

Communist Feminism, Consumer Culture, and Superpower Politics in the United States  
during the Early Cold War

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## Introduction

“No man who has a house and lot can be a Communist. He has too much to do,” quipped famed postwar builder and developer William Levitt.<sup>1</sup> Beginning in 1947, popular magazines and newspapers marketed the Levittowns springing up all over the United States and displayed new household goods to fill the kitchens, dining rooms, and garages. Suburban homeownership and mass consumption of goods served not only as key markers of middle-class status, but also as bulwarks to American political stability, freedom, and democracy.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Levitt’s declaration that suburban homeownership was an antidote to communism simultaneously glorified ownership by pairing it with masculinity while deriding Communists as lacking property, initiative, and manhood. Levitt’s assertion, moreover, reflects the fact that single-family suburban homes reinforced traditional gender roles of male breadwinner and female housewife, while communism was seen as particularly odious because it forced women to work instead of staying home and raising children. The link between gender, consumer culture, and American superiority was also on display when President Richard Nixon traveled to Moscow in 1959 to demonstrate the superiority not of American-made rockets, but of American-made washing machines. He emphasized that what capitalism allowed the United States to do was to make the lives of its housewives easier. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev snapped in reply, “We do not have the capitalist attitude toward women.”<sup>3</sup>

While the message of American superiority based on the power to produce and consume emanated all the way from the U.S. president to women’s magazines, it was not without detractors. Just as Khrushchev rejected capitalism, so, too, the American Communist Party (CPUSA) applied Marxist ideology to question assumptions and policies about consumerism,

labor, and their multiple entailments. As the largest postwar leftist group in the United States, the CPUSA was central to the labor movement and the American imaginary. With 75,000 to 80,000 members after World War II, the CPUSA enjoyed considerable financial resources as well as significant influence in liberal and labor circles. Indeed, according to historians Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes, “Communist strength was never higher than in the immediate postwar period.”<sup>4</sup> While men dominated Party leadership, women did play important roles as members and leaders and frequently contributed to such publications as the *Daily Worker*, *Worker*, and *Political Affairs*. Given that Cold War superpower rhetorical posturing centered on competing claims about the treatment of women, home, and family, the voices of American Communist women obtained a particular resonance. For example, in 1949, Communist Claudia Jones decried the classed, gendered, and racialized assumptions underlying domesticity, exclaiming, “[Bourgeois ideologists] cannot with equanimity or credibility speak of the Negro woman’s ‘place’ as in the home; for Negro women are in other peoples’ kitchens.”<sup>5</sup> From 1945 to 1956, Jones, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and other Communist women joined their male comrades in the transnational struggle between capitalism and communism by advancing sophisticated critiques of domesticity, waged labor, and racial oppression.

As this diverse group of radical women attempted to resist and remake American Cold War culture in the 1940s and 1950s, they became acutely aware of the tensions between their identities as Communists and as women. On one hand, popular magazines like *Good Housekeeping* told them that their proper place was mothering children in the single-family homes springing up in the suburbs. Such popular media assured women that politics was for the men. In the words of one mainstream newspaper, “Being a lady comrade is not a career for a glamour girl!”<sup>6</sup> By arguing that politically active, and especially Communist women, could not

be glamorous, this paper equated normative American femininity with consuming beauty products and middle- to upper- class status in the service of promoting capitalism over communism. Popular periodicals like this marshaled the gendered politics of consumption to paint as subversive those women who did not stay home, keep house, and preserve their femininity. On the other hand, Communists frequently quoted Lenin who exhorted, “A woman Communist is a member of the Party just as a man Communist, with equal rights and duties. There can be no difference of opinion on that score.”<sup>7</sup> Despite proclamations of equality, a number of Communist women argued publicly that Party ideology and practice fell short of comprehending the particular plight of women. For example, Flynn wrote in her newspaper column in 1948, “There are prejudices to overcome, family problems, the double burden of our trade union women of a home and a job—all of which need collective efforts to resolve. There are ‘blind spots’ on many of these subjects even among otherwise good trade unionists and Communists.”<sup>8</sup> Flynn called attention to the need to match proclamations with practice, noting that recruiting women to the Party required the work of all Party theorizers and members, not just women, while arguing that even progressive men acted in ways that reified male privilege.

In the 1940s, the response of many male comrades to women who made arguments such as these was to accuse them of being “feminists,” a term chosen to taint their Communist credentials with bourgeois false consciousness. This was because the American Communist Party, in line with Marxist theory, emphasized class-based oppression, largely to the exclusion of theorizing the ways in which gender and race also intersected in complicated webs of oppression. As one man wrote in the *Worker* in 1948, “I charge that the wife who fails to do her job as a good home manager for a progressive worker is being bourgeois in her understanding and is showing contempt for the progressive movement.”<sup>9</sup> American Communist women would not

have chosen to describe themselves as feminists, believing that upper-class, white women's groups like the National Woman's Party (NWP) had colonized the term.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, because they supported easier access to childcare, equal pay for women workers, and the education and autonomy of housewives, the phrase in its contemporary connotations is appropriate for their advocacy. I refer to these women as "Communist feminists" not to diminish the importance of the distinctions they made between their goals and the goals of upper- and middle-class feminists, but to refer to their distinct brand of radicalism, committed to gender equality and social justice. Indeed, despite Communist gender ideology and Cold War political repression, Communist women gradually claimed a legitimate voice to discuss "the woman question" within the Party.

Although dominant Communist discourse reified economic oppression as the sole problem facing working-class women, Communist women argued that Marxist theories of capitalism could not capture the intricacy of their oppression. They pointed to popular culture, political discourse, public policy, and Communist men as culprits. In a 1948 pamphlet, Betty Millard called upon the Party to realize the complexities of women's oppression, "Laws, customs, language, religion—they all conspire to keep woman in her place. But by themselves they couldn't do the job. Day-to-day attacks in books, films, radio shows, and magazine articles are called for, since women are more and more coming awake."<sup>11</sup> Millard noted that Communist class analysis had to account for the way popular culture reinforced a system of laws and norms that supported female domesticity. A trickle of articles, letters, and pamphlets about "the woman question" in Party presses became a deluge between 1945 and 1956 as radical women argued for the importance of culture and race in women's lived experiences. By 1956, Communists like Millard, Flynn, and Jones, had woven a sophisticated critique of consumer culture, male

supremacy, domesticity, and politics that attempted to account for race, class, and gender in both Communist theory and organizing practice. Despite many of their eventual arrests, they forever changed the way that the CPUSA talked about women's oppression.

Between 1945 and 1956, this study, argues, Communist women challenged both their Party and U.S. political culture as they built feminist theory and organizing practices. Confronting conservative gender and race politics alongside a male dominated and ideologically rigid leadership structure within the Party, Communist women nonetheless demanded that the CPUSA pay attention to unique forms of oppression emanating from gender and race, in addition to class. Communist women recognized that both mainstream political culture and the men within their Party opposed their arguments for a race- and class-conscious feminism. They negotiated this doubly disempowered position by gradually claiming a voice within the Party. In the immediate postwar period, Communist women tempered their critiques of consumer culture and men using satire and humor, hedging strategies that nonetheless politicized femininity and connected it to Communist class critique. By 1948 they directly marshaled their knowledge of Communist doctrine to create and refine their own theory, rhetorical tactics that demonstrated allegiance to Party goals while propounding intersectional analysis of oppression. Communist women connected this theory to practice by building transnational coalitions during a petitioning drive. The success of this organizing effort spurred the U.S. government to contain them through arrest and surveillance, which provided a platform for Communist feminists to speak personally about citizenship and dissent. The shifts in their rhetorical strategies and goals reflect the broader acceptance of their advocacy amongst their Communist comrades and the consolidation of a Communist feminist collective identity within the Party. By 1956, Communist women had definitively changed the rhetoric and organizing practices of the American Communist Party.

Their creative resistance to sexism in the Party and to normative visions of womanhood provided the foundations upon which women in the 1960s and 1970s built, and their rhetorical maneuvers provide insight into how political movements develop and change. The ability of Communist feminist activists to make themselves heard while drawing rhetorical resources from popular and political culture, Communist theory, and lived experience speaks to their continued relevance in a world where capitalism's critics are often silenced.

To understand the impact of American Communist women in the postwar period and beyond, my dissertation analyzes a wide range of sources, both written and visual, disseminated between 1945 and 1956. I analyze three genres of texts. First, I comprehensively searched CPUSA publications for articles written by prominent Party women, debates over the role of women in the class struggle, and other issues brought forward by or related to the Party's women. These CPUSA sources included official and unofficial journals, newspapers, and pamphlets, such as the *Daily Worker*, the *Worker*, *Political Affairs*, the *New Masses*, and the *Daily People's World*.<sup>12</sup> Second, I analyzed national political discourse alongside social and cultural discourse. In speeches by national leaders and widely circulated women's magazines, I learned about dominant constructions of U.S. female citizenship and the imaginary of Soviet women. The *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Better Homes and Gardens* were particularly important in this endeavor due to their large circulation and the fact that they were frequently cited in Communist publications.<sup>13</sup> Third, given my contention that national identity is best understood in a transnational perspective, I explored Soviet propaganda magazines including *USSR* and *Soviet Woman*, which allowed me to analyze Kremlin-created representations of Soviet citizenship. Having gained knowledge of the conventions of Cold War Soviet journalism from secondary literature, I also analyzed the visual rhetoric of photographs

and illustrations of women in the largest-circulated Soviet women's magazine, *Rabotnitsa* (*The Woman Worker*) to see how Russian women were portrayed in domestic publications. The study begins in 1945, after World War II, and ends in 1956, when the Party's influence faded due to revelations of Stalin's crimes and U.S. government repression.

This project contributes to ongoing conversations about Cold War discourse, feminist rhetoric, and labor history. Rhetoricians have devoted much attention to Cold War rhetoric, but the scholarship that exists is dominated by studies of presidential and foreign policy rhetoric.<sup>14</sup> Such studies provide important insights into the highest-level political discourse and official responses to the perceived communist threat. These scholars are attuned to the ways in which national leaders constructed the Communist threat, as well as how threat constructions manifested in policy agendas. To complement this work, rhetoricians have also taken up recurring themes in presidential discourse such as nuclearism, the creation of Cold War propaganda, and liberalism.<sup>15</sup> In one recent example of this scholarship, Ned O'Gorman explores the way worldviews of leaders mapped onto strategic foreign policy discourse from the early Cold War. These worldviews, he contends, constructed strategies based upon coherent images of how to envision "the character and identity of America vis-à-vis its role in the world."<sup>16</sup> My project expands upon this scholarship by recognizing the significance of representations of national identity during the Cold War while arguing that struggles over gender, race, and class also informed views of who America was to be in the world. To do this, I interrogate the intersection of political rhetoric with social and cultural discourse, a particularly important task given that these discourses intermingled to encourage middle-class conformity. Moreover, despite communism as the overarching exigence of Cold War presidencies, no study of CPUSA

Cold War rhetoric exists.<sup>17</sup> As the largest leftist movement in Cold War America, Communists' words warrant attention.

Analyzing Communist women's discourse also makes an important intervention in studies of feminist rhetoric by making visible feminist activism in a conservative political climate, activism often overlooked. The invisibility of the contributions of Communist women to feminist theorizing can be understood as a result of a metaphor of waves that has become largely accepted as shorthand for the history of women's activism in the United States. The wave metaphor couples women's political identities with well-publicized moments of social unrest. Scholars of "first wave feminism" explore the participation of women in social movements including abolition, temperance, and culminating in the suffrage movement and the Nineteenth Amendment. Rhetoricians have shown how participation in these movements helped women form individual and collective political identities.<sup>18</sup> The "second wave" is generally understood to begin with the publication of Betty Freidan's *Feminine Mystique* in 1963, stretching through the women's liberation movement and into the 1980s. Unsurprisingly, the conservative 1940s and 1950s fall between the first and second waves and are decades largely ignored as moments of feminist significance. This study begins to remedy this oversight by recovering and analyzing the words of Communist women, who used the 1940s and 1950s as a springboard for some of their most sophisticated theorizing about gender, race, and class. This project, then, builds upon a small but robust body of scholarship on working-class women and women in trade unions after World War II. Studies by Anne Enke, Dorothy Sue Cobble, Nancy Gabin, Kate Weigand, Dayo F. Gore, and Erik S. McDuffie have engaged how working-class women encountered feminism in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>19</sup> This, they argue, necessitates exploration of feminist activity beyond the self-identified feminists, who were mostly white and wealthy.<sup>20</sup> While there was

certainly overlap in the political programs and membership of trade unions and the CPUSA, Communist women articulated transnational, oppositional discourse to even the most fundamental assumptions about American society, radical visions that require unique focus.<sup>21</sup>

By attending closely to how Communist women formed collective identities and created a home for feminism, this study also contributes to the rhetorical understanding of social and political movements in two key dimensions. First, it combines analysis of the Communist movement's internal dynamics alongside its external rhetoric of labor organizing and political protest. Karma R. Chávez argues that rhetoricians have devoted more attention to the "rhetoric of the streets," the public messages emanating from social movement rhetors, and overlooked the behind the scenes rhetoric that builds alliances and commitment to the movement.<sup>22</sup> In order to generate a more complete picture of how rhetors come to understand themselves within movements, feel called to participate, and create the public rhetoric that has so long animated rhetorical scholarship, it is necessary to attend to the internal and external dynamics of the movement. Given the Communist Party's strict adherence to Marxist thought, the struggles to revise theory and practice are particularly instructive for rhetorical scholars. Accordingly, a second contribution of this study is to understand how political movements develop and change alongside ideological rigidity. This requires attending carefully to how movement rhetors negotiated their leadership and rank-and-file positions in a male-dominated rhetorical scene that demanded fluency in Communist theory.

In seeking to understand the complex ways that Communist women contributed to the movement for socialism in the United States, this study also moves beyond traditional public address scholarship, which has focused on single-issue political movements. Yet, as Chávez insists, an important function of rhetoric in social movements is building coalitions.<sup>23</sup> I take

“coalition” to refer to diverse groups that come together to engage in political action. Coalition enables activists to discover new and innovative ways to respond “oppression and power at its roots and to utilize difference as a resource rather than a hurdle to be overcome.”<sup>24</sup> Scholars like Chávez and Aimee Carrillo Rowe have looked to coalition as a way to understand the lines of power and the possibility in activist alliances.<sup>25</sup> For Communist women, building coalitions with middle-class women and Communist supporters across the globe was a rhetorical strategy that they marshaled in a unique and powerful way. Echoing Chávez, I study the rhetoric of Communist women not as *a coalition*, but for its coalitional possibilities. That is, I am interested both in coalition building as a rhetorical resource and as an avowed goal in Communist women’s rhetoric.

Another way this study contributes to scholarship on feminist rhetoric is by interrogating the relationship between radical women, mainstream political discourse, and popular culture. I take seriously the constitutive function of popular culture as well as the ability of Communist women to appropriate it for their own radical uses. This is a significant contribution because feminist rhetorical scholars have largely focused on the power of popular culture to disseminate negative representations of women and feminism more broadly.<sup>26</sup> These messages undoubtedly deserve our criticism. Yet, as Nan Enstad has shown, the contradictions between popular culture and experiences as workers were productive for forming political identities for working-class women in early-twentieth-century factories.<sup>27</sup> So, too, did Communist women get pleasure from popular magazines and television. They also gained exposure to preferred visions of femininity in popular culture and dominant political discourse, visions that they both appropriated and subverted in their symbolic action. During the Cold War, these visions almost always constituted women as housewives while making clear that their power stemmed from gendered consumption

practices. I engage the “complex field of social relations and discourses which center on the sale purchase, and use of commodities,” recognizing that consumption often functions as a performance of belonging.<sup>28</sup> Thus, this study expands rhetorical scholarship that points to the disciplinary power of popular, consumer culture while shifting our focus to an exploration of how women can *use* popular culture and its contradictions to constitute political identities that are liberatory.<sup>29</sup> It investigates the linkages between popular culture, consumerism, and superpower political discourse.

Consuming popular culture was only one way that Communist women expressed themselves. Their membership in the CPUSA inflected their rhetoric with a radical, working-class focus closely attuned to labor issues. Accordingly, this study contributes to ongoing conversations about labor and class in rhetoric by interrogating class as a central component of lived experience, a resource for collective identity formation, and a limitation to rhetorical action. Rhetorical studies of labor leaders have productively identified obstacles facing leaders that include uniting a mobile and disempowered work force and negotiating expectations about gender and race. Likewise, Marxist rhetoricians like Dana Cloud and James Arnt Aune have theorized the role of rhetoric in Marxism, important studies that remind rhetorical scholars of the significance of socioeconomic class.<sup>30</sup> Despite the existence of excellent work on labor leaders such as Mary Harris “Mother” Jones, Leonora O’Reilly, and Eugene Debs, in general, the rhetoric of labor has garnered little attention in public address studies, despite the recognition that the American labor movement has traditionally operated through public address to workers.<sup>31</sup> Labor leaders were not the only ones making arguments for class-consciousness and articulating identities as workers. Understanding the rhetorical influence of the Communist Party requires exploring the large conglomerate of leftists that, whether card-carrying members or not,

found themselves in the Party's orbit. I highlight, then, the way that ordinary workers responded to the public address of leaders to constitute identities at times different from those preferred by Party leadership.<sup>32</sup>

While rhetorical scholars have not centrally engaged the role of communism and anticommunism in American public discourse, historical scholarship has reached a stalemate where the American Communist Party is concerned. This stalemate surrounds the relationship among rank-and-file Americans, the Communist Party leadership, and Moscow. Traditionalist historians, led by Theodore Draper and publishing before the end of the Cold War, contend that subservience to Moscow was the most important characteristic of the CPUSA. By contrast, revisionist historians argue that CPUSA membership fostered homegrown radicalism and allowed autonomy on the part of CPUSA members.<sup>33</sup> My study models a moderate approach to Communist history that attempts to synthesize these two camps by recognizing that tracts written and circulated by Soviet leaders *did* spur U.S. women's activism, even as those leaders often failed to speak specifically to concerns American contexts of gendered oppression. In order to study the feminist politics of the CPUSA, the researcher must attend to *both* indigenous radicalism and pressures radiating from Soviet Russia and international bodies. Studying the grassroots radicalism of American women also requires moving beyond another shortcoming in historical scholarship on the CPUSA, which considers Party actions and discourse as an isolated enclave out of touch with American culture. By contrast, Party women and men lived in the United States and encountered advertising, popular culture, and dominant political discourses. As their rhetoric makes clear, these messages colored their views of what was possible, of who they were, and of how they could organize the working class.

Considering how groups like working-class and radical women can use the experiences of subordination to make new arguments, engage in creative protest, and challenge dominant power structures casts new light on studies of McCarthyism and civil rights as well. Scholars agree that Joseph McCarthy's witch-hunts, which were backed by an extensive network of surveillance and domestic loyalty boards, made voicing any type of dissent incredibly perilous. American Communists hardly stood a chance—and their own actions at times made eradicating the Party even easier. As journalist Ellen Schrecker persuasively shows, by the early 1950s, institutions and agencies from both ends of the political spectrum built a broad anticommunist network, a mainstream coalition.<sup>34</sup> As a result, many historians have concluded that the heyday of the Old Left ended with the destruction of the Popular Front in the late 1930s.<sup>35</sup> Yet, reading McCarthyism alongside the intertwined civil rights movement and the feminist activism of the Communist Party tells a different story. It shows that the most sophisticated feminist theorizing occurred with the rise of repression against the Party. This theorizing included intersectional analysis well before its alleged birth in the 1970s. Indeed, this study contributes to scholarship on the “long civil rights movement,” a view that resists the traditional narrative of civil rights history focused upon the years 1954 to 1965 with Martin Luther King, Jr., and Southern activism at its heart.<sup>36</sup> Instead, this study sees the seeds of the civil rights movement growing out of labor radicalism in the 1930s and 1940s while tracing activism and resistance galvanized by issues of gender and class, alongside race. The story this dissertation tells is “more robust [and] more progressive,” and it took hold far afield of the U.S. South. And while the persecution of communism did drive some of the economic and redistributive components out of the civil rights movement, the McCarthy Era represented a time of national mainstreaming for certain civil rights demands.<sup>37</sup> While this study does not justify the repression and policing accompanying

McCarthyism, it recognizes the creativity that is borne out of necessity for those who are repressed while contributing to studies about the effects of this time period.

Examining the ways in which Communist women challenged dominant power structures that marked them as criminal through a confluence of societal norms requires theorizing subjectivity formation and resistance. Communist women, I show, used a variety of discursive practices to constitute their own subjectivities. By this, I mean that at various times they accepted, negotiated, and resisted the subject positions available to them in Cold War culture. In so doing, Communist women invented new discourses about who they were even as they were, in Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's words, "materially limited, linguistically constrained, [and] historically situated."<sup>38</sup> As Judith Butler and Saba Mahmood have observed, the self cannot be understood without domination.<sup>39</sup> Even as their agency was constrained by social norms and political allegiance, taking seriously their activism and desire to reform the CPUSA requires that we complicate the tendency to see Communist women as mindless dupes of Moscow completely isolated from broader American culture.<sup>40</sup>

As they created public selves that challenged both Cold War society and the Communist Party, Communist women also constituted group identities. That is, articulating what being a Communist woman meant functioned as a rhetorical tactic wherein likeminded women were invited to, quite literally, join the club. Yet, just as collective identification allied women who saw their priorities and values reflected in constitutive rhetoric, they also provided "rules of exclusion," regulating access to political power.<sup>41</sup> While mainstream American culture delegitimized communism by excluding its adherents from appropriate gendered subjectivities, for instance, the Communist Party, too, created an idealized comrade with particular attributes. That discourse assumed (and thus created) a white, male, factory worker, which functioned to

create a membership with interests and values stemming from that identity. Communities, this example illustrates, impose constraints on agency. This is because groups recognize speaking subjects and confer race, class, and gender identities upon speakers as they determine what those traits mean.

Yet even within social structures of domination, possibilities for resistance exist. Because gender is performative, as Judith Butler has famously shown, the sedimentation of performances naturalizes gender in ways that make it appear fixed. It is in this very performativity, the repetitive, citational practices that produce and discipline subjects, that resistance can live. “Repetitions with a difference can be starting points of resistance, including resistance to racism and its soul-destroying epithets,” Campbell writes, providing the example of how rap music can resignify the meaning of dehumanizing identities.<sup>42</sup> Even as Communist women at times collectively identified as mothers, roles with the potential to reify Cold War stereotypes, they also opened up possibilities for resignifying those identities before a working-class audience.<sup>43</sup> Because agency is born in potentially repressive societal norms, identity performances also carry the seeds of resistance and remaking.

One potential identity born of repressive norms that Communist women sought to resignify was the U.S. citizen. Understanding their activism, thus, requires that we theorize the ways that citizenship functions as a mode of inclusion and exclusion. Rhetoricians have shown citizenship to be not merely a legal status conferred by birth or naturalization, but a discourse composed of culturally legible performances.<sup>44</sup> Citizenship is, in Lionel Cantú’s words, a “socially constructed identity that delimits an individual’s relationship to a political community.”<sup>45</sup> Performances of citizenship, however, are not all valued equally. Indeed, citizenship performances evince a “continuum of stratified relations and legal statuses shaped by

dimensions of class, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality.”<sup>46</sup> Another key component on this spectrum of belonging is labor status. Yet, rhetoricians have not considered labor to be a performance of citizenship. Exploring labor and citizenship requires the critic to attend closely to gender, race, and the body. If Robert Asen asks us to consider *how* people enact their citizenship,<sup>47</sup> a fruitful avenue for inquiry explores how the practice of labor gets figured in discourses of citizenship. Answering this question requires listening to the voices of those often marginalized for failure to belong to the ruling classes. It also requires the critic to consider the ways in which work itself is rhetorically gendered, valued, and embodied. Communist women, I show, used their rhetorical performances to claim access to benefits denied to them, like First Amendment protection, even as they sought to refigure who the female citizen was in the United States.

Yet, even as Communist women in the United States identified as U.S. citizens and fought fiercely for citizenship protections they felt they deserved, they always understood themselves as belonging to a transnational Communist network. Understanding their claims to belonging, then, requires that we push beyond the borders of U.S. citizenship to see belonging as a transnational process. “Transnationality refers to movements of people, goods, and ideas across national borders,” Wendy S. Hesford and Eileen E. Schell explain.<sup>48</sup> A transnational, writes Eithne Luibhéid is someone who acts, thinks, feels, and develops identities within social networks connected to two or more societies simultaneously.<sup>49</sup> The tensions between Communist women’s identities as U.S. citizens and as people immersed in a global movement are readily apparent throughout this study. I have chosen to use “transnational” to describe the advocacy of the women in this study because the term captures the ways in which they drew rhetorical resources from abroad while seeing themselves both as U.S. citizens and as part of the global

movement for socialism. Moreover, this term recognizes the disciplinary power that the state had in their lives—as many Communist feminists found themselves arrested under U.S. law, their comrades across the world could do nothing to stop the arrests. Nonetheless, transnational advocacy functioned as a way for women to claim belonging to a powerful movement and as a rhetorical strategy for imagining new possibilities beyond the United States.

With these theoretical underpinnings and with my collection of texts from radical, mainstream, and transnational sources, I closely read and reread my texts to group them into themes. As I read, important concepts appeared and reappeared in the texts like consumption, domesticity, and femininity. “Intermediary concepts...emerge [from the text or series of texts] as a way for the critic to organize her or his thinking about the relationship between power and discursive practice. But the concept(s) remain essentially works in progress; our understanding of the concept(s) evolves through the back and forth movement between concept and object,” James Jasinski writes.<sup>50</sup> Once I identified important themes or concepts, I returned to the archive to uncover more Communist women’s rhetoric related to these concepts.

Tacking back and forth between these key concepts and their expression in mainstream primary sources like political discourse and popular magazines helped me to construct the cultural context for the Communist feminist discourse, a cultural context that I then analyzed as a text. After all, sharing representations and language is how cultural knowledge comes into being, theorist Stuart Hall explains.<sup>51</sup> Yet, some of the sources relevant for answering this study’s guiding questions view Communists as exaggerated threats to the dominant political and social order, while still providing valuable insights on their rhetorical activism. Other sources speak to us directly with the voices of Communist women yet do so through the strict conventions of Party discourse. Still other texts emanate directly from the Soviet leadership, even as they strove

to appear neutral. It was, therefore, imperative to approach these texts with some degree of skepticism and an attention to rhetoric's world-making powers. Because I am interested in belonging and collective identity formation, I analyzed Communist feminist texts and the cultural context with an eye toward how power was discursively maintained or challenged.<sup>52</sup> In these collections of texts, both radical and mainstream, I looked for how certain gender and racialized identities were naturalized, valorized, or denied. I interrogated blind spots in narratives of citizenship and belonging. These repeated acts of rhetorical criticism and cultural analysis eventually facilitated my construction of a chronological narrative that details the complex and astute ways that Communist women affiliated with and contested their place in the CPUSA and U.S. society.

My dissertation traces the gradual manner in which Communist women claimed a voice to revise the Party's theory and organizing to more fully account for intersectional oppression. The first chapter begins in 1945, in a United States converting to a peacetime economy, with a vibrant Communist presence in labor unions. In the face of conservative gender and race politics and a male dominated and ideologically rigid leadership structure within the Party, Communist women negotiated their double disempowerment. By using rhetorical strategies like satire and self-deprecating humor, they tempered their critiques of consumer culture and Communist men. These hedging strategies allowed Communist women to politicize the performance of femininity while linking it to Communist values like class critique. Even leader Elizabeth Gurley Flynn created her authority to speak about culture and femininity through personal, humorous examples and a matronly persona. Together, these early Communist feminist writers called attention to how Cold War ideals like "domesticity" and "consumption" were feminized and disciplinary for women. Moving from awareness to action, by early 1949, Flynn had rhetorically constituted a

wide group of diverse women who enacted political agency in a debate to empower women in the Party presses.

Chapter two explores the rhetorical strategies employed to make this newfound feminist discontent compatible with the class-focused CPUSA. To spread discussions of femininity and feminism to the broader Party, writer and editor Betty Millard, I show, marshaled her knowledge of Communist doctrine to create theory out of experience. Her 1948 pamphlet targeted Communist men predisposed to dismiss feminist arguments as bourgeois. To reach this audience, Millard performed femininity paired with a teacherly ethos. Proving her Communist credentials by revising works by Frederick Engels and deploying a transnational ethic, Millard's pamphlet markedly changed discourse within the CPUSA. From 1948 on, feminism was on the pages of the papers and the lips of Communists. Despite Millard's trenchant analysis and strategic gender performance, she overlooked an important aspect of the lived experience of Communist women—racial identity.

Partially compelled by the success of Millard's pamphlet, Claudia Jones, America's highest-ranking black Communist, penned a 1949 response designed to refine the burgeoning feminist theory. In chapter three, I show how Jones sought to make Communist feminists and the CPUSA incorporate race as an axis of intersectional oppression in their theory and organizing practice. To demonstrate an allegiance to the goals of the CPUSA despite her critique of their actions for failing to see the uniqueness of black women, Jones did not attack Millard by name. Instead, she appropriated rhetorical strategies from the CPUSA's theoretical journal including an objective tone and unembellished style to claim belonging to the intellectual leadership of the Party. Presenting herself as a sociologist observing the lives of black women in the United States, Jones represented them as a group of militant workers ready to contribute to building

socialism in the United States. Jones's expert negotiation of her own role in the Party pushed leaders to change their understanding of Communist theory and labor organizing practices and introduced the term "triple oppression" to recognize the intersections of race, class, and gender.

By 1950, Communist women had broadly earned the acceptance of the CPUSA for the link they forged between feminism and the class struggle. Yet, they also sought to demonstrate their ability to organize women across the world in a petitioning drive. Communist women pushed outward, taking their message to leftist women and the general public in a massive, transnational peace petitioning drive that stretched from 1949 to 1951. The success of this mobilization, I argue, illustrated the collective potential of their feminist political subjectivity and the commitment of Communist feminists to the practice of labor organizing and coalition building. Communist women's success in circulating the petition, which garnered 235 million signatures worldwide, was predicated upon their ability to consolidate a collective identity of peace-minded and class-conscious mothers. Likewise, by publishing the peace appeals of women in Asia, they showed the limitations of domestic peace rhetoric. Taking on the persona of a witness to the pain of women and children across the globe, Betty Millard illustrated how a commitment to peace conferred transnational moral obligations, while capitalist motherhood rendered American women complicit in violence. Altogether, they resignified what motherhood meant, proved their organizational prowess, and built the Party's ability to organize women.

Chapter five examines how Communist women's rhetoric changed with the increased surveillance that accompanied the success of the petition drive. The arrest and eventual jailing of many Communist feminist rhetors created a *kairotic* moment that compelled Communist feminists to speak to broader society. In response, they issued more direct challenges to the political imaginary of the Cold War state. As they collectively imagined a new society free of

repression and passivity, they spoke in a new language that was more personal and less theoretical. Communist women like Flynn, Jones, and Esther Cooper Jackson constituted audiences of new citizens dedicated to dissent, all the while enacting a new form of citizenship. Directing their rhetoric to broad popular audiences was a bold attempt to sustain the activism of Communist women into the 1960s.

Taken together, these chapters tell a story of how Communist women gradually made their Party a vibrant home for feminist discourse and activism in a conservative and repressive time period. These chapters evidence Communist women's significant and creative resistance to Cold War society and its visions of normative womanhood alongside their pleas for class and race consciousness in a society that took for granted the white, middle-class aspirations of citizen-capitalists. Explaining their rhetorical maneuvering requires exploring the resources from which individual and collective feminist identities can be built—resources from Marxist theory, transnational coalitions, and Cold War culture. Indeed, Communist women used conservative Cold War culture for radical ends, a strategy that calls rhetoricians to explore how those marginalized by them use dominant discourses. It requires that rhetoricians explore the words of those marginalized along the lines of class while moving beyond hearing the voices of labor leaders only. Communist women's rhetorical strategies provide insights into how changes in rigid political movements can develop—a gradual change that in this case unfolded in the shift from building Communist theory to labor organizing. Thus, studying Communist women's discourse offers significant conclusions for rhetorical scholars.

Although heretofore largely ignored, the voices of CPUSA women help us reconceptualize the history of United States feminism. Recognizing that great repression often requires great creativity, this study takes seriously the need to look beyond master narratives of

the women's movement by seeking the places where feminist activity was debated and sustained in times assumed to have no feminist significance. Likewise, this study evidences a long civil rights movement, restoring concerns of labor and the working class to conversations about race in the 1940s and 1950s. These significant historiographical interventions are not merely corrections to dominant narratives. The stories we tell shape how we see the world and our options for action within it, historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall explains. In particular, stories that confirm triumphalist narratives of American society moving post-civil rights or post-race may, as Hall suggests, "impoverish public discourses, discourage investment in public institutions, and undermine our will to address the inequalities and injustices that surround us now."<sup>53</sup>

To that end, this project provides lessons as we act to address the injustices that continue to surround us. First, this scholarship calls us to consider how individuals come to see themselves as political actors with the ability to make change in the world. By exploring the gradual way Communist women interpellated their peers as advocates, we gain important insights into the process of subjectivity formation. Second, this study looks beyond traditional labor organizing methods to investigate how creative tactics like satire and fashion provide the tools for advocacy particularly in the face of intense repression. Labor analysts Kim Voss and Ruth Milkman echo the need for creative strategies as they explore how to rebuild labor in the twenty-first century.<sup>54</sup> Finally, this study reminds advocates of the need to explore intersectional approaches to justice, recognizing the varied ways that class, race, and gender intertwine. It recognizes that difference is a resource for coalition. Indeed, this study allows us to observe the struggle to claim a place and a voice for radical and working women. Along the way, CPUSA women revised seminal Marxist theory, reconsidered the relationship between popular culture and politics, and reformulated just where the class struggle could take place. Their contestations

would become an even more radical critique of domesticity, the family, and sexuality in the 1970s, and these foundations remain significant as twenty-first century women articulate what labor, motherhood, and feminism mean to them.

## **Chapter One**

### **Cold War, Hot Commodities: Gendering Consumer Culture Post-WWII**

“If I were a tyrant ruling the destinies of fifty or a hundred million people on a distant continent (and don’t think I haven’t had offers), I’d be scared to death to allow my subjects to look at an American mail-order catalogue,” *New York Times* humorist Frank Sullivan confided to his readers in 1955. “From a dictator’s point of view, such reading would be as incendiary as so many rocket bombs,” he explained. “Assume that I and my assistant tyrants have spent years of hard work and intense prevarication to inculcate the idea that they are living in an Eden under the rule of a Santa Claus, and that they ought to give thanks daily that they do not live in a decadent, imperialistic plutocracy like the United States.” All it would take to disrupt this discipline and order, Sullivan worried, would be one miscreant smuggling in American catalogues. After all, the catalogues featured glossy page after glossy page of home furnishings, clothing, tools, beauty products, and “everything the world could need, with Satisfaction Guaranteed.” The result of getting a glimpse of such luxury would undoubtedly confirm to Sullivan’s oppressed subjects that Santa Claus did rule the United States and that capitalism was far superior to any other system of economic organization. After Sullivan the Dictator was finally deposed, his subjects would undeniably send their orders to Sears—paying extra for the express shipping—to reap the benefits of capitalism on their own.

Satire aside, the so-called capitalist plutocrats were delighted that the wonders of capitalism were gaining purchase overseas. Sullivan’s imagined subjects on their distant continent pining for a glimpse of capitalist spoils undoubtedly stood in for real people trapped behind the Iron Curtain. American leaders worked hard to proselytize these real subjects in the Soviet sphere of influence. In collaboration with private businesses, U.S. officials transmitted

images of the cornucopia of convenience abroad and behind the Iron Curtain to cement United States superiority over Russia as the Cold War freeze deepened. The United States Information Service, a public diplomacy bureau, exported Sears Roebuck & Company catalogues to overseas libraries, for example. Those sent to Finland grew so worn from people crowding to see the illustrations that they had to be patched and rebound. In Jakarta, Sears catalogues reportedly sold for \$20 apiece, even though import and currency restrictions prevented Indonesian citizens from ordering anything out of them.<sup>1</sup> Exporting consumer catalogues served U.S. interests by promoting capitalism at a minor expense to taxpayers and, because of their preponderance of visual content, by enticing foreigners no matter what language they spoke. “The fall Sears, Roebuck catalogue...sings like a Whitmanesque paean to America’s rocks and rills and templed hills,” declared one *New York Times* reporter.<sup>2</sup>

While illustrations of comfortable U.S. lifestyles demonstrated the bounty of consumer goods available in the United States illustrated comfortable U.S. lifestyles, they also advanced the project of securing capitalist domination over communism—a project entangled with gender roles. Images of thin, attractive, American women graced the covers of women’s magazines from *Good Housekeeping* to the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, and advertisements within these magazines used these pictures to encourage women to purchase the goods—beauty products, weight loss schemes, and clothing—to conform to these images of appropriate American femininity. And consume American women did to fulfill Cold War duties and to enhance their marriage prospects. In 1956 alone, they spent \$1.3 billion on cosmetics and toiletries, \$660 million on trips to the salon, \$400 million on soaps, and \$65 million on weight loss products.<sup>3</sup> American women were encouraged in their quest to be the fairest consumers of them all by news stories that reported communist women’s “total indifference...to dress, make-up, hairdos, or any other

aids to beauty.”<sup>4</sup> Confirming what capitalists wanted to hear about communism, that it led to poverty and (even worse) plainness, reporters, government officials, and advertisers filtered America’s Cold War superiority proclamations through the lens of women and consumer culture. “The things that make life worthwhile for girls all over the world, like a comfortable home, automobile, chic clothes, cosmetics, fashions, parties, the theater, and even romance are branded as the trappings of capitalist imperialism,” a *Chicago Tribune* reporter in the Soviet sector of Berlin concluded gravely in 1951.<sup>5</sup> Central to Cold War rhetorical posturing then, were exultations for women to consume, as well as images of both feminine American women and masculine Soviet women.

Not all Americans were pleased with this capitalist articulation of the national interest and its attendant gender relations. Flipping through the “This Week” section in a national newspaper in September 1948, prominent Communist Elizabeth Gurley Flynn stopped abruptly at an advertisement for Crisco shortening. What caught Flynn’s attention and earned her scorn was the advertisement’s illustration of a beautiful housewife baking a juicy pie. The sheer number of advertisements with similar imagery presented a clear message to U.S. housewives. “Moral—stay at home, be a good cook, that’s the way to win hearts, and be able to smile sweetly, all dressed up in a becoming housedress,” Flynn wrote in the Communist newspaper the *Daily Worker*. Although she was known to like good food, tailored clothes, and fancy hotels, Flynn had little patience for these dominant discourses that frowned upon her political activities and itinerant lifestyle all the while suggesting that the only appropriate role for Cold War women was housewife, mother, and above all, consumer. From Crisco to cold cream, advertising in the U.S. media trumpeted capitalist consumption, which guaranteed appropriate femininity and was the marker of female citizenship. Communists were eminently critical of these narrow roles and

unabashed embrace of capitalism's convenience. Flynn's comrade Ted Tinsley, a satirist for Communist newspapers, remembered gravely, "I understand there once was a woman who was engaged, lovely, and didn't use Pond's [face cream]. She was deported."<sup>6</sup> Both Tinsley's and *New York Times* writer Frank Sullivan's use of satire indicates that humor was a prominent means to point to subtle social unease regarding gender relations and their deployment as weapons during the Cold War.

Indeed, as Tinsley's sarcasm illustrates, consumption *was* central to the relationship between U.S. women and their nation. Consumer culture and its link to femininity was a key battleground during the early Cold War. One prominent arena in which consumer culture and femininity became linked was in fashion. The proper length of a skirt (calf or ankle?) and appropriate head adornment (hat or kerchief?) were elements of aggressive superpower posturing that deeply implicated understandings of female citizenship and socio-economic organization. Tinsley's albeit satirical assertion that using the wrong face cream could sever a woman's relationship with her country seems only a slight exaggeration given the importance of consumption and femininity on the transnational stage. Because the political exigence of the Cold War asked which system of economic organization—capitalism or communism—was preferable, questions about female citizenship in the United States were deeply tied up with what the citizen wore as well as what she did. Clothing visually indexed class status, leisure opportunity, and the availability of consumer choices and as such was a prominent component of consumer culture. Fashion provokes dialogue about social and political organization, political theorist Joshua I. Miller concludes, and, as such, is a key part of democratic culture given the ability of clothing to visually show affiliation among citizens.<sup>7</sup> To that end, the earliest

arguments of Flynn, Tinsley, and their other Communist comrades represent key interventions in conceptions of U.S. female citizenship during the Cold War.

Using largely reactive rhetoric and strategies designed to temper their critiques, Communists in the mid- to late-1940s politicized femininity and its performance and linked it to Communist values. By relying on satire, rhetors like Ted Tinsley and Vivian Howard constituted a genre out of women's magazines while making clear the ways in which Cold War precepts like "domesticity" and "consumption" were feminized, disciplinary, and important. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn relied on personal examples and an authoritative, yet informal, matronly persona to perform a new type of femininity. This new femininity allowed Flynn to constitute a wide group of racially diverse U.S. women and Soviet women as revolutionary agents in a transnational struggle against bourgeois fashion designers and capitalism's planned obsolescence. As she constituted this group, Flynn called attention to the whiteness of the imagined U.S. female citizen. Flynn's new group of feminine citizens enacted their political agency in a debate in the Party presses that encouraged the CPUSA to more carefully represent their members. Yet, these debaters' reliance on expressions of commitment and bolstering through collectives illustrates the ways that even within leftist circles, these first critiques, geared at committed Communists, carried a certain amount of risk. Overall, these tempered rhetorical strategies allowed early feminist writers to begin to convince the Party that gender and culture were important for CPUSA theory during the Cold War.

Communist feminists' arguments about consumerism, fashion, and femininity were made especially relevant by the Cold War context. The Cold War is well remembered for promoting nationalistic expressions of capitalist superiority. Accordingly, scholars have recognized that articulations of American national identity were constructed in opposition to representations of

Soviet Russia. In her study of *Readers' Digest* magazines during the Cold War, for example, Joanne Sharp argues that the construction of a Soviet identity rendered the American identity secure in a tumultuous time.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, Laura A. Belmonte writes, "Frequently divided over what 'an American' was, U.S. policymakers focused on what 'an American' was not."<sup>9</sup> In other words, Americans were not Russians, as they were frequently reminded. Studies such as these call attention to the transnational focus needed to study Cold War national belonging. Even as the Cold War drew sharp boundaries around the United States, U.S. citizenship practices need to be understood in the context of comparisons to the Soviet Union and transnational anxieties. The most valuable citizenship practices, or discursive performances of belonging to the U.S. nation,<sup>10</sup> were those that promoted capitalism, opposed the Soviet Union, and maintained gender conformity.

One major medium through which U.S. national identity constructions circulated during the Cold War was in propaganda. Propaganda is, according to rhetorician Shawn Parry-Giles, "strategically devised messages that are disseminated to masses of people by an institution for the purpose of generating action benefiting its source."<sup>11</sup> Historians and rhetoricians have studied the institutional propaganda directed both at the Soviets and indirectly at the American people with the intent of shoring up U.S. opposition to communism. Yet, most rhetorical studies of propaganda focus on debates over its implications, its overtly political dimensions as it promoted democracy, or on its relation to the rhetorical presidency.<sup>12</sup> While these are certainly important precepts of national identity, the gendered and racialized dimensions of these programs have garnered far less scrutiny.<sup>13</sup> Overlooking this aspect of propaganda programs obscures the fact that the gendered nature of consumer culture also circulated transnationally.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, this chapter contends that popular culture messages served as forms of domestic propaganda, so in

sync were popular culture messages with institutional propaganda and so closely linked were publishers, advertisers, and government policy.

Combining a study of propaganda and domestic publications in the U.S. and Soviet Union shows how popular culture disciplined female citizens in both locales into acting in ways that supported divergent national identities. Scholars have documented the links between American women's magazines and consumerism and domesticity, and they have pointed out that magazines presented portraits of womanhood that were not monolithic.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, they have largely overlooked the global forces influencing these magazines, as well as ways that radical groups appropriated these rhetorical resources. This chapter contends that we must approach national identity from a transnational perspective, an approach that requires taking seriously the manners in which both Soviet and U.S. citizenship practices existed in conversation, a conversation heard vibrantly in Communist discourse. Indeed, as Communist women remade a conception of U.S. citizenship to be enacted and practiced in the United States, the rhetorical resources for this refashioning came from abroad.

Scholarship on Soviet women's magazines argues that these publications largely mirrored the party line by encouraging work and national pride, while trying to contain discontent over the lack of consumer goods.<sup>16</sup> Yet, this scholarship has discounted the ways that gendered images were taken up across the ocean by both mainstream and radical presses. Finally, this chapter attends to pluralistic constructions of national identity by recognizing that Americans did not always wholeheartedly support the images beamed across oceans. I add analysis of a radical, class-based contestation of national identity to underscore the dialectical nature of its construction and to situate Communist feminist voices within the larger contexts of their circulation, allowing us to appreciate the multi-vocal nature of their critique.

Because discourses of U.S. female citizenship postulated women as consumers and often used fashion to constitute them as such, I explore representations of the female body as a rich rhetorical site for the construction of class and national identities. In order to read these representations, I begin from the assumption, well documented in rhetorical studies, that national identity is continually negotiated through discourse, while myths of the nation call forth a particular type of citizen.<sup>17</sup> To this body of scholarship, which has focused largely on presidential rhetoric, I add insights on the political and discursive power of consumer culture and fashion to form collective identities.<sup>18</sup> I contend that, during the early Cold War, the promotion of consumer culture in mainstream discourse constituted an idealized female citizen who was white and middle class. Given that critical rhetoricians have argued that women are central to nation-building and imperialist projects, it is wise to consider the role of publications geared at them in promoting practices of citizenship.<sup>19</sup>

Echoing recent rhetorical scholarship on embodied rhetorics, I argue that the body is a central site for the construction of gendered national identities.<sup>20</sup> Much like Catherine Palczewski's study of anti-suffrage postcards shows how iconic and non-iconic images upheld "disciplinary norms" of the ideographs of <man> and <woman>, I see images in popular magazines as a "location in which to assess the 'public vocabulary' defining <woman> as well as the public vocabulary defining <man>."<sup>21</sup> These images, as John Lucaites and Robert Hariman note in their study of iconic photographs, can embody notions of civic and public identity.<sup>22</sup> And as Robert Asen reminds us, the way we treat others depends on how we imagine them and the necessarily rhetorical choices we make in how they should be portrayed, choices intimately connected to social values, beliefs, and interests.<sup>23</sup>

My approach then, is to study representations of the female citizen, both visual and verbal, which circulated in American and Soviet magazines as shared insights into labor, leisure, and decorative practices that provided a foundation for national identity and U.S. Communist feminists' contestation.<sup>24</sup> How, I ask, did popular American magazines promote an image of womanhood that defined appropriate behavior as leisure and citizenship as consumption? How did Soviet propaganda represent women's bodies differently from U.S. magazines? And how did these available representations enable U.S. Communist women to politicize femininity while linking it to the Party's values? In short, how did Communists discursively imagine U.S. female citizens during the Cold War?

To answer these questions, I first place postwar discussions of female citizenship in their historical context. Here, I show the ways in which the Allies used fashion and beauty during World War II to encourage women to report for service. By the end of the war, advertisements created the feminine citizen-consumer. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union used women's magazines to create the Soviet superwoman, an attractive, laboring mother who proved the desirability of communism. To understand the domestic circulation of idealized womanhood, I draw on issues of *Good Housekeeping* and the *Ladies' Home Journal* from 1945 to 1949, magazines frequently cited by Communist women and among the most highly circulated women's magazines during the Cold War.<sup>25</sup> My main source for Soviet constructions of female citizenship is *Soviet Woman*, a magazine published by the Soviet Women's Anti-Fascist Committee and the Central Council of Trade Unions of the U.S.S.R. Propaganda magazines focusing on domestic life in the Soviet Union became more common in the 1950s after Stalin's death and with Khrushchev's opening to the West, so in the immediate postwar period, this magazine remains one of the few ways to understand representations of Soviet women and national identity. Next, I examine how

Communist feminist satire safely identified the worthiness of concepts like “femininity” and “domesticity” for critique. My focus here is an article by Communist writer Vivian Howard in the *New Masses* and a column by journalist Ira Wallach in the *Daily Worker*. Once these critiques had been launched, Communists acknowledged the usefulness of femininity for their movement while constituting a politically active female citizen. Columns by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Sam Russell in the *Daily Worker* serve as fertile grounds for the analysis of broadening conceptions of beauty and critiques of the whiteness of representations of femininity. Finally, I show how Communists enacted a new form of U.S. female citizenship in a debate on the pages of the *Daily Worker* that spanned 1948 and 1949. Together, these Communists politicized displays and performances of femininity to alert their colleagues to the importance of gender in the Cold War.

