time political activist, co-founded the Vietnam Day Committee (VDC), was the principal organizer of the first Vietnam teach-in, and helped lead a series of violent confrontations between troop trains at the Oakland armed forces induction center. VDC was the most active and successful local antiwar group in the country. In 1967 he ran for mayor of Berkeley, winning 22% of the vote and later that year became the project director of the successful antiwar march in Washington, D.C. (David Farber, *Chicago '68* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 9 – 11, 65.

his revolutionary intentions.<sup>203</sup> David Horowitz's discussion of the trial implied that Rubin's actions, indicative of the New Left in general, demonstrated how the younger generation was more dedicated to their activism and determined than their parents.<sup>204</sup>

While Rubin's defiant and theatrical behavior was indicative of radicals' refusal to be cowed by authority figures, it is also important to note that his bravado occurred in a political climate different from that of his parents' generation. Rubin's sentence to three years in prison for contempt of court was ultimately repealed. The fact that his sentence was overthrown shows HUAC's power was all but gone by 1967.<sup>205</sup> An article in the *Harvard Crimson* noted this change, explaining:

In the fifties, the most effective sanction was terror. Almost any publicity from HUAC meant the 'blacklist.' Without a chance to clear his name, a witness would suddenly find himself without friends and without a job. But it is not easy to see how in 1969 a HUAC blacklist could terrorize an SDS activist. Witnesses like Jerry Rubin have openly boasted of their contempt for American institutions. A subpoena from HUAC would be unlikely to scandalize...his friends.<sup>206</sup>

In addition to their rejection of sectarianism, children from Old Left labor families also criticized Labor's foreign policy decisions, which were often in support of America's military presence in Vietnam. Radosh had written an essay for *Studies on the Left* entitled "The Corporate Ideology of American Labor" to show the connection

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<sup>203</sup> Doug Rossinow "Letting Go: Revisiting the New Left's Demise," in *The New Left Revisited*, John McMillian and Paul Buhle, eds. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 251.

<sup>204</sup> Horowitz, *Radical Son*, 125.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>206</sup> Thomas Geoghegan, "By Any Other Name. Brass Tacks," *The Harvard Crimson*, February, 24 1969.

between the military industrial complex and labor.<sup>207</sup> Though divided on this issue, it did not always hinder cooperation between the two groups, as seen with the UAW's financial support of SDS.

Children of the Old Left were also tired of being seen as the enemies of America, a label they acquired during the 1950s as a result of their radical lineage. Jackie Goldberg found this criticism especially grating. FSM members, and particularly those with RDB status, were constantly being accused of being against the constitution and anti-American. Goldberg offered a strident rebuttal to the argument that leftists were unpatriotic by pointing out the group's dedication to participatory democracy, a value leftists emphasized during the creation of SDS while drafting the Port Huron Statement.<sup>208</sup>

Jackie Goldberg remembered Executive and Steering Committees meetings dragging on for hours because the group took the idea of participatory democracy so seriously they allowed everyone to contribute to discussions, refusing to pass motions until there was a total majority. Discussions would some times last for ten or more hours as the group wrestled with issues.<sup>209</sup> In answer to accusations of being un-American, Goldberg stated that radicals loved America, that they were in fact the *most* American because they actually demanded America's values of democracy and transparency of

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<sup>207</sup> Kevin Mattson "Between Despair and Hope: Revisiting *Studies on the Left*" in *The New Left Revisited*, John McMillian and Paul Buhle, eds. (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2003), 35.

<sup>208</sup> Ross, Interview with the Author, 24, January, 2011.

<sup>209</sup> Jackie Goldberg, *Berkeley in the Sixties*, First Run Features (2002).

government be enforced.<sup>210</sup> Goldberg stated, “We get portrayed frequently as very cynical. We were not cynical, we were the antithesis of cynical, we were feeling our own power.”<sup>211</sup>

As the decade continued and SDS’s policies grew more confrontational and convoluted, the Old Left tried to steer the organization away from problems that had crippled their generation. Using their children as conduits to the rest of the membership, they counseled against accepting a Marxist-Leninist working class analysis that did not take America’s unique economic situation into account. They also warned against the flawed tactic of sending Party leadership underground. Radicals, like most young adults at that age, stubbornly rejected their parents’ advice and charged down the same destructive paths of their parents’ generation.