### **From Wartime Worker to Citizen-Consumer**

Beauty was on duty during World War II, and millions of Rosies across the allied countries answered their governments’ calls to serve the war effort. Donning their overalls and tying up their hair in scarves, women flooded into factories, being told for the first time that if they could bake cakes, they could load shells into bombers. As communication scholar Jordynn Jack has shown, wartime propaganda did not degender technical work. Instead, it regendered some of it as feminine, continuing to rely on assumed fundamental differences between men and women.<sup>26</sup> By revaluing the alleged delicacy of the female body, wartime industry put their nimble, deft fingers to work. But even fingers assembling parts for bombers could be beautiful. “Beautiful, dutiful hands are wearing Alert [nail polish],” proclaimed a Cutex advertisement in 1943. “A brave gay red to match your brave new spirit!”<sup>27</sup> Advertisements for beauty products

showed women in uniform on the assembly line, biking to work, and dancing with soldiers. Advertisers carefully coordinated their messages with the Office of War Information's Bureau of Magazines because if they could convince the government that their products boosted public morale or served some wartime function, they could rest assured that they would have something to sell in a time of rationing and restriction. Washington's propagandists even sent magazine publishers plot points for writers to use in their short stories such as showing women buying war bonds or planting victory gardens.<sup>28</sup> As James L. Baughman concludes, during the war, "neither the press nor any other mass medium had pretensions to being a true fourth branch of government or an independent force in America's political culture."<sup>29</sup> Hailing female citizens to do their duty, government propaganda attempted to shore up morale by reinforcing beauty norms as a responsibility. The American War Production Board never restricted or rationed cosmetics like it did with fabrics for clothing, even though their production required essential wartime chemicals.<sup>30</sup>

Echoing government propaganda, American Communists like the popular Flynn supported the war and women's role in it. "The glamour girl of today, the woman in the news, is the working woman," she declared in a 1942 pamphlet *Women in the War*. "Feminine vanity," she noted approvingly, "does not balk at dirty faces, greasy hands, hair plastered down under a protective cap, severely tailored uniforms, shoes conditioned for safety, and a lunch box instead of a fancy purse."<sup>31</sup> Flynn went on to argue for equal opportunity for both black and white women, equal pay for work, more women in labor unions, and accessible child care in her pamphlet, demonstrating her keen attention to and familiarity with the demands of working women's lives. World War II propagandists *and* the CPUSA used discourses of femininity,

fashion, and duty to draw women into the workforce. Women were called to be working citizens, even as Flynn pointed out that might not be as glamorous as recruiting posters made it seem.

The female worker-citizen, however, depended on an absence of men, since wartime discourse did not overturn the ideas of separate men's and women's work. Accordingly, this conception of feminine citizenship was easily eclipsed after the war, as many Rosies left the factory never to return, letting down their hair and swapping their overalls and work boots for skirts and pumps. As women returned to housewifery, practicality and femininity stole the show. Indeed, the housewife dressed in a calf-length skirt, heels, and apron dominated advertisements in American magazines and replaced the overalls and jumpsuits of WWII.<sup>32</sup> While this type of clothing was not officially promoted by government propaganda after the war, the casual styles were well suited to keeping house, mothering, and marketing.

While most men, sporting the ubiquitous grey flannel suit, headed daily to an office job that supported the wife and children, women had specific duties as well. Women's magazines, important arbiters of femininity in an era when television was just catching on, circulated idealized representations of womanhood that opposed communism by promoting domesticity and consumption instead of labor. The close relationship between the press and the government remained post WWII even though the 1948 Smith-Mundt Act prevented the government from propagandizing directly to the American people. Yet, magazines eagerly promoted capitalism, in line with the government's desires (and its official policy from the mid-1950s on) given that advertisers were eager to reach peacetime audiences.<sup>33</sup> Women's magazines disseminated between two and eight million copies each month, with actual readership much higher as women passed the latest issue around at play dates or PTA meetings.<sup>34</sup> Whether *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, or *Better Homes and Gardens*, women's magazines received so much

advertising revenue in the postwar period that although they only cost about fifteen cents, they were often over 300 pages long.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, the composition of the magazines—mostly advertisements—mirrored the most important duty of the American woman: to consume beauty and household products. “As for who’s going to be the boss,” a *Good Housekeeping* advice article on marriage admonished young women, “your husband probably will be, even though you’ll doubtless handle the purse strings.”<sup>36</sup> Middle-class families largely accepted these gendered divisions of labor, welcoming their stability after the upheaval and uncertainty of war. With these roles, individual consumption ensured the public good and the prosperity of an economy converting to peacetime production. “Thrift is now un-American,” proclaimed journalist and scholar William H. Whyte in 1956.<sup>37</sup>

Consuming household goods and even beauty products was the marker of U.S. female citizenship, but the pressure to stay home and mother and the large scale dismissal of women workers after the war to make room for men ensured that women’s abilities to exercise their public duties depended upon marriage. In other words, being a female citizen required consuming, but the disposable income to consume likely required a husband. Advertisements exhorted women to consume beauty products in the interest of finding a husband. Listerine, for instance, showed three young women with college diplomas in a 1949 advertisement. Two of these women were admiring their sparkling diamond engagement rings. The third woman? She apparently had not used Listerine while dating and was not one of the “smart girls and popular girls” that had learned the important lessons about bad breath while in college.<sup>38</sup> Consuming beauty products, then, was inextricably linked to enhancing one’s femininity and thus marriage prospects. And women were eager to enhance their prospects, especially with the publicly declared “man shortage” due to wartime casualties. So eager were they that in 1956 alone, they

spent billions on makeup, salon trips, and weight loss.<sup>39</sup> Once a handsome husband had been hooked, consuming to care for him and the children was a necessity. Chevrolet, for example, recognized that larger purchases, although often made at the behest of the wife, required the husband's approval. "Fetch your husband's pipe and slippers...and then show him this!" exclaimed a Chevy ad, which also included a sample monologue for the wife to convince her man that they needed a new car by promising "to drive you to the station each morning (and smile proudly all the way)...and thank you at least ten times a day for being the most understanding husband in the world."<sup>40</sup> Thus, women's duties to consume linked them most closely to husbands and children, but then to the U.S. government, which needed them to grease the wheels of a new peacetime, mass economy. Women were becoming citizen-consumers.

The peacetime economy, though, was especially important in transnational focus, as the always-turning wheels of consumption proved to Americans (and the world) that capitalism was far superior to communism for all of the goods it made available. One Cold War joke told of a Russian bragging that the Soviet authorities perfected a tiny bomb to fit into a suitcase, easily deliverable to New York. His comrade dismissed this as nonsense, asking "where would anybody get a suitcase?"<sup>41</sup> Prominent Cold War consumption discourses also proved the superiority of capitalism in gendered terms highlighting the way that consumer convenience had all but obliterated days of toil by showing bodies, most often women, in leisure. Pepsi advertisers, for example, showed a swimsuit-clad young man and woman lounging on a beach towel [figure one].

Figure One



The woman's long, exposed legs show off her trim figure. "Strictly modern American," declared the headline, while a text block underneath proclaimed, "No need to explain what land and what age these people live in. They have the unmistakable look of America." This advertisement highlighted the links between appearance and consumerism and leisure, suggesting that youth in leisure with glowing bodies were unequivocally American. Importantly, the ad also associated capitalism with choice, explaining, "They have the trim, fit figures, the health and vitality of a generation that has a world of food and drink to choose from, but whose sensible modern taste in diet is for the lighter and less filling."<sup>42</sup> Choosing consumer products also stood in for political freedom so denied by communism. It would have been easy for Americans to imagine, for instance, that Soviet production quotas strictly forbade a day of lounging at the beach. The glowing cheeks and bronzed bodies of the figures visually coupled youth with modernity and the

superiority of American capitalism. Soviets lacked the leisure time to engage in activities for fitness and the choices to eat a diet designed to enhance the aesthetic appeal of their bodies, Americans assumed. Only in the United States were there copious choices among products and the time to enjoy one's choices. All of this was celebrated through the key strategy of showing bodies in leisure, which functioned as synecdoche for national vitality and vigor. Thus, the most common representation of the American way of life in women's magazines was the female body in leisure.

Deploying images of happy, leisurely families with consumer products was a favored tactic of U.S. propagandists. The goal of these types of pamphlets, radio shows, and other publications was, in the words of Llewellyn Thompson, U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union, "to endeavor to make the Soviet people dissatisfied with the share of the Russian pie which they now receive and make them realize that the slight improvements projected in their standard of living are only a drop in the bucket to what they could and should have."<sup>43</sup> In many ways, the most visible and celebrated proponent of capitalism was the American housewife who benefited from the variety of new products and timesaving devices. Although, as rhetorical scholars have shown, soldiers are often metonyms for the body of the nation during war, in the new, diffuse Cold War, leisurely housewives promoted American superiority.<sup>44</sup>

Representations of idealized womanhood were never constructed in a vacuum. Instead, the charming American housewife was rendered all the more charming by her ugly Soviet stepsister. Americans eagerly consumed news articles telling them what life was really like in Russia, especially for Russian women. If American women were sexually desirable, charming and above all feminine, Soviet women could not be more different, according to the American press. Communism was seen to erase femininity, enslaving men and women equally to the Soviet

state. Foreign correspondents often claimed to answer the question “Why Russian Women Work like Men,” and described Russian women as “stolid” and “dowdy,” laboring as engineers, construction workers, and bus drivers because there were not enough Russian men to do the jobs. The author of one such article then assured readers, “There are, of course, occasional beauties neatly dressed despite their cheap clothes, who manage to be attractive. . . . But in general, the Soviet Union seemingly believes that looking prettily feminine is ‘bourgeois’ and therefore to be avoided.”<sup>45</sup> Even Paris-based fashion designer Elsa Schiaparelli concurred with the accounts of the U.S. press. Upon arriving in Moscow to find it cold unlike anything she had felt before, Schiaparelli noted that working women swarmed the train station “encumbered by big skirts or in mannish overcoats, wearing black kerchiefs round their heads and very heavy boots.”<sup>46</sup> The press deployed the internationally famous designer’s observations to shore up U.S. superiority using the contrast between the attractive, trim, American female body and the masculine, ill-dressed Soviet female body.

While Americans’ anxieties and superiority complexes about communism were projected onto Soviet women, Soviet women turned to popular magazines for messages about appropriate womanhood and citizenship that emanated directly from the Kremlin.<sup>47</sup> And in this regard, American perceptions were not far off. Soviet women’s magazines did indeed encourage female citizens to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to labor. One magazine published by the Soviet Women’s Anti-Fascist Committee and Central Council of Trade Unions, *Soviet Woman*, represented Soviet womanhood almost exclusively in factories, downplaying any emphasis on the women’s looks or bodies. *Soviet Woman* encouraged women to do the heavy labor of rebuilding the confederation of socialist republics postwar. A representative several page article on Soviet Byelorussia [Belarus] showed female bodies in labor in the factories, noting that the

women featured were prominent workers who had met their part of the five-year production plan within the first three years.<sup>48</sup> This article featured a photograph of a simply dressed woman poised in the middle of factory work [figure two].



Figure Two

Importantly, the woman does not look at the camera, preferring productivity to posing for pictures. As a result of this focus on the factory, this woman's body was not offered up for visual commodification, as she seemed too busy to be consumed. Soviet women, the photo declared, were producers, not consumers. The citizen's body was the productive, laboring, unadorned body, regardless of gender. Her serious expression and modest clothing stood in stark contrast to the smiling, barelegged American women in U.S. magazines. She emulated respectable, productive womanhood, not a commodity. In this particular photograph, and in the other photographs accompanying the article, the woman behind the controls was dwarfed by the activity and scale of the factory behind her. Her small body suggested that she was working for a

cause much larger than herself. Likewise, the large clock present in the foreground of the photograph highlighted discipline and efficiency, instead of the individuality of the woman worker. More important than the gender of these bodies was their placement in the factory. The pictures created a Soviet citizen that was decidedly self-effacing, more focused on building the Belarusian republic than individual actions like consumption.

Despite idealizations of Soviet citizens published in magazines and described in speeches that depicted women first and foremost as laborers, actual Soviet women eagerly, if furtively, consumed American fashion magazines and styles. Almost every Western woman who traveled in Moscow during the Cold War, from fashion designer Schiaparelli to *Vogue* correspondent Dina Aldridge recalled being propositioned by Soviet women for glimpses of American fashions in person or in pictures. In contrast to the American fashions, which highlighted femininity, Soviet women's magazines emphasized functionality of dress, given that the ephemerality of high fashion contradicted the socialist ideal of stability. Soviet magazines encouraged modest, appropriate, socialist taste by providing paper patterns for women to copy, important resources, even as textiles were in short supply. As Djurdja Bartlett concludes, fashion was a mythical narrative for Soviet women that offered no real-life solutions to rationing, deprivation, and overwork.<sup>49</sup> This was compounded by domestic industry's inability to meet demand for basic goods. Under both Stalin and Khrushchev, a black market thrived for Western fashion items and magazines, given their rarity. Yet, as article after article in *Soviet Woman* declared, the Soviet woman preferred a simple, practical fashion that allowed her dedication to the work of building the Soviet motherland to shine through.

Discourses foregrounding dedication and labor were important to the survival of the Soviet confederation. Given the devastation of the Russian countryside during World War II,

women composed the largest group of available and able-bodied laborers.<sup>50</sup> Soviet domestic propaganda argued that, in historian Greta Bucher's words, "with effective use of state support facilities combined with the proper socialist attitude toward work and family and just a little elbow grease, any woman could be a flawless worker, model wife, and mother."<sup>51</sup> Women had to work to survive in the postwar Soviet Union, and the Kremlin encouraged them to aim for high leadership positions, but most women spent their time balancing responsibilities as rank-and-file workers and mothers. State-supported childcare was vastly inadequate and poorly run, and even though Stalin encouraged single motherhood to increase the population, all mothers struggled greatly. Moreover, responsibility for housework and childcare rested staunchly with Soviet women, making them victims of the double shift in a country rife with food and necessity shortages.

Even as American propaganda specialists were closely attuned to the power of selling the good life to those behind the Iron Curtain through fashion and family living, the American Communist Party was largely silent on these issues after WWII. The CPUSA had devoted little thought to women before 1948, and nuanced discussions of gender were entirely absent from their publications before the early Cold War. This is not surprising as the Communist Party leadership was almost exclusively men, and they emphasized a class-based theory of oppression in line with Marxism. It was common in Communist Party discourse to assert that once socialism arrived, all of the concerns women had would be automatically resolved. Communist women grew to be quite skeptical of this claim.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, Communist men bought into the dominant national discourses about domesticity, and they sought to preserve their power in the Party until women forced them to concede the existence of gender-based oppression. Communists began

making their case by illustrating how the politics of fashion and consumer culture weighed especially heavily on women.

### **Comedic Consumerism and Satirical Sex Appeal**

The mass-market society hailing women as consumers was just blossoming when American Communists began discussing its implications for women. In response, Communist writers satirized magazines and advertisements to show the power of consumerism in the postwar United States. When rhetors use satire, parody, or political humor, Robert Hariman argues, they show that “what had seemed to be serious is in fact foolish, and likewise the powerful is shown to be vulnerable, the unchangeable contingent, the enchanting dangerous.”<sup>53</sup> By showing the limits of language, satire and political humor, Hariman suggests, function as social and political leveling. This is because irreverence democratizes public speech when anyone or anything can find itself targeted. Satire has, as media scholars like Jonathan Gray point out, an uncanny ability to speak truth to power.<sup>54</sup> *Daily Worker* columnist Ira Wallach, writing as “Ted Tinsley,” and *New Masses* writer Vivian Howard subjected consumer culture to their scathing ridicule. Taking women’s magazines as their texts, Howard and Tinsley each engaged in satirical readings that safely critiqued the gendering of Cold War concepts like “domesticity” and “consumption.” Together, they constituted genres suitable for Communist attention.

Both the publication venue and the use of satire were strategic choices for Vivian Howard. She published her two-page article about fiction in women’s magazines in the *New Masses*, a Leftist literary magazine. The “principal organ of the American cultural left from 1926 onwards,” according to scholar Barbara Foley, the *New Masses* attempted to create a radical

leftist culture in opposition to mass, capitalist culture.<sup>55</sup> Accordingly, the broad audience of leftist readers, Communists and others, would have been predisposed to see mainstream U.S. culture as suspect at best, oppressive at worst. These readers likely saw the necessity of creating a radical, working-class culture, in line with Howard's purpose of showing the gendered oppression emanating from popular culture alongside its erasure of class difference. Howard supported her satire by creating the persona of the harried, working-class housewife and constituting a genre of women's magazine fiction through assimilation. A small body of domestic fiction as a genre of women's writing existed in the capitalist press as a means to acknowledge the frustration of suburban isolation, but Howard's was unique in its attention to class.<sup>56</sup>

Howard structured her article as an exposition of four recent magazine stories published in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Woman's Home Companion*, and *McCall's*. Yet, her key rhetorical strategy was an assimilation of all of the main characters of these stories. She began with a story entitled "The Blank Wall" from the *Ladies' Home Journal*, and she introduced her readers to Lucia Holley, "a tall woman, very young-looking for her thirty-eight years, with a dark serious face and beautiful dark eyes."<sup>57</sup> While Lucia may be surprisingly beautiful, Howard points out that, "like all L.H.J. heroines, she has the 'resourcefulness of the mother, the domestic woman, accustomed to emergencies.'"<sup>58</sup> Twice in her half-page description of Lucia's quandaries Howard referred to her as "resourceful" and twice more she referenced her "efficiency." Lucia is both of these things and more, according to the author of the story, and her efficiency and charm helps her to dispose of a corpse, prepare breakfast, go to the market, meet with a blackmailer, reform a gangster, and care for her children while her husband is away at war. "Needless to say," Howard wrote, "Lucia, through sheer feminine charm and housewifely efficiency, solves all her

difficulties, both lethal and romantic.”<sup>59</sup> To transition to the second story, she used Lucia as a link. “To match this magnificent American wife and mother, the November *Woman’s Home Companion* offers us Rusty Farr,” she explained. Howard then described Rusty’s domestic prowess as a pie maker, which caused her to exclaim, “Rusty is nothing more or less than a younger edition of Lucia! How that girl gets things done!”<sup>60</sup> Howard assimilated the two women in their efficient domesticity, a strategy that called attention to their allegedly most noteworthy traits, while highlighting the consistency of the messages emanating from women’s magazines.

Howard then added a third woman to her discussion, again suggesting that the heroines of magazine fiction were all the same. “That same *Woman’s Home Companion* is graced by another heroine who differs from Rusty and Lucia only in that throughout the story she is nameless.” Nameless’s domestic skills land her a husband who mistakenly calls her on the phone while trying to reach someone else. “Alongside of Lucia, Rusty, and Nameless in this splendid gallery of housewives is Christina Orth,” Howard wrote, introducing her final story. Christina “starts off being a career woman, and for this she must suffer,” Howard matter-of-factly explained calling attention to the elevation of domesticity over working for wages in all of these magazine stories.<sup>61</sup> Accordingly, Christina gets pregnant, her boyfriend absconds, but luckily her dress line takes off—only after her domestic hopes are dashed. Howard’s humorous assimilation of heroines created a genre of magazine fiction driven by the exploits of intrepid domestic goddesses who could handle anything life threw at them—but only because of their domesticity.

Howard emphasized the skill with which each of these four women tend their houses, interjecting her descriptions of their atypical adventures with exclamations like “Leave us not underestimate that resourcefulness of an L.H.J. housewife!”<sup>62</sup> Likewise, in her rendering of Rusty’s attempts to deal with a cheating husband, Howard described a conversation Rusty has

with her male friend, a doctor. “But of course, the doctor, being a mere man, doesn’t know the mettle of a *Woman’s Home Companion* heroine,” she wrote, then explaining how Rusty takes the doctor’s car to apprehend her husband attempting to escape with his mistress.<sup>63</sup> When Rusty wins back her husband, Howard remarked, “[The mistress] never stood a chance, not against a girl who could cook,” reminding her readers of Rusty’s skill with pies.<sup>64</sup> These humorous asides solidified the link between the triumphs of the heroine and her domestic skills—they accentuated the ways in which women during the Cold War were disciplined to the domestic. Yet, the humorous interjection as a strategy also downplayed the objections Howard seemed to raise to these representations of womanhood.

Howard’s juxtaposition of the domestic skill with the adventures of each heroine also illustrated to the readers the ways in which the domestic ideal had to be stretched to be compelling. Indeed, her matter-of-fact telling of the outlandish parts of Lucia’s, Rusty’s, Nameless’s, and Christina’s stories combined with the everyday drudgery functioned to make obvious the tortured rhetorical labor that capitalist writers undertook to make the domestic appeal to women—they had to combine it with murder, intrigue, and adultery. For example, in her telling of Lucia’s travails—which begin with finding her daughter’s dead boyfriend in her boat—Howard wrote of how Lucia bundles up the corpse and boats out to a deserted island to dispose of it. “She puts her blue bandana over the poor boy’s face because it is all so horrible, and then she returns home to breakfast,” Howard explained. While any reader of this story would likely find it unrealistic, Howard’s quaint interjections juxtaposed with disposing of dead bodies, the triviality of objects like blue bandanas, and going to serve breakfast like a good mother heightened their absurdity. Lucia then does her motherly duty by going to the market, but is frustrated by war rationing. “What a life, to dispose of a body so efficiently before breakfast

and then to be thwarted by a marketing list!”<sup>65</sup> Thus, Howard’s retelling of Lucia’s story rhetorically functioned to dismiss the domestic as the drudgery that magazine fiction attempted to dress up while demanding its heroines have domestic skills. Couching this dismissal in satire was a safe means to critique the reverence accorded the domestic realm during the Cold War.

Likewise, Howard’s focus on fashion trivialized the alleged skill and resourcefulness of the heroines. It also functioned as a subtle class critique of the representation of housewifery in the capitalist media. “For her meeting with the blackmailer,” Howard explained, “Lucia picks out a special hat—‘a sort of sailor with an edging of white eyelet embroidery on the brim.’ At a later rendezvous, she prefers a black suit, little black hat with a white blouse and white gloves. She is never at a loss for a chic costume to suit any occasion,” even blackmail.<sup>66</sup> By exaggerating the importance of wardrobe changes at the expense of a coherent plot, Howard poked fun at the quality of the fiction, while making visible the work necessary to preserve the glamour of femininity. “On the day of the second murder,” Howard reported, “she wears a simple red-and-white checked gingham dress, stiffly starched.”<sup>67</sup> These fashion choices pointed to the necessity of a housewife’s glamor alongside capability at her tasks—the woman during the Cold War had to do it all (as long as “it all” took place at home). She needed, in Howard’s words, “sheer feminine charm.” Sheer feminine charm, however, in Howard’s telling, required a certain amount of disposable income and the time and ability to perform the labor of femininity—matching clothing with shoes with purses. Howard’s satire made clear the assumption in the women’s magazines—that selecting an outfit suitable for the occasion of blackmail or marketing was half the battle of getting through the day. Instead, the humorous presentation of the wardrobe changes presented these traits as the most notable ones of the magazine heroines and served to show the equation of domestic femininity with unrealistic glamor and income.

In order to accomplish her sweeping critique of the genre of domestic fiction, Howard constituted her own persona as a struggling housewife. This functioned to model feminine engagement with magazine fiction even as it showed its absurdity. “We housewives are being told all the time how wonderful we are,” Howard began. “Makes us feel better while we’re washing the diapers.”<sup>68</sup> This, the first line in her article, foregrounded her identification as a member of the group that such magazines targeted. It gave her the credibility to critique. She punctuated this identification immediately with the labor-intensive task of washing diapers, highlighting housewifery as a labor. Indeed, her suggestion that being informed of their worth made her and her fellow housewives feel better underscored that housewives did work that at time sapped their energies and moods. Howard satirically demonstrated her alleged internalization of the standards of housewifery in her investment in the success of her fictional role models. “It is only during her last meeting with the Irish gangster, now reformed, that Lucia disappointed me badly,” Howard admitted. She then explained that she was disappointed because “there is absolutely no description of her dress, not an inkling of the color, material, style or degree of starchiness.” But she concluded that “in spite of the lateness of the hour and the urgency of the situation,” Lucia must have selected an outfit “exactly appropriate.” By admitting her disappointment, despite its trivial nature, Howard demonstrated a personal investment in Lucia’s story, as if she were a real woman. “I never doubted but that she could do it,” Howard affirmed when finally able to relate Lucia’s triumphs through the ever present “sheer feminine charm and housewifely efficiency.”<sup>69</sup> Howard’s narration of her personal feelings about the story alongside the story itself modeled involvement, an elevation of the importance of the fiction, especially for Howard’s Communist comrades who may have thought that no one took these stories seriously.

Howard's persona as a housewife in the satire, however, also functioned as a class critique of the standards presented in women's magazines. As she concluded her discussion of Lucia, Rusty, Nameless, and Christina, she admitted, "I'm real proud of these fellow housewives of mine, and a little humble before them too." She then critiqued the classed nature of magazine fiction:

Although I read my *Ladies' Home Journal* from Page 1 to Page 296 every month, cook their recipes, imitate the full-color pictures when setting my dinner table and shampoo my hair according to the prescribed steps one, two, and three, I would not know what to do if my husband ran away with a blond or if I discovered a corpse in my motorboat, provided I had a motorboat. I am afraid I would not even be able to find a sitter for my illegitimate baby while I became a famous dress designer. And if a pleasant baritone voice called me on the phone by mistake, I am reasonably certain that I would not be washing sweaters. Of course it is possible to keep soap flakes and a pan of luke warm (not hot) water ready for just such an eventuality.<sup>70</sup>

By highlighting that she did not have a boat and that babysitters were hard to come by, Howard asserted that these escapist fantasies required a level of disposable income. Likewise, the idealized vision of the intrepid, efficient, problem-solving yet glamorous housewife, although potentially liberatory in its denial of the drudgery of housework, required class privilege in its perfection. Howard's description of reading patterns as "imitation" as well as the implication that it required both three steps (and a magazine) to shampoo one's hair mocked housewives without interests beyond the domestic. "That's why I'm glad that I have found these real answers to real problems right alongside of those splendiferous ads for washing machines, canned soups, linoleum, silverware, and refrigerators," Howard concluded. Thus, she underscored again the disjunction between these magazines and the experience of being a housewife, while calling out the magazines for what they were—vehicles for feminine consumerism. Idealized housewifery was a classed pursuit, she noted, an ideal stretched thin with drama to entice women. But because the magazines erased the class status necessary to buy the appropriate clothing and have

the leisure time to engage in pursuits beyond the home, they also ignored the labor of being a housewife while naturalizing the pursuit of glamour and fashion as a feminine occupation. Altogether, Howard's satire, supported by the creation of a clear genre and her persona as a struggling housewife, functioned to humorously interrogate the concept of "domesticity" as it identified it as worthy of Communist critique for its classed and gendered implications.

Howard was not the only Communist writer who used satire to critique capitalist gender relations. The popular column "Ted Tinsley Says..." likely penned by New York screenwriter and novelist Ira Wallach left Communists either scratching their heads or holding their sides. Letters to the editor suggest that Tinsley's satire met mixed reaction and was lost on some of the humorless comrades.<sup>71</sup> Yet, Tinsley used similar rhetorical strategies to illustrate the ways in which, in Cold War culture, "consumption" was gendered feminine. Indeed, his satire of magazine advertisements made clear that women were expected to purchase their desirability. Taking on the persona of a friendly advice columnist, Tinsley nonetheless patronized women, as he painted them uniformly desperate for marriage. Writing in the *Daily Worker* in 1948, Tinsley had a wide audience of committed Communists for his cultural satire. "Using one issue of *Good Housekeeping* as a guide, I have prepared the following rules and regulations for getting and holding men," he began. Casting his satire as "rules and regulations" instead of, for example, as helpful suggestions, he built masculine authority to inform an audience that he constituted as desperate women. He then stated the obvious, cultivating a patronizing tone toward his audience of women. "While this information is primarily of interest to women, I believe that men will also find much in it that is helpful."<sup>72</sup> This "helpful" persona, which Tinsley appropriated from many advertisements in women's magazines, was the foundation upon which he exaggerated their advertising strategies, and the way that he demonstrated the limitations that advertisers placed on

women. In effect, Tinsley was trying to sell femininity to his women readers, but his exaggeration of rhetorical strategies made clear the ridiculousness of femininity's link to consumption.

Deploying the usual advertising technique of showing products leading to wish fulfillment, Tinsley focused on the relationship between a woman's hands, marriage, and consumer products in his April 1948 column in the *Daily Worker*. "Jergens Lotion... is convinced that no woman can get a man without soft, gooky, squooshy hands," he began. Tinsley then engaged in his own rhetorical analysis of the photograph in the advertisement:

The photo which accompanies the ad is very much to the point. A woman has her fingers all over some guy's face, and he is remarking (in a choked hushed voice), "Let's get married so I'll be sure that those sweet hands are mine." In the next scene, they are looking over blueprints for a house, while she pats his hand (with her hand). I do not know what transpired between the two photos, and it may be that they plan to move into that new house and live in sin. Jergens, according to the ad, is more effective than ever—"thanks to Wartime Research." You see, war has its blessings.<sup>73</sup>

Tinsley mocked the advertisement's enthymeme. Readers were supposed to fill in the gaps with their aspirations of marriage and homeownership, although Tinsley cast doubt on the assumed gaps, suggesting the absurdity of hand cream leading to a proposal, while noting that the outcome was (sorry, ladies) actually far from certain. By highlighting these gaps and calling to mind the emotion and desire that most advertisements sought to induce in consumers, Tinsley also unmasked the affective labor that went into marketing products and the power of advertising to create idealized womanhood. Interrogating the mediated manner of our interaction with the world is, as Hariman suggests, a key function of satire.<sup>74</sup> And indeed, by Tinsley, a radical and Communist, admitting that he felt the power of these advertisements through his intimate knowledge of them for satire's purpose, he confirmed his spectatorship in an advertising-

dominated world. Tinsley dwelled on hand cream, reading another advertisement that shows a man and woman rubbing hands claiming they never wanted to let each other go. “Maybe she can’t let go! Maybe that stuff is glue,” he concluded matter-of-factly.

“But stop! No man will be taken in by Jergens Face Cream alone!” Tinsley exclaimed, repeating the brand name as an advertiser would. “You must cover your face with a one-minute mask of Pond’s Vanishing Cream,” he instructed. He then ridiculed a common technique of advertisers—the endorsement of the product by a famous person. “This cream,” Tinsley explained, “is used by none other than the Countess de Petiteville. The Countess has an historic 1000-year-old Norman name! So you see the cream will make your face younger and your name older!”<sup>75</sup> He meticulously explained the link between the endorsement and the product—which advertisers would have expected to be self-evident, patronizing his readers. Moreover, he mocked the link between the famous person’s claim to fame—being from a wealthy, established family—and its relevance to the product. This functioned to show the endorsement as a rhetorical strategy designed with female consumption in mind, and Tinsley constituted himself the rational male in the feminized, mass market, advertising culture, the only one who could untangle their true meaning.

“Now that you have used Jergens and Ponds Face Cream, you are at the very brink of your engagement,” Tinsley next explained. “Just a dab of Pond’s Cold Cream, and the man is yours!” He then pointed to another common beauty advertising technique from the 1940s—the use of a faux marriage announcement to describe the success of the product for ordinary, if wealthy and attractive, Americans. “It happened to Arta Folwell, who is engaged, lovely, and a Pond’s user.” He contrasted Ms. Folwell with an unnamed woman “who was engaged, lovely, and didn’t use Pond’s.” This unlucky woman, according to Tinsley, “was deported.”<sup>76</sup> Tinsley

exaggerated the consequences of using the wrong products, while at the same time juxtaposing the brand names together to highlight the ways the products sold the same lifestyle to women—both Jergens and Ponds promised the same thing—he implied.

“Now for a few finishing touches,” Tinsley wrote as he moved into his column’s conclusion. He explained that an ad for Bourjois cosmetics’ “Evening in Paris” line used quotes from men to sell its product, claiming that men preferred their makeup. “Why, every man I meet says exactly that!” Tinsley exclaimed deploying masculine authority and the power of men as the arbiter of feminine consumption. He then interpreted the picture accompanying the ad literally in a show of its absurdity. “The ad shows a picture of a woman with triplets, proving that she must have used Evening in Paris three times.”<sup>77</sup> The overall effect of satirizing the strategies of advertisers was to show women themselves to be a product, selling themselves for marriage proposals, necessary because women were not seen to be independent wage earners in the capitalist United States, unlike under socialism where all were allegedly equal. Magazines built the ideal, desirable female citizen from the ground up by matching this foot cream with that lotion with this nail polish. Such messages accomplished the twin goals of encouraging consumerism via marriage and fashioning a citizen that could not be more different from sensible, Soviet working women.

Tinsley’s satire went beyond Howard’s in that he dwelled on individual brand names to mount a critique of the way that branding pushed products that were essentially the same. He showed, in other words, that the exalted citizen’s choice between consumer products was a farce. One brand name hand cream prompted women in the advertisement to run their hands over men’s faces from left to right [Jergens], while another hand cream impelled right to left stroking [Hinds]. “Women, now that your hands are drenched in both Jergens and Hinds, do not think that

everything is settled,” Tinsley cautioned. “Your work is only beginning.” He then noted that if the ads were to be believed, men preferred women who used two types of face cream—one that tasted good [Jergens] and one that loosened “debris, rubble, flotsam, and jetsam” from female faces [Ponds]. “However, you should also know that can only be loved if you use Kerchiefs by Kimball, and bake cakes in Wear-Ever Aluminum Utensils,” he concluded.<sup>78</sup> Against these odds and facing such high stakes, how were women to succeed in the endeavor to attract a husband? Wandering down the beauty aisles at the local drugstore provided a dizzying array of options, and if advertisements could be taken at their word, women could take many false steps, all of them down the path of spinsterhood. Consumer choice still locked women into a system where they competed for husbands instead of becoming independent wage earners, choices that Tinsley concluded were not worth the time, money, and effort.

Given that Marxism dismissed endless arrays of consumer products as creating needs that soon became obsolete, it is unsurprising that the critique of consumerism comes to the fore in discourse of the CPUSA. What is noteworthy, however, is that these satirical articles focused upon the gendered nature of consumerism by linking it to women’s desirability and the representations of the body under capitalism. Beauty required labor and capital, both Tinsley and Howard suggested. Indeed, I have argued that these satires of women’s magazines functioned to safely critique the gendering of “domesticity” and “consumption” and identify their worth for Communist critique by linking gender to class. It was the couching in satire, for instance, that allowed Howard to critique domesticity without appearing to be a radical feminist, while Tinsley could patronize women and critique advertising.

Of course, as scholars studying humor and parody have noted, satire may foster “a cynical superiority complex,” potentially leading those exposed to it to withdraw from political

engagement.<sup>79</sup> And as the confused reactions to some of Tinsley's satire indicates, no matter how radical a Communist, one needed to have some knowledge of the social norms underlying the advertising industry to appreciate the way in which Tinsley's columns played with those norms and reduced them to absurdity. Both Tinsley and Howard played with the genre of women's magazines and representations of appropriate American womanhood to make their critiques. But as analysts of humor remind us, it is important to think about what comes *after* the laugh. Tinsley and Howard gave their readers no clear answers. Instead, their articles reminded Communists of the power of advertising to circulate problematic and classed representations of woman by disciplining their bodies and minds with consumer products. Yet, if satire demands close attention and mental participation on the part of the audience, the outpouring of Communist discourse on beauty and fashion in the wake of these satires demonstrates that, for the most part, Communists were paying attention. And they were beginning to realize that culture was important to the subordination of women, just like economic structures.

### **Putting Femininity to Work**

So what *did* come after the laugh? Although Tinsley and Howard never explicitly pushed readers to resist advertising, their satirical publications clearly ridiculed dominant representations of femininity that encouraged consumption, capitalism, and American superiority. Perhaps, though, Communist women like Flynn thought, performances of femininity could be put to work on behalf of the Party. Flynn recognized, for instance, that clothing served as an index of respectability. In her middle and advanced age, she wore matronly, flowered dresses, sensible shoes, and small hats. When using public transportation, the gregarious Flynn liked to ask people she met to guess her profession. The innocent bystanders would often guess teacher or librarian

based on her prim appearance. Their faces would inevitably fall when she informed them that, no, in fact, she was a Communist Party official.<sup>80</sup> Flynn's glee at tricking subway riders mirrored a broader social discourse that suggested that communism was so insidious because Communists looked and sounded just like the average American, which of course, they were not. In addition to using conventional clothing to "domesticate" communism and lessen its threat, Communist women also realized that appropriating dominant conceptions of femininity could minimize the objections of the Party's men to their feminist arguments. Thus, after Tinsley and Howard created a genre to critique the feminizing of consumption and domesticity, Flynn constituted a new form of U.S. femininity divorced from these concepts.

Flynn used her newspaper column, which appeared several times a week in the *Daily Worker*, to begin constituting a politically engaged, conventionally gendered, U.S. femininity. She echoed strategies of Tinsley and Howard, who sought to convince the Party that femininity ought to be a matter of their concern. She did this by linking her representation in the capitalist press with anti-Communism. "But to get back to newspaper pictures. They can make you look like hell if they want to do so," Flynn complained in a 1948 newspaper column.<sup>81</sup> So irked was she with the way she was portrayed in newspapers, that she called the *New York Times*, telling them "that while I'm no beauty neither am I a cross-eyed moron and I demanded that they take a decent picture."<sup>82</sup> Flynn visited the *New York Times* studios and sat for portraits for use in their articles about CPUSA. "They took several poses, they sent me proofs, and I must say the proofs were very good in that they looked like me," she remembered, apparently satisfied. And yet, these pictures never appeared in the papers. "They'll snap me some windy day with my hair blowing, and if it's out of doors at a meeting, I'll have my mouth wide open. Then, they'll add that to their galley of Communist women to prate that we all look like witches," she bemoaned.

Flynn rhetorically created the persona of an old biddy, a garrulous maternal figure, in this personal narrative. Indeed, her description of her trip to the *New York Times* studio evokes finger wagging and scolding from a woman set in her Communist ways. She relied on colloquialisms and grammatically incorrect constructions to create an informal tone, and she published this piece in her personal column, exemplifying her points about femininity and media representation through her own personal experience. This set her editorial apart from Communist theorizing that likely would have invited a skeptical, serious audience.

Flynn's forging of a link between her experience and a "galley of Communist women" mobilized to "prate that we all look like witches" was illustrated the political, persuasive implications of appropriate femininity and its systematic role as redbaiting. Flynn argued that being represented as a prattling witch was a means to position the CPUSA as outside of the realms of appropriate political allegiance by showing Communists despoiling appropriate gender relations. Due to her willingness to conform to appropriate gender norms in appearance, Flynn showed both that communism was a political affiliation just like any other and that conventionally feminine women could have political subjectivities. She showed gender conventionality to be politically expedient for the CPUSA.

Flynn's editorial continued to create a dissociation in the term "beauty." Her editorial, she explained, was prompted by a particularly worrisome article that had appeared in mainstream newspapers across the country. Entitled "The Gentle Sex," the article featured unflattering photographs of five female Communist leaders. "Being a lady comrade is not a career for a glamour girl," the article concluded.<sup>83</sup> Flynn, thus, framed her column reactively—explaining that her words were compelled by the capitalist press, not by a desire to condemn Communist men for failing to be sensitive to the needs of the women in their Party. She responded to the

capitalist article by creating a dissociation of beauty that she built by relying on “old fashioned proverbs” and folk wisdom gleaned from age, her feminine authority proceeding from her persona. “There are many different concepts of beauty,” Flynn explained. “An old fashioned proverb is: ‘Beauty is as beauty does!’ In their long lives devoted to the freedom of the people, these women [the radical leaders in the article] radiate a beauty that cannot be bought in the corner drugstore.” Thus, Flynn separated a commodified conception of beauty based on purchasing the products that Tinsley satirized from a genuine conception of beauty based on living a political life pursuing justice in the world.

She then reminded her readers that conceptions of beauty promoted by the capitalist media were ageist. “These women,” she explained, “are all middle-aged women, mothers of families, some grandmothers. The fresh bloom of the teen age cannot last into the sixties and seventies. . . . Is your mother less beautiful to you because her hair is white and her face is wrinkled?” Flynn used her middle-aged, matronly authority to distance her conception of genuine beauty, still based on gender conforming behaviors like motherhood, from commodified beauty. Thus, Flynn showed the desirability of gender conformity for those involved in radical political projects, but she did so in a reactive, maternal way, more likely to be palatable to her audience.

Likewise, she pointed out how these conceptions that women must always be beautiful went hand in hand with the idea that women should be “gentle, sweet, low-voiced, and pliable.” Flynn’s article is remarkable in that it explored how these idealized representations of woman influenced men. While Communist theory did not recognize gender at all prior to 1948, Flynn pointed out that men were gendered beings as well. “The reverse, of course, is that men must be strong, bold, aggressive, and looks are quite secondary,” she explained. “Any pot-bellied, thick

jowled male with a cigar stuck offensively in one corner of his mouth will give out large views on what he wants in his women. Imagine discussing whether a man has ‘a good pair of legs.’” Thus, Flynn underscored the focus on the female body while juxtaposing it with jocular observation about the male body, using absurdity to undermine its potential to offend. She continued to downplay the potential offensiveness of her observations about men by linking them to accepted Communist principles. “The economic dependence of women on men is largely responsible for many of the distorted ideas of what men think women ought to be,” she wrote.<sup>84</sup> Thus, Flynn’s editorial in her “Life of the Party” column demonstrated the importance of feminine gender performance for the CPUSA—newspaper photographs presenting unflattering views of female Communists were a form of redbaiting, she asserted. She enacted this concern by describing her own interest in her representation in the capitalist media. Her matronly and personal tone granted her authority to speak about beauty and its effect on women. But, by linking it to the Communist Party’s interests and Communist theory, Flynn helped her new conception of femininity gain significance.

The idea that gender conventionality could aid radical political projects was an idea long accepted in the Soviet Union. Indeed, Flynn appropriated her conception of genuine beauty as based on naturalness and dedication to justice from Soviet women’s magazines, likely trying to counteract the dominant American perception that Soviet women were unattractive and masculine. Page after page of Soviet women’s magazines championed model female citizens who had made great achievements in meeting production quotas. And yet, each article effusively praising a Soviet woman for her service to Mother Russia also described the clothing and appearance of that particular woman. Anna Severyanova, one of the first female directors of a textile mill in Moscow, for example, “wore a very simple and ordinary suit” when she sat down

for an interview with Tatyana Tess of *Soviet Woman* magazine. “She had quite an ordinary Russian face, slightly oval, with a high forehead and large eyes that looked at one attentively,” wrote Tess. “Everything was simple in that face, as simple as nature in Russia, as simple as the beauty of the forest when the leaves rustle slightly in the wind, as simple as the quiet flow of a river, and the meadows fragrant with daisies and mint. The longer you look at such a face, the more clearly you feel its attraction, the soft, unobtrusive face characteristic of Russian women.”<sup>85</sup> Comparisons between Soviet women and the natural beauty of Russia were a common trope, and they connected these citizens to their country. But they also emphasized the sensible, proletarian beauty of these women—steady as nature instead of rapidly changing like bourgeois fashion. The repetition of “simple” in the passages about Severyanova confirmed this. Soviet women were beautiful without purchasing products, as beauty was not a function of class privilege. And indeed, Flynn appropriated these types of descriptions when describing her radical lady heroes. Just like the Soviet magazines, encouraging women to re-dedicate themselves to the backbreaking work of rebuilding the federation, Flynn argued for the power of attractiveness and gender conformity. She imagined a new type of American female citizen who was beautiful without being bourgeois, and politically radical.

Other Communist journalists also saw the political expediency of gender conventionality. Communist writers actively reclaimed Soviet women as their stylish sisters. When mainstream journalists and reporters traveled to Moscow, they often described the women anywhere from “drab” to “appalling.” Virginia Pope, the *New York Times* fashion editor, compared a 1949 Soviet runway show to “the work of home dressmakers rather than couturiers.” “The Soviet models,” she wrote, “don’t show the chic characteristic of fashion capitals of the West and seem inept in cut and handling.”<sup>86</sup> Yet, if communism was ugly in the mainstream press,

Communist journalists re-dressed their Soviet comrades, so strong was the link between fashion and leisure and desirability. Sam Lesser, a veteran of the Spanish Civil War and *Daily Worker* journalist who would go on to cover the 1956 revolution in Hungary, the Cuban missile crisis, and the overthrow of Salvador Allende in Chile, happened to stop by Moscow to catch a fashion show in 1956.<sup>87</sup> “What will Moscow’s Miss and Madam be wearing this spring and summer?” he asked. After spending “nearly two weeks of sitting in the gallery of the Grand Hall of the Kremlin,” he had the answer. Lesser, writing under the byline “Sam Russell,” described gossamer fabrics, bright silks, and shiny gold cloth, instead of heavy boxy fashions. The fashions were tailored to fit various occasions “from the afternoon frock to the full-length evening dress, from beautiful flowered frocks to be worn in town or country to topless sun-dresses with boned bodices, dresses for the schoolgirl’s graduation party and for the evening affair.”<sup>88</sup> Leaving the show, stepping out onto Red Square in what he described as a “mere ten degrees below zero centigrade,” Lesser/Russell concluded that the “magnificent array of silks” heralded a summer of success for this Five Year Plan, designed to increase consumer goods. Indeed, Lesser clothed the Soviet worker-citizen in silk instead of burlap, in fashion instead of famine. These representations were intended to counteract both the idea that communism failed to provide consumer goods and that Soviet women were unfashionable. Beauties could work in factories and wear the fabrics of their own weaving in a socialist country, articles like this claimed. Presented in the straightforward style of journalistic objectivity, this article downplayed its propagandistic slant, instead asking the reader to make links between fashion and variety, leisure time, and affordability under communism.

In sum, the satires of Tinsley and Howard constituted femininity as something deeply interwoven with consumption and domesticity and identified it as worthy of Communist critique.

Satire was a safe means of introducing femininity as a concept to the Communist press. Using similarly safe means such as a matronly tone and her personal column, Flynn identified the importance of gender conventionality for the CPUSA and began to link it to Marxist theory about economic dependence. Russell used fashion shows to prove the availability of consumer goods and leisure time in the Soviet Union. But Flynn also rhetorically constituted a new form of femininity, one based on this conventional attractiveness and political activity, which she modeled through her column.

Flynn's rhetorical dissociation of "beauty" and her demonstration of the importance of gender conformity may not seem significant. But it was an important challenge to representations of women as solely white and middle class. Because women in American advertisements were only shown in spaces of leisure like the beach or parties or in domestic spaces, representations of black women's bodies, not often associated with these spaces, were incredibly rare. Yet, race was a part of American Communist women's theorizing of women's oppression from the beginning. Accordingly, as they contested representations of women in the nation, Communist women also opened space for black bodies as more than mammies. Black bodies in nationally circulated women's magazines were rare, and in the 1940s and 1950s so was coverage of civil rights or even African American singers or actors. In fact, one of the only representations of black women was an advertisement for Campbell's soup in a 1950 issue of the *Ladies' Home Journal*. This advertisement showed a rotund black woman in a dowdy long-sleeved dress shucking vegetables to make soup in a courtyard kitchen [figure three].

Figure  
Three



The headline above the image proclaimed, “THEY—enjoyed it back in old New Orleans, this excitingly different Chicken Soup.” Below the painting featuring the black woman was a large text box assuring “YOU—will welcome it today!” The black woman was represented in a domestic space, in line with other advertisements for food or cooking products, but her hefty figure, dowdy uniform, and the text marked her body as different and undesirable due to its position as a laborer, as it associated her with “exotic” gumbo soup instead of the attention of men. Her labor ensured the leisure of the white housewife. The text of this particular ad underscored the difference between the black woman and the white, modern housewife of today. A cartoon image of a white woman dressed in old timey garb was featured below, identified as the “belle of Old New Orleans.” This cartoon woman explained that “my famous chicken gumbo is the talk from coast to coast.”<sup>89</sup> Thus, even as the soup was associated with difference, the

recipe was still the property of the white woman, suggesting the black body was merely present to do the labor of creating it. If the American way of life was primarily a life of leisure, black bodies responsible for most of the labor had to be erased.