Though leftists rejected their parents’ warning, Old Leftists did not easily give up on their children. Annie Stein tried to become a mentor to the Weathermen, but she was often frustrated by this new generation of leftists who did not know their radical history and adopted failed policies from the past. When Eleanor’s Weathermen friends said something that sounded particularly naive, Annie said, “You couldn’t be more wrong” or

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<sup>210</sup> Goldberg, *Berkeley in the Sixties*.

<sup>211</sup> Goldberg, “Make Love, Not War,” National Security Archive, Cold War Interviews <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/interviews/episode-13/goldberg2.html>. Mickey Flacks also expressed her commitment to and pride in America. One time while marching against the Cuban Missile Crisis she thought some frat boys were pulling down the American flag to protest Flacks’ anti-Kennedy demonstration. Flacks was furious until she realized it was the grounds crew taking down the flag because it was sunset. Flacks said, “But that was the feeling, that was our flag, they had no right to take it away. It was a sense that we were the ones who had the values of democracy and best in America. It wasn’t America spelled with a KKK, it was our America (Mickey Flacks, Bentley Historical Library, 6).

“These ideas have been considered and rejected by every revolution in the world.”<sup>212</sup>

What compounded parents’ frustration is that many, like Annie, were convinced the ground had never been more fertile for organizing the masses than it was in the late 1960s. With the benefit of hindsight, most historians agree with her.<sup>213</sup>

Between the riots in the inner cities, the anti-war sentiment, and the growing Black Power movement, 1969 could have been the first year of a new history in America, the year of revolution. Instead, Annie thought SDS, and particularly the Weatherman, were botching the opportunity. She was convinced student activists had abandoned the masses at exactly the wrong moment, hiding away in underground cadre groups at a time when the charismatic leaders of the Left needed to be in the streets to incite and lead massive demonstrations.<sup>214</sup> As a member of the Old Left, Stein remembered how unsuccessful the Party’s strategy of sending its leaders underground during the Fifties had been and considered the Weathermen’s use of a similar tactic as a mistake.<sup>215</sup>

Annie was not alone in her disapproval of the younger generation. Bill Ayers remembered one RDB’s father, a lifelong Communist, who looked with “undisguised contempt at [his daughter’s] entanglements, at her tactics, at her petit-bourgeois so-called

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<sup>212</sup> Jones, *A Radical Line*, 236.

<sup>213</sup> For more on this topic, please see David Barber, *A Hard Rain Fell: SDS and Why It Failed* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008) and Kenneth Heineman, *Put Your Bodies Upon the Wheels* (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 2001).

<sup>214</sup> Jones, *A Radical Line*, 198.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 168. Though disheartened by their choice Annie was still supportive of her daughter and instrumental in helping Kathy Boudin and Eleanor hide after the Greenwich Village Townhouse Explosion in 1970 when a homemade bomb accidentally detonated and killed three Weathermen. Without Annie’s help of supplies and money to start their lives underground, the police would have captured Boudin and Eleanor.

comrades – longhaired, drug-addicted individualists.”<sup>216</sup> Like Stein, the dad was furious that the New Left was not capitalizing on the revolutionary potential of the times and accused the Weathermen of not being able to recognize “the working class even if it came marching up Grand River Boulevard toward them with red banners flying.”<sup>217</sup> Robert Meeropol’s adoptive mother was furious when she learned that the New Left’s politics were being mixed and diluted with drugs and rock and roll.<sup>218</sup> As the decade progressed, drugs became part of SDS’s and the Weathermen’s modus operandi in order to bond with the counterculture and working class youth. This was a completely different policy than the early RDBs members who avoided drugs for fear it would hinder their “revolutionary capabilities.”<sup>219</sup> As drugs became more and more prevalent in the movement, parents grew increasingly concerned about their children’s safety. Young leftists’ inability to capitalize on the movement they had helped start at the beginning of the decade frustrated the Old Left. Blinded by their embrace of sectarianism and isolation, leftists were unable to heed the warning signs of disaster. Radicals, to some degree, were more responsible for the New Left’s demise than non-leftist participants. As children from Old Left families, they knew the historical, negative repercussions that accompanied such policies, and yet, as seen by the contributions of Klonsky, Boudin, Jaffe, and JJ, they were at least partially responsible for introducing them.