Of course, there was a growing black middle class in the postwar period, and magazines like *Ebony* circulated widely among this group. Although advertisements in *Ebony* mirrored the types of products in white publications like the *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*, they did not often represent black bodies as the objects of the male gaze. Indeed, while *Ebony's* advertisers often swapped the bodies in the advertisements from white to black, they mostly utilized faces and portraits instead of full-body pictures. The black female body was rarely laid out for the consumption of viewers. Even though the magazine argued for civil rights and equal treatment for African Americans, the advertisements largely mirrored the domestic focus of white magazines. Yet, there was a far more complicated relation between the black body and the nation, given the black body's argued inability to fit white standards of beauty and desire. Indeed, many of the products featured in *Ebony* like skin-lightening creams and hair straighteners encouraged readers to conform to white beauty standards. The black body was hardly a synecdoche for the nation, but it was important to feature products for black consumption to support the argument that capitalism provided a cornucopia of goods to *all* people in the nation. Thus, advertisements in *Ebony* served to discipline the black middle class into desiring the products and lifestyle that capitalism promised. Yet, these advertisements also encouraged black women to discipline their bodies to look like white bodies, a construct that Flynn rejected as she argued for a multiplicity of beauty ideals.

Working with this broadened conception of beauty and politically active femininity, Flynn used another article, published in the widely read Sunday *Worker*, to create a group of

like-minded women, as she differentiated gender conventionality to bourgeois fashion while linking fashion to Marxist theories of production. Once again, Flynn's article was reactive, a column penned out of necessity. This time, however, Flynn directed her ire not at the capitalist press, but at the Communist press. "Many women readers of the *Worker* did not like the article 'A Year of Grace,' and I am one of them," she began.<sup>90</sup> This article to which Flynn referred celebrated Christian Dior's controversial "New Look" while suggesting that those resisting it would soon cave to its styles. Known for romantic, feminine pleats, bustles, and longer skirts, Dior's New Look was a dramatic departure from the frugal and simplistic styles of the war years. The average wartime dress, *Vogue* reported, took three yards of fabric. One of Dior's new dinner dresses required at least twenty-five yards.<sup>91</sup> The New Look echoed the Belle Époque of corsets and petticoats, and after women had spent the war years building guns, flying airplanes, and driving ambulances. "It is distinctly out of step with the trends among the average American women, who are very definitely resisting 'The New Look,'" Flynn wrote, constituting a mass of average women and making the editorial board of the *Worker* accountable to their interests. Indeed, she attributed political motive to women who were potentially not interested in fashion or lacked the disposable income to participate.

Flynn evidenced her claim that average women did not like the New Look by relating a trip to Chicago, once again constituting herself as a matronly authority. As she sauntered down Chicago's State Street, Flynn noted approvingly that women she saw gazing in the windows of the venerable department store Marshall Field's seemed disenchanted by the "dowdy, ugly looking museum pieces." "Their faces expressed curiosity, dislike, even horror, I'd say," Flynn wrote, scarcely able to contain her glee. Indeed, "Windy City skirts are usual," she reported. Chicago's women were not just skeptical, slow-adopters of the New Look, however. Flynn's

article, entitled “Women’s Rebellion,” situated them as working-class conscious revolutionaries who were purposely resisting the New Look to oppose “the tyranny of avaricious fashion makers.” Women, especially the working class, Flynn suggested would only adopt fashions that were practical and cost effective. “Low shoes, short skirts, tailor made suits, shirtwaists, sport clothes, slacks, shorts, abbreviated bathing suits, pajamas, not to mention modern underwear, and short hair, plain hats, or finally no hats at all, are all milestones in the progress of women and have accompanied their entrance into industry, the professions, and sports,” she argued, visualizing the link between fashion and progress in gender equality. But more importantly, the new fashions were designed to “force women to discard all their present wardrobes.” These dictates in the name of fashion were unrealistic for the working class. Accordingly, for Flynn, women who had failed to adopt the feminine ruffles of the New Look were fashion rebels, staking out a message to “hold the line on prices and on hems.” Thus, Flynn’s article served two important functions: to make the unfashionable radically chic and an “ego function” to commit working-class women to a cause already seemingly championed by many of their sisters—resisting the dictates of flighty fashionistas.<sup>92</sup>

Flynn, however, was not content just to play sociologist and observe the reactions of Chicago’s women to the New Look. She supplemented her grandmotherly persona, which in this case had the potential to be dismissed as someone out of touch with what young folks were wearing, with something that her Communist comrades could not ignore—interviews with garment workers. While in Chicago, Flynn visited a local shop meeting of dressmakers. These dressmakers told her that garments conforming to the New Look required a great deal more work than others, but came with no extra pay. Manufacturers charged consumers more for the styles without passing along those earnings to the workers. The garment workers explained that the

New Look styles came from a French designer, who had to cater to bourgeois fashionistas in Europe. Indeed, Flynn's shop of dressmakers registered their subordinate position in a transnational economy of style, a position Flynn made visible to her readers. Meanwhile, Flynn encouraged working-class women to reclaim some power by refusing to abandon their shorter skirts and simpler suits. Flynn made visible the ways in which fashion operated in a labor economy that exploited workers just like the auto or steel industries. In this way, Flynn's fashion narrative encouraged working-class camaraderie against the New Look and clarified the labor that went into fashion. It made supporting the New Look anti-Communist and anti-working class, while suggesting to the male editors of the Communist papers they had to answer to a mass of women with different interests than theirs. Thus, in the article "Women's Rebellion," Flynn put to work her new conception of "genuine beauty" and deployed it for collective identity construction. These rhetorical strategies were geared toward raising awareness in the Communist Party to unique concerns of women and their relationship to Communist ideals.

Altogether, then, if Tinsley and Howard encouraged Communists to laugh at the over-the-top fashion advertising that assured the Soviets that life was easy and breezy and beautiful in the United States, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn used the newfound visibility of the labor of femininity to domesticate communism while hailing a revolutionary group of sensible beauties who were visible regardless of their race or class. Beauty and fashion were political endeavors that could be deployed to remake a vision of feminine political subjectivity based on labor not on leisure or fashion.

### Refashioning American Communism

Flynn's hailing of a group of working-class women who followed gender conventions and dressed respectably, if not overtly fashionably, seemed to resonate. These radical, female citizens claimed power in a place where they had previously been disempowered—the Party press. Armed with the idea that representations of women were political and bore implications for the way citizens were expected to act, the Communist rank-and-file enacted U.S.-based citizenship within their counterpublic by critiquing problematic representations of women and questioning to what extent Communist publications themselves trafficked in commodifying the female body. This debate stretched from late 1948 to early 1949 and surrounded the question of pin-up girls, or cheesecake pictures, appearing in the *Daily Worker*. The debate signified the continuing focus on oppression as both economic and cultural. It also, I contend, represented an enactment of the types of political engagement that Flynn had been crafting in her essays and articles about fashion and beauty. These Communists voiced critiques in the Party press and refigured the value of women in the Communist Party. Yet, this debate also illustrated the limitations of the commitment to gender equality and the need to tread carefully when confronting an ideologically rigid political movement.

Prior to 1948, it was common for the *Daily Worker* to feature at least one picture of a scantily clad woman, often from a New York beauty contest on the front pages [figure four].<sup>93</sup> These pictures were always of young, attractive, curvy white women, and accompanying text failed to link these women to a socialist project. Instead, they were often complemented by captions that further sexualized or denigrated the woman pictured. One such caption over the picture of a bathing-suit-clad beauty exclaimed, “And she can cook, too!”



Figure Four

Cheesecake pictures were only one way that Communist newspapers themselves promoted the commodification of the female body. Male Party members often unnecessarily sexualized their female comrades and devoted attention to their bodies instead of their politics. In one letter to the editor, a male comrade detailed archival research he was doing on the 1912 textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts. In his research, he encountered old photographs of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, then a young organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). “And boy was Elizabeth purty at sweet 16!” J. Bilotta told *Daily Worker* readers. “She’s all decked out, in a white, ankle-length coat and broad-brimmed white hat tending to the children.”<sup>94</sup> Communist

newspapers may not have been selling consumer goods, but they were selling papers, and letters and pictures such as these represented similar strategies to those in American women's magazines and mainstream, bourgeois culture. While this writer may not have meant to associate Flynn with traditionally feminine tasks like minding children or to attend solely to her clothing choices, his words downplayed the significance of Flynn's activism in the strike.

Yet, Party rank-and-filers, as a result of budding feminist discontent, began to believe that mainstream popular culture aimed to subordinate women.<sup>95</sup> They also began to see that the public culture of the Party and their newspaper circulated representations of women and the female body that were problematic. And those representations had consequences. "We feel that it's very important for the Daily to eliminate the cheesecake pictures. These pictures have no liberating effect for women and the working class but, on the contrary, are used to perpetuate male supremacy through the idea that sex is a women's only attribute," wrote in Phyllis and Morty from New York on January 18, 1949.<sup>96</sup> Yet, Phyllis and Morty wrote their letter together, relying on "we feel" to temper their criticism. Likewise, they began their letter with a demonstration of allegiance to the goals of the CPUSA illustrating concern for the dismissal of their message. "Our *Daily Worker* is the best newspaper in the county because it's the only paper that consistently fights for the interests of the American working-class and its allies," they affirmed. Another reader suggested that they would rather see more cartoons in the places of the cheesecake pictures.<sup>97</sup> This reader also couched their criticism of the paper in support for the Party. "I think it is the duty of every reader of our paper to offer suggestions and criticisms of it from time to time, for the purpose of improving it. I for one have had one beef that I find many others share," they wrote. Again garnering authority from a collective—"that many others share"—this letter writer rhetorically displayed commitment to the CPUSA and its goals.

Mary, writing to the *People's World*, the West Coast paper, agreed that cheesecake pictures took attention away from the political subjectivities of women. "The women today who are aware of the necessity for social change are demanding recognition and encouragement of their efforts to take their rightful place in this major undertaking. For these women, 'cheesecake' is a slap in the face, expressing as it does an emphasis on the physical gifts of nature and a total lack of appreciation of the mentality and training necessary to institute any change," she wrote.<sup>98</sup> Here, Mary enacted her identity as a politically active Communist woman by showing the ways that women with appropriate training could help the Party, regardless of what they looked like.

As another letter argued, these pictures sexualized the female body the same way that racialized bodies were often exoticized, calling attention to the whiteness of the idealized female form in Cold War America. "What would we think if 90 percent of the pictures of Negroes in our paper were to show them in 'zoot suits?'" asked A. Kutzik, writing from the Bronx. "The constant exhibition of women in bathing suits, or worse, of show girls and 'actresses' is morally and politically just as inadmissible. It is a most flagrant manifestation of the male-supremacy theories which have poisoned the minds of nearly every man and woman in America, including progressives and Communists."<sup>99</sup> Kutzik, like Flynn, linked appropriate dress with respectability, signified in a denigration of showgirls and actresses. The writer also linked problematic representations of exoticized race with the sexualized female body. California's Communists also seized the opportunity to register their discontent. A.J.M., writing to the *People's World*, also made a comparison to racial and ethnic stereotypes. "The pictures—to say nothing of the coy bourgeois captions—are evidence that there are those on the PW's staff who do not know about, or worse, who are cynical regarding the woman question. Every PW reader and every progressive group would rise in fury if the bourgeois characterization of the Negro 'song and

dance man' or the 'lazy' Mexican were chronic in the paper. Why then is the cheesecake stuff permitted?" this reader queried.<sup>100</sup> Links between gender and race would soon lead Communists to theorize "triple oppression" as a manner of talking about how oppression weighed upon the working class.

Ultimately, though, the cheesecake debate illustrated the broader membership of the Communist Party awakening to the ways in which representations of the female body signified oppression of women in ways that were both economic and cultural. Many recognized that these pictures commodified the female body in line with the mainstream press that they so often critiqued.<sup>101</sup> And as women wrote in to contest these images, they enacted the citizenship practices that Flynn had modeled. These writers largely succeeded in their goal of getting the cheesecake pictures removed from the paper, yet their rhetorical strategies negotiated a concern and hesitation similar to the satirists and Flynn. Indeed, by couching their letters in praise for the paper, creating collectives of concerned Communists, and using hedging language like "we feel," they illustrated the tenuousness of the concern with femininity and gender in the Party in the late-1940s.

### **Conclusion**

The Cold War, as this chapter has shown, was battled on cultural and consumerist fronts. The struggle over what female citizenship would mean in the United States deeply implicated what the citizen would wear and what her body would be doing. Beyond promoting the products that capitalism extolled, selling the American way of life required selling the happiness and leisure of the people that used those products, and during the early Cold War, this leisure almost always belonged to white women. American domestic publications used idealized

representations of the female figure to encourage white women to act in ways that promoted capitalism over communism: consume, beautify, and relax. By contrast, Soviet magazines showed women in settings where their bodies were dwarfed by machines or the factories that enclosed them. The work of women in this nation was public, the magazines suggested.

Appropriating insights from Soviet magazines and armed with satire that showed the significance of gender in Cold War consumer culture, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and her comrades refashioned the female citizen. Flynn, for instance, dissociated beauty to make visible black and working-class women while at the same time hailing those women to be revolutionaries by resisting expensive fashions. Thus, Communist women tentatively and safely opened space for a new conception of the role of female citizens—as housewives and as waged laborers. They broadened the category of “woman” to include lifestyles beyond the idealized, glamorous housewife who never seemed to work. As a result, Communist women provided another option for how women related to the nation—not just as citizen-consumers but also as citizen-workers. Flynn then used the power of femininity to make communism less radical to an American audience and Communist men invested in traditional gender roles. This refashioned feminine political subjectivity proved attractive to Communist women who embraced it in a debate on the pages of the Communist press—arguing for an embrace of this new political subjectivity that focused on women’s activism and not their looks. They retained the significance of gender in discussions of work, a new move in Communist Party discourse.

Communist theorists had yet to consider clothing and fashion as unique components of consumer culture that promoted women’s subordination, nor had they paid much attention to the embodied experience of doing work. Yet, the language and ideas promoted by these women would become a significant piece of Communist advocacy *and* feminist activism in the 1960s

and 1970s. At this time, groups like the Boston Women's Health Book Collective spurred a women's health movement, the central argument of which was that women had to understand their own bodies to gain autonomy in a male-dominated health care system. While Communist feminists said little about the relation between their bodies and health, their willingness to scrutinize the role of the female body in popular culture and Communist discourse ensured that bodies could be seen as political. Likewise, that femininity was a type of labor, of an immaterial and affective nature, were, for example, arguments central to the unionization drives of flight attendants in the 1970s. Communist feminists' theorizing laid the foundation for the emergence of these arguments. To continue spreading their advocacy to the CPUSA, they next had to turn from humor to theory.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Spheres of Influence: Building Theory in *Woman Against Myth*, 1948**

“A woman Communist is a member of the Party just as a man Communist, with equal rights and duties. There can be no difference of opinion on that score.”<sup>1</sup> Stolidly repudiating “special organizations” for Communist women, Vladimir Lenin in a 1919 pamphlet trumpeted the prevailing belief that the ideology of communism was gender neutral. He emphasized that all workers were equal in their subordination to capitalist employers. Indeed, Marxism-Leninism, the foundational theory of communism, understood women’s oppression primarily in economic terms that would be immediately and automatically resolved with a socialist government. Such views were dominant in the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) until 1948 when Betty Millard exposed Communist theory as deeply entangled with gendered ideologies in her groundbreaking pamphlet *Woman Against Myth*. The twenty-three page pamphlet, a re-issue of a series of three articles for *New Masses*, challenged Karl Marx’s and Frederick Engel’s arguments that class exploitation was the sole cause of women’s oppression by pointing out the significant ways in which religion, language, laws, and popular culture worked together to subordinate women. “We can see that it is the delimiting of women to the role of wife and mother that is responsible for the superficial values thrown at us from every page of women’s magazines,” Millard maintained.<sup>2</sup> She argued further that traditional gender ideals portrayed in popular magazines were inextricably linked to dominant representations of the Cold War American home. Millard exposed constructions of this space as shot through with gendered understandings of consumption more than twenty-five years before Marxist Henri Lefebvre undertook a similar critique of capitalist space in *The Production of Space*. Tremendously influential, Millard’s

pamphlet formed the foundation of the Party's analysis of women's oppression for the following decade.<sup>3</sup>

In the face of Cold War repression, which drove many members to leave the Party, CPUSA saw women as an increasingly important group to recruit and retain as members. Popular media representations of the CPUSA and the Soviet Union as masculinized stymied recruitment of women. Likewise, recalcitrant men thwarted Millard's ability to formally theorize a Communist feminism by dismissing it as bourgeois. Thus, her pamphlet had two main purposes. First, Millard encouraged Communist men to consider the unique oppression faced by the Party's women outside of solely class-based terms by demonstrating the importance of gender critique to communism. Second, she invited non-Communist women to join the Party by arguing that only socialism could break down restrictive gender roles.

While the work of Flynn and the Communist satirists began discussions about the political nature of femininity and its use in Cold War culture, *Woman Against Myth* became the feminist manifesto for the Communist Party. The pamphlet's power lay in Millard's ability to make her advocacy acceptable to Communist men and dissatisfied women. Moreover, her rhetorical strategies pushed beyond humor and anecdote to build lasting theories of the gendered oppression of capitalism. By structuring the pamphlet in problem-cause-solution format, Millard anticipated the dismissal of her advocacy on the part of her comrades. In order to give her advocacy legitimacy, she cast it as Communist theory, which she built from a recovered radical feminist history. Subtly revising the tracts of famous Communist theorists also gave Millard the authority to critique the limitations of the Party doctrine. To appeal to dissatisfied women in the U.S. and to demonstrate her commitment to the goals of socialism despite her critiques, Millard wove a transnational narrative that tantalized with its descriptions of freedom and mobility,

modeling a different type of habitation based upon production and not upon consumption for American women. Yet, to temper the radical nature of her critique of progressive men and building upon Flynn's strategy of performing femininity as a critical resource, Millard performed a teacherly femininity grounded in a transnational ethos. However, in spite of Millard's astute analysis of the intersection of gender and economic oppression, she had little to say about how race imbricated the popular and historical discourses she explored and thus ignored unique problems facing black women.

Millard's pamphlet was one of the first Party discourses to negotiate the tensions between feminism and communism in a way palatable to the CPUSA. Likewise, the pamphlet's theoretical bent and impersonal tone lent it staying power. Archivist and historian Kate Weigand notes that "Millard was not the first person to question the CP's standard assumptions about the extent of women's subordination under capitalism . . . but she was the first to succeed in inducing the Communist Party to take her blended analysis of Marxism and feminism seriously."<sup>4</sup> The pamphlet was influential outside of the CPUSA with a broader audience of leftists as well. Historian Daniel Horowitz suggests that *Woman Against Myth* provided the clearest articulation of the women's issues being debated among progressive and labor feminists in the 1940s. Betty Friedan was a labor journalist active in such circles, and Horowitz concludes that these debates and Millard's pamphlet in particular provided the key concepts, language, and tools of analysis that would shape what Friedan wrote in her controversial 1963 bestseller the *Feminine Mystique*.<sup>5</sup> Although several historians have mentioned the pamphlet or summarized its arguments, as the precursor to the *Feminine Mystique* and a new piece of Communist theory, *Woman Against Myth* is worthy of sustained scholarly inquiry, which it has not received. These scholars identify the pamphlet as an important spark for subsequent debates about women and

race, but many of them, interested in probing the role of black women in the Party, merely use Millard's pamphlet as a means of illustrating the subtle racism within the CPUSA.<sup>6</sup> While there were important limitations to Millard's advocacy, and we will return to these in this chapter's conclusion, the pamphlet introduced significant rhetorical maneuvers that need to be understood on their own terms and as a mode of theory building.

To understand how Millard accomplished these extensions of Communist theory, the first section of this chapter will situate the pamphlet in its historical context by summarizing the specific ideologies of gender circulating during the Cold War. Here, I will demonstrate that prevailing attitudes about women's place in the home rendered difficult the articulation of a feminist advocacy, which was further compounded by communism's lack of recognition of performances of femininity. In the second section, I begin my analysis of the pamphlet, arguing that Millard structured her pamphlet in a strategic manner to lead reluctant comrades through her advocacy. Next, I show how she revised traditional Communist theory and reclaimed a radical working class history for women to lay the foundation for the feminism she sought. From there, I explore Millard's transnational narrative, suggesting that she moved through transnational space to break down the walls of domestic confinement and the consumerism it entailed. In the final section, I argue that Millard gendered her transnational persona feminine by combining it with a teacherly ethos to temper its radicalism. I ultimately demonstrate that, despite her failure to address the question of race, Millard's pamphlet played a significant role in opening up space for feminism in the radical left by building theory. These strategies and the pamphlet were important precursors to the socialist feminism that would emerge in the 1970s.

### **Femininity, Subjectivity, and Cold War American Politics**

Millard's pamphlet was not only negotiating Communist reluctance to recognize feminism, it also had to confront a general climate of antifeminism in the United States. This climate is illustrated in what historian Elaine Tyler May has called "domestic containment," a phenomenon that describes the centrality of the home for promoting harmony and keeping out subversion.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, few symbols were deployed to such transnational effect during the early Cold War as the single-family home. Americans eagerly embraced the home in both its material and symbolic forms. As GIs returned from war, the United States confronted a housing shortage, unable to meet the demand of the millions of new families. The material need for housing helped imbue the home with symbolic meanings of desirability and middle-class achievement. In response to the postwar family boom and desire for single-family housing, builders like William Levitt introduced "pre fab" houses that could be easily purchased with GI pensions or loans. And Americans fervently bought. Five thousand prospective buyers were placed on a waiting list for 350 available homes on Long Island, and 300 "home-hungry veterans" camped on the doorstep of a model home the night before it was scheduled to go on sale, according to a 1949 *New York Times* report.<sup>8</sup> For Communist women, the home was yet another reminder that Americans valued consumption, individual advancement, and domesticity instead of cooperation and work.

The homeward turn was supported by discourse that conditioned appropriate gender roles and disciplined detractors. Although this discourse was idealized and artificial, the ideology it upheld was nonetheless significant.<sup>9</sup> May continues, "because of the political, ideological, and institutional developments that converged at the time, young adults were indeed homeward bound, but they were also bound to the home."<sup>10</sup> The single-family home represented a return to stability after the upheaval of the war, and was deployed as a further bulwark against the

uncertainty of cold war. The Cold War home also signaled a return to domesticity for the millions of Rosies who had left to rivet in response to calls to fulfill their patriotic duties. The focus on the home reinforced gendered ideals that suggested that men were breadwinners active in public and women guardians of the domestic sphere. Not surprisingly, such discourses served to contain women in the home just as male political leaders attempted to contain the spread of communism from the Soviet Union.

As we have seen, wives had very specific duties in Cold War America: to stay home, raise children, and consume. Talking heads continually debated the “right” degree of consumption, which demonstrated the superiority of the United States over communist Russia but avoided the weakness and decay caused by comfort and convenience.<sup>11</sup> Consumerism was a significant avenue for the empowerment of housewives as household spending skyrocketed. National income increased 60 percent between 1947 and 1961, and the size of the middle class with discretionary income doubled.<sup>12</sup> In the four years after the end of the war, Americans purchased 21.4 million new cars, 20 million refrigerators, 5.5 million stoves, and 11.6 million televisions.<sup>13</sup> In the fifteen years after World War II, Americans achieved the highest standard of living in the history of the world.<sup>14</sup> In addition to being feminized, post-war consumerism was linked directly to the expanding middle class, a class with which Millard and her comrades did not identify.

Advertisements in *the Ladies' Home Journal* and myriad other women's magazines placed women in the drivers' seat of consumption for household goods—from refrigerators to cleaning supplies. Beyond constituting women as consumers, magazines also constituted a vision of the family home that showed women what to strive for as the guardian of the domestic realm. Advertisements always showed family homes occupied by white, nuclear families. Homes were

also single-family standalone houses, not apartment buildings, as a *Good Housekeeping* advertisement for Bon Ami cleaning powder made apparent. In this advertisement [figure one] the advertisers literally constructed the home as the domain of the smartly-dressed, middle-class wife by picturing her husband outside. His placement outside the home, which featured picture windows opening to the lush green yard, also made clear that it was a single-family home.



Figure One

The charming, feminine housewives that popular discourse elevated would have little interest in setting up their homes in the Soviet Union. Americans fervently believed that Soviets did not have comfortable homes or attractive women taking care of these homes. Harry

Schwartz, one of the *New York Times*' Soviet specialists, reported in April 1948 that, "In Moscow it is almost impossible to buy such common household necessities as chairs, window screens, nails, knives, and drinking glasses. Electric vacuum cleaners and refrigerators aren't even being made!"<sup>15</sup> A cartoon in the same magazine showed two Russian men staring at a bucket, shovel, and hoe placed on a pedestal. One man asked the other, "Why do you have such commonplace objects in your Regional Museum?" The other replied, "Well, you see, in our section of the country they have become rarities."<sup>16</sup> To most, consumption of household goods was a uniquely American act that demonstrated the superiority of the capitalist United States over communist Russia.<sup>17</sup> To reject the capitalist home was to reject a central component of American identity, meaning Millard had to tread carefully as she attempted to open up space for Communist feminism in the United States.

The home was also specifically marshaled to oppose communism in political discourse. "Owning a home contributes in powerful measure to the stability of the United States," New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey asserted during his 1952 "Home Week." "The person who owns his home will rarely be found on the side of crackpot or subversive movements. He is permanently opposed to the creeping influence of socialism which already envelopes [*sic*] so many of our activities and interests."<sup>18</sup> With these remarks, Dewey echoed quintessential builder and developer William Levitt's quip that "No man who has a house and lot can be a Communist. He has too much to do."<sup>19</sup> Of course, Dewey valorized men as the breadwinners and protectors of the home. On the transnational level, American leaders saw the comfortable, single-family home as "the germ of state socialism's potential undoing." This was because they assumed that if those "crackpots" behind the Iron Curtain had comfortable homes to return to after a day in the fields or factories, they would choose to do so instead of attending socialist rallies and

meetings.<sup>20</sup> One front-page exposé of the “life of the Soviet common man” published in a series in the *New York Times* in 1954 detailed the horrors of the living conditions in Russia:

Ivan drinks too much. He has a job in the wood-working shop of a small factory situated in the Moscow suburbs and lives not far from his place of work in a kind of rural slum. It is a barracks-like one-story wooden building with a tarpaper roof, heated by several Russian heat-radiating tile stoves. Eight families live in this building, some having one room, some two.

The article went on to note that, as a carpenter, Ivan was luckier than most as he was able to borrow (or steal) wood from his employer to turn the porch of the barracks into another room for his family.<sup>21</sup> Painting a picture of bleakness and misery, articles like this detailed the stark differences between capitalist and communist living—differences underscored in the gap between public and private spaces. In communism, living spaces were in short supply, undermining any notion of privacy. No wonder, Americans thought, Russians did not want to return to cramped, dark, impersonal flats after work in cramped, dark, impersonal factories.

And no wonder that the common Soviet man of the American imaginary turned to alcohol to drown his sorrows. Yet to give in to the bottle as Ivan had seemed a failure of masculinity. The circulating discourses of appropriate, domestic American femininity that Millard had to negotiate were constructed in opposition to Cold War masculinities. While Ivan may have succumbed, Cold War fears suggested that most Soviet men were rugged, tough, and technically minded. As historian K.A. Cuordileone writes, “in the name of combating an implacable, expansionist Communist enemy, a new premium [was put] on hard masculine toughness and rendered anything less than that soft, timid, feminine, and as such a real or potential threat to the security of the nation.”<sup>22</sup> Oriana Atkinson, the wife of a *New York Times* correspondent stationed in Moscow, for instance, remarked in her 1947 memoirs *Over at Uncle Joe's*, “Moscow is a man’s city and the Soviet Union is a man’s world.”<sup>23</sup> Cold War discourse

commonly described American manhood as besieged by the consumerist society that emerged post-World War II. Popular magazines such as *Harpers* decried the takeover of “feminine influence” in American society, and books such as the 1942 classic *Generation of Vipers* chastised women for emasculating their husbands.<sup>24</sup> As a result, American men were told in magazines like *Esquire* to cultivate tough masculinity to take back their role as head of household while securing U.S. domination over communism.<sup>25</sup> Masculinized women, represented as women who worked and Communist women, were also constructed as threats to domestic harmony. Of course, CPUSA members did not view the Soviet Union as negatively as the broader American culture did. Nonetheless, Millard had to attempt to overcome these associations because of the importance of recruiting women to the CPUSA in 1948.<sup>26</sup> Thus, it is likely that, even though CPUSA members may not have believed the dominant representations of masculinized women in the Soviet Union that circulated in U.S. media, Millard was responding to these discourses to assuage the concerns of women the Party was attempting to engage.

It was not just broader American culture that argued women belonged in the Cold War, consumerist home. Communist men frequently held such attitudes as well. For example, when the Communist newspaper the *Worker* called for opinions on the problems with balancing women’s political organization and housework in 1948, Harold B. wrote in. “I would be the first to admit that women’s position is unenviable,” he affirmed. “But they are not going to solve their problems by hog-tying their husbands. As the bread-winner the man not only has to work during the day, he has to work after hours to protect his job. He’s fighting not only for himself, but to feed, clothe, and shelter his wife and family as well. If this means that his wife is confined to the home, it’s tough, but she has to recognize that this is not something he is responsible for.”<sup>27</sup> Like many Communist men, Harold B. blamed capitalism for women’s confinement and elevated the

class struggle above sex-based oppression. He also classified women's activism as constraining male autonomy. G.P. concurred. He wrote, "My wife called me a chauvinist because I wanted her to go away for the summer with the kids! Is that or is that not feminism?"<sup>28</sup> G.P. relied on a common tactic of Communist men in the papers—using the term "feminism" as a glib aside to discount the Party's women. These letters illustrate the primary obstacle Millard faced: the representation of feminism as the false consciousness of bourgeois women, which fomented opposition of many progressive men.

Even Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, who had already been writing about the ways in which femininity and fashion could be oppressive, often fell back on jokes about feminism in her columns. In 1948, for instance, she used such a joke even to demonstrate the need to recruit more women to the Communist Party. "It is [important] to put the best foot of the party forward. I'm beginning to think it's in a nylon stocking in lots of places. (Am I being a feminist?)"<sup>29</sup> she flippantly queried. Despite their opposing views of how to emancipate women, both the CPUSA and the National Woman's Party, a bourgeois organization, were working in a general climate of antifeminism because of the post-war glorification of the domestic ideal.<sup>30</sup>

Millard was not completely without rhetorical resources to make her case for Communist feminist theory, though. Views of communism and the Soviet Union as bastions of masculinity were based more in myth than reality, and, in fact, the Communist Party had been concerned about the specific plight of working women for many years. Theorists like Vladimir Lenin and Frederick Engels had studied how the evolution of private property created the nuclear family as the basic unit of society and pushed labor into a public realm, subordinating the private work women did in the home.<sup>31</sup> However, Engels's solution did not include increasing the importance of so-called women's work, but getting women out of the home and into the factory, making

them masculinized laborers as well. Marxist theory also reified the factory and industrial worker as the loci of struggle, which ignored female subjectivity and women either not working or not working in the industrial sector.<sup>32</sup> As Eva Fodor suggests, women could never be considered as reliable and devoted to the Communist cause as men because of reproductive duties, so their participation in the world of work was always segregated and inferior.<sup>33</sup> However much Communist theory struggled to find a place for women to work, it struggled even more when dealing with men or women who performed a feminine gender identity.<sup>34</sup>

Just as Millard could not turn to the male CPUSA leaders, she also could not turn to the few groups still speaking out for women's equality in the late 1940s and early 1950s to support her case. "Feminism" was a term claimed by the upper class National Woman's Party, an organization the CPUSA thought to be drastically misinformed about the origins and causes of women's oppression. Indeed, the leaders of the NWP were highly educated, upper class, white women. The NWP was limited in its ability to recruit working-class women because of their focus on passing the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Communist women opposed the ERA because they thought it would undercut important labor protections for female workers.<sup>35</sup>

Women in the CPUSA took matters into their own hands by creating the Congress of American Women (CAW) in 1946, an organizational response to the discontent women began articulating postwar. The organization was short lived and small, but it made significant contributions to theorizing and discussing the role of women in capitalist society. The CAW was not solely a Communist organization; it attracted a constituency that included some middle-class women, but the CPUSA publicly endorsed the group and devoted space to its activities in their publications. The Congress largely celebrated women's roles as wives and mothers, but because it sought to raise the status of women economically, politically, and socially, it did challenge

assumptions that wife and mother were the only roles for women.<sup>36</sup> At the group's founding, members supported a wide range of issues relating to gender and peace, but by late 1948, the group focused primarily on opposing the Truman Doctrine and the arrest of CPUSA leaders. As a result, the Truman administration added the CAW to its list of subversive organizations in 1948, and the group disbanded in 1950.<sup>37</sup> However, even its modest gains were significant to those involved. Gerda Lerner remembers that the CAW's concern with women's history made it unique among other women's groups of the time.<sup>38</sup>

Because of the large-scale dismissal of feminism as bourgeois and the activity of the CAW, CPUSA leaders likely thought they were doing enough to placate the women in their Party at the beginning of 1948. However, in the wake of Millard's early 1948 publication and with the labor movement growing increasingly hostile to communism, Party leaders more than ever needed the support of women. Leaders like Elizabeth Gurley Flynn used the 1948 election as a means to mobilize women and to demonstrate the Party's congruence with women's interests. 1948 was "a year in which women should use their votes effectively," Flynn declared. "It is a year of destiny for all the American people," she wrote, "when we women must effectively use the vote...to protect ourselves and the world from American imperialism, to guarantee peace and security for children everywhere."<sup>39</sup> "Women: It's Your Turn Now!" declared a pamphlet the CPUSA Election Committee released, urging them to vote for peace and reject the two party system.<sup>40</sup> The preponderance of materials like this emphasized the key role women were seen to play and the ways in which Communists used the election as an opportune moment to issue these calls to action. These calls were partially spurred by the isolation of the Party in the labor movement.

While leaders may not have agreed that supporting a fight against women's oppression was a high priority for the CPUSA, as soon as the phrase "male chauvinism" appeared in the party presses, Communist women championed it.<sup>41</sup> One reader wrote on the letters page, "We women would like to see some study of male chauvinism in the United States. And we would like a weekly or bi-weekly column in the Sunday *Worker* which would discuss the concrete examples of male chauvinism and the Marxist solutions to them. And don't put it on the 'Woman's Page,'" she requested. "Print it where men will read it too."<sup>42</sup> Letters to the editor began to appear for the in the newspapers more frequently asking for help with issues of sexism. Of course, Communist women could never fully stamp out male supremacy, but through the CAW and their publications, they did make important contributions to sustaining activism for women's equality in a time period largely assumed to have no feminist activity.

In light of these constraints, it is difficult to overstate the importance of Betty Millard's pamphlet, *Woman Against Myth*, published in 1948, for Communist Party discourse. The pamphlet collected and reissued three articles Millard had written for *New Masses*, the leftist literary journal, beginning in late 1947.<sup>43</sup> Millard was a world traveler born to a wealthy family who found her home in radical circles at Barnard College in the 1930s. Known for her generosity and sharp sense of humor, Millard was fond of poking fun at her privileged upbringing by telling stories of her mother being chauffeured around in Chicago, lowering the window to offer unsolicited advice to the masses on the street. Millard joined the CPUSA in the 1940s. She spent several years in Paris after World War II working for the Women's International Democratic Federation, a global communist organization. Upon her return, she became an editor and journalist at the *New Masses*, a Communist literary journal, where she embraced her love of photography and writing. According to one story, Millard was moved to write her articles after

conversations with Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Grace Hutchins who wondered why Millard's name was not on the masthead for the *New Masses* despite the intense work she was doing to help editor Joe North with the publication. When North approached Millard, she apparently told him that she did not mind that she had been receiving no credit for her work. She then allegedly thought about the issue further and put pen to paper detailing the many subtle ways American women suffered oppression.<sup>44</sup> Even after her break with the Communist Party in the late-1950s, Millard remained a social activist, leading a long, radical life, described by one friend as “in sync with the twists, turns, and turmoil, of the American Left.” Another friend pronounced her a “global citizen,” an apt description, as it echoes rhetorical strategies she employed in *Woman Against Myth*.<sup>45</sup> In the next section, I analyze Millard's pamphlet illustrating how she structured the pamphlet in order to overcome the obstacles arrayed against her.

### **“Is There a Woman Question?”: Minimizing Objections through Structure**

Millard strategically structured her pamphlet to respond to the obstacles she faced in trying to demonstrate the compatibility of feminism with the Communist Party. The logical structure, which on the macro level was in problem, cause, solution format, led her readers through her argument while minimizing their chances to disagree. Likewise, her reliance on questions preempted objections to her advocacy. This structure was designed to respond to two key obstacles emanating from the CPUSA and mainstream American culture—a general apathy toward feminism alongside its bourgeois associations.

The first part of Millard's pamphlet after the introduction began with the section heading “Is There a Woman Question?” “The only question one can come to is that most of us feel the fight is more or less won. But is it?” Millard asked.<sup>46</sup> “Should we perhaps turn our attention to

other more pressing matters?” she queried, voicing a question undoubtedly on the minds of her opponents—that the class struggle took precedence over agitation for women’s equality.

Demonstrating goodwill toward her opponents, she then made concessions to their argument that, in fact, things had gotten better for women over the past hundred years. Yet, after Millard detailed the legal changes and shifts in custom that had led to improvements in women’s situations, she insisted that there was a great deal of work still to be done. Work that she put on the same level as legal shifts. “For women,” she wrote, “there is generally reserved a quieter, more veiled kind of lynching. Many of the thirty-eight million American housewives are doomed to circumscribed, petty lives, to the stultification of whatever abilities and interests, outside of motherhood, they may have had.”<sup>47</sup> She then connected this dramatic example of lynching to working-class issues. “Especially is this true of women of the working class and farmers’ wives, who cannot afford maids and household conveniences,” she claimed. These claims functioned as an attempt to convince her audience that there was a problem, while explaining that the problem was most severe for working-class women, a target demographic for the Party. Relying on the descriptor of lynching to explain the discrimination women faced heightened the severity of the problem, as the lynching facing black Americans was a common component of CPUSA discourse of the late 1940s.

Yet, lest Millard’s audience of Communists dismiss dominant political culture as the main problem facing women, Millard reminded them that the CPUSA had been largely apathetic toward the unique struggles of women as well. “Even in progressive circles,” she explained, “there is a tendency on the part of too many to give only lip-service to ‘the need to bring women forward into full citizenship.’”<sup>48</sup> Millard credited the CPUSA with being marginally more aware of “the woman question” than mainstream political culture, but noted that there was still far to

go. “It would require a volume to describe all the economic, legal, and political barriers against women,” she explained.

Having explained that a problem faced women in the United States, attempting to demonstrate the severity of the problem, and describing how the CPUSA had failed to make substantive reforms, Millard transitioned to the second part of her pamphlet, a group of sections that outlined the causes of “the woman question.” The next five sections of the pamphlet detailed these causes. The number of pages that Millard dedicated to explicating the causes indicates that this was a significant component of her rhetorical act. Indeed, the first cause that she identified was the English language. “Woman’s inferiority is embedded in the very language she uses,” she wrote.<sup>49</sup> She then analyzed the definitions of “woman” and “man” in the dictionary, arguing that they constructed women as an “appendage” of man. She next moved through religion and popular culture as “day-to-day attacks” that were designed to “keep woman in her place.”<sup>50</sup>

It was not until page fourteen of her pamphlet that Millard addressed the ways in which economic structure in particular oppressed women. This is significant, as a key purpose of Millard’s pamphlet was to convince her readers that the oppression of women went beyond women’s place in the working class and included other messages targeted at women specifically, regardless of their class status. That is, this structure underscored her point that women’s oppression could not be reduced to their membership in the working class. Of course, as a member of the CPUSA, Millard undoubtedly did believe that capitalism was a key component of women’s oppression. Indeed, as we will see, the narrative she told about the historical roots of women’s subjugation was appropriated from important Communist texts. Yet, by mentioning this last in her discussion of the causes of women’s oppression, she emphasized the varied reasons and the larger omissions of these causes in CPUSA discourse.

The last eight pages of Millard's pamphlet explained the solutions to the woman question. It was here that she most clearly demonstrated her dedication to the Communist Party by holding up Soviet socialism as one of the most prominent illustrations of what women's emancipation could look like. "For a society that eagerly welcomes women's entrance into new fields and lays the economic and legal foundations for her full participation, we must turn to socialism and the Soviet Union," she wrote as a means of transition.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, she even referenced a play in the Soviet Union, which demonstrated "the Hollywood thesis in reverse," continuing to emphasize that culture was significant alongside the traditional class focus.<sup>52</sup> This solution section of her pamphlet created appeals designed to resonate with Communists—it echoed their reverence for the Soviet Union and demonstrated her investment in the goals of the CPUSA. This grounding of the solutions to women's oppression in socialism also functioned to sever the link between feminism and bourgeois organizations like the NWP.

Yet, Millard identified socialism as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for women's emancipation. "Every inch of the gains women have made has had to be fought for," she explained.<sup>53</sup> As evidence for this claim, she described how women workers in the nineteenth-century United States organized for wage increases. These women struggled, she argued, not merely "against their employers but against the overwhelming prejudice against 'un-feminine' women who asserted their rights."<sup>54</sup> Thus, Millard challenged the common Communist argument that socialism would automatically bring about the emancipation of women by noting that fighting for women's rights was necessary. This argument was a key contribution of Millard's pamphlet, and a central intervention in CPUSA theorizing.

Overall, then, Millard's pamphlet used a macro structure of problem, cause, and solution. This structure was a strategic choice, designed to minimize the objections of CPUSA leaders,

who were generally dismissive of feminism as a form of bourgeois false consciousness. It aimed to convince them that there was in fact a great deal of women's oppression that was not merely caused by capitalism—indeed, it required struggle above and beyond the class struggle, she argued. Likewise, she demonstrated her commitment to the CPUSA by holding up socialism as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for women's emancipation. In addition, her catalogue of the varied causes of women's oppression was designed to bring awareness to a dominant culture with a general apathy toward feminism. This was significant in light of the CPUSA's need to recruit more women to their cause because of increasing labor movement hostility. Next, I more closely examine Millard's rhetorical strategy of appropriation to understand the way in which she attempted to build Communist theory.

### **Forging Radical Ties: Appropriation and America's Forgotten Women**

One of the main ways that Millard's pamphlet countered the CPUSA's dismissal of feminism as bourgeois was by reclaiming feminist history as radical history. In the introduction to the pamphlet, Millard wove a historical narrative about women learning of their oppression in the mid-nineteenth century. "In 1853 the editor of *Harpers' New Monthly Magazine* warned of the 'intimate connection [of the woman's rights movement] with all the radical and infidel movements of the day. A strange affinity seems to bind them all together.'" Millard linked this observation to the 1940s as she placed woman's rights in a radical activist history. She continued, "This commentator put his finger on a remarkable heritage of common struggle. A century ago women's fight against oppression was closely linked with that of labor and, especially, the Negro people. The leaders of the women's movement took part in the struggle against Negro slavery; the Abolitionists gave their support to the women."<sup>55</sup> By linking the labor

movement and the abolition movement to the woman suffrage movement, Millard wove a simplified historical narrative that reclaimed the radical tradition of women's activism in an attempt to overshadow its middle-class public memory.

Millard placed Elizabeth Cady Stanton at the head of the century of struggle, claiming her as an erased collaborator to the woman's rights cause. This rhetorical maneuver denied the ability of the NWP to place Stanton as the figurehead for their movement. "The greatest leaders of this struggle in the nineteenth century were Susan B. Anthony and her life-long collaborator Elizabeth Cady Stanton," Millard maintained. "Susan Anthony is at least a remembered name today, although there are few who have any idea of her momentous contributions. But Elizabeth Cady Stanton is truly America's forgotten woman."<sup>56</sup> Millard highlighted Stanton's varied critique of women's subjugation and her late interest in socialism:

From the day in 1848 when, discouraged in such a revolutionary step by all her friends but Frederick Douglass, she demanded the vote for women at the first Woman's Rights Convention, she brought forward one issue after another—divorce, equal pay, education, sensible clothing—and brilliantly showed their relation to woman's struggle for equality. She was an ardent Abolitionist. The abuse heaped on her by outraged men and women alike merely made her more militant as the years passed. In her old age she became, though of middle-class background, increasingly pro-labor and attracted to socialist thought, alienating the conservative younger women for whom suffrage had become 'respectable'. . . It is an indication of the shameful neglect of the heritage of the woman's rights movement that such a woman can be virtually forgotten today.<sup>57</sup>

By using these strategies, Millard claimed Stanton as a militant figure to be admired by working-class women. Moreover, she mapped Stanton's varied projects and arguments for women's equality onto her own multidimensional critique of women's oppression that encompassed questions of class, language, religion, and popular culture. Likewise, given her assertions that Stanton was a militant activist for gender and economic justice, Millard subtly accused the CPUSA of "shameful neglect" of the woman's rights struggle.

Millard took on the NWP more directly by explicitly rejecting the group's claims to the legacies of Stanton and Anthony. One way in which she accomplished this was by labeling the NWP as reactionary, and thus, not worthy of such radical women. "It is true," Millard wrote, "that many of the leaders of this struggle were of the middle class, and that their memory is claimed today by reactionary women's organizations whose anti-labor outlook leads them to oppose the real interests of the great majority of women."<sup>58</sup> The implication was clear. Even if Stanton and Anthony were middle-class in economic status, they were working-class in consciousness. By aligning working-class consciousness with labor and militancy, she claimed Stanton and Anthony for her own Communist feminism. Indeed, Millard was careful as she reclaimed the history of the woman's rights movement to demonstrate her primary allegiance to the CPUSA by discrediting mainstream feminist organizations like the NWP by relying on common CPUSA language, including the term "reactionary."

Millard also displaced the year 1776 as the beginning of American liberty and replaced it with the year 1848. In this way, she laid the foundation for the cultivation of her transnational ethos by linking the beginning of the American woman's suffrage movement to the 1848 labor uprisings throughout Europe.<sup>59</sup> The one hundredth anniversary of 1848 also provided an opportune moment for her pamphlet, one that framed it with remembrance and celebration while downplaying her critique of the CPUSA. She placed the Seneca Falls Convention in a global context of labor struggle in order to reframe woman's suffrage as a movement consistent with Communist advocacy. "This year," Millard explained, "as we mark the hundredth anniversary of the publication of the *Communist Manifesto*, we mark also a hundred years of the organized fight for equality of American women that began with the Seneca Falls Convention. Those two events are linked by more than a common date."<sup>60</sup> Implying that the events were connected by radical

improvements in class-consciousness, Millard fit Seneca Falls into the larger narrative of worker revolution with its celebrated origins in 1848. By doing so, she placed activism for women's equality into a radical labor history already claimed by the Communist Party in their analyses of the historic roots of working-class oppression.

Millard returned to this narrative in the very last words of her pamphlet. She concluded her pamphlet by appropriating a phrase from the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments presented and discussed at the Seneca Falls Convention. Because the Declaration of Sentiments was an appropriation of the Declaration of Independence, it implicitly claimed 1776 as the beginning of the American woman's rights movement. Millard once again replaced that date with 1848.<sup>61</sup> She inscribed a Communist view of history over the prevailing liberal view and advanced a link between communist ideology and feminism. Millard concluded, adding her unique take on the early feminists' words, "More and more we come to see that it is only the socialism foreshadowed by Marx and Engels . . . that can make it possible for women to achieve real equality. That can give substance to the ringing declaration adopted at that woman's convention holding it to be self-evident 'that all men and women are created equal.'"<sup>62</sup> These words from the Declaration of Sentiments underscored the importance of her calls for equality by aligning her advocacy with the ideals of the United States as expressed in a historically significant document. Millard capitalized on Marxist theory's concern with the historical development of society, while reminding her readers that women had to fight for the rights that they did possess.

Millard's appropriation of 1840s activism for woman's rights demonstrated the importance of women's emancipation for an audience of working-class women and men. However, her audience may have still been skeptical of her appropriation of events and figures claimed by the bourgeoisie. To make her advocacy legible to the CPUSA, she had to build

credibility to ensure that her radical critique of progressive men and the capitalist home was not dismissed. To achieve this, Millard effectively rewrote Engels's *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* with attention to broader gendered discourses, using direct citation and quotation of Engels's book throughout her pamphlet. Indeed, Millard for the most part repeated Engels's analysis of the historical development of classes and parroted his conclusions that private property led to the subjugation of women and their exclusion from the paid labor force. But, she revised his analysis in two ways. First, she suggested that women's emancipation had to be fought for and would not come automatically. Second, she extended his argument from the industrial realm to the domestic, suggesting new ways in which Cold War capitalism could oppress women through the reification of domestic consumption and motherhood.<sup>63</sup> Before making her own theory of women's oppression, Millard had to demonstrate her knowledge of traditional Communist theory in order to gain credibility and the distance to critique. She submitted herself to the norms of Communist class analysis without allowing her advocacy to be solely reduced to the arguments presented by Marx or Engels.<sup>64</sup>

Millard framed her revision of Engels by opposing it to biological explanations for women's inferiority. Instead, she claimed, Engels "had a different slant on it" because he argued that oppression was historic and specific.<sup>65</sup> Her narrative, taken from his book, explains that the domestication of cattle and invention of private property largely led to the undoing of a primitive division of labor.<sup>66</sup> This analysis echoed Party dogma and would likely have been very familiar to Millard's readers. She continued to explain that women became slaves to household drudgery while men labored in public. The industrial revolution, however, created a demand for cheap labor, which brought women into the factories and laid the groundwork for potential emancipation. She quoted Engels directly:

For as Engels says, ‘*The emancipation of woman first becomes possible when she is able, on an extensive social scale, to participate in the production and housework claims her attention only to an insignificant extent.* And this for the first time has been made possible by modern large-scale industry, which not only admits woman’s labor over a wide range, but absolutely demands it, and also strives to transform private household work more and more into a public industry.’ [My italics—B.M.]<sup>67</sup>

In Engels’s book, communism would automatically bring about the advent of women’s emancipation, but Millard was not sure this was the case. Her use of italics called attention to the first part of the quotation, which advocated the participation of women in production and deflected attention away from the second part, which suggested the inevitability of women’s emancipation. In this way, Millard claimed the power to frame and reinterpret Engels’s theory, which paved the way for the creation of her own theory of gendered and capitalist constructions of the home. The use of quotations from Engels in the first place, though, placed Millard’s argument for women’s emancipation within a culturally legible context for her Communist audience. As we have seen, Millard insisted that, “emancipation by no means took place automatically.” Referring to the ways in which women workers historically had to negotiate expectations about femininity alongside convincing their male comrades of the legitimacy of their grievances.<sup>68</sup> This radical revision of Engels’s analysis was framed with examples of working class women to further demonstrate the consistency of feminist advocacy and femininity with communism. However, and potentially problematically, Millard continued to reify industrial labor and the strike as the appropriate means for class struggle. Nonetheless, her assertion that these could be feminine activities was new.

Millard’s revision of Communist theory was somewhat subtle and tucked into her pamphlet alongside traditional Communist class analysis, but the critique her revision raised was quite radical. In addition to her suggestions that religion, popular culture, and language worked

to further the oppression of women alongside the economic structure, she argued that even good Communist men oppressed women. “Even many otherwise progressive men,” she wrote, “cling to their vested interest in male superiority, and many women are so committed to the seeming security of their inferior yet ‘protected’ position that they echo the voteless, propertyless, completely dependent women of a century ago who declared to Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony that they already had ‘all the rights they wanted.’”<sup>69</sup> Only an authoritative Communist could have the power to make such a sweeping critique, and Millard’s appropriation of Engels opened space for her to assume such authority.

Millard’s pamphlet complexly and creatively critiqued and appropriated Communist theory and figures from the early stages of the U.S. woman’s suffrage movement. By linking radical labor history to the woman suffrage movement, she provided new fodder upon which to build Communist theory. She also made a statement on the need to incorporate the experiences of women when building theory. By performing traditional Communist class analysis in her pamphlet, Millard gained the authority of the theories she quoted but also opened space to critique. By claiming figures like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony for her advocacy, she attempted to overcome the association of feminism with bourgeois women. Her appropriation of Engels’s analysis of class formation as an overarching narrative for women’s oppression made her advocacy of working-class feminism culturally legible to a party that had previously dismissed the demands of feminists. And indeed, Millard’s presentation of her arguments in an impersonal tone and historical frame matched the seeming objectivity with which Communist leaders built their theory, a stylistic declaration of her credibility and dedication.

In the next section of this essay, I consider how Millard broadened her feminist perspective beyond the borders of the United States to enact her argument against domestic containment. I also introduce the concept of transnationalism to describe Millard's overarching rhetorical persona. The effect of this rhetorical strategy, I contend, was to continue building Communist theory—this time about public and private spaces under capitalism.

### **Spheres of Influence: Domestic Containment and Transnationalism**

Given the power of the domestic containment ideology in national political culture alongside Millard's needs to appeal to the CPUSA and women not yet in the Party, Millard wove a spatial critique of capitalist space in the United States. This was a significant theoretical move that predated significant Marxist work done in the 1970s on the power of capitalism to mold space. In 1975, Marxist Henri Lefebvre famously called for a critique of space, suggesting that social space is never neutral, but is ideological, implicated in power arrangements, and conditioned by society's modes of production. "Capitalism and neocapitalism," he argued, "have produced abstract space, which includes the 'world of commodities,' its 'logic,' and its worldwide strategies, as well as the power of money and that of the political state."<sup>70</sup> Specifically, Lefebvre saw the space of capitalism as founded on networks of banks, malls, business centers, and airports. These spaces then gave rise to discourses that valorized relationships built on exchange.<sup>71</sup> Places and spaces were structured by power relationships to Millard. More than twenty-five years prior to Lefebvre's critique, Millard appraised the way capitalism also constructed the American home, which was supported by prominent discourses advocating female-driven consumption. She then questioned the stability of the gendered constructs that provided the foundation for the capitalist, Cold War home. These strategies

demonstrated her investment in socialism as a necessary component of women's emancipation and articulated another new Communist theory that would have significance for her audience.

Millard opened her spatial critique by illustrating the taboos against women working outside of the home and concluding that popular representations of the space of the factory gendered women workers masculine.<sup>72</sup> Spaces were not neutral, but in fact, gendered she argued. Indeed, gender norms were levied under capitalism to support women's roles as consumers and not as producers. She also explained how understandings of the home as a private enclave for women were even more problematic for working-class women, who were forced to work a double shift without being able to afford household conveniences. So strict was the separation of public and private spaces and so closely were these spaces linked with gender that Millard demonstrated that women were forced into a "quiet lynching" for their inflexibility.<sup>73</sup> Using language that clearly evoked constricted space and suffocation through the dramatic image of lynching, Millard critiqued the powerlessness of housewives to grow in roles other than mothers, even as she ignored questions of race. By contrast, she described her end goal of socialism in the language of openness and opportunity for women, free from the containment of the house. "The day will come," she claimed, "when it will no longer be necessary for any woman to refer to herself as merely a 'housewife.' And when that day comes there will open out before women such a future of accomplishment and satisfaction as we can only dream of today."<sup>74</sup>

Millard refused to be contained in the home and burst the walls of domestic confinement by rhetorically moving through international space. This movement was a significant component of Millard's vision of female emancipation, for as social geographer Yi-Fu Tuan writes, "Spaciousness is closely associated with the sense of being free. Freedom implies space; it means having the power and enough room in which to act."<sup>75</sup> Seeking freedom, Millard used her

descriptions of the Soviet Union as a way to enact the power to move through international space, far away from the restrictions of the American home. In the first two parts of the pamphlet, she located herself primarily in the United States. There, as we have seen, Millard described problems facing American housewives and narrated a history of American women's activism for equality that focused upon Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. In the section dealing with solutions to women's confinement, Millard wove a transnational narrative based in the Soviet Union to see what women's emancipation could look like, all the while critiquing the way capitalism constructed the U.S. home.

As she moved through the space of the Soviet Union, Millard crafted a transnational narrative through her detailed descriptions of the nurseries, the factories with intercom systems that allowed working mothers to talk to their children in daycare, and the schools where women were increasingly being educated.<sup>76</sup> She also depicted relationships in the Soviet home. Millard grounded her account in illustrations of these specific places, and she rhetorically traveled from one to another, enjoying the freedom allegedly granted to women in the Soviet Union. She began her narrative in the Soviet home, stating, "No Soviet woman is forced to work if she would rather stay home and live on her husband's wages (and many still do); but it is a basic principle of Soviet thought that woman must assume responsibility outside of the home if she is to realize all her potentialities as citizen, wife, mother and creative individual."<sup>77</sup> Women in the Soviet Union were citizens because they moved around outside of the home. Staying in the domestic space was an option, but it was not the only option. Millard's declarative, matter-of-fact tone, and her familiarity with "basic principles of Soviet thought" suggested that she had a transnational awareness that could break through containment. In addition to demonstrating a commitment to the Soviet Union, a hallmark of Communist discourse and a display of her

allegiance to the Party, these descriptions could also appeal to American women feeling constrained or limited in their ability to balance waged work and domestic tasks.

After she described the Soviet home, Millard located herself in the factory, where she claimed Soviet women enjoyed equality. “The Soviet Union,” she wrote, “has established a network of aids to women, and especially mothers, that is without parallel in other countries. Most notable are the factory and neighborhood nurseries that, staffed by trained specialists, care for the children while their mothers work.”<sup>78</sup> Again, with her characteristic attention to detail, Millard continued to illustrate how two-way public address systems and joint holiday celebrations allowed working mothers to see their children, and she even described the children as “happy” and “healthy,” suggesting that she had actually been inside the factories and seen the children herself.<sup>79</sup> She then explained how easily accessed such facilities were, unlike the conveniences in the United States, which were too expensive for the working class. These descriptions positioned Millard within the factories as she constructed her transnational narrative, while potentially enticing working-class American women.

Next, Millard moved to the schools. “Every factory and farm has become an education center; trade unions offer courses on a variety of subjects right on the spot, and have built up a vast network of factory libraries and study clubs. As a result, women who were 80 per cent illiterate in 1917 already by 1939 formed half the student body in higher institutions of learning.”<sup>80</sup> Mirroring the schedule of movement in a workday, Millard then returned to the Soviet home to describe how the changes in work and education promoted a more fulfilling family life. She suggested that Soviet marriages were based on equality and mutual love instead of dependence or economic need. She also noted that prostitution had been eradicated because women were “more intelligent mothers and more interesting companions as wives.”<sup>81</sup> The strict

disciplining of women that occurred when capitalism separated public and private spaces had been eradicated. With these rhetorical movements and her rich descriptions, Millard performed her argument that women were more emancipated in the Soviet Union and rejected the contained domestic space of the American home. In addition, by highlighting Soviet women's ability to mother and work at the same time, she undermined the stability of the separate spheres doctrine and instead suggested that the factory and the home, the public and private, could and should be blended.<sup>82</sup> She described a new mode of inhabiting space while contributing greatly to Communist theorizing about how capitalism itself structured space.

The equality and cooperation achieved in the Soviet household laid bare the instability of the American home. Countering domestic containment discourses proclaiming that the American home was the beacon of stability in a rapidly changing and dangerous world, Millard claimed that, in fact, the competitive stress of the capitalist system strained relationships in the home. "In America today," she stated, "one out of three marriages ends in divorce, a startling fact which has been the subject of innumerable magazine articles and sermons. But no moral preachments can disguise the fact that it is socialist Russia that is establishing new highs in family stability while capitalist America is witnessing an increasing breakdown in family relationships." Millard continued, "The conclusion is unavoidable that the one is a reflection of the co-operative relationships that permeate the whole of socialist society, while the other mirrors the insecurity and corrosive stresses of our competitive system."<sup>83</sup> Millard strategically *displaced* the American, capitalist home as the central locus of stability by linking it with capitalist competition and *replaced* it with the Soviet, socialist home, which she argued was infused with equality and cooperation. Taking advantage of the American obsession with stability, she suggested that, contrary to fears, only when equality was achieved for women would the home

be truly impermeable. It is important to underscore, however, that Millard stopped short of altogether rejecting domesticity and childrearing as paths for women, advocacy that may have been too radical for 1940s America. Instead, she suggested that happy, stable homes could only be achieved in a socialist system that allowed a blending of public and private spaces.

Millard replaced the capitalist American home with a different vision of habitation that focused not upon consuming, dominantly represented as the duty of the middle-class housewife, but on producing. She foregrounded Soviet women as satisfied producers, instead of merely consumers:

We can see, for instance, that it is the delimiting of women to the role of wife and mother that is responsible for the superficial values thrown at us from every page of women's magazines. After a hundred years of the modern struggle for women's equality Soviet women are urged in their magazines to educate themselves and grow, to fulfill their production quotas and thus add to the happiness and well-being of the nation; while judging from the number of square feet given over to the subject in every issue of the *Ladies Home Journal*, the highest ideal of American womanhood is smooth, velvety, kissable hands.<sup>84</sup>

In this passage, Millard critiqued the feminine gender ideal presented to American women in the popular media as trivial and silly. At the same time, she addressed the equation of consumption with appropriate femininity and of the common representation of Soviet women as masculinized workhorses for the state. She drew the line at *degree* of consumption, suggesting that Soviet women still consumed beauty products, but to a lesser extent and in conjunction with their roles as full citizens. In this way, she sought to offset the prevailing narrative that there were no consumer products or attractive women in the Soviet Union, which would have rendered Soviet women a poor model for emulation by American women who contemplated joining the CPUSA. "It goes without saying," Millard countered, "that all normal women, including Soviet women want to be as attractive as possible and also to achieve a happy marriage; but the tremendous over-emphasis on superficial attractiveness in our society results in such a reversal of values that

a woman's interests and abilities and achievements become the least important things about her."<sup>85</sup> Despite the rhetorical expedience of statements such as these, they mark another shortcoming of Millard's pamphlet—the lack of language to talk about sexuality, a shortcoming of Marxist theory at the time writ large.

Millard performed an educated worldliness in her transnational narrative. Because of her free traversing of international space, Millard cultivated a transnational ethos seen in her attention to the relationship between global forces and the home and her rootedness in both the Soviet Union and United States.<sup>86</sup> As a result, transnationalism implies a way of inhabiting space markedly different from the woman confined in the home, and Millard embraced linkages between the Soviet Union and the United States based in freedom of movement. To stress the importance of uninhibited movement, she wrote, "It is only to the degree that woman has been excluded from the productive process and from the larger activities and problems outside the home that she finds difficulties in expressing herself as a human, thinking person."<sup>87</sup> Women grew in sophistication and intelligence by being active outside of the home, Millard claimed, underscoring the importance of emancipation.

In its transnational orientation, Millard's strategy was both necessary and risky. By grounding feminism outside the borders of the United States, she attempted to avoid cooptation by the National Woman's Party while building a persona of sophisticated intelligence. By destabilizing the American home, she critiqued capitalism in line with her Communist ideology. Despite her trenchant critique of capitalist space, gender, and power, Millard's strategy invites consideration of the ways in which she may have reinscribed an elitist or middle-class ethos through her transnational performance. In the next section, I consider how Millard tempered the elitism of her identity by performing transnational femininity.

### **“Girls Who Wear Glasses”: Transnational Femininity and the Marxist Subject**

The final step in Millard’s theory-building pamphlet was to illustrate that her spatial and gendered critique was, although eminently critical of the gendered spaces capitalism wrought, not too critical of communism’s male leaders or their failure to theorize gender. Her arguments had to be amenable to male Communist leaders, female Communists, and female non-Communists who were the target of the massive 1948 recruiting drive. Because dominant U.S. media dismissed Russian women and American feminists as unnaturally masculine for desiring equality, Millard sought to counter that portrayal by performing femininity, but she disassociated femininity from consumerism and grounded it in transnationalism. She adopted a teacherly ethos, which enabled her to model an authoritative femininity not at odds with communism or broader American culture. The confluence of this gendered persona was the oppositional space needed for the creation of a Communist feminist subjectivity.

Millard performed transnational femininity by first portraying herself as the sophisticated traveler who had seen the world outside United States borders, as we have already seen. She valorized the Soviet Union as the utopian community toward which the United States ought to strive. She established the freedom of women in the Soviet Union as well as her own urbanity by quoting statistics about the educational attainment and occupations of Soviet women. Describing women’s role in Soviet government, she wrote, “By 1946 women constituted 21 per cent of the deputies in the Supreme Soviet; in the lower Soviets the proportion is much larger. In other fields they have forged ahead even more rapidly: today, for instance, over half of the Soviet Union’s doctors are women.”<sup>88</sup> Millard clearly admired the Soviet Union and thought its willingness to assist working women beneficial. However, she was cognizant of the need to dispel the

stereotype of the masculine nature of Soviet women held by her American audience. She attempted to accomplish this in several ways. Primarily, Millard argued that families were more stable in the Soviet Union than in the United States. She described how the divorce rate was declining, prostitution had been eliminated, and women were more intelligent mothers and more interesting companionate wives. This emphasis also functioned to downplay the threat of feminist advocacy to progressive men. Millard contrasted this picture of marital bliss in the Soviet Union, where “[divorces] are used less and less frequently,” with the troubled United States, with its increasing divorce rate and breakdown of family relationships.<sup>89</sup> This argument allowed Millard to capitalize on Cold War concern with the stable family as the signifier of America’s exceptionalism as well as to argue that even emancipated women could be good mothers and appropriately feminine. As a true transnational, she held home and abroad in dynamic tension.

In addition to her own feminine persona, Millard gendered Soviet women feminine to counteract popular portrayals of Russian women as masculinized workhorses for the state. Millard’s pamphlet illustrated the struggle to find a feminine gender in a Communist project. Unwilling to completely disregard the femininity of American women and unable to because of her need to appeal to women who may have identified with these popular portrayals, Millard tempered her position and tried to reclaim femininity both in performance and argument. The passage quoted in the previous section asserting that all “normal women, including Soviet women” strove for beauty and happiness by buying consumer products is an example of this struggle.<sup>90</sup> Here, Millard tried to sever the link between femininity and the mindless and extreme consumption of products that gave American women “smooth, velvety, kissable hands.”<sup>91</sup> She also utilized the American views that extreme consumption rendered society weak and

conformist by drawing the line at degree. Women could still act femininely by consuming some beauty products while simultaneously performing duties of citizenship. Russian women were exemplars of a desirable model of emancipated femininity. As a transnational, Millard blended the home country with the preferred model of emancipated femininity she saw abroad. She did not disavow the United States altogether, though. She tried to fuse the femininity of American women with the productivity and equality achieved by Soviet women.

Millard's transnational narrative based in the Soviet Union, described in the previous section of this essay, also fit into her larger performance of emancipated femininity. The locations in which she placed herself included homes, schools and nurseries. For example, while describing the ability of women to work and mother, Millard portrayed the specific location of "neighborhood nurseries" and then noted, "The nursery charge is nominal, in some cases nothing. Women get a maternity leave of three months with pay. . . . In addition they benefit from the free medical care that is the right of all Soviet citizens."<sup>92</sup> Thus, Millard focused her account on locations inhabited by women. She narrated views of factories and farms as well, but only in the company of Soviet women who had allegedly achieved equality in these arenas. Her transnational perspective did not include any political leaders or spaces of government activity. Millard's primary focus was on the Soviet home, where she read magazines and saw plays, describing one such play where the heroine gave up her medical studies to get married but was soon divorced when her husband found a more interesting woman with an interesting job. "The happy ending came only when the heroine went back to her career," Millard wrote.<sup>93</sup> Thus, although Millard rhetorically placed herself in the Soviet Union in her pamphlet, the sites she occupied were traditionally female spaces. Moreover, her descriptions of the factories were situated within the context of childcare and motherhood. Millard complicated the strict

separation between public and private by suggesting that the domestic sphere and the workplace could be one.

Millard herself demonstrated the potential compatibility between femininity and communism by granting herself feminine authority through a teacherly ethos. This performance not only made the educated superiority she enacted legible, it also empowered a performance of femininity grounded in work rather than consumption. Teaching had long been a career path open to women, and educating the sons of the nation to take over as leaders of the next generation had been seen as one of the most important duties of American mothers. The Communist left in particular, also valued education in the form of the Jefferson School of Social Science, an adult workers' education venue. Women had also exerted influence on the left as writers, publishers, and editors of children's books with subtle, radical teachings.<sup>94</sup> Millard performed her teacherly, feminine ethos by using simple, declarative statements, asking questions to gently guide her reader, and using history and Communist theory as lessons for the future she sought to craft. The pamphlet often reads as an informative history lesson about women in the Soviet Union and the radical nature of historical activism for woman's rights, in line with Millard's goal of reclaiming radical feminist history. As we have seen, Millard introduced her reader to the importance of the year 1848 by pointing to historical struggles for labor and the first woman's rights convention in Seneca Falls.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, Millard claimed that the woman's suffrage movement was revolutionary and "full of meaning for us today." However, she stated, "we have all but forgotten this struggle and the people who led it."<sup>96</sup> By noting this lapse in historical memory, Millard set herself up to serve as a teacher and inform her audience about these struggles. Moreover, her reliance on statistics, religious doctrine, the dictionary, and

myriad magazines and newspapers for evidence lent to the pamphlet a sophisticated, educated air, one that would be crafted by an experienced teacher.

Millard's pamphlet, of course, was not geared to an audience of school-aged children seeking information about communism. The teacherly ethos she adopted likely made her poignant critiques of men in the progressive movement seem culturally appropriate and feminine without being too harsh and overtly feminist. Millard's matter-of-fact tone made her critiques of Communist men and women seem like simple corrections to misguided children.<sup>97</sup> For example, she stated, "A man who does half of the household chores after he and wife have come home from work will not feel that he is doing his wife a favor; for equality cannot be given as a favor but only recognized as a fact."<sup>98</sup> Thus, Millard's cultivation of a teacherly ethos allowed her to access femininity without reducing it to consumerism and granted her power over progressive leaders by claiming the historical and theoretical knowledge to correct them like the naughty boys they were. Millard was clear and direct without oversimplifying, and she focused her attention on informing her audience about the idealized community in Russia. As a result, she performed what I have called transnational femininity. Coupled with the teacherly ethos, Millard attempted to create femininity in communism that could pave the way for women's emancipation.

Implicated in Millard's gender performance were representations of the masculinity of Soviet women, American feminists, and female consumers. She tempered the radical nature of her critique of the progressive movement's failures to address women's concerns with her feminine, teacherly persona that empowered her as a feminine agent without requiring her to be a consumer in the post-war economy. Moreover, the transnational identity she performed granted her the authority to speak about the Soviet Union as an imagined community to be emulated. She

described scenes of domestic bliss in Russia like a traveler writing in a journal, as someone who knew and had been there. Millard performed and modeled a feminine gender identity not completely at odds with communism, an important step in preventing an all-out dismissal of her ideas and in granting her the authority to build a theory around the experiences of women.

### **Conclusion**

Delving into the gendered and spatial contexts of communism, consumerism, and feminism in post-war America illuminates otherwise ignored dynamics of the struggle to sustain women's activism during a time when the domestic ideal was glorified. It reveals that pamphlets and books debated much more than just who was supposed to do the housework and raise the children. Rather, such discourses imbricated concerns about containing communism, consumption of household goods, class, domesticity, and femininity. In her 1948 pamphlet, Millard pushed beyond the latent discontent expressed by Flynn and the satirists to begin building a theory about women under capitalism. Her theoretical pamphlet was a significant critique of the idea that women were oppressed solely due to their membership in the working class. On a more concrete level, Millard wove a historical narrative about the importance of class consciousness to the woman suffrage movement. Her significant theoretical contributions included a theory of the way that capitalism strictly separated public and private spaces that were particularly oppressive to women. She enacted her awareness of gender performance by performing a transnational femininity throughout the pamphlet.

Millard's pamphlet succeeded in raising awareness of the issues of male chauvinism in a progressive political movement, and it helped to bring such issues into mainstream discussions within the CPUSA. The Communist newspaper, the *Worker*, published a five-issue debate

featuring letters written by members of CPUSA in summer 1948 about housework and male chauvinism in the party, illustrating the increasing attention paid to these topics.<sup>99</sup> This debate also demonstrated, however, that many male CPUSA members continued to dismiss women's demands for attention to male supremacy.<sup>100</sup> A review of Millard's pamphlet published in the *Worker* stated it was, at times, too feminist.<sup>101</sup> Thus, perhaps Millard did not wholly succeed in creating a space for Communist feminism. Some members of the CPUSA continued to see the demands of women as impractical when compared to the class struggle.

In another sense, however, perhaps Millard succeeded too well in mainstreaming her feminist theory.<sup>102</sup> In November 1948, the Party issued "On Improving the Party's Work Among Women," an article published in the theoretical journal, *Political Affairs*. The article was likely written by members of a subcommittee working on theorizing women under capitalism, but it was published under the byline of chairman William Z. Foster to give it legitimacy. The article defined the theoretical position that CPUSA members were supposed to hold where women in the class struggle were concerned. Importantly, the article parroted Millard's concern with the "narrowness" in which Communists had dealt with women under capitalism prior. "We tend in analyses to reduce women's status in society simply to a question of economics and politics," it conceded.<sup>103</sup> Foster's article also called for new articles and a book about women under capitalism. With Foster's article, the issue of women's oppression gained national prominence in the Party, while forcing skeptical comrades to take it seriously. Yet, this article also allowed the Party to say they had done enough to overcome male chauvinism, while taking little concrete action. Indeed, the book that Foster called for in this article was never published.

Despite the overall positive reception of Millard's pamphlet, she left out some important aspects of the battle for women's equality. Sexuality in Millard's writing was characterized, in

scholar Julia Allen's words, by "unfortunate ellipses."<sup>104</sup> Yet, these ellipses garnered no attention from Millard's contemporaries. Some other oversights did compel a response. In spite of Millard's insightful critique of language, religion, popular culture and their contributions to female oppression, she said little about the unique disempowerment facing black women. Indeed, she completely neglected questions of how black women's oppression differed qualitatively and quantitatively from white women's oppression and how representations of African American women uniquely hindered their struggles for justice.<sup>105</sup> Likewise, Millard's focus on the disciplinary nature of domestic containment presumed a white subjectivity, as black women were working outside the home in far greater numbers than white women during the early Cold War. Jones took up Millard's and Foster's calls to contribute more theory and understanding of women under communism.

Millard moved beyond the humorous, personal hedging strategies that Flynn, Howard, and Tinsley used to alert the CPUSA to the importance of gender in Cold War culture and the new landscape for the class struggle. These rhetorical strategies softened the critique of male chauvinism while calling for awareness. Millard shifted the conversation about gender to the dominant Party language—Communist theory. While still demonstrating a commitment to the CPUSA through her reverence for the Soviet Union, Millard began theorizing the multiplicity of ways in which class, popular culture, religion, and spaces oppressed women. Yet, she designed her theoretical pamphlet to answer and minimize the ability of her audience to dismiss her ideas as bourgeois through its structure, historical narrative, and appropriation of Engels. In the next chapter, we will see how Claudia Jones refined Millard's theory to include race as an axis of oppression.

### **Chapter Three**

## **Militancy and Loyalty: The Rhetorical Challenge of Black Feminism in the Postwar Communist Party U.S.A.**

“An outstanding feature of the present stage of the Negro liberation movement is the growth in the militant participation of Negro women in all aspects of the struggle for peace, civil rights, and economic security,” asserted Claudia Jones in “An End to the Neglect of the Negro Woman!” Published in the Communist Party USA’s leading journal *Political Affairs* in 1949, the article intoned: “The capitalists know, far better than many progressives seem to know, that once Negro women undertake action, the militancy of the whole Negro people, and thus of the anti-imperialist coalition, is greatly enhanced.”<sup>1</sup> Asserting that the power of the “Negro woman” scared white elites, Jones urged the American Communist Party (CPUSA) to enlist that fear to strengthen the movement for socialism. Appealing to the Party’s self-interest by stressing that the Negro woman could be marshaled as a powerful force in the worldwide struggle against capitalism, she demanded that the CPUSA overcome their neglect of black women. Indeed, Jones charged that the CPUSA, the largest leftist political movement during the early Cold War, displayed “the worst kind of Social-Democratic, bourgeois-liberal thinking” in its interactions with black women.<sup>2</sup> The special problems of black women, she argued, required the CPUSA to re-theorize oppression along the intersections of gender, race, and class, instead of class alone which reigned supreme in Communist ideology and rhetoric.

Even as popular African American magazines such as *Ebony* waved “Goodbye Mammy, Hello Mom,” heralding WWII as a time when black men got jobs in war industry and black women could return home to mother, glib declarations did not make it so.<sup>3</sup> To the dismay of Jones and many other black women, domestic service largely remained the lot for them after the Second World War. Because black men were still paid far less than white men during and after

the war, black women continued to work outside of the home in far greater numbers than white women.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, even though the CPUSA was slowly coming into its own feminist consciousness, that feminism was profoundly white.<sup>5</sup> Betty Millard's 1948 pamphlet *Woman Against Myth* had awakened the CPUSA to the possibilities of feminism's compatibility with the class struggle, as we have seen, but her pamphlet wove a profoundly racialized narrative that erased black women almost entirely. Despite its limitations, Millard's pamphlet was largely celebrated throughout the CPUSA and for the next ten years formed the basis of the Party's theorizing about women under capitalism.<sup>6</sup> One reviewer lauded Millard for giving "the correct Marxian approach" to the issues she discussed, while another suggested that most of her colleagues thought that Millard had "done a terrific job."<sup>7</sup> None of the reviews suggested complicating the analysis. Yet Claudia Jones thought there was a great deal still to say about women's oppression under capitalism.

Jones's essay had both immediate and long-term ramifications in the CPUSA and its radical circles. Foremost among the enduring contributions of Jones's 1949 essay is the concept of "triple oppression." Jones articulated a clear argument for the importance of black women in the struggle against capitalism and provided an analytical framework and language to talk about the way in which race, gender, and class intersected to oppress. Jones did not use the word "intersectionality," and instead relied upon "triple oppression" or "super exploitation" to describe the unique forces that combined to oppress black women. Yet, her essay demonstrates that intersectional analysis of oppression existed long before Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term "intersectionality" in the 1980s. Historian Erik S. McDuffie argues that "An End to the Neglect of the Negro Woman!" is one of the two most influential works of Cold War black left feminism.<sup>8</sup> In the immediate wake of her 1949 publication, the Party put Jones's intersectional

ideas to work as it organized African Americans. After the publication of her essay, “triple oppression” became a common term in the Communist Party press, and the Party attempted to more clearly respond to oppression as an intersectional phenomenon.<sup>9</sup>

In recent years, scholarship on black women on the postwar left has flourished. Literary scholar Mary Helen Washington describes these 1940s women as the founders of “black left feminism,” a diverse approach to women’s liberation that united transnational black radicalism with Marxist theory.<sup>10</sup> Historians and literary scholars like Kate Weigand, Erik S. McDuffie, Dayo F. Gore, Carol Boyce Davies, Connie Johnson, and Kathlene McDonald have turned to Claudia Jones to recover activism previously overlooked in institutional histories of civil rights and the CPUSA.<sup>11</sup> These scholars catalogue Jones’s arguments while elucidating the importance of her theoretical interventions for leftist activists of the 1950s and decades beyond. Likewise, activists like Angela Davis have lauded Jones’s essay for its recovery of black women’s leadership in the labor movement.<sup>12</sup> Yet, scholars of rhetoric have overlooked the essay, despite the significant lessons it offers for rhetorical critics such as providing an example of black women using militant rhetoric. The essay is also an example of discourse that argues for change within a dogmatic political organization, providing insights into how to make social movements more inclusive.

Jones relied upon a rhetorical strategy of militancy, a strategy that invites consideration of militant rhetoric’s relationship to gender in political movements. While many rhetoricians have asserted that militant rhetoric aims at justifying violence, I take militancy to refer to rhetorical strategies that offer aggressive and confrontational support for a cause.<sup>13</sup> Recognizing that women always have to confront expectations about gender and political activism, rhetoricians have explored how women have used militancy to accomplish diverse goals

including arguing for the vote and labor organizing. Yet this scholarship relies upon the study of white women, women who had different access to the rhetorical resources of militancy.<sup>14</sup> The scholarship on black militant rhetoric has focused on men affiliated with the Black Power movement in the 1960s,<sup>15</sup> rhetoric that, as Steve Estes argues, often silenced black women.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, where militant rhetoric was concerned, Robin D. G. Kelley writes, “Communists and black nationalists found common ground—a ground which rendered women invisible or ancillary.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, Jones first had to reclaim militancy as a strategy for black women, necessary given her rhetorical context and purposes. Then, she used black female militancy in the service of strengthening the Communist Party’s theory and organizing practice.

Jones used militant intersectional critique to encourage the CPUSA to theorize the uniqueness of black women’s oppression alongside recruiting and developing them as Party leaders. In seeking to persuade the leadership of the CPUSA to expand their understanding of oppression, Jones waded into perilous rhetorical territory. She had to build her own authority while claiming a vision beyond the purview of those white male leaders. In order to do this, I argue that Jones crafted a persona as a sociologist that demonstrated her ability to perform militant Communist class critique while using the rhetorical conventions of CPUSA leaders’ discourse. To extend her critique to include the intersections of gender and race, Jones represented black women as a uniform and militant collective. Yet, as she did this, she rendered them largely silent, a maneuver that also silenced Jones’s own belonging to that marginalized group. Just because she mostly silenced their voices did not mean that Jones did not see black women as powerful. Instead, their silence allowed Jones to illuminate silences and shortcomings in prominent narratives of CPUSA labor organizing, radical feminism, and Cold War society. Thus, Jones developed a construction of black women as a militant group as a powerful threat

with the potential to expose the Party's limited commitments to CPUSA principles and the holes in Cold War propaganda. Taken together, these strategies allowed Jones to critique her Party in the service of building its strength. Even today, Jones's strategies can help rhetorical scholars understand how to make political movements more inclusive.

In order to better understand the rhetorical significance of Jones's 1949 essay, it is necessary to explore the contexts of Cold War and CPUSA discourse. To that end, I begin by situating Jones's article in its context, a background that helps us appreciate the risks and creativity of her response. I next turn to analysis of Jones's article seeking to understand how she advanced Communist analysis to incorporate both race and gender in its critique of capitalism. First, I explain how Jones addressed the challenge of convincing a white, ideologically rigid audience to change their thoughts and actions by speaking their language, using their rhetorical conventions, and maintaining an objective persona. Second, I show how she pushed beyond class by representing black women as a unified group, a rhetorical move that demonstrated black women's militancy while preserving her own objectivity. Finally, I explore how Jones used this representation of black women to issue threats to expose the limitations of CPUSA organizing and theory, a militant call that showed the power of black women in the battle for socialism. I conclude by explaining how Jones's strategies can help rhetorical scholars think about militant rhetoric and the development of social movements.

### **Gender and Race in Early Cold War Rhetoric**

Jones conceptualized her pamphlet in an America that imagined itself as white even while racial tensions compromised U.S. credibility abroad. In the Cold War era, the U.S. government suddenly had a vested interest in making civil rights progress. This was because

U.S. policymakers began to recognize that perceptions of U.S. race relations were seriously discrediting their promotion of democracy in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and other proxy locations for Cold War influence. Yet, due to racial tensions, especially in the South, U.S. leaders and propagandists found themselves constantly on the defensive in their international broadcasts. While they carefully selected which information would be broadcast abroad, propagandists counseled against lying. “A lynching should be reported without comment, but the following week there should be a general report of U.S. progress in race relations,” one information agency report advised in 1954.<sup>18</sup> Race relations were seen to be the United States’ major point of vulnerability in fighting the Cold War. Indeed, the Soviet Union actively cultivated the view of the United States as a place marred by racial unrest. The periodical *Vokrug Sveta (Around the World)* reported in 1947 that, “Lynching in the South is a picnic, a diversion. People attend lynchings with sandwiches and whiskey.”<sup>19</sup> Likewise, those African Americans who had been to the Soviet Union trumpeted its progress in race relations. “There is one country in the world that has no Jim Crow of any sort, no unemployment of any sort, no prostitution or demeaning of the human personality through poverty, [and] no lack of educational facilities for all of its young people. That country is the Soviet Union,” affirmed social activist and writer Langston Hughes in 1946.<sup>20</sup> Singer Paul Robeson concurred, writing, “When I was there [in the Soviet Union], I walked the streets with manly dignity for the first time in my life.”<sup>21</sup>

In response to international pressure, the U.S. government promoted gradualism and moderation as the keys to civil rights success on a national level in the 1950s. The need to rehabilitate the image of America as a democracy worthy of emulation both expanded and contracted civil rights discourse. The federal government wove narratives of American race relations that framed them in a way that promoted U.S. moral superiority and the triumph of

good over evil. “The lesson of this story was always that American democracy was a form of government that made the achievement of social justice possible, and that democratic change, however slow and gradual, was superior to dictatorial imposition,” historian Mary Dudziak concludes.<sup>22</sup> Narratives have to be controlled, however, and one way to control the Cold War civil rights story was to limit who could speak. Communists and other leftists were silenced on a national level and ostracized from unions where they had previously wielded power.

Anticommunism was the highest priority, leaving a very narrow space within which civil rights leaders could argue for change. Accordingly, broad-based social reforms and discussions of the intersections of class and race were off the table.

Because the task of proving that there was racial harmony in the United States was fraught with contradictions, U.S. propagandists often fell back on their favored strategy of beaming abroad images of American citizens happily enjoying the spoils of capitalism. Yet, the image of the happy consuming, capitalist housewife depicted in U.S. women’s magazines, television shows, and movies was almost always represented as a white woman providing for her white family. While propaganda for international audiences always stressed the political progress occurring in race relations in the United States, for domestic audiences, the Cold War did little to disrupt the long-standing stereotypical representations of black women as either hypersexual Jezebels or domineering matriarchs.<sup>23</sup> Both of these representations were blamed for the instability seen to plague black families in the United States.

In advertisements and media that circulated in the United States, the black woman was largely represented as a domestic mammy. As folklorist Patricia A. Turner suggests, images of the black mammy were a comfortable way to imagine agreeable relationships between black women and white families. They advanced notions that black women were asexual, plump

beings who “were happy with their lot, honored to spend their days and nights caring for white benefactors.”<sup>24</sup> Even radicals on the left sometimes had difficulty moving beyond such representations. Black Communist men often framed their participation in the class struggle as an issue of reclaiming masculinity, overlooking black women’s roles as workers.<sup>25</sup> The Party often dismissed the activist work of black women or even suggested that black women were backward and needed radicalizing.<sup>26</sup> Black women on the left, then, had to be careful when speaking or acting militantly given the propensity to be dismissed as domineering matriarchs.

The CPUSA was dissatisfied with the government’s gradual and moderate approach to civil rights. The large membership of black workers inspired Communist leaders to push the government to move more quickly and more substantially toward equality. African American women and men of both the working and intellectual classes had long seen the CPUSA as a place to turn for support in their struggles against employers and Jim Crow. Pressure from Moscow placed a clear imperative on the CPUSA to put work among African Americans at the center of Party organizing in the 1920s. As a result, the Party’s officials elected more African Americans to leadership roles and formed more committees focused on the black working class.<sup>27</sup> Yet, parroting arguments from Moscow did not recruit many blacks to the Party. Instead, work on the ground in poor communities during the Great Depression convinced many of the CPUSA’s commitment to civil rights and equality.<sup>28</sup> CPUSA members fought unfair evictions and protested discrimination against black employees.<sup>29</sup>

It was the Party’s vigorous campaign to free the Scottsboro Nine, young black men falsely accused of raping two white women in 1931, that was most responsible for the emergence of CPUSA as a force in African American politics in Harlem and beyond.<sup>30</sup> In these protests and their vocal opposition to Jim Crow, Communists helped to plant the seeds of the civil rights

movement by illustrating the pervasive racism in American institutions.<sup>31</sup> The Scottsboro case received international attention, broadcasting widely the undemocratic practices in the South, which troubled mainstream politicians.<sup>32</sup> Because of the prominence of the case, the CPUSA emerged as the defender of working-class African Americans and protector of democracy. Thus, by the mid-1930s, historian Mark Solomon asserts, “the Communists had become a very visible part of black political life.”<sup>33</sup>

Despite the ideological commitments, the CPUSA’s efforts to pursue racial equality were at times limited in scope and depth. Black members and CPUSA leaders reported dissatisfaction in the way the “virus of white chauvinism” was being attacked. Black women in particular were accustomed to having their complaints about racism in the Party—particularly how black men frequently dated white women—dismissed. Some comrades worried that focusing on these social reforms drew the CPUSA away from fighting to achieve socialism. As one African American Communist observed, the outrage over interracial relationships was “confusing the class struggle with the ass struggle.”<sup>34</sup>

In the 1940s, the Communist Party devoted much of its attention to union organizing. The CPUSA assigned its most effective organizers to build unions in maritime, automobile, steel, and electrical industries, and many of these organizers rose to lead their unions. By the 1940s, Communists and their allies were in charge of twenty percent of the membership of all industrial unions affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Communist-led unions were among the most dynamic and the most committed to racial equality of postwar unions. Communist organizers led fights for the rights of black workers within the CIO and American Federation of Labor. This wave of activism, which historian Robert Rodgers Korstad calls “civil rights unionism,” was premised on organizing black workers and calling for social democracy

and economic redistribution, a militant rhetorical environment that lasted through the decade. It peaked in the 1940s before being decimated by anticommunism.<sup>35</sup> Increased black urbanization provided a larger base to organize, and CPUSA organizers jumped eagerly at these opportunities.<sup>36</sup> In the pre- and postwar periods, people joined the CPUSA to support work on labor regulations, rent control, women's equality, and minority rights.<sup>37</sup>

This was the Party that attracted the young Claudia Jones, an immigrant to the United States from Trinidad at the age of eight. Her parents had left Port of Spain seeking better economic circumstances. As Jones remembered, her parents "hoped to find their fortunes in America where 'gold was to be found on the streets,' and they dreamed of rearing their children in a free America."<sup>38</sup> Their dreams were soon shattered. Her mother died in a garment shop during the Great Depression when Claudia was 12. Despite her impoverished upbringing, Jones was bright and quick. She earned a citizenship award and served as class president in junior high. She graduated from high school, and although she was certainly academically talented enough to attend college, the cost was far greater than she or her family could pay. Instead, Jones sought work in Harlem's laundries. No stranger to the hardships facing working-class black immigrant families in New York City, Jones joined the Young Communist League when she was eighteen years old and rose to its leadership ranks.

Yet, despite its embrace of Jones, the CPUSA had a fraught relationship with black women, who did not often fit the typical profile of the industrial workers that Communists organized. African American women were forced to work outside of the home in far greater numbers than white women. In 1950, half of all black women were working as private domestics or in other types of service which were notoriously difficult to organize.<sup>39</sup> Jones was no exception, as she toiled for incredibly low wages in Harlem. Yet, she had always been a talented

writer, and alongside her factory work, she wrote a column for a local paper. In 1937, she began writing for the *Daily Worker*. Jones quickly earned leadership positions as secretary of the Women's Commission and in the Congress of American Women.<sup>40</sup> She was well known throughout the Party as the highest-ranking African American woman and as a frequent contributor to CPUSA's newspapers and journals.

In her 1949 essay "An End to the Neglect of the Negro Woman!," Jones sought to jolt the Party forward in its analysis of the oppression of black women. Rather than decrying the downtrodden position of black women, Jones situated them in an empowered position, emphasizing their economic strength. Given the Party's emphasis on uniting the proletariat and its reliance on class to explain oppression, this rhetorical strategy was neither preordained nor obvious, as it necessitated dividing CPUSA membership. Likewise, it was a strategy that entailed a stern chastising for the CPUSA—a further risk for Jones. Yet, Jones responded to this challenge creatively and compelled the CPUSA to take her intersectional critique seriously.

### **Claiming the Center: Jones as Sociologist**

In "An End to the Neglect of the Negro Woman!," Jones had to carefully negotiate the politics of inclusion and exclusion in the CPUSA. She waded into dangerous waters by taking the Party to task for neglecting black women. Likewise, her arguments about black women's "special problems" broke with Marxist theory that emphasized uniting the proletariat to fight class-based oppression. These obstacles were compounded by the fact that her interventions at the level of theory and practice had to be directed at the Party's highest leadership. Although Jones was a leader in her own right, in an ideologically rigid political movement, criticisms of the highest leadership could be daring undertakings. Moreover, black women, even when they

achieved leadership positions, were often “outsiders within,” never equal participants with the white, male leadership.<sup>41</sup> To convince the Party of the importance of recruiting black women, Jones took to the pages of *Political Affairs*, the CPUSA’s theoretical journal, to make her case. A “magazine devoted to the theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism,” *Political Affairs* was the flagship journal for American Communists to engage in theorizing about the state of working-class consciousness in the United States. Articles in this journal were long and dense, and volumes consisted of over 100 pages of double-column text without illustrations. By choosing this venue for her article, Jones targeted a narrowly-circumscribed audience of the most devoted Communist activists. Appropriating the conventions of *Political Affairs* discourse allowed Jones to assert belonging with the white, male leadership, and it demonstrated her ability to mount a seemingly objective critique of the Party’s actions.

In her article, Jones sought to accomplish two related goals. First, she attempted to persuade members of the American Communist Party that they were ignoring the unique oppression that black women faced in the Cold War United States. To achieve this purpose, Jones had to convince skeptical white Marxists that black women really did face unique forms of oppression that could not be explained solely by their membership in the working class. “To understand this militancy [the militancy of black women] correctly, to deepen and extend the role of Negro women in the struggle for peace and for all interests of the working class and the Negro people, means primarily to overcome the gross neglect of the special problems of Negro women,” Jones explained. She then directed her concern toward members of the Communist Party. “This neglect has too long permeated the ranks of the labor movement generally, of Left-progressives, and also of the Communist Party.”<sup>42</sup> Accusations of “neglect” framed her entire article, as evidenced by the essay’s title.

Jones attempted to persuade her audience of white leaders of the existence of neglect by providing a detailed list of the ways in which progressive Party members were maintaining the oppression of black women, perhaps without knowing they were doing so. This strategy directed her concerns toward white leaders while making visible subtle manifestations of racism. The overall suggestion was that Jones lacked confidence in her audience's ability to determine when they were acting in a manner that alienated black women. In one key example, Jones expressed dismay over "the habit of assuming that the duty of the white progressive employer is to 'inform' the Negro woman of her exploitation and her oppression which she undoubtedly knows quite intimately."<sup>43</sup> Valorizing black women's experiences on their own terms, Jones argued that they evidenced unique working class struggles. Likewise, although complaints about the social life of the Party were often dismissed, Jones pointed to social events as another arena in which Party members failed to integrate black women. "Some of the crassest expressions of chauvinism are to be found at social affairs, where, all too often, white men and women and Negro men participate in dancing, but Negro women are neglected," she explained as a means of illustrating the ways that Party members had adopted "white ruling-class standards of 'desirability.'"<sup>44</sup> Taken together, Jones's willingness to illustrate specifically what white and male chauvinism looked like among Party members constituted an audience of already radicalized, but largely white, Communists.

Her second goal was to issue a call to action to encourage Party members to remedy their neglect of these unique problems. In order to do so, she argued that they needed to halt the overt and subtle acts of racism within the Party that isolated black women and drove them away from Party meetings, social events, and protests. As the exclamation point in the essay's title illustrates, Jones issued a strident demand for the CPUSA to undertake action. In order to fulfill

this goal, Jones explained that the interventions she sought to make in the Party included both theoretical changes and organizational changes. “The most serious assessment of these shortcomings by progressives, especially by Marxist-Leninists, is vitally necessary if we are to help accelerate this development and integrate Negro women in the progressive and labor movement and in our own Party,” she urged.<sup>45</sup> Jones sought “serious assessment,” of the kind that occurred in the theoretical journals of the Party, and of the kind that had to be approved by Party leaders in an ideologically rigid political movement. To seek these changes in a political movement strictly governed by Marxist theory and ruled by a hierarchical structure necessitated an audience of the highest leadership.

Motivated by these two goals, Jones needed to constitute herself as an insider while at the same time claiming a vision beyond the view of the white, male leadership. She needed to manage her own subjectivity to gain both authority and distance to critique. In order to do this, Jones constituted herself as a sociologist, speaking in an objective and theoretical voice. Jones appropriated characteristics of sociological writing that included a reliance on observation to build knowledge, an objective and distant authorial voice that guided readers to conclusions, the use of categorization and generalization, and an unembellished and straightforward tone.<sup>46</sup> This rhetorical choice allowed Jones to build her authority by appropriating the rhetoric of CPUSA leadership as presented in *Political Affairs* and to appear as a Party leader not motivated by personal gain but by commitment to Marxism as a social scientific endeavor.

Jones maintained a distance from the subject of her analysis in developing her voice as an author, and she built her article on observing the work habits of black women. Nowhere in her article did Jones identify as a black woman herself, even as her experiences growing up impoverished and seeking work in Harlem’s laundries heavily influenced her pursuit of

economic and social justice as an adult. Jones presented herself as a sociologist observing black women workers in the United States. “Negro women—as workers, as Negroes, and as women—are the most oppressed stratum of the whole population,” she matter-of-factly reported to her audience. She then evidenced that claim in the form of statistics from the U.S. Department of Labor. “Despite the shift in employment of Negro women from rural to urban areas, Negro women are still generally confined to the lowest-paying jobs,” she wrote. “The Women’s Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, Handbook of Facts for Women Workers, shows white women workers as having median earnings more than twice as high as those of non-white women, and non-white women workers (mainly Negro women) as earning less than \$500 a year!” she continued. Black women were oppressed, Jones argued, because of their low pay from menial jobs. These claims would have been acceptable to her audience accustomed to focusing on the economic components of oppression. With social scientific evidence and a consistent reference to black women as “Negro women” as opposed to “us” or “we,” Jones demonstrated her ability to engage in the seemingly objective data collection that provided the foundation for communist theorizing. Jones’s adoption of this sociologist persona presented her own subject position as part of the intellectual class of the CPUSA, as a legitimate source of knowledge for the Party.