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<sup>216</sup> Bill Ayers, *Fugitive Days: A Memoir* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 149.

<sup>217</sup> Ayres, *Fugitive Days*, 149.

<sup>218</sup> Meeropol, “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” 9.

<sup>219</sup> Jeffrey, Bentley Historical Library, 11.

## **Conclusion**

Though there certainly were differences between the Old Left and the New Left, young leftists' attempts to distance themselves from the previous generations' politics were offset by their perpetuation of Old Left values, strategies, and sectarianism. At the beginning of the decade, children from Old Left backgrounds introduced traditional leftists goals of socioeconomic parity, anti-imperialism, working class rights and racial equality to students who had yet to support these causes as their own. Even when leftists introduced theories and programs they considered unique to their generation, in reality radicals were adapting mobilization techniques and strategies from the Old Left.

Being raised in Old Left families set radicals apart from other activists not only for their unique skill sets, but also, when applicable, how they viewed their Jewishness. After the Six Day war in 1967 and the resulting anti-Zionism that surfaced in SDS, many non-leftists Jews denounced the New Left. Children of the Old Left, who identified more with their politics than their ethnicity, stayed with their organizations. The decision to choose politics over ethnicity was another connection to their parents' generation. Throughout the entire decade as co-leaders of student protest organizations, young leftists demonstrated the continuity between the Old Left and New Left.

Yet being children of the Old Left and sharing similar childhood experiences was not sufficient to keep all these youths united in their vision for the New Left. RDBs and their radical peers contributed to the theoretical debates and multiple transitions in focus that shaped SDS in the 1960s and ultimately led to its radical demise. Even though they had been working for a powerful, influential Left since childhood, their contributions to the factionalism, increasingly violent protest methods, and ultimate decision to go



underground destroyed the movement. In the end, what they helped to build came crashing down in ignominy, purposeless violence, criminality, retreat into hiding, and collapse.

## **Chapter Seven: Conclusion**

During my research I learned of a dissertation, written by an RDB, dedicated to “the Rosenbergs, Sacco and Vanzetti, and to the thousands of Vietnamese who shall remain nameless.”<sup>1</sup> The New Left author, whose father was a leader in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, showed his radical roots by paying tribute to martyrs from the Old Left. In addition, he demonstrated his dedication to the New Left’s anti-war movement by mentioning the innocent lives lost in Vietnam. His references to both the Old Left and New Left exemplify the continuity that existed between the two generations. Activists raised in Old Left families who went on to contribute in the New Left are a direct link between the two movements and show the continuous trajectory of radicalism in America.

The continuity that connected the Old and New Left started in the home. Raised in Old Left households by parents who were associated to some degree with leftist values and causes, young radicals’ lives focused on racial equality, workers’ rights, and nuclear disarmament. As a result of their parents’ and their own activism, FBI agents followed young leftists to school, teachers harassed them in the classroom, and strangers hassled them on the street. As the hysteria over national security increased following World War Two, the House of Un-American Activities, Joseph McCarthy, and other investigatory committees attacked the Old Left. Young leftists had parents who were investigated, arrested, and imprisoned. If mothers or fathers were leaders in the Communist Party and ordered to go underground, RDBs might live for years without their parents. As a result

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<sup>1</sup>Paula (last name withheld), “Introducing Ourselves 1982,” in *Red Diaper Babies: Children of the Left*, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, eds. (Washington D.C.: Red Diaper Productions, 1985), 22.

of these traumatic experiences, young radicals did not experience the 1950s “golden childhood” some historians describe.