Like a skilled writer of social scientific arguments, Jones directed her reader through her data to her conclusions. Jones strategically built her case as though her reasoning was not open to contestation or alternative interpretations. “The intensified oppression of the Negro people, which has been the hallmark of the postwar reactionary offensive, cannot therefore but lead to an acceleration of the militancy of the Negro woman,” Jones insisted, then cataloguing where she observed that repression unfolding during the early Cold War in arenas including work, the

family, and popular culture. The causal link “cannot therefore but lead to” constituted black women as uniformly and necessarily militant as a direct result of postwar economic conditions. She framed them as a homogenous group throughout the entire article. Yet, rather than defeating black women, Jones argued that this “reactionary offensive” led to their growing strength as fighters for justice. “Viewed in this light,” Jones explained, the light of black women’s reactions to postwar oppression, “it is not accidental that the American bourgeoisie has intensified its oppression, not only of the Negro people in general, but of the Negro women in particular.” In this, the introduction to her article, Jones carefully constructed a causal claim. The “American bourgeoisie” and their program of oppression against African Americans had fostered the militancy of the black woman.

Lest CPUSA leadership dismiss black women as lacking radical consciousness, a claim often made to ensure their subservience, Jones’s causal argument, stemming from evidence about the wage gap between white and black workers, made it difficult to dispute the congruence between black women and the CPUSA. Couched in phrases like “it is not accidental” and “cannot therefore but lead to,” Jones’s causal claims led her audience to seemingly certain conclusions. Likewise, this construction outwardly did not depend upon her careful crafting—the style downplayed any role Jones herself had in the text—contributing to her objective stance. While relying on allegedly objective observations about the state of capitalism and the working class was a convention in CPUSA discourse, it was all the more important for Jones in her task of convincing Party leaders of their neglect in thinking about this key segment of the working class. Her use of the passive voice centralized her theoretical contributions to the decision-making bodies of the Party—she did not claim credit for the critique.

Logical transitions also guided the reader to conclusions while enhancing the explanatory power of Jones's revised theory of the sources of oppression. In the article's short introduction, Jones announced the postwar oppression of black women and previewed her arguments about how oppression fomented their resilience and militancy. From there, she told a historical narrative about the strength of the black mother under chattel slavery. "This brief picture of some of the aspects of the history of the Negro woman, seen in the additional light of the fact that a high proportion of Negro women are obliged today to earn all or part of the bread of the family, helps us understand why Negro women play a most active part in the economic, social, and political life of the Negro community today," Jones explained as a transition to a discussion of black women's roles in mass organizations like clubs.<sup>47</sup> Jones used reasoning that flowed directly from previous parts of the article while clearly leading her readers through the links in her argument. "The negligible participation of Negro women in progressive and trade-union circles is thus all the more startling [because of their active participation in black women's clubs]," Jones clarified, linking club participation to the labor movement in which her comrades would have been particularly invested. This linked clubs to black women workers, which Jones then tied to the labor movement's failure to organize domestic workers. Jones's use of transitions tightened the logic of the pamphlet and created a flow that emphasized the ways in which economic hardship, racism, and gender-based oppression intersected without being reducible to class. As a result, Jones's interpretation of black women's experiences seemed self-evident, and closely in line with Communist goals of bringing about capitalism's demise.

Jones used an austere, unembellished style, another convention of social scientific and CPUSA theoretical discourse. She used the passive voice, logical transitions, and evidence both directly cited and invoked to build her article. These strategies cast the article in the veneer of

Communist theory instead of the experiences of one black woman with a personal investment in the topic. The reliance on passive voice throughout the article functioned to render her observations unquestionable while maintaining the objectivity necessary for a sociologist and obscuring Jones's own role in observing this phenomenon. "Persistent challenge to every chauvinist remark as concerns the Negro woman is vitally necessary if we are to break down the understandable distrust on the part of the Negro women who are repelled by the white chauvinism they often find expressed in progressive circles," she remarked, allowing the "vital necessity" of this action to overshadow exactly who needed to be mounting the "persistent challenge." Throughout, her language was to the point and matter of fact, choices that facilitated her persona as a sociologist presenting objective data.

Jones also built her persona as sociologist through her use of historical analysis and contemporary empirical observation about black women's behaviors. This demonstrated her skill in working with social scientific evidence to build arguments. The overall function of these strategies was to recover what was largely invisible. One example of Jones's use of these sociological methods came in her discussion of black motherhood. She referenced historians of the slave trade who had argued "that the love of the African mother for her child was unsurpassed in any part of the world," and how black women readily sacrificed themselves to save their children from being enslaved.<sup>48</sup> Once these women arrived in the American South, Jones noted that the horrors of slavery nurtured their militancy. "Subject to legalized rape by the slave owners, confined to slave pens, forced to march for eight to fourteen hours with loads on their backs and to perform back-breaking work even during pregnancy, Negro women bore a burning hatred for slavery," Jones reported.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the experiences of fighting to keep their families together under slavery had strengthened black women and introduced them to the

oppositional politics that the CPUSA supported. Moreover, Jones reclaimed agency for black women under slavery and gave them control over their own bodies in her narrative. While her assertions are likely idealized, she noted that, even though black women did not own their labor, they had power over their own bodies sexually. “The Negro mother was mistress in the slave cabin, and despite the interference of master or overseer, her wishes in regard to mating and in family matters were paramount,” Jones asserted.<sup>50</sup>

Jones used this historical narrative about the experience of black women under slavery to generalize about how most black women during the Cold War were working as domestic laborers. She provided statistics about the prevalence of this work alongside descriptions of the work that black women did in the home like cleaning, washing windows, caring for children, doing laundry, and cooking. “Many a domestic worker, on returning to her own household, must begin housework anew to keep her own family together,” Jones observed.<sup>51</sup> Taken together, Jones propounded sociological analysis in her use of historical detail combined with observation and social scientific data. This allowed Jones to take on a scholarly, serious tone with her audience while making visible the ways in which the labor market gendered and racialized jobs to limit opportunity for black women. She became the sociologist that brought these important things to light.

Jones channeled her intersectional critique, built from a critique from objective observation and historical analysis, not her own experience, into an indictment of the hypocrisy of the U.S. government. This demonstrated her commitment to the anti-capitalist principles of the CPUSA. She saved her most militant and indignant tone for criticism of government actions, creating a common enemy for the CPUSA and black women. To evidence this claim, she pointed to the Rosa Lee Ingram case, a case that galvanized black women on the left during the postwar

era.<sup>52</sup> Black women urgently, but unsuccessfully, organized to release Ingram from jail in Georgia, where she was imprisoned for allegedly murdering a white man who had sexually threatened her. “Consider the hypocrisy of the Truman Administration, which boasts about ‘exporting democracy throughout the world’ while the state of Georgia keeps a widowed Negro mother of twelve children under lock and key. Her crime? She defended her life and dignity—aided by her two sons—from the attacks of a white supremacist,” Jones charged.<sup>53</sup> While Jones’s critique was indeed of the CPUSA for neglecting to organize black women, it was also a militant critique of the U.S. government for perpetuating racism and sexism while claiming to promote it abroad. Such a strategy of mounting a critique on both levels created a common enemy—in this case, the Truman administration—with the white, male leadership of the Communist Party. It constituted a moment of urgency, called attention to a unique problem that black women were interested in, and demonstrated her good will toward Communist goals.

Jones’s persona as a sociologist in the article also facilitated the creation of distance between herself and her readership of CPUSA leaders. She was able to gain a critical distance and vision for her critique. “To win the Negro women, for full participation in the anti-fascist, anti-imperialist coalition, to bring her militancy and participation to even greater heights in the current and future struggles against Wall Street imperialism, progressives must acquire political consciousness as regards her special oppressed status,” Jones summarized near the end of her pamphlet.<sup>54</sup> Jones showed that rather than black women it was the CPUSA leadership who needed to “acquire political consciousness” so that they could understand the importance of black women in their alliance. “Prime responsibility lies with white men and women comrades,” Jones insisted, suggesting that the lived struggles of black women had prepared them to struggle for socialism in ways alien to their white comrades. “Negro Communist women must

everywhere now take their rightful place in Party leadership on all levels.”<sup>55</sup> In these formulations, Jones subtly separated herself from the Party leadership even as she spoke their language and understood their theory. While not calling attention to her subjectivity as a black woman, the fact that she was writing the pamphlet enacted the argument that she did not need her “political consciousness” raised.

The sociologist persona with its purported objectivity also yielded the rhetorical tool of shame for Jones. According to Jones, her objective analysis and observation of black women showed the leadership’s failures, and she used the fact that she had engaged in this rigorous analysis to demonstrate how they had failed to live up to the core principles of the movement. This rhetorical weapon was a significant component of Jones’s arsenal because of the ideological rigidity of the CPUSA—Jones used her authority to shame leaders on their own terms. In one of the most direct and critical passages, Jones again turned to social events, arguing that white Communists were not applying their Marxist beliefs to their personal lives. “For white progressive women and men, and especially for Communists, the question of social relations with Negro men and women is above all a question of strictly adhering to social equality,” she chastised. “This means ridding ourselves of the position which sometimes finds certain progressive and Communists fighting on the economic and political issues, but ‘drawing the line’ when it comes to social intercourse or inter-marriage,” she reminded her audience that the struggle for socialism went beyond the Party meeting hall. “To place the question as a ‘personal’ and not a political matter, when such questions arise, is to be guilty of the worse kind of Social-Democratic, bourgeois-liberal thinking as regard the Negro question in American life,” Jones wrote, escalating her chiding to a severe indictment.

She then explained that such activities equated to “imbibing the poisonous white-chauvinist ‘theories’ of a Bilbo or a Rankin.” Jones made an allegation that would have been taken very seriously by the leadership of a Party striving to emulate Marx and Engels—that they had, unbeknownst to them, been tainted, poisoned, by the racist surroundings of the United States. Jones evoked the names of Theodore Bilbo and James R. Rankin, Mississippi Democrats known for their racism and anti-Semitism, to intensify her threat. Indeed, Bilbo was a known member of the Ku Klux Klan. While reminding her audience of white CPUSA leaders that there were members of the working class that lived with additional manifestations of oppression, Jones also defined the inability to see this as not “strictly adhering” to Party theory. Thus, her persona as sociologist garnered her access to militancy and shame, rhetorical tools that heightened the severity of her critique of Party theory and action. Indeed, even her use of shame seemed objective, drawn from reasoned study of core CPUSA principles instead of personal vitriol.

Thus, Jones constituted herself as a sociologist, an objective theorist familiar with the conventions of CPUSA Party discourse. She relied on conventions of sociological writing like maintaining distance from her subject and her readers, gathering data through observation, and an unembellished style. This rhetorical strategy helped her build the authority to critique the Party for neglecting black women—a serious charge—that she nonetheless presented from the center of the Party despite her own semi-marginalized status. Jones dared her audience to dismiss her arguments so entrenched were they in the theoretical and militant language of the Party. Indeed, the radical nature of her critique necessitated the careful presentation as Party theory. The audience of white leaders was central to Jones’s rhetorical purposes, so much so that despite the fact that black women’s plights occupied the article’s subject matter, black women

themselves occupied a symbolically silent space. It is to their strategic deployment that I turn next.

### **Militancy and Silence: Representing Black Women**

Jones set out to convince her white audience that black women were a militant force that needed to be actively recruited by the CPUSA. Yet given that this argument equated to a radical critique of Party theory and practice, the objectivity of Jones's arguments, cast in the veneer of Communist theory, was particularly important. As such, black women were not given a voice in the article; they functioned as a visible group of militant, but largely silent workers. This section considers the strategic ways in which Jones deployed representations of black women in the article, a group who, despite their silence, she constituted as the vanguard of the working class. This group of black women that Jones rhetorically constituted demanded the attention of CPUSA leaders without calling attention to Jones's identity as a black woman, ensuring her ability to represent herself as a member of the CPUSA's intellectual elite.

Given that the article demanded that the CPUSA recognize intersectional oppression in the form of the unique experiences of black women, it is no surprise that black women occupy a central place. Jones represented them strategically as a uniform group of workers. The performance of labor defined the identities of all black women as a result of their positions as mothers and economic providers for their families. Jones insisted that black women were "the main breadwinners of the Negro family," a role that Jones asserted was their "real role," despite the fact that this was not how black women were typically "pictured" in the bourgeois media.<sup>56</sup> Jones linked labor to the identities of black women by explaining their historical need to work. "Following emancipation, and persisting to the present day, a large percentage of Negro

women—married as well as single—were forced to work for a living,” she wrote, acknowledging that this phenomenon “has its roots in the treatment and position of Negro women over the centuries.”<sup>57</sup> Jones made visible the actions of black women by speaking in generalities. Consistent with her persona as an objective theorist, she never quoted them. Indeed, in the 17-page article, individual black women were rarely mentioned by name. Instead, black women were always referred to as “the Negro woman” or “Negro women,” both phrases that called attention to them as a collective.

Jones consistently constituted black women as militant fighters against the CPUSA’s enemies. “Negro women are among the most militant trade unionists,” Jones reminded her audience, an important claim as the CPUSA found itself increasingly marginalized from its power base among industrial unions due to anticommunism. “The sharecroppers’ strikes of the ‘30’s were sparkplugged by Negro women. Subject to the terror of the landlord and white supremacist, they waged magnificent battles together with Negro men and white progressives in that struggle of great tradition led by the Communist Party.”<sup>58</sup> Because of what she labeled black women’s “super-exploitation,” a term that referred to their location as the most oppressed group of U.S. society because of their racial, gender, and class identities, Jones located them as the vanguard of the working class. As such, they were a wedge group useful to move “the whole Negro people.” “The negro woman, who combines in her status the worker, the Negro, and the woman, is the vital link to this heightened political consciousness,” Jones asserted. “To the extent, further, that the cause of the Negro woman worker is promoted, she will be enabled to take her rightful place in the Negro proletarian leadership...and by her active participation contribute to the entire American working class, whose historic mission is the achievement of a Socialist America.”<sup>59</sup> In these passages, black women rhetorically functioned as a link, a means

to a stronger socialist movement. Again, Jones overshadowed the individuality of black women by speaking about them in general terms, a move that rendered them largely silent in the article, even as she attributed militancy to their actions through historical examples.

Lest her audience dismiss these as historical examples, Jones also specifically defined black women in the contemporary moment as a militant group. “More recently, the militancy of Negro women unionists is shown in the strike of the packing-house workers, and even more so, in the tobacco workers’ strike,” she wrote.<sup>60</sup> As she summarized her arguments toward the end of the article, she affirmed the militancy and talent of black women and linked it to the self-interest of the Party. “The strong capacities, militancy, and organizational talents of Negro women can, if well utilized by our Party, be a powerful lever for bringing forward Negro workers.”<sup>61</sup> “Militant” was the key word Jones used repeatedly to refer to the group of black women that she encouraged the CPUSA to recruit and develop as leaders. This chosen descriptor tapped into the tradition of militant rhetoric amongst black male Communists while insisting that black women did not need to be radicalized or trained before they could join the CPUSA.

Jones’s representation of black women as a militant group of workers was a strategic way to implicate her CPUSA comrades in the neglect of the unique problems stemming from race and gender. One way that Jones negotiated this was by constituting black women as almost exclusively domestic workers. For the Party, this rhetorical strategy cast white progressive women in roles as employers, not genuine members of the proletariat. These were the progressive women who thought it their responsibility to tell the black domestic worker how oppressed she was, despite the fact that they were the ones who hired them for these jobs of “unbearable misery” in the first place.

These white women hired black women with “no definition of tasks in the household where she works,” who may “have ‘thrown in’ in addition to cleaning and scrubbing, such tasks as washing windows, caring for children, laundering, cooking, etc., and all at the lowest pay.”<sup>62</sup> The fact that Jones specifically identified these white women as progressive targeted women affiliated with the Communist Party, who, despite good intentions, perpetrated subtle, everyday racism. Her comprehensive listing of the tasks functioned to shine a light on labor rendered invisible by white women. “The Negro domestic worker must suffer the additional indignity, in some areas, of having to seek work in virtual ‘slave markets’ on the streets where bids are made, as from a slave block, for the hardiest workers,” Jones explained.<sup>63</sup> While there certainly were white women who were not progressive who hired domestic help, Jones insisted that “too many progressives, and even some Communists, are still guilty of exploiting Negro domestic workers,” an exploitation that went beyond low pay and entered the realm of language and attitude.<sup>64</sup> This section of Jones’s article separated black women from white women, showing the ways in which even well meaning white women alienated black women. Positioning white women as such reminded Party leaders of their positions of privilege. Likewise, making visible black women’s labor and aligning it with this large, militant group called the CPUSA to account for their lackluster attempts to organize domestic workers.

Constituting black women as a large militant group also allowed Jones to directly compare them to black men. This rhetorical strategy was a veiled statement on black Communist men’s use of militancy. It also both showed black women’s uniqueness from black men and reinforced their difference from white women. Jones represented black men as weak and ineffectual, a strategy that opened a vacuum for black women to fill with their militancy and economic support while reversing the mainstream gendered narrative upon which lynching was

justified within white communities. She assigned black men's stereotypical aggressiveness and roles as heads of households to black women. Throughout her article, Jones exposed the flimsiness of black men's claims to power, working against their claim to masculinist notions of militancy. She illustrated the historical evolution of black patriarchy by claiming that black men were "exceedingly jealous" of the importance of black women in the family after emancipation so they became tyrannical husbands backed by the authority of the church. "Sanction for male ascendancy was found in the Bible," she observed.<sup>65</sup> Highlighting their tendency to give in to petty jealousies, Jones suggested black men behaved like stereotypical women. Indeed, even as she largely painted them as weak, she acknowledged the tendency of black men to use militant rhetoric to silence women and targeted them as a key group needing to welcome black women to the Party. "Negro men have a special responsibility particularly in relation to rooting out attitudes of male superiority as regards women in general," Jones noted.<sup>66</sup>

Separating black men from black women in militancy and empowerment, Jones again constructed black women as a uniformly unique group among black Americans. These arguments also illustrated shortcomings in white feminist analysis of patriarchy—specifically Jones showed the ways in which patriarchy was not a monolithic force to be opposed. Instead, patriarchy weighed differently on black women because of black men's differential access to power, arguments that later black feminists and scholars such as Hazel Carby advanced.<sup>67</sup> "The new economic arrangement [after the Civil War], the change in the mode of production, placed the Negro man in a position of authority in relation to his family. Purchase of households also helped strengthen the authority of the male," she explained. While she relied on Marxist analysis of shifts in the modes of production to describe what happened to black families, she pointed out the existence of the unique pressures of slavery and subsequent emancipation. This macro-

history also constituted black women as a uniform group subject to the same pressures of economic change, even as those pressures differed from those facing white women. As a result, to Jones, patriarchy was historically specific. Just like she showed that gender was often not enough to unite black and white women given their vastly different experiences, here, she argued that race and class could not erase the complexities of gender.

In line with her persona as sociologist, she interpreted and explained the behaviors of black women. That is, they did not speak in her article. Jones spoke for them, did not individuate them, and relied on a strategy of pointing out their near-invisibility. Importantly, this rhetorical deployment of black women also downplayed Jones's own subjectivity as a black woman. By silencing black women, Jones also silenced her belonging to that group. While never explicitly denying her identity as a black woman, Jones never claimed it either. Instead, she issued commands in line with the leader she was claiming to be. "In our Party clubs, we must conduct an intensive discussion of the role of the Negro women, so as to equip our Party membership with clear understanding for undertaking the necessary struggles in the shops and communities," she wrote.<sup>68</sup> In these final pages of her article, she used "our" and "we" to refer to CPUSA members. This is the only time that she called attention to her own role as author; Jones never used "I." The only group with which she was willing to verbally identify was with other members of CPUSA, even as she positioned herself as having deeper knowledge than they did, as they needed to be equipped with "clear understanding." Thus, Jones downplayed the gendered and racialized characteristics of her own identity, merely identifying as a member of Party leadership. Silencing black women as a group in the article worked to ensure the silence of her gendered and racialized identity, a rhetorical strategy necessary to ensure her objective stance and claims to be part of the male leadership of the Party.

Yet, just because black women were silent, did not mean they were not powerful. In this chapter's final section, I turn to how Jones used representations of black women as a threat to Party leadership.

### **Exposure and Fear: Black Women as Threats**

Jones's representation of black women as a silent, unified group still rendered them as a threat to both the mainstream political culture and the CPUSA. As Jones exposed their often invisible experiences, she allowed black women to threaten the exposure of the limitations of commitments to racial equality. This provided force to back Jones's arguments that the CPUSA needed to organize black women.

By characterizing black women in her article as domestic workers, Jones threatened both the newfound feminist commitments of women in the CPUSA and propaganda emanating from the U.S. government. Centering domestic service in her narrative of black women workers made visible the ways in which the suburbs of the American Dream were not places of color-blind opportunity, but places of white privilege and black exploitation. This was because Jones compared domestic service jobs to slave markets.<sup>69</sup> The implication as we have seen was that it was white women, many of them who considered themselves feminist or progressive, that hired black women to do their housework without recognizing black women as sisters in the struggle against patriarchy or as laborers to be treated with respect. Jones's description of seeking domestic work as "virtual slave markets" juxtaposed capitalism with slavery and illustrated how the prosperity of the postwar United States necessitated these slave-like economic relationships. Making visible these economic relationships called into doubt U.S. government declarations about how capitalism benefited all Americans.

Likewise, representing black women as domestic workers also allowed Jones to expose limitations of CPUSA labor organizing. “One of the crassest manifestations of trade-union neglect of the problems of the Negro woman worker has been the failure, not only to fight against relegation of the Negro woman to domestic and similar menial work, but to *organize* the domestic worker,” Jones explained. “It is merely lip-service for progressive unionists to speak of organizing the unorganized without turning their eyes to the serious plight of the domestic worker, who, unprotected by union standards, is also the victim of exclusion from all social and labor legislation.”<sup>70</sup> In her typical serious tone, Jones then provided statistics about how ninety percent of black women were not covered by minimum-wage laws. Thus, even as representing black women as domestic workers implicated white progressive women as employers, it also allowed her to shame union organizers whose shortcomings she exposed. “All of the arguments heretofore projected with regard to the real difficulties of organizing the domestic workers—such as the ‘casual’ nature of their employment, the difficulties of organizing day workers, the problem of organizing people who work in individual households, etc.,--must be overcome forthwith,” she insisted.<sup>71</sup> Handily dismissing these excuses, she illustrated how domestic work exposed limitations of union organizing, linking them back to crass neglect of the uniqueness of black women.

If Jones’s representation of black women rendered them a silent group that exposed the silences in the organizing program of the CPUSA, it also showed silences in burgeoning narratives of feminism. Because Jones represented black women as workers in the home, she implicated narratives of domesticity that had been the crux of white feminists’ challenges to Cold War society. “The bourgeois ideologists have not failed,” she argued, “to develop a special ideological offensive aimed at degrading Negro women, as part and parcel of the general

reactionary ideological offensive against women of ‘kitchen, church, and children.’” Yet, Jones made clear that these disciplinary strictures did not apply to black women in the same manner. “They cannot,” she continued, “with equanimity or credibility speak of Negro woman’s ‘place’ as in the home; for Negro women are in other peoples’ kitchens.”<sup>72</sup> Again relying on the rhetorical strategy of making visible the labor of black women, Jones this time juxtaposed this labor with domesticity—showing how labor rendered the experiences of black women distinct from white women, further evidence for the argument that there needed to be a special approach to black women for the Party and for feminists. Bourgeois ideologists had already recognized a special approach was necessary for black women, Jones reminded her audience, and it was time for the CPUSA to do the same.

Jones also challenged white narratives of feminism by reminding her audience of the limitations of the first wave of the suffrage movement, which had been championed by Millard in *Woman Against Myth*. This section of the article, sandwiched between two paragraphs where Jones discussed the current struggle for working-class liberation, also undermined claims to racial progress by blurring the past and the present. “The suffragists, during their first jailings, were purposely placed on cots next to Negro prostitutes to ‘humiliate’ them. They had the wisdom to understand that the intent was to make it so painful, that no women would dare to fight for her rights if she had to face such consequences,” Jones intoned.<sup>73</sup> She then explained that while the rank-and-file members of the suffrage movement may have understood the ways that anti-suffragists attempted to discredit their advocacy, movement leaders, due to their bourgeois backgrounds “failed to link their own struggles for the full democratic rights of the Negro people following emancipation.”<sup>74</sup>

Jones then transitioned back to discussing “the woman question today” and advancing black women as a link to “heightened political consciousness.” Thus, Jones allowed the past to haunt the present, suggesting that black women were still seen as different and shameful in feminist coalitions. The implication, although not overtly stated, was that the CPUSA was guilty like suffrage leaders of not recognizing black women as partners in their struggle. This historical interjection allowed Jones to threaten the exposure of the CPUSA’s radical limitations without herself identifying as a black woman. The militancy she ascribed to black women could be brought together with the Communist Party’s unembellished and objective rhetorical style by using them as this uniform symbolic group.

The rhetorical potential of black women did not only depend upon their ability to threaten the feminist and labor organizing practices of the CPUSA. Instead, Jones demonstrated how representations of black women and their work also undermined dominant narratives about racial progress in the United States, especially those narratives beamed abroad as evidence of the equality and harmony said to accompany capitalist social organization. Jones illustrated the ways in which the American Dream depended upon not just erasing the labor of black women, but erasing the very places in which they dwelled. She grounded her discussion of black women as mothers in the particular space of the black home, which she made very clear could not be compared to white, middle-class homes, narratives of Cold War capitalist progress required the erasure of the many black communities. Her descriptions of black homes were infused with evocations of the ghetto and constricted space instead of the openness and opportunity seen to characterize the suburbs. Remarking on the low wages of black men and women, Jones wrote, “Little wonder, then, that in Negro communities the conditions of ghetto-living—low salaries, high rents, high prices, etc.—virtually become an iron curtain hemming in the lives of Negro

children and undermining their health and spirit!”<sup>75</sup> The language of “hemming in” illustrated crowding and containment, and the dramatic image of the iron curtain further emphasized that the black ghetto, zoned for public housing instead of private homeownership, was wholly set apart from the idealized, suburban home. It called attention to the hypocrisy of the U.S. government in its propaganda.

In evoking the ghetto, Jones allowed those erased from the American Dream to threaten its desirable locations. In addition, by using the trope of the iron curtain, Jones demonstrated in a way that powerfully resonated with political discourse that the oppression and lack of opportunity that Americans ascribed to those living under Soviet rule also existed in the United States in ghettos all across the country. In her sociological observations of the ghetto, Jones constituted black women as militant mothers. This functioned to demonstrate how the U.S. government could not continue to repress images of the racialized poverty that capitalism had wrought. “From the days of the slave traders down to the present,” Jones explained, “the Negro woman has had the responsibility of caring for the needs of the family, of militantly shielding it from the blows of Jim-Crow insults, of rearing children in an atmosphere of lynch terror, segregation, and police brutality.”<sup>76</sup> By connecting the present to “the days of slave traders,” Jones illustrated the racialization of the benefits of capitalism. Jones rhetorically used representations of black women to threaten the *telos* of American, capitalist progress. Their presence was a threatening presence that overflowed the boundaries of Cold War repression. “The Negro woman fights against the wiping out of the Negro family, against the Jim-Crow ghetto existence which destroys the health, morale, and very life of millions of her sisters, brothers, and children.”<sup>77</sup> These arguments served to boost Jones’s own Communist credentials by issuing threats of exposure to a common enemy—U.S. officials. Indeed, by referring to the

ghetto as the “Jim-Crow ghetto,” Jones made clear that she saw racial oppression as intimately connected with housing and work opportunities.

In certain parts of the article, Jones explicitly framed the threat that black women posed as the threat of exposure for the U.S. government’s failures. “Nothing so exposes the drive to fascization in the nation as the callous attitude which the bourgeoisie displays and cultivates toward Negro women,” she explained. “The vaunted boasts of the ideologists of Big Business—that American women possess ‘the greatest equality’ in the world is exposed in all its hypocrisy when one sees that in many parts of the world, particularly in the Soviet Union, the New Democracies, and the formerly oppressed land of China, women are attaining new heights of equality.”<sup>78</sup> Bringing to light black women’s unique experiences exposed the lies that comprised U.S. propaganda. Moreover, by calling upon her knowledge of communism’s alleged successes across the world, Jones built her own authority while relying upon evidence for her claim that would have been acceptable to her audience—that women were better off under socialist regimes.

The final component of Cold War racial problems that Jones exposed through her representation of black women was the asymmetrical treatment between white women and black women wherein white women were praised for their charm and domesticity but black women were ignored or blamed for a host of social problems.<sup>79</sup> Taken together, her discussions of black women as militant yet oppressed coupled with her recognition that white women were complicit in racism allowed her to demonstrate the hypocritical nature of lynching. “[The Ingram Case] reflects the daily insults to which Negro women are subjected in public places, no matter what their class, status, or position,” she wrote, reminding her audience that even upper class black women faced racism. “It exposes the hypocritical alibi of the lynchers of Negro manhood who

have historically hidden behind the skirts of white women when they try to cover up their foul crimes with the ‘chivalry’ of ‘protecting white women.’”<sup>80</sup> The continued prevalence of lynching denied claims to racial progress, and Jones reminded her audience of the fact that black women’s differential treatment exposed the racial motives of the crime. Moreover, even conforming to middle-class standards could not protect black families from lynching, and Jones presented an example of a black man in Georgia lynched because “he had bought a new Cadillac and become, in the opinion of the ‘white supremacists,’ ‘too uppity.’”<sup>81</sup> Thus, the unified militancy and labor status of black women allowed them to threaten to expose silences in narratives of labor organizing, feminism, and Cold War civil rights progress. Despite Jones silencing of black women, their actions were a powerful statement on their place in the CPUSA.

Asymmetry between black and white women also existed in the glorification of motherhood in the United States. Jones explained that President Truman had recently given a Mother’s Day address wherein he praised the mothers of the United States. “The so-called ‘love and reverence’ for the mothers of the land by no means includes Negro mothers who, like Rosa Lee Ingram, Amy Mallard, the wives and mothers of the Trenton Six, or the other countless victims, dare to fight back against lynch law and ‘white supremacy’ violence,” she explained.<sup>82</sup> Once again, black women functioned as threats—they exposed the denigration of black mothers as a means to disprove arguments about how women were valorized. Moreover, by calling up the examples of Rosa Ingram and Amy Mallard, the widow of a black man lynched for voting in 1948, Jones showed that black activists were indeed threatening the social order by refusing to accept the dictates of Jim Crow. While Jones did not often refer to individual black women throughout her article, in the rare instances where she did, she called up women known for their militancy or political activism.

Jones also allowed her representation of black women as militant to expose the traditional “mammy” stereotype for its function of denigrating black motherhood. Throughout her article she described the difficulties that black women faced in caring for families, difficulties stemming from racism and poverty. “In the film, radio, and press, the Negro woman is not pictured in her real role as breadwinner, mother, and protector of the family, but as a traditional ‘mammy’ who puts the care of children and families of others above her own,” Jones noted. “This traditional stereotype of the Negro slave mother, which to this day appears in commercial advertisements, must be combated and rejected as a device of the imperialists to perpetuate the white chauvinist ideology that Negro women are ‘backward,’ ‘inferior,’ and the ‘natural slaves’ of others.”<sup>83</sup> In this sense, then, Jones also challenged traditional Communist class analysis to illustrate the ways in which popular culture, not just capitalism, could foment oppression.

Jones channeled her use of the threatening presence of black women into an argument about how CPUSA should take advantage of the fear that many people felt about black women’s militancy. This argument stipulated that the CPUSA should organize and recruit black women because white elites in mainstream, capitalist society were afraid of them. “The bourgeoisie is fearful of the militancy of the Negro woman,” Jones swore.<sup>84</sup> Yet, the fear that white elites may have felt at the militancy among black women had not inspired neglect. The bourgeoisie was, according to Jones, increasing their repression of black women while making them tokens of racial progress. “The American bourgeoisie, we must remember, is aware of the present and even greater potential role of the masses of Negro women,” Jones scolded. These white elites were “therefore not loathe to throw plums to Negroes who betray their people and do the bidding of imperialism.”<sup>85</sup> These claims elevated the urgency of Jones’s remarks about the need to organize black women, constituting a necessary moment to work against the bourgeoisie, to intervene

before their ideas took hold. At the same time, she evoked common Communist enemies including the “bourgeoisie and “Wall Street” to remind her audience that they stood on the same side in the battle against capitalism. Couching her intersectional critique in urgent moments and identifying bourgeois weakness gestured toward coalition. “There is a danger that Social-Democratic forces may enter this field [of labor organizing] to do their work of spreading disunity and demagogy, unless progressives act quickly,” she warned.<sup>86</sup>

Altogether then, it was the combination of her sociological persona and her representation of black women as silent, yet militant threats that allowed Jones to authoritatively make a critique of a dogmatic political organization. These strategies facilitated Jones’s construction of authority and appropriation of the writing style of the leadership even as she claimed a knowledge and vision beyond their limitations. Altogether, then, she called attention to the unique, intersectional experiences of oppression black women experienced as she demanded that the CPUSA attend to these differences in their theory and organizing practice. This analysis would guide the CPUSA into the 1960s and would encourage them to work to recruit black women to their Party.

### **Conclusion**

Jones’s article was one of the most sophisticated pieces of black left feminist theorizing during the Cold War. Remarkably militant in her insistence that black women’s oppression encompassed more than their membership in the working class, Jones demanded that her Marxist comrades begin to speak and think in a way that reflected the complexity of intersectional existences. And while the CPUSA could never expunge racism among its ranks, historian Kate Weigand reports that many were persuaded by Jones’s arguments. Leading Communist writers

campaigns to spread Jones's ideas regarding the importance of black women for progressive politics throughout the Party.<sup>87</sup> This resulted in the republication of "An End to the Neglect of the Negro Woman!" as a pamphlet, issued by the Party's Women's Commission. The content of Party publications also changed dramatically in the wake of "An End to the Neglect of the Negro Woman!" Daily and weekly newspapers almost always included an article about black women's special status after 1949, and articles devoted to black women's history also regularly appeared. In labor organizing, too, black women became more central to the CPUSA after the publication of Jones's essay. Labor unions under the leadership of Communists fought for black women's rights, and Jones's calls to strengthen a Domestic Workers' Union were heeded. When a new organization of black women called the Sojourners for Truth and Justice formed in the early 1950s, the CPUSA supported their activism. Jones was a member of this group and her influence resonates throughout their rhetoric.

Of course, not everyone accepted Jones's militancy. Betty Millard, author of the pamphlet that had awakened the CPUSA to the idea that feminist struggle could be compatible with Communist struggle, felt that Jones had misinterpreted the ideas she had promulgated in *Woman Against Myth*, even though Jones never mentioned Millard in her article. Likewise, another white Communist woman accused Jones of perpetrating "the most awful reverse chauvinism," a belief in the superiority of black women above all other members of the working class.<sup>88</sup> Historian McDuffie reports that Jones suffered ostracism as a result of her publication. This confirms Jones's need to tread carefully when mounting critiques of the CPUSA, a political movement with strict ideological commitments.

Seeking greater inclusivity within the American Communist Party but constrained by the generic limitations of the publication mediums available to those seeking theoretical changes in

Communist doctrine, Jones did not confront the rhetorical conventions of CPUSA discourse. Challenging the theory of a political movement with a hierarchical structure and strict ideological frameworks necessitates sanction by the leadership or a great deal of popular support. Jones chose the first strategy. While the conventions were comfortable for Jones as a Party journalist, surely not all progressive black women would have agreed. Indeed, many black leftist women opted for alternate publication venues. Alice Childress wrote novels, while Lorraine Hansberry penned plays, both deeply influenced by the Communist left.<sup>89</sup> These progressive black activists and others like them confronted the racist and sexist Cold War United States through art instead of theory. In the creation of art and the formation of groups like the Sojourners for Truth and Justice, black Communist women created more discursive spaces for an intersectional, poly-vocal, multi-front struggle against racism and capitalism during the Cold War. For rhetoricians examining political movements, these lessons compel us to interrogate the costs to inclusion. At the same time, as activists struggle to find rhetorical resources to contest economic injustice, the example of the Cold War left reminds us of the power of coalitions and the need for a diversified strategy.

Jones's essay offers other lessons for rhetoricians of social movements, too. Particularly for those political movements deemed dogmatic or ideologically rigid, Jones carefully selected strategies from a much narrower range of options. Jones was well suited to challenge the leadership of the CPUSA given her faculty in Marxist theory and her immersion in the style and language of the organization. For an organization so hierarchical and committed to a Party line, such rhetorical strategies would have been necessary to gain the legitimate authority to critique. Jones combined her attempt to blend in with the leadership with appeals to the Party's self interest to soften the harshness of her critique. Indeed, assuring her audience that recruiting black

women would strengthen the Party's ability to work for socialism both demonstrated her fealty to Party goals while also allowing her to claim a vision beyond the leadership. Finally, Jones's article illustrates the rhetorical potential of shame when dealing with a rigid, dogmatic organization. While social movement rhetors from abolitionists to woman suffragists and beyond have urged audiences to attend to gaps between professed values and actions, such a strategy is particularly likely to succeed for an audience of leaders entrusted with the scientific teachings of an international political movement. Of course, these are strategies that political advocates use in more open and fluid social movements as well, but their suitability for persuading an audience of dogmatic leaders was not lost on Jones.

Jones's article also encourages rhetorical critics to revisit what we know about militant rhetoric. Given that militancy as a strategy always operates in gendered and racialized contexts, the irony of Jones's use of militant rhetoric in this case was that she downplayed her own gendered and racialized identity. Moreover, because militancy was typically used within the CPUSA to silence black women and dismiss them as needing radicalization, it is also noteworthy that Jones, too, largely silenced black women's voices, using them as a uniform group to which *she* attributed militant consciousness and actions. Such a choice allowed Jones, who had already built her authority as a Party leader through her persona as sociologist, to present black women's militancy as objective and observable. This suggests that militant rhetoric needs to be understood in the general rhetorical milieu of its targeted audience. For Jones, this meant an audience that would have been accustomed to militant rhetoric being used by Party leaders, which allowed her to subtly claim militant rhetorical power for black women. Additionally, it reminds rhetorical scholars that militant rhetoric does not solely have to be used to promote violence or to browbeat

an audience. Stern insistences and commands dovetailed with reasoned appeals to shame functioned as significant components of the militant rhetorical environment for Jones.

While Jones's article could not completely ameliorate the distrust that she diagnosed between black and white women on the Communist left, the attention now being paid to black women and the power that Jones had seized to bring this issue to the attention of Party leadership was noteworthy. Indeed, it represents the push for the sophistication of Communist feminist theory that Millard had begun to build. It also illustrates the importance of the astute rhetorical strategies that Millard and Jones had used to bring their ideas to Party attention in a manner designed to prevent their dismissal. Yet, lest this new Communist feminist theory perish on the pages of the papers, Jones and Flynn seized an opportune moment to put it to work in a labor organizing drive in the early 1950s. Their mobilization of a broad coalition of U.S. women demonstrates the move from theory to practice. And while discussions of theory on the pages of Communist papers did not cease, Communist women set out to prove to the Party leadership that they were just as skilled at labor organizing as the male trade unionists. Combining the transnational focus on peace with a mainstream U.S. propaganda campaign focused on the role of mothers, Communist women used their new, intersectional lens as a call to action for women across the world. It is to this action that we now turn.

## **Chapter Four**

### **“Articulate and Organized”: Peace Petitions, Working-Class Motherhood, and Transnational Witnessing**

On October 23, 1950, children in Chicago Public Schools participated in what would have been a routine occurrence—a “duck and cover” drill designed to practice preparedness in the event of an atomic bomb attack.<sup>1</sup> Upon hearing the siren, children obediently dropped to their knees, curled up under their desks, and sheltered the back of their necks with their hands. On the kids’ way home from school that day, members of Chicago Women for Peace met them and distributed leaflets. On the leaflet, a map of Chicago was marked with three rings of destruction from a hypothetical bomb that had been dropped on the south side neighborhood of Washington Heights. Underneath the graphic was a letter that read: “Dear Mother and Dad: I came home to you today after the mock A-drill. If a real A-bomb were dropped at 107<sup>th</sup> Street and Prospect Avenue, our family, our home, and our school would be totally destroyed. Instead of frightening us with A-Bomb drills, can’t you grown-ups do something to keep the A-bomb from falling on any children—anywhere in the world?” The letter then instructed parents, “If you really would protect us” to call the mayor of Chicago and write to President Truman to oppose the stockpiling of nuclear weapons. “Sincerely, Your child.”<sup>2</sup>

Members of Chicago Women for Peace, one of many women’s peace organizations across the globe protesting Cold War nuclearism appropriated the voices of children and their association with innocent life worthy of protection. Joining a wave of peace activism that was sweeping the United States, these women used the prominent Cold War equation of women with motherhood to introduce arguments that focused on the protection of life to argue against the bomb. And they were not the only ones with peace on their minds. In May 1950, 75,000 New Yorkers took to the streets to protest the development of deadlier atomic weapons. Seizing the

occasion of May Day and its association with workers' rights, thousands cheered and applauded amidst brightly colored decorations and bold signs declaring "We Want Peace! and "Outlaw the H-Bomb!"<sup>3</sup> Many leftists brought their children to the parade in an attempt to impress upon the younger generations the severity of nuclear war.<sup>4</sup> A grave "May Day Warning" in the *New York Times* cautioned U.S. citizens that "having appropriated an ancient spring festival for their own devious purposes, some 25,000,000 Communists in all parts of the world are ready to celebrate May Day today as a day of triumph."<sup>5</sup> Despite such attempts to discredit the rallies, millions across the world *did* pour into the streets to celebrate the holiday and protest what was beginning to feel like imminent nuclear war.<sup>6</sup>

Protests and rallies such as these did not simply materialize. Communist men and women spent a great many hours organizing and planning a transnational drive for peace in an attempt to thaw the Cold War. Alongside demonstrations, Communists enthusiastically spearheaded the 1950 Stockholm Peace Petition campaign, a global campaign that eventually garnered 235 million signatures throughout the world. A wide variety of Americans (Communist, leftist, and neither) participated in the peace protests and petitioning drives. This chapter explores the leadership of the Party's women in these endeavors. Indeed, their participation and articulation of the stakes of the peace petition represent an attempt to use their newfound intersectional approach to the analysis of oppression for grassroots organizing purposes. They asserted their own voices as competent and qualified organizers of women and the working class, and they used the petition as a constitutive rhetorical tool to help women see themselves as political agents. In some ways, this chapter demonstrates, women's leadership over the peace petition drive represents an attempt to prevent the cooptation of their feminist ferment by the Party's male leadership.

Between 1948 and 1952, this chapter argues, Communist women used transnational performances of motherhood to broaden women's role in preventing nuclear war and to demonstrate their prowess for organizing the working class through coalition building. Facilitated by a global petitioning drive, these women appropriated national security discourse that positioned women as mothers in charge of protecting their families. Yet, Communist women critiqued the white, middle-class valence of national security discourse as they encouraged women to do more than stock their pantries and weather nuclear fallout. Rather than accept mainstream discourses of what motherhood meant, they remade it as a militant protectorship that conferred obligations to guide the macroeconomy. In the embodied act of petitioning, women placed their bodies in citizenship venues that flouted government surveillance and its capitalist spaces. In the publication of peace appeals in the *Daily Worker*, women were uniquely called to witness the pain of mothers across the world, and by responding to these calls, Communist women showed the limitations of security discourse as a national endeavor, affirming that mothers had obligations beyond the boundaries of the nation. Overall, in the action of peace petitioning and in their discourse promoting it, Communist women resignified motherhood as a militant, working-class identity that rhetorically claimed ownership over the peace campaign, proved their prowess for labor organizing and coalition building to the Party's male leadership, and advanced their intersectional approach to understanding oppression.

To make these arguments, this chapter builds on new rhetorical scholarship about how ordinary citizens do labor organizing to make change.<sup>7</sup> How, I ask, does one convince people to risk precarious livelihoods to argue for change? To venture an answer, I explore both the content of the peace petitions and the organizing practices that women undertook to build and sustain broad alliances for peace. Taken together, this chapter advances our understanding of rhetorical

strategies for labor organizing in a transnational context while recognizing that a key portion of what labor organizers do is contest negative representations of the group that they are organizing.<sup>8</sup> Finally, this chapter explores the broad alliances and social support networks that women peace petitioners built, recognizing, as Angela G. Ray argues, “most often, people act bravely when they have the support of others.”<sup>9</sup>

In order to create this network of social support, Communist women used arguments about motherhood and performances of motherly care. This chapter interrogates the ways that Communist women resignified motherhood to proclaim a working-class, radical, and militant identity through their peace petitions. This interrogation requires moving beyond existing scholarship to explore the possibilities for militant and radical motherhood in the rhetoric of black *and* white women and its relation to masculinities in the decade after World War II. The example of peace petitioning reminds rhetorical scholars that motherhood involves both nurturing and militant elements, elements particularly suited to advocacy on behalf of the labor movement.<sup>10</sup> This is important because, as Isaac West explains, assuming an identity allows rhetors not only to enact, but also to resignify what that identity means.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Communist women’s peace petitioning requires us to consider how they performed working-class motherhood, alongside how that performance resonated against dominant conceptions of what motherhood entailed in U.S. political culture.

Existing rhetorical scholarship leads us to ask how Communist women seized the potential to remake motherhood, as well as how the militant side of mothering intersects with the compassionate desires for peace. These are particularly important questions where working-class and black women are concerned because historians and rhetoricians alike interested in peace discourse have focused on bourgeois peace movements and presidential speeches.<sup>12</sup> Martin

Medhurst and Robert Ivie have shown that Cold War presidential peace rhetoric was largely a ruse for projecting national strength.<sup>13</sup> These examinations provide a useful overview of the national political discourse, while overlooking important aspects of the Cold War rhetorical milieu, such as how Communists themselves talked about peace and how women saw their roles in relation to imminent nuclear war. Rhetorical scholarship has also explored the ways in which advocates deploy essentialist notions of womanhood as peaceful and compassionate to argue against war.<sup>14</sup> Communist women, as this chapter shows, were in a unique position as they could not easily claim access to the benefits of motherhood given dominant political culture's dismissal of their credentials as mothers. Indeed, this chapter encourages rhetorical scholars to look more carefully at women not typically associated with representations of motherhood while recognizing that in particular historical moments converging social and geopolitical discourses may render women's activism for peace subversive.

Historical examinations of peace movements have focused on male-dominated organizations, like the American Friends Service Committee, War Resisters' League, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation.<sup>15</sup> Those scholars who have examined the women's peace movement have also focused on primarily white, largely upper-class organizations like the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).<sup>16</sup> Organizations like the WILPF and the International Council of Women, as Leila Rupp shows, attracted an elite constituency because of the high cost of participation, including travel to conferences.<sup>17</sup> Even those historians who have focused on the role of American Communists in the peace movement have said little about the activism of the Party's women.<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps part of the reason that scholars have largely overlooked the rhetorical power of Communist women's peace activism in the postwar period is that it requires theorizing

petitioning as an embodied performance of citizenship, an enterprise complicated by a lack of extant sources. To overcome source limitations, I attempted to triangulate the description of protest actions and petitioning activities in the Communist press with the protests depicted by the *New York Times* and other mainstream papers whenever able. Situating the petitioning of Communist women within rhetorical scholarship on petitions as a rhetorical form helps to appreciate the subversive power of these performances of citizenship. Although most studies of petitioning in the Western world focus on eras before universal suffrage, I maintain, in line with rhetoricians, legal scholars, and political scientists, that petitioning continued to hold radical potential in the Cold War era. This was because petitioning was recognized as a central tactic in mass democratic politics given that all citizens could petition, while their rulers were obligated, at least in theory, to receive petitions and respond to grievances.<sup>19</sup> For women who lacked the vote, as Susan Zaeske shows in her examination of petitioning in the abolition era, petitioning constituted a collective identity through which women claimed access to the public sphere.<sup>20</sup> Yet, even for Cold War women who could cast ballots, I contend that petitioning provided a rhetorical resource for Communist women that functioned persuasively in constitutive, embodied, organizational, and visual forms. Petitioning also held radical potential in the Cold War era because it allowed Communist women to both make claims on the government of the United States as legal citizens while at the same time demonstrating performing belonging in a transnational coalition of activists.

To understand how Communist women used petitioning, this chapter first places Communist feminists' peace activism in its historical context. Here, I explore anxiety and motherhood in the nuclear age. Prominent national discourses alerted women to their duties in family protection, duties that were both individual and consumerist. Communists' involvement

in the peace movement, I show, rendered “peace” a subversive word by the early 1950s. In the next section, I closely read the Stockholm peace petition to show the rhetorical resources available to Communist women as they appropriated the organizational power of Communist labor organizing. The third section shows the unique rhetorical resources that Communist women seized when they participated in the global peace petition drive. Reading both discourse about petitioning and the performance of petitioning and protests as rhetorical texts, I show how Communist women’s petitioning both appropriated and subverted the power of the Stockholm petition by constituting a collectivity of anxious mothers not content with the messages emanating from the U.S. government. My sources for this analysis include articles by women in the *Worker* and *Daily Worker* as well as descriptions of petition drives in the Communist and mainstream press. The final section argues that petitions and appeals written by women in other countries and published in the *Daily Worker* called U.S. Communist women to bear witness to the bodies of children in pain. Placing American women as the addressees of appeals from women across the world obligated them to respond to the rapaciousness of capitalism. When responding to these appeals, Communist leaders like Betty Millard entered a transnational conversation that compelled moral action and rejected capitalist solutions for peace. Altogether, then, this chapter shows how Communist women used the subversive aspects of calls for peace to make motherhood a working-class identity divorced from consumerist individuality and tied to transnational networks.

### **At Home with the Bomb**

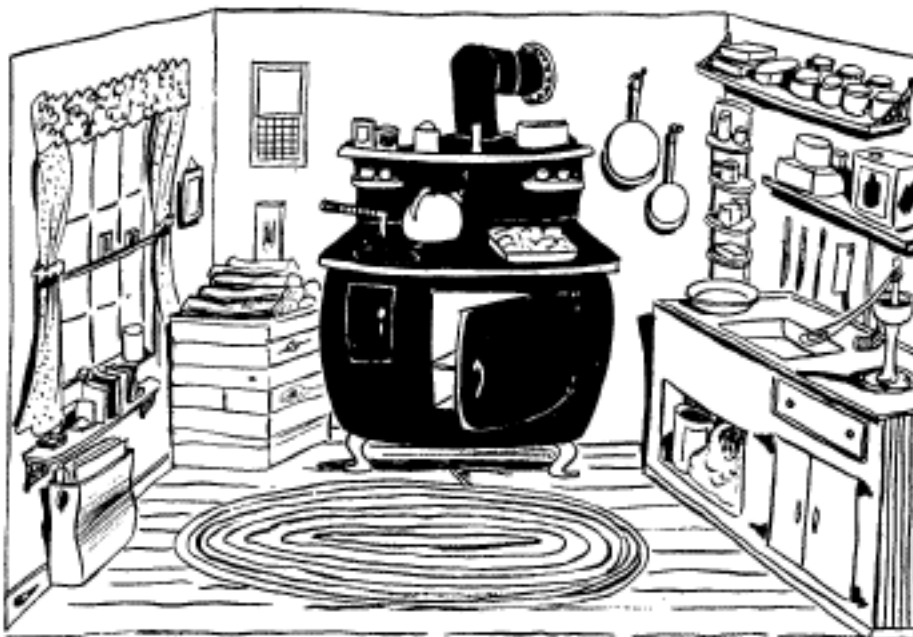
In a prominent civil defense film, an animated turtle, Bert, showed children how to “duck and cover” in the event of a warning siren or flash of light signaling the outbreak of nuclear war.

The grim voiceover encouraged children to recognize that a nuclear bomb attack could happen at any time. Over the course of the Cold War, millions of schoolchildren saw this short movie, which nurtured fear in the service of preparedness. Indeed, Bert “did what we all must learn to do” chanted friendly voices at the beginning of the *Duck and Cover* film. “When danger threatened him, he never got hurt” because Bert had perfected the technique of ducking and covering to protect himself from the blast of a bomb (or a monkey holding a stick of dynamite). While the Bert the Turtle cartoon certainly increased awareness about the importance of preparedness in an atomic emergency, it also framed surviving nuclear war in a domestic scene.

When Bert the Turtle had expounded his lessons, the *Duck and Cover* film cut to live footage of school children in New York, encouraging them to ask their teachers or parents what to do in the event of a bomb attack. It also showed teenagers protecting younger children and a great number of children who found themselves alone upon hearing a warning siren, but were versed in safety measures. Preparedness rested with the individual and the nuclear family. The U.S. government quickly realized that mass evacuation or public bomb shelters were impractical and expensive, so the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) promoted local and private efforts to ready oneself for war. Civil Defense workers, including Jean Wood Fuller, the director of women’s activities for the FCDA, encouraged women to prepare their homes for a nuclear attack. One public campaign, for instance, asked “Grandma’s Pantry was ready—Is your Pantry Ready in the Event of Emergency?” [figure one] This brochure then listed goods, food, and medical supplies that women should stock for family preparedness.<sup>21</sup>

Figure One

## GRANDMA'S PANTRY WAS READY



**Is Your "Pantry" Ready in Event of Emergency?**

Civil Defense rhetoric, then, infused women's traditional roles as homemakers and mothers with new, important tasks including defending, stocking, and fortifying the home to ensure their family's survival.

But women had to accept the nuclear family and their duties within it for the FCDA's private survival strategies to work. And if psychologists were to be believed, many women had no interest in protecting their homes. Popular psychology texts like Lundberg and Farnham's 1947 *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*, warned that the home was the "spawning ground of much of our social disorder."<sup>22</sup> Lundberg and Farnham pointed their fingers in one direction when it came to destabilizing influences: feminism. Consumed by "deep, suicidal destructiveness," women with feminist tendencies allegedly ignored their children as they sought to achieve "maleness" while replacing their womanly charms with aggression. These women "could neither

love nor make love,” the popular book concluded.<sup>23</sup> The concern with feminists destabilizing the nuclear, loving home unsurprisingly extended to radical women and radical politics more broadly. Communism thwarted appropriate marriage relations and a loving home because of the expectation that one’s passion for the Communist movement and the Soviet Union would burn even hotter than devotion to a spouse or one’s children. After all, one informant for the 1952 *Report on the American Communist* exclaimed, “you are a bride of Stalin!”<sup>24</sup> Likewise, the overwhelming association of communism with work instead of domesticity cast doubt on the ability of Communist women to appropriately mother their children.

Yet, motherhood was a discourse deeply fraught, as so many Cold War discourses were, with anxiety. For if the nuclear American family could defeat the spread of communism, it could also generate it. And once again, Mom was to blame. Cold War society empowered women morally, provided they accepted economic and political subservience to their husbands. But women’s moral influence had to be wielded lightly. “The women of America raped the men” in a *de facto* matriarchy, according to successful writer Philip Wylie, whose best-selling book describing “Momism” was declared one of the best nonfiction books of the first half of the twentieth century by the American Library Association.<sup>25</sup> Momism, or the overpowering influence of Mom in the family, drove husbands and sons to become “lifelong sucking-eggs.”<sup>26</sup> These were the men, portrayed in Cold War movies, who became Communists. Indeed, in the 1952 film, *My Son John*, the title character, a Communist spy, has been driven into communism’s seductive embrace by the inappropriate intimacy he shares with his overbearing, yet independent mother. Likewise, in the *Manchurian Candidate*, a Korean War veteran is brainwashed into playing a Communist dupe. He is then controlled and used by his domineering

mother.<sup>27</sup> Thus, discourses around motherhood and communism reflected the deep anxieties of the Cold War nuclear age.

While survival strategies in the form of building bomb shelters, teaching children to duck and cover, and stocking the pantry were key responses to the nuclear age, the awareness of the imminence of nuclear war produced intense anxiety among U.S. citizens. The FCDA tried to mitigate feelings of anxiety by domesticating the atom to show its potential uses in the home. Once again, it targeted housewives as family opinion shapers. Unabashedly stealing the title of Eisenhower's 1953 speech, the President's special deputy on disarmament told 1955 readers of the *Ladies' Home Journal* about "atoms for peace." Promising women "a fuller, richer life," in a world where radioactive isotopes could fight cancer, design more efficient dishwashers, prevent food from spoiling, and provide cheap power, Harold Stassen argued that nuclear energy could "change the face of the world."<sup>28</sup> "I am thankful," he wrote "we are taking the leadership in turning atomic energy into constructive channels." Such articles encouraged women to have faith in military, scientific, and governmental elites.

Publications not explicitly geared toward women, like the influential picture magazine *Life* also put their stamp on the atomic age. Juxtaposing a photo spread entitled "A Jap Burns" with an advertisement for Campbell's Cream of Mushroom Soup, as the managing editor did on August 13, 1945, was neither out of the ordinary nor offensive [figure two]. "*Life's* weekly interpenetration of images...served to insert the atomic age into the narrative of everyday life," concludes historian Peter Bacon Hales. "Holocaust pictures might increase the sales of insurance, but ads for tourist havens and bad-breath cures served to neutralize that atomic anxiety as well, by presenting it as only one among many bodily, family, domestic, national, and global concerns."<sup>29</sup> Communist writers, by contrast, had little patience for *Life's* glorification of the

atomic age and attempted to make visible its editorial strategies. Leftist writer Howard Fast wrote in the *Daily Worker* deploring the magazine's "arrogance" and "brashly vulgar" outlook on the atomic bomb. Indeed, he critiqued the magazine for suggesting that the Japanese "love those cute little atoms the way children love kittens."<sup>30</sup>

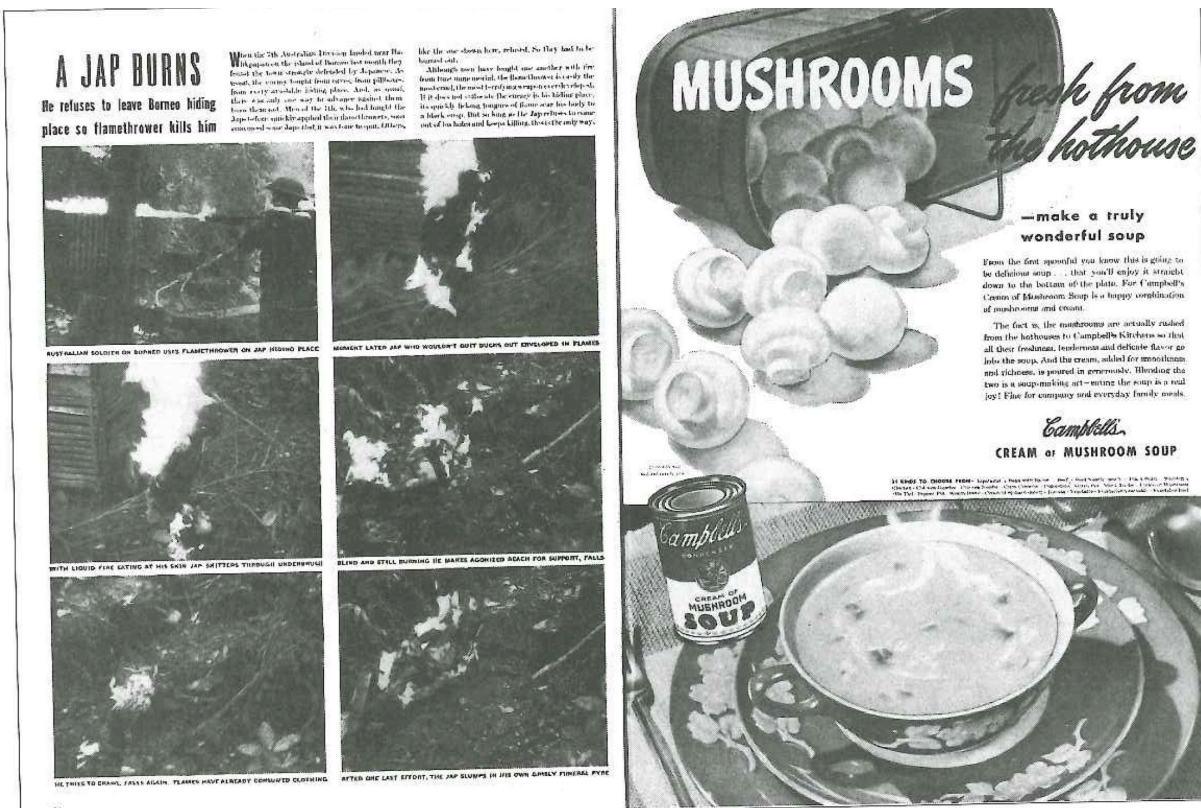


Figure Two

Stockpiling nuclear weapons was also a national survival strategy, and one promoted by President Truman. Discourse about geopolitics embraced strength and aggressive masculinity to combat the Soviets. "The stronger we become, the more possible it will be to work out solid and lasting arrangements that will prevent war. Our strength will make for peace. . . . The growth of our defenses will help to convince the leaders of the Soviet Union that peaceful arrangements are in their own self interest," Truman prescribed in a 1951 speech at Wake Forest College.<sup>31</sup>

Robustly defending the arms race, Truman spoke directly to those who agitated for peace in the U.S. “I am afraid that some people, here and abroad, believe that the creation of armed defenses must inevitably lead to war. This is not the case. We do not think war is inevitable,” he answered. Secretary of State Dean Acheson echoed Truman’s messages, telling the U.N. Secretary General in 1950 that the U.S. would continue to demonstrate “strength in the free world.”<sup>32</sup> The Cold War rhetoric of national leaders marginalized the peace movement and proclaimed the importance of strength through nuclearism. As historian Robert Dean persuasively shows, protecting U.S. hegemony in the free world required cultivating imperial masculinity. Displaying leniency toward the Soviets carried with it the loss of masculinity. Indeed, one political cartoon published after Senator Joseph McCarthy accused Acheson of being part of a plan to “turn all of Asia over to the Communists” showed Acheson limply tossing cream puffs at Joseph Stalin.<sup>33</sup> While the 1947 Truman Doctrine laid out a Cold War anti-Communist consensus that was backed by the force of domestic loyalty hearings, its convictions also led to intervention in Korea. Most Americans accepted that the United States had to be involved in the conflict.

People across the world, however, did speak out against nuclear weapons and war. To these disgruntled peace partisans, Communists contributed their organizing power and dedicated activists. While many Communists were genuinely interested in preventing large-scale nuclear war, they saw this endeavor as tied to the welfare of the Soviet Union. A large March 1949 peace conference held at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City attracted a variety of Communists, socialists, and intellectuals, making it a target of, the *New York Times* understated, “bitter controversy.”<sup>34</sup> The general message emanating from the speakers and activists at the conference upheld the Soviet Union as a beacon of peace in a tense world, while criticizing the

U.S. government for tensing its trigger finger. These arguments were consonant with the CPUSA line, although a variety of non-Communists believed them as well. Other speakers at the Waldorf conference expressed a commitment to socialist principles without pledging support for the Communist Party.<sup>35</sup> Despite the variety of opinions and non-Communists present, repression plagued the event. During the opening banquet, for example, U.S. immigration officials *deported* two of the three Canadian delegates for “alleged Communist activities.”<sup>36</sup> One mainstream press source billed the conference as a “let’s-all-love-Russia clambake.” *Newsweek* reported that everyone was for peace, “Just as everyone was against the man-eating shark. The trouble was that it didn’t mean the same thing in Russian that it did in English.”<sup>37</sup>

Repression against peace activists for their links to international communism continued throughout the spring and into the summer of 1949. When controversial Communist entertainer and civil rights activist, Paul Robeson, held a peace concert in summer 1949, military veterans barricaded the roads leading to the concert, set fire to the platform, chairs, and songbooks, and beat those who managed to make it to the concert grounds. Fiery Ku Klux Klan crosses appeared in the grass when the concert venue lost power.<sup>38</sup> Concert attendees requested police presence to break up the riots. Help did not arrive two hours after the calls for help began. The concert was rescheduled for September, and 20,000 eager listeners showed up, only to meet more angry mobs that flipped over cars. These events were highly visible and garnered press attention, due to violence and communist presence.

By the mid-1950s, then, the association of “peace” with the Soviet Union and Communist activism rendered it a subversive term. “I have found recently that to be an advocate of peace or of world government is almost equivalent to advocating the overthrow of the United States government by force,” conceded one U.N. employee dejectedly.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, when the Justice

Department indicted W.E.B. Du Bois for failing to register the Peace Information Center as a subversive organization, neither the NAACP nor the ACLU came to his defense, so tainted was he with red. Only the Sojourners for Truth and Justice, a black left feminist coalition protested his arrest. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called Communists,” Du Bois concluded glumly.<sup>40</sup> The subversive nature of peace activism alongside the general association of women with peace combined to make this a prominent arena for Communist women to intervene in the broader transnational movement for socialism.

Against the backdrop of fervent attention to the issue of world peace, “the woman question” continued to animate Communist conversation, mostly at the theoretical level. Millard’s pamphlet and Jones’s critiques pushed the theory forward, and an article published in *Political Affairs* under the byline William Z. Foster officially sanctioned theories of gendered oppression that went beyond class oppression. The article, “On Improving the Party’s Work Among Women,” also declared that addressing “male superiority” in the Party was a phase in the fight for women’s liberation.<sup>41</sup> The article likely was not penned by Foster, who at the time was the Party chairman, but instead may have been written by a group of women participating in the subcommittee that formed in the wake of the publication of *Woman Against Myth*.<sup>42</sup> This article, in line with its publication venue, continued to frame women’s oppression as primarily a theoretical problem that could be overcome with more sophisticated theorizing. Indeed, “On Improving the Party’s Work Among Women” mirrored the unembellished style of the journal in which it was published. Yet, Jones continued to be frustrated by the fact that women were not being plugged in to grassroots organizing efforts. “There is much underestimation still of the importance of mass concentration work among women,” she wrote in *Political Affairs*, urging her comrades to “appreciate the need of real attention to this phase of work in order to enable our

women comrades to do effective mass work and Party building.”<sup>43</sup> In this sense, the ownership that women Communists took over the peace petitioning drive symbolized a desire to meld the theoretical perspectives on women’s oppression with the “mass work” that Jones and others saw as so desperately needed.

Thus, in the nuclear age, the nuclear family and their warm, fortified home took center stage. Billed as the place where subversive elements would be tamed and contained with abundance, technology, and the promise of traditional gender roles, Communists allegedly flaunted all of these ideals. Yet, Communists had their own ideas about how to ensure the survival of their families that had little to do with stocking pantries or ducking and covering. They sought to change the discourse entirely. In the next section, I consider the “generic promise” of petitioning by closely reading the Stockholm peace petition to show how it constituted a masculine petitioner, who was a liberal subject.

### **The Promise of the Petition**

The Communist Party enthusiastically participated in a global peace petition drive to register discontent with the Cold War stockpiling of nuclear weapons to fend off the Soviets. “Your hand can stop atomic war! Sign for peace!” declared the petition, drafted at a 1950 meeting of the World Peace Congress in Stockholm. Communist women joined other peace partisans in demanding “the outlawing of atomic weapons as instruments of intimidation and mass murder,” classifying governments using atomic weapons as committing crimes against humanity.<sup>44</sup> While men and women, Communist and not, the world over circulated the same petition, the bulk of discourse on petitioning published in the Communist Party presses focused on women’s activism for peace. Yet, before we can discuss how discourse on women’s

petitioning remade views of motherhood and combated the privatized view of security, we should first explore petitioning as a rhetorical practice.

The Stockholm Peace Petition drive grew out of the third meeting, held in Sweden, of the World Peace Council, a pro-Soviet organization that argued against imperialism and in favor of nuclear disarmament. In April 1950, after the Stockholm conference, peace activists, Communist and otherwise, created the Peace Information Center (PIC), the organization for which Du Bois was indicted. The PIC circulated hundreds of thousands of pieces of literature and issued periodic “peacegrams” with updates on the fight for peace. The CPUSA participated in this Center and the broader drive gladly, noting that the Stockholm Peace Appeal, “opens up new possibilities of bringing into our ranks thousands of the best fighters for peace and security and socialism.”<sup>45</sup> While the Party did hope to broaden its appeal to peace-minded Americans with this endeavor, members were genuinely interested in a world without nuclear war. The CPUSA threw itself into gathering signatures with great success, a mirror of the popularity of the peace petition the world over. Although the majority of signers lived behind the Iron Curtain, almost 1.5 million people signed on in the United States, a total greatly outnumbering membership in the Communist Party. Approximately 235 million people across the globe had signed the petition by August 1950.<sup>46</sup> “Don’t be nervous about signing your name and address,” Flynn told *Daily Worker* readers. “You’re on J. Edgar Hoover’s list...already. You ought to be insulted if you are not,” she joked.<sup>47</sup> Although concerned about the number of signers and their prominence—signers included George Bernard Shaw, Thomas Mann, Henri Matisse, and Pablo Picasso—the *New York Times* concluded that many of the signers were loyal Americans and “idealistic people who are horrified by the thought of atomic war.”<sup>48</sup> Indeed, some Americans signed the petition to protest the prevailing view that peace was an idea that only belonged to Communists.

A close reading of the petition itself shows how it provided rhetorical resources that could be appropriated by Communist women. However, it also shows the rhetorical framing Communist women had to do to make the petition viable for their purposes. The Stockholm Peace Appeal devoted the bulk of its page space to constituting the signers of the petition. The petition's visual structure reflected the idea that the most important readers of a petition may be those who sign it, not the authorities to whom it is directed. This is apparent in the petition's foregrounding of the agency of the individual as a political actor. The top of the petition featured a drawing of a large hand holding a pen in a move to sign while declaring that "Your hand can stop atomic war!" in bold, capital letters [figure three].<sup>49</sup> The hand dwarfed a row of sketched trees, indicating that individual signatures and individual action could save the natural world.

Underneath the drawings, the petition declared that people across the world "in China, Italy, Israel, in England and Brasil, in France and Mexico, in Finland and Poland, Sweden and the Soviet Union, in Africa and India and in the United States" were signing the appeal. The petition then assimilated these countries in a democratic tradition that valued the voice of "the people" in governing decisions. "Tens of millions of people of all faiths and creeds, all races are signing this appeal. If we, the people say NO to war THERE WILL BE PEACE." Despite the fact that popular sovereignty was not protected in all of the countries listed, the petition asserted the power of the people to guide their governments. The petition, then, levied the power of popular opinion, encouraging each individual signer to add their voice to make collective demands.



peace. “I bless everyone, every man and woman, who works for peace,” he wrote. This quotation used Lie’s ethos as the leader of an international institution as he made a claim based in religious authority. By implying that the leader of the U.N. could confer a blessing on those signing for peace, the petition elevated the moral import of peace while constituting a public of signers as the flock deferring to the U.N. and Lie’s leadership.<sup>50</sup> French Catholic leader Abbe Boulrier also used his religious authority when he asserted that “God does not want the atomic bomb dropped.” Boulrier claimed a right of the priesthood in the Catholic faith, necessarily masculine—to know and to understand and to speak God’s will.

The petition also trumpeted the credentials of men like German author Thomas Mann to illustrate that the petition had support in high places. African American labor leader William R. Hood also noted that “I am for world peace. If we don’t have peace we won’t be around to struggle for more democracy and better working conditions.” Showing that peace was the precursor to struggles both for class equality and racial equality, Hood left open the question of where “more democracy and better working conditions” were needed, fitting his statement into the global alliance that included the Norwegian Lie, French Boulrier, German Mann, and International Red Cross. Yet, he defined peace by its place in a network of values that included democracy and equality, which he invited other signers to share. Nonetheless, overall, these statements set up the significance of the petition grounded in masculine religious authority and the credentials of well-known men.

Beneath the large hand illustration in the center of the petition, three bullet points laid out the petitioners’ specific demands. These demands were the closest the petition came to identifying a higher power to redress the grievances. Yet, absent an addressee, the demands constituted the shared beliefs of the signers. In this case, the demands were grounded in

international institutions and law. “We demand the outlawing of atomic weapons as instruments of intimidation and mass murder of peoples. We demand strict international control to enforce this measure,” petitioners claimed. Again, the petitioners made no direct claim on any specific international or national legal body, even as they demanded “strict international control.” This openness gave Communist women the ability to wield the petition as a weapon against both national repression and to claim international legitimacy for protest.

Petitioners next asserted the power of public opinion to define moral actions. “We believe that any government which first uses atomic weapons against any other country whatsoever will be committing a crime against humanity and should be dealt with as a war criminal,” the petition claimed. This strategic move avoided naming the United States for bombing Japan several years earlier (and the editorial board of the *Daily Worker* explicitly emphasized that the petition did not seek to cast past actions of the United States as constituting war crimes).<sup>51</sup> This demand echoed the moral obligation constructed on the left side of the petitions while leaving the question of who would be dealing with a country guilty of using atomic weapons to speculation. It cast questions of nuclear policy in the black and white language of morality. “We call on all men and women of good will thruout [*sic*] the world to sign this appeal,” the last demand concluded—inviting petitioners to testify to the existence of harm. In all instances, the broad and vague “we” was making a demand on an unnamed addressee while levying the force of an unspecified international law.

If the subversive power of petitioning lies in its ability to compel a response from authorities, the fact that the Stockholm petition had no direct addressee may seem to undermine its potential. Yet, the petition was politically consequential, I contend, as it invited its signers to see themselves as individual members of a transnational network instead of the subjects of a

particular country or government. Yet, those circulating the petition did not wholly accept this invitation to transnational belonging. American men circulating the petition spoke about their obligations to do so in manners that reflected the FCDA's concern for individual nuclear families. They grounded their activism in national identity and masculine roles of providership. Communist women had to contend with these arguments in addition to the symbolic potential provided by the text of the Stockholm petition.

The *Daily Worker* declared in bold, front-page print the Communist Party's dedication to heeding the call of the World Peace Congress through circulating petitions in June 1950, "TO SIGN UP 5 MILLION FOR BAN ON ATOMIC WAR!"<sup>52</sup> *Daily Worker* coverage of men and women peace petitioners makes clear that when men were interviewed about their petitioning practices, they spoke about it in very different terms from Communist women. Communist men had to negotiate expectations about masculinity strongly linked to military service and virile strength, seen as necessary to defeat the Soviet machine. The 1940 Selective Service Act codified the relationship between male citizenship and military service and created new tensions for men who, for religious, political, or other reasons, opposed war. "Whose job is it to protect these things you own and this girl you want?" World War II draft propaganda asked. The implied answer linked military service to the protection of family life and the obligation of male citizenry based in gendered obligations.<sup>53</sup> While Communist men had proudly served in the military during the Second World War and often played up such military service in discourse with popular audiences, when the Korean War broke out, they were left in a more precarious position. Because the Korean War surrounded the spread of communist ideals in Asia and the Soviet Union was trying to preserve its sphere of influence in the region, Communists across the globe sought to ease tensions. As a result, Communist men in particular were subject to being

stereotyped as weak-willed sissies subject to the whims of the Soviet Union without the manhood to fight for their country. The purges of alleged gay men from the State Department that began in 1950 elevated the importance of performing virile masculinity, cultivated by the likes of Nixon and later Kennedy.<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, when Communist men spoke about their peace petitioning, they spoke in the language of rights and patriotism to counteract being smeared as pink or lavender, in addition to red. United Electrical Workers (UE) Local 475, for instance, set a goal of 50,000 signatures on the Stockholm petition. Yet, when asked why they undertook such a lofty goal, they did not speak of protecting innocent American life or of transnational obligations. They spoke of the rights of men. “We know that we can do this job,” the leaders of UE 475 told the *Daily Worker*, “and we know that when we do it, we will have taken a most important step to guarantee the right of ourselves and our families to a certain peaceful tomorrow.”<sup>55</sup> Although these Communist men spoke of their families, they positioned themselves as the heads of household with masculine obligations of providership as well as the public roles and authority to protect and wield rights guaranteed by American citizenship. They confidently asserted their ability to succeed. “The major job of the American people today is the fight for peace,” Charles Fay, president of Local 475 explained when asked why UE workers were circulating the petition. “It is the major job because the A and H bombs, developed as weapons of aggressive war, spell misery and death for all of us.” Although these men pointed to the destructive potential of the bombs, their description ended there, with an assertion of technical understandings of the reality of the nuclear world.

Men also spoke in quantitative languages when describing their petition activities, and boasted of the number of signatures that they had gathered. Twenty-five year old Albert Johnson,

a “sturdy metal worker” residing in the Bronx not only got 900 signatures on his petitions, but also mobilized fourteen individuals to begin circulating the Stockholm petition on their own, reported the *Daily Worker*. These descriptions protected the masculinity of the men who circulated the peace petitions instead of going to war by describing their impressive totals and organizational prowess. Likewise, the paper described Johnson’s activity as “buttonholing bypassers” in addition to visiting factories and canvassing the streets. Even when speaking of protection, men spoke of the land and the country over their children or wives. In an editorial penned by a member of the all-male board of the *Daily Worker*, for instance, the author framed peace as a patriotic venture to defend the country in line with masculine obligations. “Only peace can save our country from the horrors of atomic warfare. The peace petitions are the most patriotic movement of real defense in America today. They are aimed at defending America from atomic war on our soil,” he wrote.<sup>56</sup> In the papers, Communist men described it in terms that mirrored obligations of patriotism, framed peace as a right, and redefined peace as a masculine project to protect the United States, not the globe.

As a whole, the activities of male petitioners garnered little press attention. It is nonetheless important to interrogate the ways in which men circulated the petition to understand the unique claims made by Communist women as well as to illustrate the ways in which circulating the petition was a rhetorical action that could hail potential signatories somewhat independently of the claims made in the petition itself. While Communist men perpetuated the petition’s grounding in masculine authority, their discourse about the practice of petitioning channeled that authority into defense of country and family, not fealty to a transnational network. I do not mean to suggest that Communist men were not interested in peace, but wish to show

instead the ways in which *Daily Worker* discourse negotiated the broader feminization of peace by linking men's roles in the peace campaign with their domination over nuclear families.

While women spoke about the motivation for their petitioning activities differently, the peace drive gave them a public and visible opportunity to flex their muscles at the organizing tactics that had been used by the American labor movement (and women's movement) for many years. While many American Communist women lacked factory workplaces in which to circulate petitions, they too conversed with their neighbors by going door-to-door to gather signatures. They sometimes even brought their children along as they did so.<sup>57</sup> Turning instead to the networks that women participated in for signatures, Communist women also passed around petitions at PTA meetings and used crowded shopping centers as places to hand out petitions and peace ballots.<sup>58</sup> Likewise, they organized rallies specifically designed to mobilize women around the issue of peace, requesting that women "make a date with your husband to mind the children Saturday night."<sup>59</sup> Groups like the Lower East Side Committee of Women for Peace sent press releases to *Daily Worker* announcing "Women's Rallies" to "launch a drive for thousands of signatures to a peace petition."<sup>60</sup> Appropriating the tactics of labor organizers, Communist women creatively used the networks to which they had access as they circulated petitions. They spoke in the language of building and movement as they encouraged women to sign. "Let us, as women, mobilize now, before it is too late," Flynn wrote in an International Woman's Day column.<sup>61</sup> "If the women move, the whole people will move," she urged, encouraging women to "build the peace."<sup>62</sup> Doing so demonstrated their interest in performing the "mass work" of the Party and illustrated their capacity for it. It also translated the theoretical foundation they built in pamphlets and journals into a tactic for mobilizing women, rendering it a performative argument for the importance of their advocacy to the Party.

### **The Promise of Motherhood: Subverting the Subversive**

Anxious as a result of the Stockholm Appeal's popularity, U.S. officials sought to discredit it as a Communist ruse. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) issued a statement in June 1950, eager to quickly stop discussion on the petition. Their three-page statement declared that "Americans should not affix their signatures thoughtlessly to this appeal ... Their names and addresses gathered by Communist solicitors will constitute a gigantic and invaluable RED MAILING LIST for the Communist Party, USA." Laying out their benevolent motives, the members of HUAC noted, "The Committee on Un-American Activities desires to acquaint the American people with the facts in regard to the most recent and active effort of the Communist Party in this country. We have every confidence that, knowing the facts, Americans will treat this latest manifestation of Communist chicanery with deserved contempt."<sup>63</sup> The HUAC report and mainstream press coverage that linked the peace petition to Communist activism did slow the response rate, but Communists and non-Communists continued to gather signatures, even in the face of arrests, physical attacks, and workplace discrimination. One policeman, arresting two young women in Los Angeles for circulating the petition, expressed his dismay both at their leftist cause and flaunting of appropriate gender roles that stipulated politics was a man's game, saying they were "too cute to be commies."<sup>64</sup> This dominant discourse about the masculinity of Communist women reflected the supposition that feminists were spinster hags. As this section shows, in their published remarks on petitioning and in the embodied practice of circulating the petition, Communist women constituted themselves as mothers, accepting mainstream Cold War female subjectivity even as they claimed the power to rewrite its meaning.

In their door-to-door petition circulating, Communist women's accounts are rife with the power of identifying as mothers when meeting potential signers. One female petitioner remembered knocking on the door of a woman who expressed concern for her young son. "I wonder what good is struggling to keep him in school, if it's all going to end up with him a soldier instead of in peace?" she asked the woman circulating the petition. This petitioner also spoke to a "tired-looking, middle-aged man" who rebuffed her arguments for signing the petition. "But his wife took the petition from my hand as he spoke and quietly signed it," she wrote. She described her experiences circulating the Appeal with her sons in tow in the *Daily Worker*. She signed her letter to the editor "A Mother."<sup>65</sup> This letter directed the constitutive function of motherhood in two channels—toward Communist women reading the paper and as a means of broadening the audience for the Stockholm petition.

Likewise, when women presented 7,000 signatures on the petition to the United Nations in April 1950, the testimonies of the Minute Women for Peace equated motherhood with a protector role. They revoked this role from Communist men, constituting a community of mothers on whose behalf they spoke. "I am the mother of a young veteran of the last war and of a younger son. . . I speak for all those who lost dear ones in the last war and who have not the chance to intercede to you personally," Mrs. E. M. Butler from outside of Boston pleaded with the U.N. representative. She asserted that she had done her citizenly duty—raising a soldier—even as she opposed the war and sought to protect the life of her younger son. Butler and other women who testified mobilized their status as mothers to become genuine authorities on peace and as a way of creating a unified feminine identity for political action. In almost all of the testimony women gave about why they petitioned, they spoke of the obligations of motherhood. In their views, however, they required doing more than simply attempting to survive a nuclear

war. This was a unique take on the Stockholm petition, as nowhere did the petition mention protecting the lives of innocent children. They invited another potential collective identity for petition signers—mother. This also proved the astuteness of Communist women at their organizing tasks—they recognized the necessity of attempting to convince an audience skeptical of the CPUSA of their credentials in order to be effective organizers for peace. As a result, they built upon the traditional equation of motherhood with peace to reach audiences of government officials even as they created a unified identity for women to be public advocates.

While Communist women capitalized upon the postwar obsession with motherhood, the collective identity that they created in their discourse resignified what motherhood meant during the Cold War. Rather than accept the FCDA's vision of motherhood based in buying products to stock the bomb shelter, Communist women emphasized the militant side of motherhood. "[Women] are a mighty force—the creators of the human race. They will not silently see a few mad imperialists, bent on rule or ruin drive this human race to involuntary suicide. They will judge every country and every government by whether it agrees to outlaw the bombs," Elizabeth Gurley Flynn wrote in an article published on International Women's Day in 1950.<sup>66</sup> Flynn underscored motherhood's militant side by constituting mothers as a "mighty force," calling them to fight to protect their children. She also juxtaposed the creation of children with destruction and the suicidal drive represented by the arms race. This marginalized the creators of this destruction by framing the peace movement as a movement of the masses, while only a few wealthy individuals supported creating bombs. For Flynn, women were the moral compass of society, with the political authority to judge not only people, but also national governments as they levied the moral authority to which the Stockholm petition obliquely referred. "The desire for peace is deep and strong in the minds and hearts of the American people, and especially

American women who have grave fears for the future of the children,” she summarized.<sup>67</sup> Flynn used moral discourse that elevated the peace petitions beyond national interests. Her words were grounded in a moral concern for the well-being of humanity writ large. “The women can help strike the bomb from their [war mongers’] irresponsible hands,” Flynn counseled.<sup>68</sup> Flynn called women to act—not just defensively to protect their homes, but she called them to be on offense and “strike the bomb” from the hands of war makers. She constituted women as a mass of mothers with the moral authority to question the character of legislators in a dangerous status quo. As petitioners, mothers engaged in a militant clash of character with government officials.

Along with emphasizing motherhood’s militant side, Communist feminist peace discourse made its own demands, in addition to the three laid out on the petition itself. The demands Communist women made married class-consciousness to the practice of mothering. They refused to accept the economic subordination of women stipulated by Cold War culture. They demanded an opportunity to participate in discussions of the U.S. budget. “We demand,” Flynn wrote in an appeal designed to motivate American women and show that American women were against the elite imperialists, “that the billions now being wasted in the cold war be spent for research as to the cause of the killers which menace their children and ours—polio, cancer, and other fatal diseases. We demand that it be spent for houses, hospitals, schools, child care, rural improvements, flood control, here and elsewhere.”<sup>69</sup> Flynn and other women who signed the Stockholm peace appeal noted that the poverty that capitalism and the war machine created needed a solution because they were interwoven, articulating intersectional demands.

Indeed, one woman wrote in the margin of a peace petition that she signed that she was for peace, but that she was also for the eradication of poverty. “Yes, I want peace myself. And I want a place for myself and my five little children. I’m in a one room with my five children. But

I do want peace and also a place to live,” this African-American mother wrote.<sup>70</sup> Miss Edna Brown, one of the Minute Women for Peace who delivered petitions to the U.N. also articulated links between race, poverty, and war. “As a young Negro woman, I am here demanding...in the name of Negro people subjected to less than second-class citizenship—that the United States end this cold war. Give us a chance to build a free America, free of minority oppression, free from police brutality.”<sup>71</sup> Articles by Flynn and the words from these women linked poverty and war, a class-consciousness that illustrated the difficulties in providing for families amidst the beating of war drums. They also made visible the blind spots in the narrative of prevention and defense circulated by the FCDA. Stocking the pantry and building a bomb shelter required money and time, which single mothers in one-bedroom apartments did not have. Thus, Flynn’s economic demands called attention to the middle-class and consumerist nature of the FCDA’s answer to nuclear war. With their defense rhetoric, the FCDA had proclaimed a desire to only protect the middle class. Flynn also shifted attention beyond the family pantry to the macroeconomy and inserted motherly concerns like housing and food into a conversation about warheads and stockpiles. This coalitional subjectivity that Communist women constructed as they linked class and race forms the basis of what Karma Chávez calls “a complicated intersectional political approach that refuses to view politics and identity as anything other than always and already coalitional.”<sup>72</sup>

Altogether, then, in their discussions of petitioning that were published in the Communist Party press, Communist women like Flynn and Jones used the Stockholm petition to hail women as mothers to engage in peace activism. But their rhetorical moves of claiming protectorship, asserting militancy, and rejecting economic subordination, were far more than broad strokes to interest women in the Communist Party, although they were that, too. More importantly, I

contend, they represented an appropriation and revision of FCDA discourses that posited women as the key figures in surviving nuclear war while showing the blind spots of this middle-class, consumerist narrative. They resignified motherhood from defensive, consumerist protection into assertive, militant action. This rhetorical strategy focused the moral authority of motherhood beyond the nuclear home and directed it into a global arena that sought an end to war instead of accepting survival tactics for the fallout. The intersectional demands also used the theoretical foundation laid by Millard and Jones in the work of organizing women for peace.

The embodied act of petitioning also functioned rhetorically for Communist women. In these actions, Communist women hailed signers beyond card-carrying Communists and resignified Cold War spaces. Communist women collected signatures at shops and markets, where women were likely to be out doing their shopping. They also haunted bus stops, the lobbies of theaters, and the gates of factories to get working women and the middle class to sign their petitions. Familiar with the mobility restrictions that accompanied raising small children, Minute Women for Peace, a Boston-area volunteer organization, went door-to-door to get housewives and the homebound to sign on. “Everyone is alert on the question of peace,” the Minute Women told Claudia Jones in a *Worker* article. Their campaign met with great success, collecting 10,000 signatures in Boston alone. Women in Pennsylvania, New York City, Gary, Chicago, Ohio, and Pasadena also formed volunteer groups to circulate petitions.

Petitioning was an embodied rhetorical interaction between the petition circulator and the woman (or man) on the street because approaching a potential signer required that women present their bodies along with pieces of paper. Indeed, petition circulating was a visual rhetoric that re-signified capitalist spaces as spaces of democratic engagement. On May 17, 1950, for instance, 125 women activists got 3,000 shoppers in Newark to cast ballots for peace. “Shoppers

carrying large bundles lined up as many as ten deep to indicate their position” on questions including “should all nations outlaw the A and H bombs?” *Daily Worker* coverage explained.<sup>73</sup> The women activists estimated that they spoke to 10,000 people that day, distributing leaflets and petitions. Their embodied presence in the capitalist space of the mall for the purpose of petitioning called into question whether the purchase of consumer goods was enough of a bulwark against nuclear war. More needed to be done, they implied, like working for the outlawing of nuclear weapons. These petition circulating drives re-signified the mall as not just a capitalist space, but also a space where citizens engaged with other citizens.

Appearing in public as a petitioning body and assuming the risks of government surveillance also worked against the assumption that peace was a subversive venture. Indeed, these drives were a flagrant disruption of the government surveillance of Communist feminists’ peace organizations. Communist women showed the failure of HUAC’s bureaucracy as they urged women to “send their vote for peace to President Truman.”<sup>74</sup> They defiantly asserted the right to petition the government, even despite the surveillance and repression of the Cold War era. By framing their petitions for peace in the form of a ballot [figure four], as the women in Newark and several days later in Queens did, Communist women empowered their signers as democratic citizens through the visual display and rhetorical ritual of casting ballots.

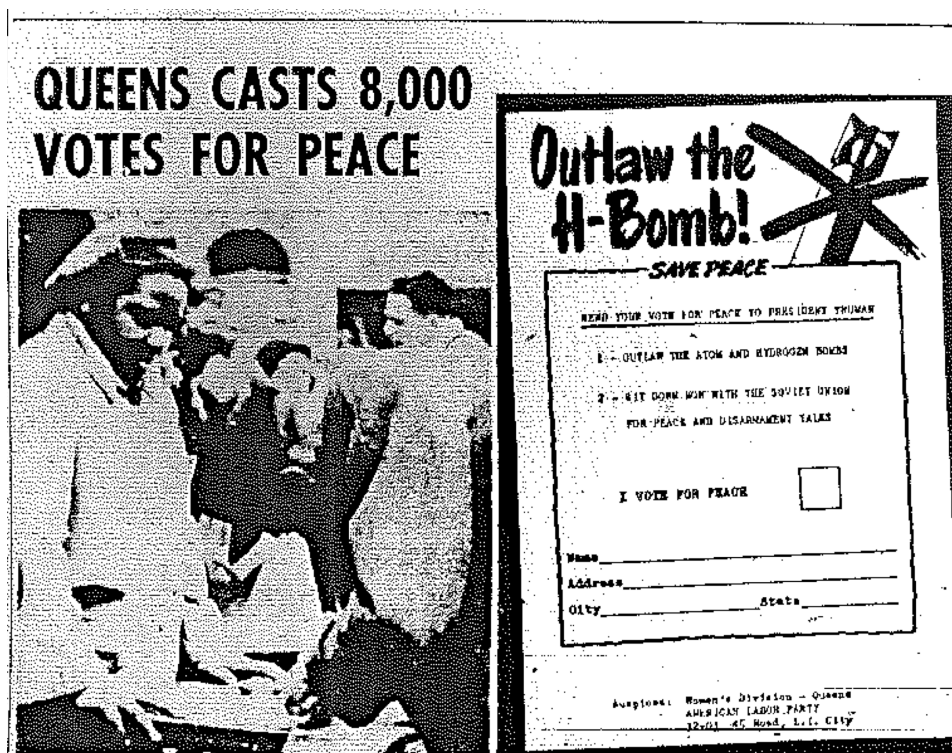


Figure Four

Meanwhile, the embodied nature of petitioning allowed Communist women to preserve a respectable feminine appearance while reaching audiences beyond the readership of partisan papers. Photographs in the *Daily Worker* [figure four] of women petitioners show women, both white and African American, wearing unremarkable feminine hats and jackets, conforming to appropriate dress for housewives out running errands. This worked against the equation of communism with masculinity or general radicalism. Moreover, signing the petitions or casting ballots allowed women to identify their demands absent any political affiliation—as mothers or women instead of Communists—but as political agents. Petitioning presented Communist women with the opportunity to make their demands public. The petition drives that women organized at shopping centers in Newark, Queens, and Boston allowed them to reach largely,

although not exclusively, other women, beginning political dialogues among citizens often overlooked in Cold War militaristic rhetoric.

Ultimately, then, petitioning was a unique rhetorical resource for Communist women. They took a legalistic petition, and used it as an organizing tool—to hail women to accept their role as Cold War mothers. But their discourse about why they circulated the petition made clear that they did not accept the consumerist, defensive nature of that duty, outlined by civil defense films and pamphlets. Instead, they constituted motherhood as militant and outward looking. Likewise, they contested the economic subordination guaranteed by traditional defense narratives, which allowed them to suggest the need for non-consumerist and non-nuclear defense narratives. Additionally, they circulated their own petitions inspired by the Stockholm one, created peace ballots, and staged demonstrations that enacted female citizenship and used the presence of their bodies to flout the repression of the Cold War state. In this chapter's final section, I show how the constitution of female signatories as mothers entered a transnational dialogue that proved oppositional to both dominant discourse and Communist men's petitioning.

### **Witnessing for Peace: Petitioning and Transnational Recognition**

The women across the globe circulating the Stockholm peace appeal were not the only women using the form of the petition to register their desire for peace. The *Daily Worker* published petitions from women across the globe in the early 1950s, especially around the annual March 8th occasion of International Women's Day. Echoing similar rhetorical strategies to the American women circulating the Stockholm Peace Petition, third-world women wrote in to the American Communist papers claiming identities as mothers to beseech their American sisters to work even more diligently for peace. These petitions, I argue, mobilized vulnerable bodies in an

act of rhetorical vision to show the global reach of American capitalism. Asian women supplicated themselves before American women, calling attention to their privilege and forcing them to witness the bodily pain of children overseas. When we witness, we formally sign, swear, see, or audit.<sup>75</sup> Witnessing, rhetorical scholars contend, is not a passive act of viewership, but a “sustained emotional encounter” that engenders political action. This is because witnessing is a dialogic process of political address-ability and response-ability. One recognizes another body and feels compelled to provide a response. With this framework, citizenship transcends struggles between citizens and non-citizens and moves into the realm of a shared struggle against state violence, the effects of which may have global resonance.<sup>76</sup>

Asian women who wrote an appeal to women of Western countries situated the bodies of their children in the context of global capitalist takeover of the third world. Bodies always emerge in conflicted and multiple contexts, rhetorician Kevin DeLuca reminds us. Discourse then helps to shape what they mean.<sup>77</sup> When delegates to the Conference of the Women of Asia in December 1949 gathered in Peking, they wrote an appeal to women of the Western world, which provided this contextual framing. “We women and mothers of Asia, representing hundreds of millions of our sisters, appeal to you, wives and mothers of the United States, Britain, France, and Holland living in imperialist countries whose governments are oppressing our people,” they pleaded, deploying the common petitioners’ tactic of supplicating themselves before a more powerful addressee.<sup>78</sup> “Our children are naked and die of hunger whilst thousands of ships leave our ports heavily laden with cotton and rice,” they explained. This was all so that colonialists could “gorge themselves on the riches of the countries of Asia.” These women depicted children’s emaciated bodies in the context of colonialism, which they made rhetorically vibrant

through the juxtaposition of children dying of hunger while capitalists gorged themselves on cotton and rice. They linked these two groups in the zero-sum colonial relationship.

Using direct comparison allowed the women penning this appeal to create vibrant rhetorical visions. “Words facilitate vision,” Debra Hawhee writes. “Rhetorical vision resides in short bursts of language, in vivid turns of phrase, in lively and lifelike metaphors.”<sup>79</sup> Using intense language and the imagery of children as skeletons, the Asian mothers helped U.S. women “see,” imagine, and act upon their suffering. “We, women of Asia, know no protection as wives, mothers, and workers, nor do our children. We work fifteen hours a day to earn a handful of rice.” Meanwhile, “our unhappy children work from the age of five or six years, in mines, in factories, and on plantations. They know nothing of the happiness of childhood,” they explained. Evoking images of emaciated bodies of children and placing them in dangerous workplaces, this petition used motherhood as a way to make these bodies deserving of a response from those in a country more powerful and wealthy than their own. They constructed this through a direct comparison between children in the United States and in Asia. “They are exhausted by their labors and work till they are skeletons at the age when your children are beginning to go to school. Such is the poverty and desperation that mothers are driven to sell their little ones to factory owners and landowners as slave labor, to brothels, like ordinary merchandise,” the Asian mothers wrote movingly. In constituting these images, the Asian mothers cast capitalism as the culprit, which called into question the innocence of American women who benefited from its abundance.