Regardless of the attacks their activism initiated, many children raised in Old Left families adopted their parents’ politics. Witnessing the almost religious devotion their parents had to leftist values, children developed the same sense of intense dedication. These young activists were convinced, like their parents, that America was theirs to change. Children were told at an early age they had a special duty to improve America, and this messianic motivation pushed young activists to challenge the status quo regardless of the persecution it brought down on their heads. Looking at these young leftists provides examples of child agency, both for the ways radicals adopted their parents’ ideals and participated in adult organizations, and also the ways young leftists created their own protest activities.

Through their activist efforts, RDBs and their Old Left peers developed organizing skills and protesting methods that would be instrumental later in their activism on college campuses. As young radicals they gave public speeches about civil rights, helped their parents leaflet to save the Rosenbergs, and participated in political campaigns. They learned how to recruit members to their groups and join liberal organizations with the intent of introducing radical platforms. They understood the backlash that accompanied challenging the status quo and developed the focus necessary to concentrate on their strategic goals regardless of harassment.

As children from the Old Left matured into young adults, their dedication to social causes grew. Since childhood they had waited for an opportunity to put their activism into practice on a national scale in a mass movement, and the Civil Rights

Movement provided that opportunity. Leftists were some of the first white participants in the movement and at times the only whites stationed on Congress Of Racial Equality (CORE) or Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) projects. Radicals not only came with their unique skill sets, but they also arrived with a much deeper understanding of African American history than most non-left whites. Children raised in Old Left families were educated at an early age about socioeconomic racism. Their families were friends with African Americans, they went to camp with African Americans, and they lived in African American neighborhoods.

Another way leftists differed was in their response to SNCC's mission to integrate of African Americans into the political, social, and economic system that white America enjoyed. While some leftists agreed with the plan and thought it was progressive, others leftists felt it was counterproductive for African Americans to assimilate into an inherently flawed capitalist system. The radicals who felt this way tended to come from families more involved with Old Left organizations, particularly the Communist Party. These individuals were often children of Party leaders, union organizers, or other members steeped in the classic theory of the Left. Educated at a young age about the shortcomings of capitalism, they were not interested in creating a Beloved Community within the old system, but to create a completely new socialist government that supported racial equality and workers' rights. Even if leftists' ultimate goal was to bring about a socialist revolution, they tabled these larger objectives and focused on the task at hand.

With their history of activism, leftists made important contributions to the movement. In addition to the strategic skills they brought, they also came knowing the reception they would receive from the South and the lack of protection they would

receive from local, state, and federal law enforcement agents. When non-radicals came to the South they certainly knew the situation would be dangerous, but most were not prepared for the state and federal governments' complicity with the South's vigilante justice. Participants discovered law enforcement officers' membership in the KKK, saw FBI agents do nothing while SNCCers were arrested without legal justification, and witnessed judges turn their backs on movement lawyers as they defended their clients.

While southern racists persecuted all whites for their participation in the movement, activists with Old Left connections were specifically targeted. This persecution was exacerbated if these activists were leftists and Jewish. The Klan planned for an all out attack on civil rights workers during Freedom Summer, 1964. In an effort to combat the Communist invasion and recruit more members, the KKK sent out newsletters outlining their defensive strategies. One policy was to pick off the civil rights leaders. This tactic was used during Freedom Summer against RDB Mickey Schwerner, a leftist from New York who started working for CORE in 1963. The Klan was incensed by Schwerner's activism, his radicalism, and his Jewishness. After setting a trap for Schwerner by torching an African American church in his community, Schwerner, James Chaney, and RDB Andrew Goodman were murdered.

While many radicals went to the South, others stayed in the North and participated in the movement. Leftists raised money for SNCC, helped keep track of workers in the South, housed speakers during fundraising drives, held sympathy protests, and marched in major civil rights demonstrations. Whether they were working in the North or the South, Old Left parents supported their children's activism, expecting them to participate. Studying this unique group of individuals raised in Old Left families adds

another dimension to the Civil Rights Movement historiography. While newer works have challenged previous studies' depictions of white participants as a homogenous whole, more needs to be done to show the differences between white activists, particularly political ones, and how those differences affected their activism.

Just as leftists were some of the first white participants the Civil Rights Movement, they were also the first to participate in the New Left. Leftists were catalysts on college campuses. Radicals from Old Left backgrounds were co-creators of the major student movements of the Sixties, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Free Speech Movement (FSM), the Weathermen, Yippies, and the Revolutionary Youth Movement.

Studying leftists as a unique cohort contributes to the argument of continuity between the Old Left and New Left. Activists, just as they did in the Civil Rights Movement, used skills developed during childhood to support their protest organizations. SDS in particular exemplified the ways leftists embraced Old Left causes. Under the guidance of Alan Haber, RDB Robert Ross, RDB Steve Max, Sharon Jeffrey, and RDB Richard Flacks, the group focused on civil rights and the labor movement. The same was true with the activists who joined FSM, many of whom had participated in the Sheraton Hotel civil rights protests the previous Spring or were involved with other civil rights organizations.

Participants from Old Left backgrounds were instrumental in both the creation of these organizations and the strategic planning that directed members' activism. As a result of their experiences growing up in the Left, activists were determined to eliminate the factionalism that had handicapped radical momentum in America. This value, which

was practically unintelligible to those raised outside the Left, was one of the main points stated in the Port Huron Statement. Not surprisingly, RDB Richard Flacks, who had personally witnessed and experienced sectarian red-baiting, wrote the section against factionalism.

Even though leftists were initially united in their methods for organizing SDS, within a few years various individuals began to introduce a variety of different policies for accomplishing these common goals. A series of new programs were introduced that ran the gamut of strategies. While not everyone agreed with the differing policies, the determination to avoid sectarianism prevailed and leaders participated in each others' programs. This was particularly seen with ERAP, where almost every leftist leader could be found on the membership roll. From 1962 until 1965, the group remained fundamentally cohesive regardless of these different projects.

This sense of unity diminished with the introduction of Prairie Power, a group of younger student members who rose to prominence after the successful 1965 antiwar march in Washington D.C. Prairie Power is often described as wholly different from the original "Old Guard" leadership and membership that started the organization. In many ways this is true. Prairie Power members often came from large Midwest universities, had little knowledge of the Left, and were more interested in taking demonstrations to the streets than writing position papers. But this description leaves out the Prairie Power activists from Old Left backgrounds that once again moved into leadership positions and dominated organizational strategy.

Just like the "Old Guard," Party members, union organizers, and civil rights supporters raised this group of Prairie Power leaders. From 1965 to 1968, every major

position paper introduced was co-authored by radicals. Leftists at least co-initiated the organization's numerous theoretical twists and turns, co-introduced the new terminology that named America as an imperialist nation, and co-implemented new strategies that took the organization's demonstration style from one of protest to resistance. The rest of Prairie Power might have been unaware of the Left's history, but leftists in leadership roles were once again at the head of the organization and perpetuating the tradition of radicalism in America.

As the decade continued, the escalation of unrest at home and war abroad, brought a heightened degree of desperation to the organization. While most SDS members were frustrated with national and international developments, leftists were particularly disheartened. Activists from Old Left backgrounds were raised with the messianic goal of leading America into a brighter future. So far their efforts had failed. Instead of ending the war or stopping racial violence, Vietnam was escalating and law enforcement agents were attacking Black Power organizations with impunity. Amidst these events, a growing level of frustration gripped the organization leaders as they frantically grasped for a strategy that would successfully stop the war. During the last years of SDS, leftists took the lead and helped push SDS to its breaking point. Disregarding the history of the Old Left, a history that demonstrated how sectarianism and underground cadres crippled an organization, leftists like Mike Klonsky, John Jacobs (JJ), Naomi Jaffee, Ted Gold, Kathy Boudin, and Eleanor Raskin introduced and supported policies and strategies that forced SDS to splinter and collapse.