The Asian mothers next created an affective alliance based on common feelings about children as a way to blur the moral boundaries between their children and those lucky enough to be born in the United States and Western Europe. “You wives and mothers of the United States,

Britain, France, and Holland, who love and are as proud of your children as we are of ours can understand the terrible suffering of mothers whose little ones are murdered, can understand our revolt against the imperialist executioners.” The love and feelings of pride for children created an emotional bridge between women thousands of miles away—a statement of the universality of motherhood to create a desire for peace. They used motherhood as a way to politicize their familial relationships. Articulating their losses as a matter of public concern, they invited a response. “Dear sisters, our interests are the same,” reminded the Asian women. “The imperialists try to dig an abyss of hate between us. Expose their lies! We love our children as you love yours and desire their happiness as you do.” These Asian women constructed a power differential in their appeal, presenting their words as a humble petition to women in developed countries that allegedly had the power and voice to influence the governmental warmongers.

Members of the Union of Democratic Women of Korea echoed these messages in a 1951 letter in the *Worker*, situating intervention in Korea in the context of capitalist takeover that had ramifications for family life. “The American intervention has caused our people unheard of suffering,” they wrote. “The carefully tilled fields lie unharvested. The painstakingly stored reserves of rice have been reduced to ashes.”<sup>80</sup> The ability to provide food for “the shining future of our children” had been destroyed. “Women of the whole world, we call upon you to raise ever higher the banner of the struggle for peace,” the Korean women issued a call to action. These appeals shattered the ability for American Communist women to claim ignorance. In this appeal, bodies were notably absent, highlighting the way in which intervention had undermined the ability to do agricultural work and to live peaceably.

The Women’s International Democratic Federation also sent a peace appeal to American women designed to encourage them to join the peace movement. “The prospect of a world

atomic war is so staggering,” the message declared, “that the mind can hardly encompass it. But already the menace of such a catastrophe has been brought nearer by the war in Korea, where thousands of women and children are dying agonizing deaths under a rain of bombs.” If the mind could “hardly encompass” the magnitude of harm that would occur should atomic war break out, the best way to understand this devastation was through what has happening to women and children in Korea. Communist women were being called to understand atomic war through the pain of innocent mothers and children, as best as such devastation could be understood. Yet, the appeal was directed to American women because they, according to the WIDF, were not innocent. “It is the sons of American mothers who have released these bombs,” the petition stated starkly, before listing demands that included the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Korea and the cessation of bombing. The WIDF appeal lastly called American women to sign the Stockholm peace petition.<sup>81</sup> By contrasting innocent life with mothers not-so-clearly innocent, this peace appeal called American women to act on their responsibility to bear witness to the pain of Korean women. To see the suffering laid at one’s feet and to choose to ignore it equated to a tacit consent of the innocent death. One could not, these appeals implied, confine the locus of one’s concern or care to one’s own family. The need to bear witness to bodies whose pain was caused by United States is, as Susan Sontag has argued, an oppositional, potentially unpatriotic action that demands accountability.<sup>82</sup> Using the link between mothers and their sons, the petition from the WIDF constituted the identity of mother as morally culpable for the actions of their children. Once they had seen the destruction wrought by their sons, this appeal called them guilty.

American Communist women responded to the global women’s petitioning in the Party press. If witnessing is a performance of political address-ability, spectatorship may be a civic

response-ability—an active component of citizenship.<sup>83</sup> In their responses to the global women’s petitions, American Communist leaders constituted themselves as witnesses by appropriating the concerns of these women. This appropriation, I argue, indicted survival discourse from the FCDA suggesting that all one could do was protect their nuclear family. Instead, they affirmed that moral responsibility required one to work in broader means to prevent war, not just weather it. By affirming discourse that placed children’s vulnerable bodies in the context of the rapacious nature of capitalism, American Communist women illustrated the shortcomings of the FCDA discourse in a transnational framework. Jones, for instance, argued that women in the United States had to become more internationally-minded in order to effectively work for peace.

Hence, a fundamental condition for rallying the masses of American women into the peace camp is to free them from the influence of the agents of imperialism and to arouse their sense of internationalism with millions and millions of their sisters the world over; to protest the repressive and death-dealing measures carried through against the countless women victims by Wall Street’s puppets in Marshallized Italy, in fascist Greece and Spain, to link them in solidarity with the anti-imperialist women united 80 million strong in 59 lands in the Women’s International Democratic Federation, who are in the front ranks of the struggle for peace and democracy.<sup>84</sup>

Such an argument reframed U.S. security discourse that viewed nuclear war in a domestic scene by arguing women must themselves as sisters with those across the globe.

Placing this discourse in a transnational framework demonstrated that not only did the “stock the pantry” discourse have a decidedly middle-class cast, perpetuating capitalism’s voracious appetite, which led to the desperate appeals of women in Asia whose children’s bodies fed capitalism’s machine. Flynn in particular noted that American women’s responsibilities could not be so narrowly circumscribed. “If our hands are not to be bloodstained,” she warned, “we have a special duty to demonstrate to our sisters in all lands that we are not a part and will have no part in this shame and disgrace to our country.”<sup>85</sup> Indeed, Flynn argued that active

demonstration was required by American women—a response to women in other countries. In this passage, Flynn also attempted to separate Communist women from the nationalistic pride that Communist men displayed when petitioning. “If the mothers of America could realize the fears and horrors of another war which exist among women in other lands, they would feel compelled to make immediate response to the question I heard over and over in France, ‘What are the American women doing to stop war?’ Every ballot and petition for peace here is an answer, every letter to a Congressman, every letter to a newspaper, every action, large or small, from wearing a peace button to delegations to the United Nations,” Flynn wrote, once again demanding that American women see and respond to women in other countries.<sup>86</sup> By constituting the unique moral responsibility of American women to respond, Flynn expanded the obligations of female citizenship and exalted transnationalism in a repressive climate.

If Flynn encouraged her audience to bear witness to visible pain, writer and editor Betty Millard used the persona of a witness in a 1952 pamphlet about the transnational drive for peace through the Stockholm petition. This carefully constructed persona allowed her to encourage her audience of U.S. women to take ownership of the peace petition drive and awaken themselves from complacency. She began building this persona by noting that she had “the rare opportunity to travel about Europe and Asia these days” while “getting acquainted with all sorts of women.”<sup>87</sup> Once again, Millard grounded her authorial persona in travel, but this was a visual travel, wherein she saw and then spoke of women facing poverty and the atrocities of war. Indeed, the things that Millard encountered during her travels had “to be seen to be believed.”<sup>88</sup> She structured her pamphlet in sections, each section dedicated to a different country and the challenges facing women in that country which had spurred them to work for peace and the eradication of poverty. This systematic travel narrative, which moved from place to place, based

in visual, vivid observations of poverty and war built her credibility as one who could bear witness to the pain of women abroad. While Millard noted from the outset that her opportunity to travel was “rare,” she did not identify the purpose for her travels or the authorizing organization for which she undertook them until halfway through the pamphlet. The first half was composed of the observations of an ordinary citizen-traveler-witness—one who built her credibility through visually witnessing pain.

Millard enacted her purpose of bearing witness to poverty and the pain unique to women through her detailed rhetorical visions of poverty. While in Italy, Millard made these observations:

The poverty, especially in the south, has to be seen to be believed. In Naples I visited a huge windowless dungeon built in the Middle Ages as a storehouse. Two thousand people live there now, piled together incredibly. One typical “apartment” I saw was occupied by a family of eight. It consisted of a dark cave just big enough for a double bed and a charcoal brazier. Four slept in the bed and four children on rags on the stone floor. There were no chairs, no water, gas or heating. Instead of stairs, these sightless holes were connected by dark winding tunnels of earth and stone, lit only by occasional open holes in the roof. When it rained, the water poured down the muddy “stairs” and dripped through the ceiling onto the beds.<sup>89</sup>

She then connected these vivid observations to war. “Instead of taking measures to alleviate these conditions, the government spends billions on war preparations,” she remarked.<sup>90</sup> Millard had seen and thus believed the effect of war preparations on ordinary citizens, and her pamphlet encouraged women in the United States, far from the devastation of Europe, to believe as well.

She also described the ways in which women were resisting the beating of war drums, celebrating their heroism. While in France, she heard of Raymonde Dien, a young woman who lay down on train tracks to prevent munitions from starting their journey to Vietnam. “For this she was imprisoned for many months,” Millard explained. “*But because her act symbolized the feelings of almost the whole of France, there was a tremendous wave of protest, and she was*

*freed*. I saw her picture, cut from magazines, pasted on kitchen walls all over France. Even in Berlin I saw a play about her; her deed is known throughout Europe and Asia and has been depicted by countless artists in drawings, paintings, and sculpture.”<sup>91</sup> While this observation did not bear witness to poverty, it visually confirmed the power of women’s resistance to war, based in Millard’s personal, ocular experience—seeing the posters, the sculptures, and the play. Millard also visually guided the readers of her pamphlet by italicizing stark declarations of protest—a convention she used throughout her piece.

She focused her visual observations in women’s concerns, creating patterns of resistance out of visiting women’s meetings. “I remember...a mass meeting of peasant women in a Hungarian village listening to one of their number, gnarl-handed and kerchiefed like themselves, tell why she wanted no more war. As she related the suffering she had endured I saw handkerchiefs taken out all over the hall, for the bitter memories she evoked in all of them were so strong that they wept, even though they must have heard similar speeches many times before.” Millard narrated her memories of these travels grounded in emotion and visual detail while inviting her readers to be spectators at the meeting in Hungary, to watch and to listen along. “I have seen the same thing happen at meetings of French women, dressed in the black of mourning for sons and husbands, at gatherings of German women, Italian women,” she explained, lest her readers dismiss her memories as warped or unrepresentative.<sup>92</sup> Millard powerfully bore witness to women in pain, organizing against war, and her vivid language created rhetorical vision that invited her audience to see those women—to respond as citizens “seeing” Millard’s rhetorical visions.

The reason for Millard’s transnational journey was the 1949 “Conference of the Women of Asia,” the conference out of which a petition was penned and sent to women in the United

States via the *Daily Worker*. As she described this conference and her role within it, Millard's tone shifted, and she built her authority not merely as a visual witness but also as a member of the Women's International Democratic Federation. "My work as a member of the Secretariat (Administrative Committee) of the Women's International Democratic Federation took me to the Soviet Union and China in the winter of 1949-50," she explained to her readers.<sup>93</sup> Because bearing witness depends upon an audience—one bears witness *to* someone, after all—and because this relies upon the trust of the audience, Millard had built her authority as a member of WIDF. She then provided the testimony of other witnesses who gave her audience more information. "The Indian delegate, in her graceful sari, is speaking," Millard explained. "Our average life span is 26 years. . . . Children from the age of six work 12 and 16 hours a day in factories and on plantations; boys and girls of 10 work in the coal mines. These miserable little ones never know what it is to have a full stomach: 60 percent of them die of starvation and disease before they reach 14 years."<sup>94</sup> Writing in the voice of the Indian delegate, Millard allowed this woman to provide her own testimony to a U.S. audience about the challenges facing Indian children.

This section of the pamphlet went country by country, this time in the voices of the delegates to the conference. "'Often,' said the Iranian delegate, her voice full of bitterness, 'they lie down and die right there in the workshop, and the other doomed children look on and know that their turn will come soon, too.'"<sup>95</sup> Thus, Millard provided her own witness testimony of the conference while speaking to eyewitnesses of global capitalism and war. Responding to the Iranian delegate, Millard commented, "This is the way the beautiful Persian rugs are made that we all admire so much," reminding her audience of American women of the costs of their place

in the consumer market. The persona of the witness and the use of eyewitness testimony proved a powerful rhetorical tool for organizing women in the United States.

Millard also bore witness to the desire for peace in the Soviet Union and China, a controversial argument that she undertook only after having fully built her credibility as a member of the WIDF. “Finding myself in the Soviet Union, I seized the opportunity to learn all I could about the question that concerns all Americans and the whole world so vitally: *Is the Soviet Union bent on war or peace?*”<sup>96</sup> “Of course, three weeks do not make anyone an expert on Russia,” Millard conceded, a concession that presented her ocular evidence as unmediated truth regardless of deep expertise. “One sees signs and banners everywhere calling for *Mir*—peace. There is complete absence of comic strips and radio programs glorifying war, violence and brutality, of the kind that appall American mothers. One never sees Soviet children brandishing toy pistols, a common sight on our streets; I inspected several department stores in Moscow and found no war toys of any kind,” Millard wrote, framing her observations again through women and children.<sup>97</sup> And while she disavowed expertise, she provided her readers with her sensory observations—what she saw and heard in Moscow, along with what she expected her readers as mothers would feel. Her words appeared as direct access to truth “on the ground” in Moscow.

Millard took on a more refutational tone in these sections, a tone that eclipsed her earlier conversationality, a recognition of the controversial nature of her topic. Yet, she relied heavily upon the language of sight as she refuted arguments about the alleged drive to war in the Soviet Union and China. “I have tried to describe the atmosphere of peace and friendship in which mothers of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries bring up their children, as I saw it. I know that this is not the picture that is usually presented to us,” she reminded her audience that she was aware of the contrary nature of her observations but that they were confirmed

through her own eyes. “Very well, you may say...But isn’t the Soviet government aggressive? Hasn’t it taken over one country after another? Look at China!—you may add. I did look at China,” she wrote. Implying that “seeing is believing,” Millard refuted common arguments about Soviet expansionism in the language of sight. And she invited her audience to see, too.

One of the final sections of Millard’s pamphlet was titled “How the Words of Freedom Were Carried Home.” In this section, she bore witness to how women delegates to the conference in Asia traveled home to with messages of peace and freedom. This, after the sections of testimony from individual delegates speaking to conditions in their home countries, solidified her focus on circulation. As Millard went from place to place in the pamphlet, she rhetorically illustrated how messages of peace spread—just like petition circulation. In this way, the organization of Millard’s pamphlet mirrored her argument that women in the United States needed to become vessels through which messages of peace and socialism could circulate.

Taken together, the rhetorical strategy of building the witness persona through a visual travel narrative focused on women and children allowed Millard to keenly accomplish her purpose of fighting complacency among women in the United States. More specifically, the persona of the traveler-witness allowed her to claim access to a deeper truth than many women living in the United States could. As an American woman who had “the rare opportunity” to travel “freely back and forth across the so-called ‘iron curtain,’” Millard wrote that she was “struck” with several things. One of which was “the fact that our newspapers *do not tell us the truth* about the way hundreds of millions of our fellow human beings think, feel, and act.”<sup>98</sup> It was Millard’s witnessing and travel that allowed her insight into the way other people felt and led her to the careful conclusion about the worldwide desire for peace. Identifying as an American with the use of “our,” she made clear that access to new information was needed to

galvanize the fight for peace. Thus, the persona she created gave her the latitude to critique the U.S. government in a way that many others could not. “It is hard for many Americans to understand how deeply women abroad feel about war,” she wrote. While Millard did not identify herself as a mother in the pamphlet—doing so may have raised questions about her mobile lifestyle—she spoke about women largely as mothers and the testimony she gathered focused upon the lives of women and children in the countries that she visited. She claimed authority as a female witness to a type of information unknown by male seekers of peace. This was the authority needed to understand and organize effectively an alliance—it functioned both to constitute the collective of women to work for peace and to cement ownership and organizing power on the part of women Communists.

If Millard took on the persona of a witness to rhetorical visions of pain and poverty, Communist women like Flynn demanded an official response to these visions in her column. In a November 1950 column, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn quoted women’s appeals from other countries and asked, “How can we American women answer this appeal? There is a profound truth in this letter...the political and moral responsibility of American women to vote only for those candidates who are pledged to an immediate peace in Korea and to outlawing atomic weapons.”<sup>99</sup> Flynn explicitly asked American women to respond to the claims made on them by women in Asia. The national political activities of American women, such as voting for candidates in line with the quest for peace, implied the response-ability, the witnessing and responding to the pain of women the world over, and thus became an intervention in discourses of female security obligations. By engaging in this transnational conversation, Communist women bore motherly witness to the bodies of children in pain, which had been ravaged by capitalism. This significantly illustrated the embeddedness of American discourses of nuclear

survival in capitalist frameworks, as well as made American women who quite literally bought into those discourses responsible for the perpetuation of the nuclear problem. Once again, Communist women used their transnational, Marxist framework to remake a vision of female citizenship that required circulating petitions and attempting to stop nuclear war at its roots instead of merely attempting to shield the nuclear family. Even as Communist women invited signatures to the Stockholm petition from women who identified as mothers, they resignified what motherhood meant, such that it obligated women to be active in transnational coalitions.

### **Conclusion**

So subversive was activism for peace in the early 1950s that it was Jones's 1951 essay "For the Unity of Women in the Cause of Peace!" that was the main piece of evidence in her trial that would later land her in jail for the fourth time in three years. Likewise, almost every organization in which Communist women worked that spoke against nuclear war and the hostilities in Korea including the American Peace Crusade and American Women for Peace ended up on the Attorney General's "subversive organization list." Both groups filed paperwork to contest their inclusion on the list, appeals which were handily dismissed by the Justice Department.<sup>100</sup> The Justice Department was so paranoid about the links between peace and communism that it continued to pursue the case against the APC even after the organization dissolved. "Question: Who are the officers? None. What is the address? It has none. From where are its funds received? It does not receive any," argued a lawyer in the 1955 hearing about the organization. And yet, the motion to dismiss the case was denied.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, in Illinois, a Christmas card sent by the local chapter of the APC that said "Peace on Earth and Good Will to Men" was admitted into evidence at an Un-American Activities Committee hearing.<sup>102</sup>

Perhaps because of its subversive nature and because of national discourses that had long associated women with essentialist maternalism and peace and caring, Communist feminists seized this prominent issue as a major vehicle to expand their place as organizers in the Communist Party and to enact both U.S. citizenship and transnational belonging. In the embodied circulation of petitions as well as in Communist Party publications that encouraged women to petition, Communist feminists revised prominent security discourses. Accepting their Cold War roles as mothers, they leveraged that role to challenge national discourses about nuclear war that assumed that an individualist, consumerist survival strategy was the extent of their obligations. Instead, they showed the blind spots in the “Grandma’s Pantry” narrative. They also challenged Communist men’s patriotic embrace of national security by using petitions from women across the world to witness how their moral obligations extended beyond the edges of the United States. Communist women’s attempt to make peace activism feminine and respectable would later be adopted in the 1960s by Women Strike for Peace, and although the organization seemed novel, CPUSA women had already used many of the tactics now associated with the WSP group such as deploying motherhood, posing women as a moral force, and appearing conventionally feminine.<sup>103</sup>

While these rhetorical strategies, I argue, significantly enabled the building of transnational coalitions during the early Cold War, we ought not uncritically adopt them in twenty-first-century labor coalitions. While the appeal to a universal maternal peace sentiment was successful because it elided differences between women, its power was augmented due to motherhood’s presence in national discourse. Likewise, because it relied primarily on affect instead of assumptions about how women’s lives were all the same in significant ways, its universalizing character was made more benign. Yet, the success of this strategy, I suggest, was

also possible because there were prominent orators like Claudia Jones who attended to racial difference and called upon white feminists to see these differences as classed, while maintaining roles in all-black organizations and mixed race and transnational coalitions. Indeed, the central focus on class made coalitional subjectivities in the CPUSA and forming alliances a more manageable task. For Flynn, Jones and their comrades, for instance, it was never *just* about gender, it was always about class, too. Studying the words of these Communist feminists calls attention to the silences in twenty-first century feminism—what historian Dorothy Sue Cobble terms feminism’s “class problem,” a failure to recognize that class is still a significant component of lived experience.<sup>104</sup> The rhetorical strategies of Communist women also remind scholars of the power of seeing to compel activism—an insight that requires us to rethink spectatorship’s tie to passivity and recognize its active potential.

Of course, if “peace” was a subversive term due to the desire to contain communism in Korea and throughout the world, working for peace in transnational alliances with those behind the Iron Curtain was doubly problematic for U.S. officials. As the next chapter makes clear, when anti-Communists came knocking on doors to arrest Communist women, these stalwart radicals found another manner in which to relate to their Party, nation, and world. The opportunity to speak in defense of themselves at trials provided a broader audience for Communist women as they issued passionate statements supporting democracy and dissent.

## **Chapter Five**

### **“I Speak My Own Piece”: Imagining New Possibilities in McCarthy’s Heyday**

At 224 East 12th Street, the doorbell was buzzing insistently. Inside their apartment, sisters Kathie Flynn and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn were preparing breakfast for Kathie’s school-aged daughter. The summer day was shaping up to be sweltering. After being buzzed in and climbing the three flights of stairs, three suited guests brusquely pushed past Kathie to enter the apartment. The trio’s leader declared that they held a warrant for Flynn’s arrest for “teaching and advocating the violent overthrow of the government.” Gulping down her morning coffee, Flynn left with the FBI officers just after seven on that morning in June 1951. “This is a long range proposition,” she whispered as she was being ushered out the door, in an attempt to calm her family’s fears. And she was right. Flynn’s entanglement with the law did not end until July 1957, a date that marked her release from prison and the end of her parole restrictions.

It was still early and the normally bustling New York streets were largely deserted on Manhattan’s Lower East Side. The FBI agents loaded Flynn into a car and drove her through the Bowery to the Federal Court House in Foley Square. Here, she awaited the arrival of fifteen other comrades, also arrested for violating the 1940 Smith Act. After being fingerprinted and registered, Flynn placed the one phone call she was allowed. She called her sister, offering more words of reassurance. When she hung up, she handed the phone to one of the arresting officers, who then promptly placed a call to his family. This was not his usual line of work, he explained to Flynn when she raised her eyebrows in question. “That he had to go forth at dawn to arrest a Communist apparently had his family as much in a dither as my arrest had mine,” Flynn smirked.<sup>1</sup> Flynn herself was no stranger to arrests, having been arrested ten times alone in her early activism with the Wobblies.

Three other women defendants joined Flynn in the courtroom where she was arraigned and had her bail set. They included Betty Gannett, Claudia Jones, and Marian Bachrach, who would later be granted severance from the trial due to advanced cancer. This was Jones's fourth arrest in three years. As Flynn related, the press "unflatteringly" referred to this group of sixteen Communists sitting glumly in the courthouse as "the second string Communists," because a group of male leaders led by Eugene Dennis had already been arrested in 1948. This "first string" group had been found guilty of advocating the overthrow of the U.S. government using force and violence, and their appeal had been rejected. Armed with the approval of the Supreme Court, the government pursued the female Communist leaders in 1951. This fact irked Flynn to no end. "As the only woman member of the [National] Board [of the CPUSA] I felt quite embarrassed and at a loss to explain why I was not arrested with my co-workers," she complained. "I felt discriminated against by Uncle Sam!"<sup>2</sup> Even the fact that the media referred to the trial of these second stringers as "the Flynn case" did not lessen her indignation at what she called the "whole legal chicanery."

Meanwhile, in Brooklyn, when FBI officers arrived to collect James Jackson, another Communist leader, they found him to be not at home. After his wife, Esther Cooper Jackson, distinguished activist in her own right, answered the door, she answered honestly that she did not know where her husband was, nor did she know when he would return. Although her answer was the truth, the disappearance of her husband was the beginning of her entanglement with a bureaucratic apparatus intent on harassing leftists. As the FBI propelled itself into a nationwide search for the missing man, Cooper Jackson and her two daughters found themselves targets of constant surveillance. Agents in fedoras and trench coats would tail them on walks around their Brooklyn neighborhood, and strange, threatening phone calls were a common occurrence for the

Jacksons. This was compounded by intense loneliness and uncertainty as to when and if Cooper Jackson would see her husband again. The community of Communists in Brooklyn started referring to James Jackson and three others who, unlike Flynn, opted to go underground instead of standing trial as “unavailables.” Flynn’s arrest, Jones’s eventual deportation, and Jackson’s disappearance illustrated the intense personal costs of Cold War activism in the face of the FBI’s redbaiting.

This chapter explores how Communist women’s rhetoric changed in the wake of the peace campaign, the success of which led to increased state surveillance and repression. Having already dedicated a host of publications to calling Communist women to see themselves as powerful political actors with unique perspectives on the class struggle and having largely convinced the Party leadership of the intersectional nature of oppression, they next issued more direct challenges to the political imaginary of the Cold War state. The arrest and surveillance of prominent Communist women provided an opportunity to speak to broader audiences beyond the CPUSA in courtrooms and the capitalist media. Communist women seized this chance to collectively imagine a new society. To reach these new audiences, Communists like Flynn, Jones, and Cooper Jackson used rhetorical strategies like rehearsing abstract democratic principles and weaving compelling biographical narratives. While Flynn, Jones, and Cooper Jackson sought to constitute these audiences as new citizens dedicated to dissenting speech, all three of them also enacted this new form of activism that refused to be silenced as they claimed identities as citizens. Taken together, the new world these three women collectively imagined rejected the Cold War political imaginary and its attendant practices of individual consumerism in lieu of a collective, vocal, and politically active citizenry. Situating their Communist ideals in

this context for a broad popular audience represented an attempt to sustain the activism of Communist women beyond the 1950s and into the 1960s and 1970s.

The trials of Communist women provided an exigence that compelled a shift in rhetorical strategies to safeguard the feminist activism that had blossomed with Flynn, Millard, and Jones. The trials, when the most prominent Communist feminists were hauled before a captive jury and judge, were a *kairotic* moment. I contend, then, that the trials represented a defiant enactment of Communist women's newfound power before the American public. Flynn, Jones, and Jackson provided eloquent statements on citizenship, activism, and democracy. Yet, in Kate Weigand's broad treatment of Communist feminism, the trials of Communist leaders have been overlooked, as she apparently thinks that the trials provided no opportunities to enact or advance feminist beliefs.<sup>3</sup> Little in general has been said about the Flynn trial, despite the fact that Eugene Dennis's trial has garnered much historical scrutiny.<sup>4</sup> Examining the trial rhetoric of female Communists also suggests that there were more nuances in the Party defense strategy than originally believed. Communist women circulated powerful statements about experiences of being marginalized that resonated beyond the immediate context of their trials while helping to preserve the legacy of their feminist activism.

Their collective attention to the world-making power of discourse is why I read Flynn, Jones, and Cooper Jackson together in this chapter. Flynn and Jones delivered their statements on the stand in front of a hostile courtroom in 1953, while Cooper Jackson penned her pamphlet in response to her husband's disappearance and the constant FBI surveillance she faced throughout the early fifties. The pamphlet was published one month after Flynn and Jones faced the jury. While all three texts confront the state and its repressive power, all three rhetors also proclaim statements of defense that valorize discourse and articulate a central, if varied, role for women in

the CPUSA and broader class struggle. Accordingly, these texts represent the engagement of Communist women with the broader public as they challenged the overarching Cold War figurehead of the 1950s—Joseph McCarthy.

The public statements of Flynn, Jones, and Cooper Jackson also represent Communist women engaged in the process of collective imagining of new worlds beyond the Cold War United States. Robert Asen argues that imagining is a “constitutive social force” drawing “its power from a capacity to represent people, objects, and ideas.”<sup>5</sup> A force that takes place through “discursive engagement,” Asen explains that collective imagining unfolds when public interlocutors reflect upon “rights, responsibilities, and obligations granted, entitled, and owed one another.”<sup>6</sup> Collective imagining is a process whereby advocates can shift what Karma R. Chávez calls “rhetorical imaginaries,” or the “persuasive messages, images, and ideologies designed to move people toward particular ways of existing and envisioning themselves and others.”<sup>7</sup> As Communist women presented public statements surrounding their arrests and entanglement with Cold War repression, they collectively engaged in a process of imagining the world they wanted to live in and its gender and race relations.

To understand how Communist women collectively imagined a new world, this chapter first explores the context of the trials. In order to understand why Flynn and Jones had to deliver speeches in self defense, I explore the political pressure stemming from McCarthyism that demanded absolute vigilance against the alleged Communist threat. In the second section, I explore how Flynn constituted an audience of citizens committed to a deliberative political process. The chapter’s third section argues that Jones valorized marginalized voices by countering representations of African Americans circulating through the trials. In the final section, I turn to Esther Cooper Jackson and her view of Cold War repression on the home front.

Cooper Jackson, I maintain, articulated the significance of an oppositional space, a black counterpublic, which needed to be nurtured by the words of a biographer. Taken together, these three texts ensured a home for dissent, sustained women's activism, and argued for a better future, as they looked beyond the Cold War stifling of speech.

### **Chilling with McCarthy**

Flynn and Jones met their arrests with weary resignation. They understood them to be largely a foregone conclusion as a result of the power of a widespread network of institutional mechanisms that watched over those suspected of Communist activities in the United States. In order to comprehend the pressures to which theirs and Cooper Jackson's public statements responded, it is necessary to explore the ways in which McCarthy and the Truman administration built this wide apparatus to root out alleged subversion with the goal of appreciating how difficult it rendered dissent.

Although the 1950s are a decade synonymous with the repression that bears the name of Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy, in fact, the institutional mechanisms for the resulting suspicion and fear were laid well before he began his barnstorming tours waving lists of alleged Communists. The House of Representatives created the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1938. During the Cold War, the committee focused primarily on communism and used now infamous tactics of public humiliation and disclosure to root out alleged Communists from government.<sup>8</sup> In 1940, as a response to Hitler's growing power throughout Europe, Congress unanimously passed the Alien Registration Act (also known as the Smith Act) which required resident aliens to register with the government and forbade any person from knowingly or willingly advocating, advising, or teaching the necessity of

overthrowing the United States Government by force or violence.<sup>9</sup> While only two people were arrested for violating the Smith Act during World War II, it would indeed prove a dangerous weapon in the government's domestic arsenal as the Cold War dawned.<sup>10</sup> This was the law under which the "first string" leaders of the CPUSA, including all the members of the National Board except Flynn, were indicted. In a testament to the Smith Act's overreaching power, U.S. Attorney General J. Howard McGrath also threatened to prosecute the millions of Americans who had signed the Stockholm Peace Petition under the Smith Act in July 1951.<sup>11</sup>

The Supreme Court of the United States became part of this repressive apparatus when they issued their decision in *Dennis v. U.S.* Upholding the convictions of the leaders in 1951, the court broadly interpreted "clear and present danger" to justify such repressive measures. In the plurality opinion, Justice Vinson argued that overthrow of the government was "certainly a substantial enough interest to limit speech." Because of the import and danger of such advocacy, the clear and present danger standard could not mean, he wrote, "that before the Government is to act, it must wait until the *putsch* is about to be executed, the plans have been laid and the signal is awaited."<sup>12</sup> Despite the fact that the prosecution could never prove that the Communists attempted to overthrow the government—merely that they conspired to advocate government overthrow—the distinctions did not seem to matter to the Court. Though the Communist leaders insisted that they never advocated violence, their arguments fell upon deaf and paranoid ears. The *Dennis* case, in the opinion of journalist Scott Martelle, effectively criminalized political belief and dissent.<sup>13</sup>

McCarthy's browbeating public statements also contributed to the atmosphere of hysteria wherein dissent was interpreted as disloyalty. On February 9, 1950, he delivered the infamous Wheeling, West Virginia speech to the Women's Republican Club. Finally able to keep his 1946

campaign promises to deal seriously with the issue of domestic communism, McCarthy harangued the Republican women about the intensity of the challenges facing U.S. Cold Warriors. “Today we are engaged in a final, all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity. The modern champions of communism have selected this as the time, and ladies and gentlemen, the chips are down--they are truly down,” he declared urgently.<sup>14</sup> McCarthy’s concerns were largely overblown given the waning strength of the CPUSA by the 1950s. Although U.S. Communists still had an impressive potential to mobilize people to work for peace and power in some of the leftist unions, they had little direct contact with Moscow and scant revolutionary plans. Yet, none of that mattered to McCarthy, who saw the combination of China’s “fall” to communism, the Soviet’s success in exploding an atomic bomb, the conviction of Alger Hiss for perjury, and the arrest of Klaus Fuchs for supplying atomic information to the Soviet Union, as the perfect backdrop to launch his career on the back of an increasingly tense geopolitical situation.

The implications of McCarthy’s hunts for reds (and lavenders—men accused of being gay and as such not conforming to McCarthy’s prized white masculinity) are well documented. Appearing soft on communism, as the persecution of Secretary of State Dean Acheson made clear, was not an option. In the wake of the Wheeling speech, even levelheaded journalists like Walter Lippmann suggested Acheson resign to “restore a measure of confidence and some national unity in the conduct of foreign affairs.”<sup>15</sup> Yet, the ripples spread beyond those working for President Truman. The discourse of national leaders sent a clear message to American citizens that they, too, had duties during the Cold War. Leaders asked citizens to watch out for subversion and suspicious activity in their workplaces, schools, and neighborhoods, while the FBI maintained an extensive network of paid informants. The climate of fear was such that by

the mid-fifties, graduate students at the University of Chicago were so afraid of having their names on a list—any list—that they refused to even sign a petition to get a soda machine in the physics lab.<sup>16</sup> Universities suffered extensively as professors and scholars known for leftist politics quit, were forced to resign, or merely muted their critical impulses for decades to come. As historian Geoffrey R. Stone points out, “The Republican’s Red-baiting reaped a political windfall” in the 1950 Congressional elections. Republicans won every House and Senate seat in which they repeatedly forced the “soft on communism” label onto their opponents.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, loyalty boards investigated more than 4.7 million government employees. “If Communists like apple pie and I do, I see no reason why I should stop eating it. But I would,” one such government employee concluded glumly.<sup>18</sup> Loyalty had to be absolute.

Ironically, another part of the Cold War repressive state was a propaganda arm that reframed its meaning for international audiences. In order to counter communism, propagandists were exporting images of freedom, democracy, and choice as the American way. A key component of the U.S. propaganda program involved cartoons and pamphlets promoting democracy. One 1950s film distributed by the United States Information Service (USIS) entitled *Social Change and Democracy* told a homespun story of a group of white fisherman who entreat their local city council to protect their lakes from pollution. The men peacefully presented their grievances to the authorities. They won recognition of their interests without backlash. The film sought to show how democracy considered all interests and helped “communities to flourish because the people flourish.”<sup>19</sup> The story of the fishermen also illustrated how democracy balanced power between competing interests and tensions between community welfare and individual freedom.

Because of the importance of this message, the USIS and Voice of America radio broadcasts at first ignored McCarthy's rise, dismissing it as a matter of domestic interest. But as he gained prominence, the anti-Communist crusade became another blot on the U.S. democratic record, as Western Europeans found his tactics antithetical to democracy. When propagandists were finally forced to confront McCarthy in global communications, they still found it easier to attack the Soviet system of government as opposed to defending McCarthy's actions. Pamphlet after pamphlet declared, for instance, that "communism must have blind, unthinking obedience." "This is a government of the party, by the party, for the party," declared the American ambassador to the USSR in 1947.<sup>20</sup> The Soviets, too, used McCarthy to demonstrate that U.S. officials were too cowardly to allow frank discussion of Marxism in their country. Thus, even as a broad coalition of mainstream organizations supported the frenzy of the anti-Communist hunt, such hunts existed in tension with U.S. propaganda messaging.

Alongside the legal precedent, the public rhetoric, and the propaganda, the Cold War United States promoted an extensive surveillance apparatus targeting subversives. Those affiliated with the Communist Party's National Board, functionaries who would have never had time to infiltrate the U.S. government, were followed, observed, and detained.<sup>21</sup> Their passports were revoked, their children harassed at school, and their family members jailed and deported. The relentless tailing of the families of Smith Act convictions was deemed necessary for national security, and it cost the FBI almost one million dollars a year.<sup>22</sup> Against this powerful apparatus, Communist women found ways to resist. Lillian Green, wife of the disappeared leader Gilbert Green, was fond of toying with her FBI followers. She would often make them tail her to Long Island's beaches where she languorously sunbathed on the hottest afternoons. The FBI officials would be condemned to an afternoon of sweating profusely in their sweltering cars in dark, wool

suits.<sup>23</sup> Some of the sassier wives, like Lil Green, found quotidian methods of resistance to constant surveillance, but their persistent interaction with the state was trying financially, politically, and emotionally.

These wives, previously politically active or not, became heads of households, charged with explaining their husband's political activism to children asking questions about when daddy would return. By spearheading a committee to provide support for families absent a breadwinner as a result of Smith Act convictions, many women connected with the Party became prominent activists. In reading about the endeavors to raise money and support children, other women on the Party's fringes were drawn in. Peggy Dennis, wife of Eugene Dennis, the Party secretary who served a five-year sentence in jail, remembered that the time of the trials and Families' Committee helped translate the goals of the Communist Party into terms easy to understand. "Within the context of that time, and given the Party's heavy-handed, depersonalized use of dogma, the efforts of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and we women to translate the repressions into simple human terms and depict what was happening to individuals, to women and to families, was a new and positive concept for our Party, and it had a salutary effect on the movements," she recalled.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, during this time, Dennis argued, the Party was able to more successfully make "abstract Marxist theory and dogma about the Woman Question [that] might agitate experienced Party women," relevant to "average women and their daily needs and problems."<sup>25</sup>

It was amidst the entangling of these various public messages emanating from the Courts, the FBI, and McCarthy, that Flynn and her comrades found themselves arrested. The 1952 trial attracted much attention. The 1951 Supreme Court decision that upheld Dennis's conviction under the Smith Act provided a green light to red hunters. Flynn and sixteen of her comrades were arrested a mere two weeks after the Court rendered the decision in *Dennis v. U.S.* Drama

persisted even before the trial opened. Flynn and her comrades struggled to find lawyers to represent them, as the five defense attorneys from the *Dennis* case were in jail for contempt of court and two of them had been disbarred. As a result, Flynn marshaled her defense experience and largely served as her own attorney. Flynn's trial—all ten months of it—took place in the Federal Court House in Foley Square, a Federal Court in New York's Second District.

Flynn called her own trial a “monotonous repetition of the *Dennis* case,”<sup>26</sup> and while the capitalist press agreed with her observation, they still closely watched the unfolding events. Comparing Flynn's trial to Dennis's earlier one, Harold Faber wrote in the *New York Times*, “The setting is the same—Room 110 of the United States Court House on Foley Square. The charge is substantially the same. And the evidence is so far about the same.”<sup>27</sup> Faber did note, however, that the atmosphere was different this time around. “There are no demonstrations or pickets outside the court. Inside there is none of the bitter verbal exchange between counsel and the court.”<sup>28</sup> Instead, as he and other journalists noted, there was a weariness, a resignation, about the jury and the defendants stemming from the recognition that this would likely be another lengthy trial.<sup>29</sup> Even without protestors crowding the steps of the courtroom, the *New York Times* reported that the seats allotted to spectators were often full.<sup>30</sup> The *Times* issued almost daily updates on the trial, and Flynn's activities were widely reported given her status as the most famous of the defendants. Evidence suggests that Flynn and her comrades levied the power of popular opinion to some effect. A watchdog group composed of non-Communists also watched the trial closely and issued weekly press releases about the events. By the end of the trial, the CIO, NAACP, ACLU, National Negro Labor Council, 51 local trade unions, and over 150 religious leaders publicly spoke out against the prosecutions.<sup>31</sup>

Judge Edward Dimock presided over Flynn's lengthy trial. Dimock was a rare judge, who held Flynn in high esteem, explaining after the verdict in a speech to a bar association meeting that he found her and her comrades "intelligent and most well educated." Dimock praised Flynn's speaking ability in particular, explaining that her speeches were "magnificent and deserve to be recorded in the reports of state trials." His esteem for Flynn was colored by his skepticism of the charges against her. It was strange, Dimock argued, that Communists could be preparing a revolution without "any instruction in the use of arms of explosives or sabotage."<sup>32</sup> Instead, in his opinion, most American Communists had legitimate, serious grievances against the U.S. government. "All through the trial, I could feel Joe Stalin breathing down one side of my neck and Joe McCarthy breathing down the other," he confided to his fellow lawyers, summarizing the personal effects of Cold War hysteria.

While Flynn and her comrades faced no delusions about the obstacles they were up against and their likelihood of success, they still poured upwards of \$5,000 a week into mounting the best defense that they could.<sup>33</sup> Flynn testified numerous times and submitted to cross-examination as the ten-month trial dragged on. During the trial, she served a thirty-day sentence in the Women's Detention House for refusing to name other members of the Communist Party. Yet, despite Dimock's sympathies, after seven days of deliberations, the jury found all on trial guilty.<sup>34</sup> The announcement of the jury verdict was a front-page headline in the *New York Times* on January 22, 1953. All told, the trial filled 153 court days, amassed four million words of testimony, and left a trial record of 16,000 pages.<sup>35</sup> The case went through a variety of appeals until, finally, the Supreme Court refused to hear it. Ever the activist and incapable of sitting still, Flynn spent the waiting time writing her autobiography and running for Congress.<sup>36</sup> Flynn and her comrades entered jail in 1955.

The Smith Act trials and McCarthy purges had a lasting impact on the American Communist Party—the Party lost most of its coherence as a social movement. As historian Rosalyn Fraad Baxandall concludes, during these “scoundrel times,” “the government took a sledge hammer to squash an ailing gnat.”<sup>37</sup> The response to the already beleaguered Communist Party greatly outweighed their influence in American society. The effects on the broader American population were significant, too. The “silent generation” of the 1950s grew up in the shadow of fear of their neighbors and of voicing critical thoughts. While national political discourse from Truman to McCarthy equated citizenship with assent, Communist feminists like the spunky Flynn and eloquent Jones responded to this repression by imagining a new world that demanded a different kind of citizen.

### **Constituting a New Audience**

The Flynn trial, I argue, represented an opportunity for Communist women leaders to take their newfound political power and voice to a broader audience. This audience existed beyond CPUSA journals and newspapers. Flynn and her co-defendants knew that their words would be circulated in some manner beyond the readership of CPUSA publications. While Flynn’s words garnered the most scrutiny of any of the defendants on trial, it is her statement before sentencing that is the most famous speech emanating from the trial.<sup>38</sup> Already having been found guilty, Flynn and Jones had, like orators on the gallows and docks before them, no need to convince the jury of their innocence. Speakers who have “stood trial before the bar of public opinion” may resort to similar strategies, particularly if their rhetorical acts on the gallows, to the court, or in front of the jury were unlikely to result in favorable outcomes.<sup>39</sup> In the case of courtroom speeches delivered by those facing hostile audiences, insurmountable odds, or

even an already-delivered guilty verdict, the demands of the situation often include saving face and preserving one's reputation. A speaker may also assert their innocence and claim to be the victim of an unfair trial.<sup>40</sup> In the Cold War context, asserting innocence and decrying the system were powerful dissenting moves. Recognizing that the verdict had already been delivered, Flynn and Jones attempted to levy the power of popular opinion to legitimate their dissents as acts of citizenship.<sup>41</sup> They did this, I argue, by engaging in collectively imagining a new U.S. public.

Flynn's speech was not delivered to her immediate audience. Instead, she targeted her appeals to an audience of posterity, which she constituted through the course of her speech. She endowed this audience with clear judgment and a commitment to democratic principles. She began framing her speech centrally about dissent by enacting the importance of speech in a Cold War climate committed to silence. "Your honor," she addressed Judge Dimock, "my first impulse was to remain silent during this last act of our trial, which I feel could have been foretold in April 1952. . . . Your honor undoubtedly has the list of our names and sentences already in mind, and this procedure will probably cause no change."<sup>42</sup> Although she was ostensibly directing her remarks at the Judge, her concession that they would not change the outcome of sentencing suggests that she was attempting to reach a different audience. "In spite of a sense of futility, which grew with every passing day of this frustrating trial, I must speak out, however," she explained. "Silence might be construed as defeatism, when the truth is that I am so serene in our consciousness of innocence of any crimes, that I can be imprisoned, but I cannot be corrected, reformed, or changed." Flynn's speech, then, was intended to exonerate her in front of history and to demonstrate that she was not defeated, a declamation that built her persona as a strong radical leader. But it was also a process, I argue, of imagining a new type of U.S. citizen committed to deliberation and dissent.

She constituted this audience of ordinary American citizens, while noting that they did not exist in her current moment. She empaneled her own jury, the American people of the future, by stating, “A people’s movement is arising in our country like a strong, fresh prairie wind against repressive legislation, loyalty oaths, congressional investigations, witch hunts, political trials, and the like. They will repeal the Smith Act and see that its victims are released, and those will be long before a transition to socialism, Your Honor.”<sup>43</sup> Flynn placed her faith in this audience of posterity, while contrasting it with the actual jury that she faced, a jury that was clouded due to “fog of lies, hysteria, prejudice, and, worst of all, fear.”<sup>44</sup> The triads built in force as Flynn rejected the Cold War as a context for deliberation on her case and invited an audience free from the vices and shortsightedness of her current day to make the ultimate decision on her espoused ideals, a decision that she was confident would rest in her favor. She granted this audience of the future the power to repeal this repressive legislation, upholding the process of democratic deliberation. Flynn called a very particular audience for her performance, endowing only them with the power to judge her. This power was denied the actual judge and jury. Flynn revoked the authority of the judge, while she directed the flow of history. Thus, as Flynn constituted a new context for her audience, she also attributed to this new type of citizen the power to deliberate, judge, and speak.

As Flynn constituted this audience of future U.S. citizens, she attributed to them faith in a democratic process and democratic principles. These principles became the foundation of a new society that she imagined. Unsurprisingly, free speech and thought were principles that Flynn emphasized. “All human history has demonstrated that ideas, thoughts, cannot be put in prison,” she philosophized. “They can only be met in the forum of public discussion.” With her characteristic defiant tone, Flynn denied the agency of the judge and the jury to convict her

because, she argued, this was a discussion properly meant for the marketplace of ideas, not for “the fog-engulfing courtrooms, middle-class juries, and the press.”<sup>45</sup> “Someone sent me a picture of Thomas Jefferson, which now adorns my cell in the House of Detention. It says ‘Difference of opinion leads to inquiry, and inquiry to truth. We value too much freedom of opinion not to cherish its exercise.’” Evoking Jefferson and elevating him to a prime position in the small personal space that she was allowed, Flynn implicitly compared her commitment to deliberation with his. Her placement of Jefferson, constituted here as a beacon of dissent, was jarring inside her detention cell, a marker of confinement and repression. This placement functioned to call attention to her stalwart faith in dissent, which had led to her imprisonment in the first place. Flynn articulated an epistemology that stipulated that truth was only discovered through public discussion, discussion which had to remain unfettered. But her articulation of abstract democratic principles and resurrection of a cherished founding father were also tailored to reach a broader audience uneasy with Cold War repression but perhaps not completely sympathetic to communism.

The new political process that Flynn imagined—committed to dissent and deliberation—became a foundation of support for her Communist ideals. She placed the Communist movement at the vanguard of a futuristic populist movement, while making clear that Communists’ leadership came from promoting popular ideas. “Time was when the Communists alone raised slogans for peace, for security, for jobs, for democracy, for unionism that are on the minds and lips of millions of Americans today,” she asserted. In this statement, she made clear that the ideas of Communists had spread throughout the U.S. population via speech. “Our lives, our work, our aspirations are part of the American scene for the past half century. Our predecessors go back a century and more.”<sup>46</sup> In order to solidify the claim that Communists’ beliefs were

actually in the mainstream of American popular opinion, she linked this history to repressive legislation of the past, legislation that had come to be viewed as hysterical. “Somewhere and soon the Smith Act will go into the discard as did the alien and sedition laws of 1800, the fugitive slave laws of the ‘60s, the criminal syndicalist laws of the ‘20s.”<sup>47</sup> These passages demonstrated her faith in deliberation for overcoming shortsighted legislation and her juxtaposition of CPUSA advocacy with treasured democratic ideals.

Flynn also insisted in the centrality of free association of political affiliation. In her description of this principle, she implicitly answered the common argument that Communists were foreign radicals, dupes of the Soviet Union, with no devotion to the United States. In her typical lyricism, she declared:

Your Honor, all the material property I possess, as far as a fine is concerned, are books accumulated since I first bought a paper-covered copy of Tom Paine’s *Common Sense* at the age of sixteen. They are good books—poetry, drama, history, political economy, fiction, philosophy, art, music, travel, literature. Marx and Engels are there besides Shakespeare, Shaw, Emerson, Hegel, Mark Twain; Lenin and Stalin are there besides Thoreau, Jefferson, the Beards, the Webbs, Hugo, Hardy, and many others. What happens to them, Your Honor, my guilt-by-association partners that I use for my speeches and articles? There is force and violence on those shelves, but not where the government looked for it. It is in Irish history—Connolly, O’Casey, and others telling of the long and bloody struggle against British rule. It is in American labor history—in Colorado, West Virginia, Homestead, South Chicago, and on the Embarcadero of San Francisco. It is in American history—the Revolution, the wars against the American Indians, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War. It is in the struggles of the Negro people. It is in the Bible, too—which is on my shelf, Your Honor—against the Jewish tribes and the old prophets, against Jesus and his disciples and the early Christian martyrs. And it all proves our thesis that force and violence come from the ruling class and not from the people.<sup>48</sup>

She used her dissent as a critique on the process of guilt-by-association logic that characterized the Communist hysteria in the United States. One did not need to subscribe to Flynn’s beliefs to view her favorably, as she foregrounded the principles upon which she constituted a new U.S. public.