Throughout the last years of SDS and its transition into the Weathermen, the Old Left could do nothing but watch in dismay. What frustrated radical parents most about



their children's activism was how close they came to creating a mass base that supported traditional radical causes. This mass base became especially powerful after the Kent State shootings in 1970 when students nationwide shutdown college campuses. This was a moment in American history, similar to the Popular Front era, when substantial political and social improvements were possible.

Prior to the Kent State tragedy, the established authority structures of society were answering students' demands. University administrations abandoned strictly Eurocentric college curriculums, the federal government passed civil rights legislations, and a larger percentage of Americans protested against the Vietnam War. And yet, by the end of the decade students were left without a national organization that could forward their demands. The New Left was unable to capitalize on this opportunity of mass unrest because it had squandered its chances with flawed theories and overly militant organizational and tactical strategies. After seeing so much potential in their children, it was painful for the Old Left to watch this lost opportunity at the end of the decade. The New Left's implosion and the Weathermen members' placement on the FBI's Most Wanted List, was another example of continuity, albeit ironic continuity, between the Old Left and their children's generation.

Though the Sixties did not bring about the great political and social changes leftists had hoped for, many activists raised in Old Left families still consider the decade one of the most exciting periods of their lives. Jeffrey stated that contributing to the New Left was "Wonderful. Very lovely. Oh yeah, I loved it, I loved organizing, I loved all the

SDS stuff. Yeah, it was a very high time, a very exhilarating time.”<sup>2</sup> Most of the leftists I interviewed, and those who attended the RDB conferences or contributed oral histories to the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, remembered their participation in SNCC, SDS, FSM, CORE, and other Sixties movements with fond nostalgia. Many are still involved in social movements, some enjoying their sixth decade of activism. Though the majority expressed concern about the current political, social, and economic state of the United States and the world, they still retained the sense of hope that progress was inevitable. Their enduring belief in good’s ultimate triumph over evil has nourished their activism since childhood, and it still inspires their activism today. Jeffrey ended her interview with this comment, “I still have the same mission: bringing light, love, joy and beauty to the planet.”<sup>3</sup> When Richard Flacks was asked if political and social reform were still possible in the present day, not only did he answer in the affirmative, but he stated that thanks to the Sixties, progress was now possible on an even wider scale.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Sharon Jeffrey, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan (October 1978), 11. Even though Jeffrey’s interview was conducted in 1978, the individuals I interviewed in 2010 and 2011 expressed the same sentiment.

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey, Bentley Historical Library, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Flacks, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan (June 1980), 18.

## **APPENDIX**

**Interview Questions Discussed Over the Phone or Through Email:**

- 1). Where did you grow up and what year were you born?
- 2). Were you parents active in the Communist Party or other leftist groups? How did they participate?
- 3). Were your parents active in social causes? Please list which ones and how they contributed.
- 4). Were you involved in protest activities as a child (Free the Rosenbergs, Ban the Bomb, Civil Rights protests, etc.)? What were they and how did you participate?
- 5). Did you attend a leftist summer camp? How did that experience affect your childhood?
- 6). If you attended a leftist summer camp, did the camp inspire or support your activism? Please describe how.
- 7). Were you involved with or a member of Civil Rights Organizations in the 1960s (If NO, skip to question 11)? Which organizations and what did you do?
- 8). Did your childhood experiences influence or motivate your civil rights activism? If yes, please give specific examples (summer camp, the Party, progressive education, etc).
- 9). Did you feel as an RDB you brought any special skills/knowledgebase to your civil rights activism? Please explain why or why not and include any specific examples.
- 10). Did your parents support your involvement in the Civil Rights Movement? How did they did they show their support?
- 11). Were you involved with or a member of any New Left Organizations (SDS, Free Speech Movement, etc)? Please list which ones.
- 12). How did you participate in these organizations?
- 13). Did your parents support your New Left activism? How did they show their support?
- 14). Did you feel as an RDB you brought any special skills/knowledge base to your New Left activism? Please explain why or why not and include any specific examples.
- 15). If Jewish, what was your reaction to the anti-Israel, anti-Zionism sentiment embraced by Black Power organizations and some New Left groups in the latter part of the Sixties?

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