Placing her faith in a new American public committed to deliberation, Flynn constituted herself as the new type of leader to empower ordinary Americans. While her speech was eloquent, Flynn also demonstrated a strength and confidence in her position that bordered on cockiness. “In all my long life,” Flynn explained, “and Mr. Lane [the prosecutor] did not do justice to it; I think I did better on the witness stand, Your Honor, and that you know me better, and that everything that there is in my life there that I myself testified to—in all my long life I never expected that I would go to jail for books.”<sup>49</sup> Invoking her age and wisdom, Flynn reminded her audience of her storied history as a labor leader, while protesting the representation crafted by the prosecution. She used her history to bolster her strength and credibility as an activist, and specifically insulted the prosecution as another means of illustrating her power to control the courtroom, if not the verdict. Her cockiness was channeled through decades of experience organizing the working class in the United States.

Flynn explicitly levied her authority as a farsighted, levelheaded American when she actually rejected one of the judge’s suggestions for how her sentencing should proceed. In an apparent demonstration of sympathy, Judge Dimock interrupted the final moments of Flynn’s statement. “Well, that is the way that I thought you felt, Miss Flynn. I am afraid that if you go to prison, you will come out feeling just exactly as you do now, and it was that thought that made me wonder whether there was any alternative,” Dimock stated. “If something like spending the rest of your life in Russia could be worked out as a substitute for prison, would that interest you at all?” he asked. Flynn, as always, had a rebuke. “It would not, Your Honor,” she shot back. “I am an American; I want to live and work in the United States of America. I am not interested in going anyplace else, and I would reject any such proposition.” Not only did Flynn chastise Dimock for his half-baked scheme, once again revoking his authority to control the outcome of

the trial and the flow of the courtroom, she also enacted her belief in the United States while demonstrating independence from Soviet Russia, a place where democratic deliberation was not known to thrive. “We would merely consider ourselves traitors to the American people if we turned our back on this country and considered only our own freedom from jail,” she continued.<sup>50</sup> With her characteristic sharp Irish wit, she then suggested to the judge that his proposition was akin to asking Christians who believed in heaven whether they wanted to go to heaven right away. Instead, she argued that she and her comrades had political responsibilities in the United States, indicating her power to speak on behalf of the Party. Although Flynn was speaking to her immediate audience of Judge Dimock and the jury in this exchange, her insistence on the inviolability of her own principles made clear that she intended her words to resonate in the future, cementing her legacy, and modeling leadership behavior for her new audience.

Flynn made herself farsighted, clearheaded, and stalwart, demonstrating her certainty that history would judge her leadership favorably. She used a defiant tone to enact this persona. “There is a Homeric irony, Your Honor, in the ending of this hollow and costly Pyrrhic victory for the government,” she insisted, “that the books, the ideas, the thoughts remain outside, spreading on the wings of the morning, while only we, a few individuals, go to prison, and that history will write a different verdict and will agree that we are many and they are few.”<sup>51</sup> Her confidence that jailing members of the CPUSA would prove costly for the government and resolve that history would render a different verdict demonstrated her to be one who could see beyond the hysteria of the Cold War moment, rendering her a prophetic leader. “It is no illusion, however, for us to say confidently, Your Honor, we are on the winning side. We have the welfare of our country and its people at heart,” she explained. Flynn’s confidence radiated

through her statement, a statement which proceeds at a brisk pace, inflected with Flynn's serenity in her own innocence.

As she constituted herself as the appropriate leader of this new U.S. public, Flynn represented those rounding up Communists as acting on foolish, irrational impulses. As such, she stripped away the masculine masks behind which McCarthy and his cronies hid. They became feminized blowhards instead of the masculine protectors of the American way of life that they claimed to be. Flynn accomplished this by creating the image of these wealthy politicians cowering in fear as they read the headlines about communism's spread through Asia. "Now it is from a small handful of frightened rich that this contagion [of fear] has spread—the men of the trusts who never loved their country more than their stocks and bonds, whose patriotism is always on a percentage basis, who would rule and exploit and use violence against not only their fellow countrymen but the human race." These were the weak-willed men who could be bought and sold, who clamped down on deliberation for fear of their suspicions being disproved, the men who passed laws that criminalized belonging to a political party. They, according to Flynn, had no interest in the wellbeing of their own country.

In shifting the audience of her address beyond the hostile jury, Flynn spoke to a broader audience of the American people, and as such, her rhetoric evidences remarkably different strategies from her newspaper columns or pamphlets. While not specifically referencing her feminist activism, she spoke in abstract principles that I argue engaged in the process of imagining a new U.S. public committed to deliberation and dissent, absent the Cold War hysteria. She then constituted herself as a far-sighted authoritative figure with the power to lead a new movement that would emerge genuinely from the people. This statement, I argue, was a defiant response to government repression that opened space to sustain the activism of CPUSA's

women as part of the audience Flynn constituted. Flynn, however, was only one of defendants to take the stand before sentencing.

### **Countering Negative Representations**

Rhetorically engaging with Flynn in imagining a new U.S. public, Claudia Jones sought to make present those often absented, and indeed, those that were absented in Flynn's imagination. "I find it a strange request," Claudia Jones retorted, also dismissing Dimock's alternative of exile in Russia. "I am fighting deportation to earn my citizenship," she said, rising to deliver her closing remarks, and situating her statement within the realm of citizenship duties and obligation. At this point, defense attorney John McTernan jumped in to express his dismay that banishment was being considered as punishment under U.S. law. The thirteen Communists were convicted of a very serious crime, one of the most serious on the statute books, prosecutor Myles J. Lane, shot back. "I consider murder, robbery, counterfeiting, and racketeering more serious crimes," Dimock reflected. As Lane stuttered his objections, Dimock insisted he would not even impose the maximum sentence on the thirteen.<sup>52</sup> When Lane finally ran out of steam, Dimock gave Jones the floor.

Jones's statement before sentencing has received attention for its status as one of her few extant pieces of biographical writing. In the statement, Carol Boyce Davies argues, Jones used her biography to speak back to the Cold War surveillance state, inserting her ideas publicly into the record.<sup>53</sup> The statement is deeply personal in a manner unlike Flynn's eloquent defense of democratic deliberation. As she stood before the court, Jones undoubtedly realized that repression meant something different for her than it did for Flynn. Jones joined Flynn in imagining a new society dedicated to deliberation and dissent, but she also countered the

disabling images of African Americans that surfaced in the trial as part of the process of collective imagining. In order to imagine a new society where poverty was not the lot for those of color, Jones emphasized the conditions under which the negative representations of black Americans had surfaced. To persuade a broad audience beyond the CPUSA, she wove a compelling autobiographical narrative.

Like Flynn, Jones began by addressing her immediate audience, Judge Dimock. “Your Honor, there are a few things I wish to say,” she said. “For if what I say here serves even one whit to further dedicate growing millions of Americans to fight for peace and to repel the fascist drive on free speech and thought in our country, I shall consider my rising to speak worthwhile indeed.” This constituted her two audiences—the one in the courtroom and the one beyond, which Jones constituted as an activist audience dedicated to the empowerment of ordinary citizens through free speech. She also recognized the futility of her statement before sentencing. “Quite candidly, your Honor, I say these things not with any idea that what I say will influence your sentence of me,” she explained, beginning to reveal her motivation and goal. Indeed, the first half of Jones’s statement sounds very much like Flynn’s—Jones admitted her affiliation with the CPUSA while refuting that membership in the CPUSA was illegal. “Even with all the power your Honor holds, how can you decide to mete out justice for the only act to which I proudly plead guilty, and one, moreover which by your own prior rulings constitutes no crime—that of holding Communist ideas; of being a member and officer of the Communist Party of the United States?” she asked.<sup>54</sup> This passage constituted her strength while reminding the judge that the question was one not of fact—both Jones and Flynn admitted to their Communist association—but one of definition. Jones sharpened her dismissal of the trial by explaining her

innocence through the inconsistency of the judge, a rhetorical strategy heightened in severity by its context—the importance of precedent to legal rhetoric.

Jones proceeded to dismiss her conviction for being a member of the CPUSA by highlighting the arbitrary nature of sentencing. For her immediate courtroom audience, this undermined the trial's legitimacy. But for an audience beyond the trial, it explained the principles that Jones's imagined new society cherished—peace, equality, and free speech. “Will you measure, for example, as worthy of one year's sentence, my passionate adherence to the idea of fighting for full unequivocal equality for my people, the Negro people, which as a Communist I believe can only be achieved allied to the cause of the working class?” she queried.<sup>55</sup> This question, and those that followed, defined Jones's crime as holding certain ideas or beliefs, while reminding her broader audience of important intersections. “A year for another vital Communist belief, that the bestial Korean war is an unjust war? Or my belief that peaceful coexistence of nations can be achieved and peace won if struggled for?” she continued. “Still another year's sentence for my belief that the denial of the exercise of free speech and thought to Communists only precedes, as history confirms, the denial of the exercise of these rights to all Americans?”<sup>56</sup> These questions defined the crime as one of expression and thought, a defense of the First Amendment in line with Flynn's arguments and with the general CPUSA strategy throughout the trial. Jones's use of the possessive in the phrase “my belief” also demonstrated that she had no intention of altering or changing her beliefs, remaining stalwart in the face of adversity.

As Jones dismissed the legitimacy of her trial while promoting the principles that she and Flynn agreed should be the basis of a new U.S. public, Jones explained the way that black Americans were represented throughout the trial. These rhetorical strategies engaged what Asen calls the tension between absence and presence.<sup>57</sup> Jones recognized that black Americans were

present in the trials as witnesses for the prosecution, but that their presence did little to promote a positive view of black Americans as valuable citizens. Moreover, their presence promoted a racist, sexist, and classist society. In line with Flynn's arguments about the unfairness of the trial, Jones lamented the ways in which informants were paid off. But rather than note that Cold War hysteria made people jump to turn on their neighbors, Jones situated this within the racialized poverty that drove blacks to desperation. "What has been amply justified?" she asked. "The despicable forced admission of the Negro witness Cummings who laughed at the thought of his \$10,000 Judas gold jingling in his pocket when he said he would turn informer on his own mother for a mess of the prosecutor's pottage?" she queried sarcastically. Jones related the experience of another black witness whose statements lacked coherence and relevance as he seemed to fall asleep on the stand. While Jones's righteous indignation at these witnesses being paid off for their testimony bristles through her sarcastic tone, her anger was not directed at them, but at the social conditions that made them willing to turn on former colleagues, friends, and family members in order to cash a check. Jones made present the conditions that weighed especially heavily on black Americans as a way of explaining the negative representations emanating from the trial that reinforced dominant social imaginaries of the second-class status of black citizens.

Jones also enacted a more positive representation of black citizenship through the second half of her statement, which was largely autobiographical. This enactment was a performance of collective imagining of a society beyond the racialized poverty endemic to the Cold War United States. Jones insisted she was also being convicted of "the crime of being born black on American soil."<sup>58</sup> In the second half of the statement, her tone shifted from one of indignation to personal reflection. Jones's anger gave way to disappointment, and her evidence shifted from

legal precedent to personal experience. Indeed, she dispatched with her refutational strategy of rejecting her first conviction for Communist Party membership, accepting the charge of her race. Jones transitioned to this second portion of her statement. “Introduce a title page to show Claudia Jones wrote an article during the indictment period,” she began, referencing the ways in which articles and books were the prosecution’s main evidence against the Communists, “but you dare not read even a line of it, even to a biased jury. . . . You dare not, gentlemen of the prosecution, assert that Negro women can think and speak and write!”<sup>59</sup> Her eloquent statement to the court and practiced rhetorical performance provided evidence for the fact that she was a thinking, critical citizen.

The reason that the prosecution could not read the article was because it illustrated the ways in which “being born black” was treated as a crime in the United States—contrary to propaganda claims about racial equality. “Moreover, you dare not read it because the article not only refutes the assertion that the ruling class will ever grant equality to fifteen million Negro Americans, but shows that what we are granted is unrequited force and violence, not only in the unpunished barbaric crime of lynching, but in eating, in everyday existence, in living, in the armed forces, in jails, in the denial of land, in recreation—yes, even in the nation’s cemeteries,” Jones explained. These articles, she argued, laid bare the hypocrisy of the U.S. government’s claims to civil rights progress against the Soviet Union. Her use of “we” moreover functioned to remind her audience of leftists that she still insisted upon the uniqueness of race oppression, allying herself with those who were only slowly being recognized by the CPUSA. Yet her insistence on the existence of these crimes in the United States imagined a new political community where they did not exist.

Even in her personal narrative about her relationship to Marxism, Jones resurrected and explained negative representations of black women as criminals. Crimes were committed against African Americans daily in the form of discrimination and violence. To support this claim, Jones introduced a lengthy exegesis on her personal relationship to Marxism that situated her subjectivity on the margins of U.S. society. “Just as now, there flashes in my mind’s eye those young Negro women I have seen at the Women’s House of Detention, almost children, of whom, but for my early discovery of Marxism-Leninism, I might have had to say now, ‘There I might have been.’”<sup>60</sup> Identifying strongly with the young, black women she met in the House of Detention, she illustrated the typical trajectory for those who looked like her. The irony was that Jones was no exception. She was headed to jail, too. “It was out of my Jim Crow experiences as a young Negro woman, experiences likewise born out of working-class poverty that led me in my search of why these things had to be that led me to join the young Communist League and to choose at the age of 18 the philosophy of my life, the science of Marxism-Leninism,” she continued, using personal rhetoric absent her usual social scientific tone to reach a broad audience.

Jones then argued that threats to the social order stemmed from poverty, not malice, once again making present the social conditions so entrenched in negative representations of black Americans. In one moving passage, she redefined the meaning of crime, so that capitalist social organization became inherently lawless. She began by explaining that in a world where she had not discovered Marxism, she would likely be one of the faceless, nameless blacks wasting away in jail, convicted by all-white juries. “For what crimes?” she asked forcefully. “Petty crimes born of poverty, of the ghetto, of Jim Crow living, the crime of being born black on American soil, of resisting treatment, rebellion against which, unchannelized, became lawless against the very Jim

Crow society that perpetuates their lawlessness.”<sup>61</sup> In such a society, Jones eloquently argued, the crime was merely being born black in a society that denied one the ability to make a living. The daily conviction of blacks rendered the conviction of Claudia Jones less significant. Instead, she focused on the resulting lawless system where lynching was sanctioned and vigilante action to prevent it enflamed an endless loop of violence. Indeed, Jones implied that the American Communist Party organized resistance to such violence. Communists represented the order in a chaotic system of violence—in contrast to the government’s charge that Communists perpetuated force and violence. If the CPUSA was order amidst chaos because they organized all voices, Jones’s statement illustrated the real consequences of a political sphere that was violently racist and classist despite proclamations of equal access. Colorblindness was a dangerous farce, she showed, and she reminded a broad audience of leftists of the varying levels of privilege among their ranks.

Jones also identified as a working-class black American, and her statement enacted her role as a member of the new group of citizens dedicated to dissent and activism that she collectively constituted with Flynn. She linked racism to her U.S. experiences as a way to demonstrate the inherency of capitalism’s perpetuation of racism. “It is here on this soil (and not as Mr. Lane would depict to this Court, as a young child of eight year [*sic*] of age waving revolutionary slogans), that I early experienced experiences which are shared by millions of native-born Negroes—the bitter indignity and humiliation of second-class citizenship, the special status which makes a mockery of our Government’s prated claims of a ‘free America’ in a ‘free world’ for 15 million Negro Americans,” she explained.<sup>62</sup> With her attention to an audience of leftists, insisting on “shared” experiences facing black Americans, she reminded them that future activism had to capitalize on these common occurrences to build coalitions. At the same time,

she demonstrated that the problems of racism in the United States came directly out of capitalist conditions. Her use of strong words like “indignity” and “humiliation” served as justification for the biting and vitriolic first part of her statement. “One need only be a Negro in America to know that for the crime of being a Negro we are daily convicted by a Government which denies us elementary democratic rights, the right to vote, to hold office, to hold judgeships, to serve on juries, rights forcibly denied in the South, and also in the North.”<sup>63</sup> By speaking in the language of conviction, Jones made clear that even as she insisted upon her innocence for the trial crime of belonging to the CPUSA, she recognized the inevitability of her racial identity leading to arrest and persecution. She cast her lot with black citizens, radical or not, as they shared important experiences and invited them to engage in resistance.

As Jones recovered marginalized voices in her statement, she pleaded for women to sustain their activism despite the Cold War repression, and she articulated a lasting role for women in the CPUSA. Yet, she resisted the unproblematic assimilation of all voices, arguing that the unique experiences of race and gender, too, needed to be preserved in future coalition. “[My article] cannot be read, your Honor—it urges American mothers, Negro women and white, to write, to emulate the peace struggles of their anti-fascist sisters in Latin America, in the new European democracies, in the Soviet Union, in Asia and Africa to end the bestial Korean war,” she argued. In this description, Jones constituted her own essay, “Women in the Struggle for Peace and Security,” that was the main piece of evidence in her trial, as a threat to the social order, labeling it unreadable. The reason it was unreadable for mainstream American society was because it urged those outside of the mainstream to produce discourse—to write. And it urged them to marshal their subject positions as mothers, but as mothers with a racial identity, to argue against policies that disrespected human life. Jones continued to claim a subject position marked

with race, class, and gender. And she embraced her marginalization among these women, arguing that until the macro-organization changed, poverty and racism would continue to systematically prevent African Americans from accessing justice and equality. She reminded these audiences of mothers that she had spent her career in the CPUSA hailing them as political subjects with unique voices.

Thus, Jones engaged in the process of collective imagining with Flynn. She, too, articulated the framework for a U.S. public not marred by hysteria and silencing. She imagined a world where black Americans were not constantly convicted for the discrimination that was endemic to capitalism. To do so, she countered the negative presence of black witnesses in the courtroom and enacted the power of marginalized voices through her own experience. Both Flynn's and Jones's statements struck at the heart of a Cold War society claiming to spread prosperity to all while protecting a virulently racist and violent society that criminalized ideas and political affiliation. The opportunity to address broader audiences free from the theoretical language necessary in Party discourse provided the chance to collectively imagine what a new U.S. public might look like. If Flynn and Jones constituted new citizens, a new commitment to democratic processes, new leadership, and a new attention to marginalized voices, Esther Cooper Jackson imagined the responsibilities that members of this new public owed each other.

Of course, Flynn's and Jones's eloquence did nothing for them, as both had predicted. Judge Dimock sentenced sixty-two-year-old Flynn to a \$6,000 fine and 28 months in the Federal Reformatory for Women at Alderson, West Virginia. The two Communist women did not enter the prison until 1955 because their appeal was making its way up to the Supreme Court, which eventually declined to hear the case.<sup>64</sup> True to her words in the 1953 statement, Flynn did not change her beliefs and even relished being a political prisoner. She wrote in the autobiography of

her time at Alderson, “Come what may, I was a political prisoner and proud of it, at one with some of the noblest of humanity, who had suffered for conscience’s sake. I felt no shame, no humiliation, no consciousness of guilt. To me my number 11710 was a badge of honor.”<sup>65</sup>

Flynn’s faith in America, however, remained unshaken throughout her imprisonment. The final passages in her autobiography from Alderson voice her staid patriotism, and demonstrate her ear for triads and rhythmic passages. She wrote, “Nothing and nobody can take my country away from me. I sit in prison, thinking of its beauty, its breadth, its people. It is ever in my heart, my thoughts, my eyes—its growth, its vastness, its richness. . . . I love my country and her varied people and I know them well. For over fifty years I have traveled back and forth across the broad bosom of my country, to make it a happier, more peaceful, more prosperous place to live in for our people.”<sup>66</sup> Her faith in her Communist ideals also remained steadfast. “I had no reason to reform, repent, or recant, so I simply reduced,” she quipped in typical Flynn fashion. While in jail, she lost 75 pounds.<sup>67</sup>

Jones left no memoirs of her time in prison, but as someone without U.S. citizenship, she had much more at stake than Flynn. Dimock sentenced Jones to one year and one day at Alderson, yet the sword of deportation hung over her head the whole time. She served ten months, battling a serious heart condition that placed her in the detention center’s infirmary for much of her sentence. Upon release, she was hospitalized again before the U.S. government attempted to have her deported to Trinidad. When Trinidad refused her entry, she was eventually allowed exile in the United Kingdom. She continued her activism, founding newspapers for the diasporic West Indian populations in London. She also helped to establish the Caribbean Carnival in 1959, which unified isolated immigrant communities and grew out of race riots in Notting Hill. “A people’s art is the genesis of their freedom,” she explained.<sup>68</sup> Persecution,

jailing, and isolation took their toll on Jones, however, and she was felled by a heart attack in 1964, reminding us that repression has definitive, material consequences.

### **Imagining Community**

Repression had definitive consequences even for Communists not on the Party's National Executive Board. Esther Cooper Jackson, for instance, jumped every time a knock came on the door of her apartment in the largely black Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn or when the phone rang unexpectedly. It was 1953 and Cooper Jackson had not spoken to her husband, James Jackson, in two years, since he had disappeared underground instead of standing trial with Flynn. To make matters worse, FBI agents had been tailing her and her two children for seven months now. They trailed on her leisurely walks through Prospect Park with her two vibrant daughters, and they coerced a kindergarten into expelling the four-year-old Jackson daughter.<sup>69</sup> "They can't put little children in jail, can they?" Kathy asked Cooper Jackson, her mother, after yet another afternoon of dark-suited men watching her play with her friends.<sup>70</sup> As much as it pained her, Cooper Jackson could not answer the queries of her young daughters as to where their father had gone or when he would return, because she had no idea. This was politically expedient, as the FBI had launched a massive manhunt to find the missing Communist leaders, and the Bureau called on every American to assist in their search.

This chapter's final section explores how rank-and-file Communist women contested and coped with repression absent the platform afforded by a well-publicized trial. Cooper Jackson still attempted to reach a broader audience, I argue, through a biographical pamphlet that allowed her to imagine the collective obligations that U.S. citizens owed each other. Scholars of American communism and Black activism have noted the prominence of what they have termed

“familialism” in Communist discourse from the Cold War era. Deborah Gerson, for instance, studies the Families of Smith Act Victims Committee to argue that the women who were active in this committee resisted state repression by valorizing the family while using maternity as a vehicle for political action.<sup>71</sup> Erik S. McDuffie argues that Esther Cooper Jackson’s rhetoric showed the contradictions underlying this strategy by both conforming to postwar conservative gendered roles and creatively challenging the ways in which motherhood was understood to be white and middle class.

While these are astute observations of Jackson’s most prominent pamphlet, *This Is My Husband: Fighter For His People, Political Refugee*, I wish to advance a different claim about the pamphlet. The pamphlet’s significance, I contend, lies in its weaving of biographical information about the Jackson family throughout an impassioned plea for the sustaining power of discourse in marginalized communities. As such, the pamphlet participated in the collective imagining begun by Jones and Flynn to articulate how these new citizens should support each other to sustain diverse communities—it was a statement against the rampant individualism of Cold War political culture. Cooper Jackson suggested that her citizenly duty was nurturing discursive communities that would then support their radical members. As a result, her pamphlet also articulated a new public, sustained by quotidian exchanges of ideas. The pamphlet was issued in 1953 through the National Committee to Defend Negro Leadership, a radical organization dedicated less to organizational politics and more toward the broad struggle against racism. It was reissued with two more printings subsequently that year, and the fact that Cooper Jackson was well known in both Communist circles and the black freedom movement suggests it was widely read among leftists. Like Jones, Cooper Jackson marshaled the power of biography to reach beyond the narrow membership of the CPUSA.

Cooper Jackson's pamphlet, a personal, intimate description of her husband's life, is only on the surface about James Jackson and their family, I contend. Instead, Cooper Jackson imagined a new black community through her persona of the biographer. By purporting to tell her husband's biography, Cooper Jackson appropriated his voice to prevent its silencing after his disappearance, and she also enacted the argument that marginalized communities required words as sustenance. Because she had no contact with her husband and as a result could not have run her chosen words by him to verify their accuracy or assure they conformed to his desired public persona, she became his official biographer. She cemented this official status by publishing the pamphlet using his last name as her own. This was the first time—ten years into their marriage—that she took the name “Jackson.”<sup>72</sup> Cooper Jackson reflected as she began her thirty-six-page pamphlet on the exigence that compelled her to write. “Even as I write this my hand shakes with hatred for these cruel and vicious manhunters of the true leaders and heroes of the people. Through the window of my apartment I have seen them sitting in their cars, glaring searchingly at every passer-by and waiting impassively to trail me to work, to the park, to school with our daughters. When they sit there no one speaks to them.” Placing herself as a biographer, poised with pen, to write the words that would carry on her husband's legacy despite his unknown whereabouts, she sought the strength to calm her shaky hand. Yet, she preferred words of anger and emotion to the silence, passivity, and unquestioned obedience displayed by the FBI officers tailing her. Her biography of her husband, then, would not be emotionless words, but memories and personal observations to prevent his erasure. It also flouted prescriptions for silence on the part of the Cold War society's passive citizenry.

The biographer persona that Cooper Jackson enacted was a means of preserving the inventional resource of memory for marginalized groups. It was her job to do the memory work

that would sustain her family absent a key member. “It is a great effort to write these words,” she confessed to her readers. “Memories pour through my brain and fill my heart. . . . I want so much to have now his warm comradeship; to hear again from his lips those winged words of exciting promise as he would give voice to his confident dreams of a free and bountiful new life for the world’s humble peoples.”<sup>73</sup> The memories coursing through Cooper Jackson’s brain—finding expression in her shaking hand—were political. They evidenced imaginings of a better life for African Americans and for the two daughters he and his wife loved. Yet, the reader appears to be overhearing the utopian visions for which the Jacksons strove. They seemed, in their juxtaposition to James Jackson’s biography, intimate. They were not the well-laid conspiracy plans that the government claimed the Communists on trial possessed in their alleged endeavor to overthrow the government. Instead, they were the imaginings whispered between husband and wife. The preservation of these whispered dreams has long been the creative task of women, Iris Marion Young theorizes. Women’s work in the home, she explains—although often dismissed as household drudgery—also includes preserving the objects of the home and the value of family—it renews meaning and constitutes the narrative of life.<sup>74</sup> As she publicly preserved the memory of her husband, Cooper Jackson called attention to his absence, but gave that absence meaning in her arguments about the import of speech.

Cooper Jackson built her persona as a biographer by generally placing herself in the background of the pamphlet. Especially during her rehearsal of her husband’s early life, she rarely used the pronoun “I,” instead focusing on her husband and the people that surrounded him. Yet, her use of detail as she described his childhood situated her as an observant authority, even as the FBI constantly observed her. “He was influenced by his mother’s character and demeanor. She surrounded her children with love and devoted attention,” Cooper Jackson wrote, describing

her mother-in-law. “A peace-loving and gentle woman above all else, his mother found her greatest happiness in doing for others...It is she who has been the preserver of the family.”<sup>75</sup> It is noteworthy that Cooper Jackson situated her mother-in-law in a role as peace maker, extending the Communist equation of mothers with peace, as we saw in chapter four. This passage also serves to show the ways in which Cooper Jackson did not weave herself deeply into the pamphlet. Instead, she relied upon observation and stories that her husband had told her to build her authority as biographer. Taking on the role of the biographer was a strategic choice that built upon the new opportune moment in the CPUSA to circulate discourse that was less theoretical and more personal. It allowed her to make new arguments about the importance of free speech in line with intersectional experiences in the black community, instead of the universal arguments Flynn had made. It accomplished dual goals of sustaining activism and humanizing the CPUSA amidst repression.

Even though Cooper Jackson performed a traditional wifely duty in her role as biographer, the memory work she performed was undeniably public. It was part of the collective imagining begun by Flynn and Jones to constitute a new, vocal citizenry. A well-known activist in her own right, Cooper Jackson had earned her stripes as a leader in the Southern Negro Youth Congress. As she intimately remembered her husband, she made public these memories to her readership. This was a subversive and empowering move as it denied the government agents the ability to make public the private details of her life with James. She would make them public on her own terms. The FBI files on the Jackson family are extensive, yet Cooper Jackson wrote her pamphlet with the authority that she was the only source of this information. “Let me now put down some of the highlights of my husband’s life, gathered from relatives, friends, and from my ten years of full and happy life with them,” she wrote.<sup>76</sup> While the FBI may have already been

privity to much of what was in the pamphlet, Cooper Jackson made the intimate memories of her family public on her own, disavowing the surveillance power of the government. Indeed, she issued a challenge to the government. She noted that her husband was a fugitive in his native country. But despite the terror inflicted by the FBI on the two young children and their mother, the fact remained—the FBI did not know where James Jackson was. The pouring out of the intimate details of the Jackson family life both denied the FBI the chance to make these details public on their accord, but also served as mocking reminder that although the FBI may know the details of the Jacksons lives, they did not know where their target was.

While her husband remained a public figure, in Cooper Jackson's tour of the places of his childhood and adult life—which functioned as the headings of the different sections in the pamphlet—the body of her husband remained absent. Instead, the communities through which he passed were the central characters. Only through Cooper Jackson's interpretation and re-telling of these places and people did he remain present. Through quotations from letters he had written her and speeches he had delivered, she kept his voice alive and provided evidence for her engaging chronological narrative. In contrast to the FBI officers tailing her family friends who “are sealed off from all of the ‘tongues’ in the community by an unreachable wall of hatred which is the historic fate of the persecutors of the just,” James Jackson's voice continued to resonate through his wife. The voice Cooper Jackson presented as belonging to her husband was multivocal—it spoke at rallies, in private letters while serving in the military, in speeches at Virginia Union University—direct quotations from many of these speech events appeared in the pamphlet. Her wifely duty was not just to nurture their children, but also to nurture his words—to circulate them and to demand that they be heard. In this way, Cooper Jackson, through her role

as biographer, enacted the new citizenship imagined by Jones and Flynn—privileging speech instead of silence.

Cooper Jackson situated the voice of her husband carefully in the communities that sustained him and helped him to grow into the activist that he was. The most important trait of these communities, however, was their openness to discourse. It was the ability to exchange words that nurtured Jackson as a child and young adult. Cooper Jackson carefully described the drugstore in Jackson Ward, a predominantly black neighborhood in Richmond, Virginia, where her husband grew up under the watchful eye of his father the pharmacist. While she noted that being the son of a community pillar like the town druggist gave her husband access to privileges that many poor blacks did not have, the most important sustenance the drugstore seemed to provide for James Jackson was its spirited debate. “My husband often told me vivid stories of his childhood,” Cooper Jackson wrote, authorizing her words. “He never forgot hours spent daily in his father’s store. This store was always a kind of neighborhood public forum for discussion and debate on the questions of the day, the needs and aspirations of Negroes, the trials and tribulations of the laborers and domestics and their bosses.”<sup>77</sup> The community that sustained James Jackson, was in his wife’s telling, a discursive community, based upon the exchange of ideas. “Behind the prescription counter, in the back of the store of evenings, two or three of the ‘inner-sanctum’ cronies could always be found—seated on boxes, around a big wood burner—their conversations ranging over the whole galaxy of human knowledge and experience.”

Although most of the members of the Jackson Ward community were impoverished blacks barely making ends meet, Cooper Jackson argued that they nurtured each other in their free discussions. “Young Jack sat in the far corner, or on the knee of his favorite uncle, his attention fixed on each conversationalist in turn—his eyes full of wonder and excitement—his

mind taking in every word, following each homespun precept and scheme as expounded by one or another of the wood-stove ‘savants.’” As Cooper Jackson told the story of her husband’s upbringing, she focused on the discursive communities in which he grew up. This rhetorical choice functioned to showcase the importance of speech to marginalized communities. The pamphlet became less about James Jackson and more about a vocal black counterpublic.<sup>78</sup>

It was not just a discursive community forged in the back room of his father’s drugstore that was significant in Cooper Jackson’s telling of her husband’s biography. Narrating his college days, for instance, Cooper Jackson described her husband’s speeches, debate topics, and his skillful editorship of the student paper. The legacy of James Jackson, she implied, was the circulation of discourse dedicated to working for racial justice. Moreover, once again foregrounding the communities instead of her husband, she described the way that speech sustained striking tobacco workers that her husband organized with the Southern Negro Youth Congress in 1938. This passage provides a telling clue about her belief in the power of discourse. She described the wholesale exploitation of tobacco workers in Virginia. “They worked ten and twelve hours a day for as little as a dime an hour in steam-filled, dust-beclouded, dark cavernous sheds,” she wrote—her focus on the place of the factory again functioning to downplay her husband as a figurehead while bringing the focus to the communities of people he touched. “Inside the factory there were rules against laughing, and rules against talking, and rules against getting up from one’s stool, and rules—and rules—and rules.” Prescriptions for silence were a means of control and repression on the part of the white foreman.

Yet, talking also became a means for resistance. “So once out on the streets the workers would laugh and shout to one another at the top of their lungs,” Cooper Jackson observed. Talking—yelling—became a means of reasserting one’s sense of self and community outside of

a dehumanizing job. “Yes, after the closing whistle blew, for ever so little a while, the street belonged to the workers.”<sup>79</sup> Loud speech allowed workers to take ownership of public space and assert themselves as humans deserving of dignity. Cooper Jackson then described the ways in which the workers’ strike won them recognition for their union. Equating, as she had done in the pamphlet’s opening, FBI officers and repressive work conditions with silence functioned to foreground the importance of speech. And if the pamphlet was about preserving the voice of the community of Virginia blacks that were so important to her husband and her family, Cooper Jackson added her voice to the collective imaginary of a vibrant Cold War public dedicated to racial justice.

All in all, then, Cooper Jackson’s 1953 pamphlet, *This is my Husband*, is far more than the use of familialism to contest the arrests of Communist men. Instead, I contend that it is an intimate defense of the ways that discourse sustained the black community in repressive times. Beneath the surface was a plea for blacks to keep talking in the face of surveillance and prescriptions for citizen silence. Cooper Jackson used the biography of her husband to constitute a discursive community that thrived in the exchange of ideas, a community capable of producing leaders like her husband. She participated in the collective imagining of a vibrant counterpublic that refused the imaginary of the silent, passive, Cold War citizen. The pamphlet articulated, in addition to a defense of the black family, an implicit rhetorical theory. It was a pragmatic theory that Cooper Jackson articulated—speech accomplished goals. She named specific results of speech acts in her pamphlet, for example. Her husband delivered a speech in college, and “on the strength of this speech, my husband was elected among the delegates to attend an interracial Seminar in North Carolina.” It was here, she explained that James Jackson met a Communist for the first time. But without the speech and the resulting ability to attend the convention, this

would never have happened. Likewise, during a speech delivered in 1946, Cooper Jackson explained, her husband was attacked by a mob and arrested. In these vignettes, speaking accomplished immediate goals—election, arrest. Woven throughout the pamphlet, too, was the implicit claim that discourse constituted the black community. It provided the voice for their dissent, nurtured their intellectuals, kept romance alive, and allowed them to reclaim their humanity in an economic and political system that rendered them silent. And within these small communities, they could plant the seeds of resistance.

Cooper Jackson's biographical focus on the communities through which James Jackson had passed allowed her to foreground the power of collective action, as she linked the past with the future. For instance, when describing her husband's discovery of communism, she foregrounded alliances with white workers. "Through the study of communism, my husband discovered that the Negro people have a powerful ally in the white workers and that it is to the self-interest of both to unite in common struggle," she explained. "He found that the task of correct leadership was to fight for the unity of the Southern people—Negro and white workers—to weld it, and to win allies for them in the nation and throughout the world."<sup>80</sup> In her role as biographer, Cooper Jackson was able to appropriate the authority to explain the "correct" approach to leadership, a recognition of the power of the alliance-building that Communist women had done in the peace petition campaign. She also emphasized collective action when describing the 1938 tobacco workers strike in Richmond, Virginia. "The whole community was involved in making that fight of the tobacco workers for a decent wage from the giant Wall Street-London Corporation a success. The initiative taken, the success achieved by the tobacco workers gave a new confidence to all sections of the Negro people and inspired a wave of struggles among the white workers as well," she matter-of-factly reported, once again

highlighting interracial solidarity.<sup>81</sup> Her focus on the strength of the whole community instead of merely her husband demonstrated the struggle would continue in his absence, as it implicitly turned toward the future.

Her emphasis on collective action and the communities that touched her husband alongside her downplay of her own voice in the pamphlet allowed her to subtly move from biographer to theorist in the pamphlet's final two pages. This rhetorical maneuver allowed her to shift her focus more clearly to the future to her imagined community, as the pamphlet finished with a plea to continue speaking and agitating on behalf of the U.S. working class. Building upon Flynn's strategies, she drew inspiration from the democratic heritage of the United States. "Jefferson...never ceased to draw inspiration from the great French Revolution in the early development of the United States, just as our revolution served as a catalytic agent among the French people and throughout 18th century Europe," she explained. "Similarly the first blows at the institution of slavery in the Western Hemisphere were made when the people of Haiti and the West Indies won their emancipation from French and British slave-holders. The movement for emancipation in the West Indies gave great stimulus to the American anti-slavery movement."<sup>82</sup> In line with the Communist feminist perspective, Cooper Jackson articulated a transnational awareness, as she used resources from abroad to inspire her audience of leftists to sustain their activism. "Today Congress would deny us the rich heritage of peoples of other lands," she concluded dejectedly. Voicing a Communist feminist perspective that valorized transnational alliances, Cooper Jackson used her authority as a biographer to call for sustaining alliances and activism that was sensitive to intersectional oppression.

The power of Cooper Jackson in this system was not, as scholars have already suggested, that she fashioned herself as the normative mother that reinscribed traditional gender roles while

critiquing their racial implications. Instead, Cooper Jackson articulated a new role for the black mother altogether. As biographer, it was her job to preserve memories, circulate stories, and draw forth discourse from her community. She became the one who disseminated the voice of her husband—reframed through her own voice. As she resisted the silencing of her husband, the pamphlet issued a plea for more discourse as the sustaining power of the black community, strengthened through alliances. She articulated a new space for citizenship in the discursive homes of the black community—in the back rooms of drugstores, in the historically black colleges and universities, and in the Communist Party.

The overall function of the pamphlet's biographical focus was the constitution of a discursive community for black women like Cooper Jackson to protect. Her pamphlet did show black women to be mothers and black men to be devoted fathers, but always situated the families in broader communities. "It was in that steel city of the deep South [Birmingham] that our first daughter, Harriet Dolores, was born. We named her for the heroic woman fighter, Harriet Tubman," Cooper Jackson wrote. She linked their daughter to struggles for emancipation in the name. But in the next sentence, she made clear that their experience in Birmingham was as part of a southern black community. "Our friends and associates shared the many grueling experiences and triumphs of years of struggle on a multitude of issues in the Southern Negro Youth Congress."<sup>83</sup> Behind these biographical tidbits and in their link to communities and places, I contend, is a different type of subversion of Cold War domesticity. It was a plea for the black community to stand strong and keep talking.

James Jackson emerged from the underground in December 1955 after almost five years of having no contact with his wife or children in December 1955. The *New York Times* rejoiced upon the surrender of "one of the most dangerous Communist conspirators in the United States"

and “the top organizer in the South.”<sup>84</sup> William Z. Foster, Party chairman, had a different take, arguing that the reappearance of Jackson and other disappeared Communists was “an expression of confidence in the rising democratic strength of the American people.”<sup>85</sup> By 1955, the Senate had censured McCarthy and the geopolitical climate had stabilized making a fair trial more likely than it was in 1951. Foster’s hopes proved too optimistic. Jackson stood trial only to be found guilty, just like Flynn, Jones, and Dennis. The judge sentenced him to two years in prison, and he and his lawyer began furiously preparing an appeal. The appeals process was just beginning when the Supreme Court handed down *Yates v. United States* in 1957, which limited the scope of *Dennis*. The Court argued that the Smith Act could not prohibit advocacy of “forcible overthrow as an abstract principle, divorced from any effort to instigate action to that end.”<sup>86</sup> The Yates decision applied to approximately ninety other Communists awaiting trial or serving time, and Jackson’s conviction was summarily reversed.

Although Jackson did not have to serve his jail time, in many ways, damage had already been done. The couple struggled to reconnect after such a sustained separation. They dedicated themselves to spending time with their family after James Jackson’s resurfacing, yet never worked closely in the same activist organizations again. James Jackson became the editor of the CPUSA paper the *Worker*, while Esther Cooper Jackson founded and edited *Freedomways Magazine*, a magazine dedicated to publishing diverse perspectives on the black freedom struggle. Historian Sara Rzeszutek suggests that the independent career Cooper Jackson pursued stemmed from the independence she was forced to assume while her husband was disappeared.<sup>87</sup> Other Communist families faced similar struggles. Peggy Dennis, for instance, described intense loneliness, nights of tears, and fear about how she would get by as a single parent while her husband was in jail. “Despite my new activity editing the women’s page, writing my column,

speaking at meetings, writing articles on behalf of the political prisoners, 1950 was a lonely, frightening year,” she remembered. She described that she often felt herself an important symbol to the CPUSA, but noted that Dennis’s male colleagues in the highest circles of the Party did not ask after her and her son’s emotional wellbeing, nor did they open their families to her. “During that year, my walls of self-sufficient reserve and aloneness grew higher around me.”<sup>88</sup> And these walls were difficult to dismantle once her husband returned.

### **Conclusion**

As this chapter shows, one of the most intense ironies of McCarthy’s reign was that the Communist Party deemed to be secretive and totalitarian emerged as the protector of free speech. Flynn, Jones, and Cooper Jackson took advantage of a new, broader audience, using the power of words to collectively imagine a new U.S. public. Building on the shift from theoretical language to the personal language that emerged in the transnational petitioning drive, their words emerged in a dialogue dedicated to imagining a world free from repression, dedicated to equality and speech. Altogether, these three women resisted the imaginary of the Cold War surveillance state while refusing to waver in their commitment to understand experiences of oppression as intersectional.

Flynn, Jones, and Jackson continued their work on behalf of the working class after their collective encounters with the long arm of HUAC and Joe McCarthy. While the shadow of McCarthy had begun to recede by the mid to late-1950s, the Communist Party would never be able to rebuild to the strength it cultivated immediately after World War II. Flynn finally got her chance to travel to the Soviet Union in 1960 and was rewarded for her lifetime of work on behalf of the Party by being elected its national chair, honors previously held by Eugene Dennis and

William Z. Foster. Although Jones was deported, she founded a magazine and a carnival to make visible the presence of the West Indian community in the U.K. Jackson also founded a magazine that would emerge as central to the civil rights movement and continued to struggle for black equality in the United States.

Flynn's long life in the Party was a testament to the power of words and the strength of the women who, alongside their comrades, took on McCarthy and the U.S. government. Yet, her leadership over the CPUSA did not last long. Needing a rest, she returned to the Soviet Union in 1964 where she died in September at age seventy-four.<sup>89</sup> Rosalyn Fraad Baxandall writes, "To die in a foreign country, although a Communist one, which treated her better than her own country, seemed an unfitting end. She was an American rebel. It was in America that she stirred millions, fought bravely, and tried...to live a revolutionary life."<sup>90</sup> The Soviet government laid her body in state in Red Square and honored her with a state funeral. For the eight hours her body was there, mourners six deep passed by to pay their respects. Nikita Khrushchev also honored her and his wife, Nina, helped carry her ashes to the Lenin Mausoleum. Her death prompted a front-page obituary in the *New York Times*.<sup>91</sup>

First scrambling up on a soapbox when she was only fifteen, the beautiful young woman with the raven hair and pale blue eyes quickly earned a reputation and a following from those who had seen her passionately speak at the corner of 125<sup>th</sup> Street and Seventh Avenue. This first speech embarked Flynn upon a career of speaking and activism that spanned from the labor violence of the early 1900s to the beginning of the turbulent 1960s. Many labor leaders and members of the press celebrated her oratorical skills, and Flynn earned the nickname "the East side Joan of Arc" plus an arrest for speaking without a permit by the age of sixteen.<sup>92</sup> She was so renowned for her speeches that a famed movie producer asked if she was interested in being an

actress, to which she replied, “I’m in the labor movement, and I speak my own piece!”<sup>93</sup> Indeed, the legacy of Flynn and her lady comrades was encouragement directed toward many other American women to speak their own piece.

## Conclusion

The height of the Smith Act trials and arrests were dark times indeed for the CPUSA. Yet, the 1954 Senate censure of Joseph McCarthy for acting “contrary to senatorial ethics” seemed to indicate a sea change in public opinion and recognition of the excesses of the anti-Communist fervor.<sup>1</sup> As Communist leaders emerged from jail in 1955, there seemed to be, as one Party member observed, a commitment to independent thinking, criticism, and reevaluating of Party platforms. The hesitant optimism within the Party would not last. Instead, something happened that none of the Party members could have predicted.

Peggy Dennis found out a few days before the rest of the Party. As she was somewhat uneasily settling back into life with her formerly jailed husband Party Secretary, Eugene Dennis, he brought home a transcript of what would become known as Nikita Khrushchev’s “Secret Speech.” In this February 1956 speech delivered at the Communist Party of the Soviet Union’s Twentieth Congress, Khrushchev detailed Stalin’s reign of terror over the Soviet Federation. Decrying the “cult of personality” that Stalin cultivated, the report charged that he “used extreme methods at a time when the revolution was already victorious.” Stalin, Khrushchev brazenly declared, “chose the path of repression and physical annihilation, not only against actual enemies, but also against individuals who had not committed any crimes against the party and the Soviet Government.”<sup>2</sup> To individuals who had dedicated their lives’ work to the Party, such allegations were explosive, shocking, and left them reeling. “The cold printed words ricocheted like bouncing pellets,” Peggy Dennis remembered. “The last page crumpled in my fist, I lay in the half darkness and I wept. . . for a thirty-five year commitment that lay shattered.”<sup>3</sup>

The shock of Khrushchev’s allegations reverberated deeply through the American Communist Party. Many, like Dennis, questioned the utility of many dedicated years in the Party.

Unsurprisingly, the revelation that their idolized Soviet Union had been built with tactics of mass repression spurred a significant exodus among many rank-and-file Party members. Subsequent events like the Hungarian Revolution that erupted in fall 1956—only to be crushed by Soviet forces—raised questions about the corruption at all levels of the Soviet Communist Party. For those Party members still clinging to the listing ship of the CPUSA, the years between 1956 and 1960 were a period of intense debate and sectarian infighting. Factions struggled for control of the Party. One faction, which included Peggy and Eugene Dennis, remained committed to a critical look at the failures of previous policy and of dedication to the Soviet Union. Another emphasized Party unity and fealty to the Soviets.

These allegations and struggles at the highest levels of the Party made the organization appear confused, and Communists terminated their memberships, even as many continued to believe in socialism. Khrushchev's speech came at a particularly unfortunate time for the Party, as there was, in historian Joseph Starobin's words a "purely American" re-examination under way, wherein the CPUSA was far ahead of other national parties in independent thinking and theorizing about how to best build socialism in the United States.<sup>4</sup> Sophisticated theorizing on gender continued to occur in the Party presses alongside discussion of the Secret Speech and its implications. Women seized upon the "vigorous free-for-all" in the Party press to continue debating their concerns over the definition of work, the socialization of housework, and the accessibility of child-care for the working-class.<sup>5</sup> "If any labor movement in the world has yet demanded a sixteen-hour working day, I have not yet heard of it," snarked Party journalist Elizabeth Lawson in May 1956 as she called attention once again to the double shift of housework and waged labor which women confronted.<sup>6</sup> Even as Party members jumped ship in droves, women used the Party newspapers to forward their feminist theorizing.

Party journalists and the rank-and-file members hanging on spurred these feminist discussions that occurred throughout the summer of 1956, largely due to necessity. The leaders of the Communist feminist movement were indisposed. Jones had been deported to the United Kingdom in 1955 after her native Trinidad and Tobago refused her entry. Flynn spent the turbulent summer of 1956 in prison, a fact that likely impelled her subsequent elevation to Party chairperson. As the sectarian fighting dominated the CPUSA, Communists would ask Flynn's sister, Kathie, which side Flynn was on. "Haven't you heard?" Kathie would quip, sharing Flynn's quick wit. "She's on the inside."<sup>7</sup> James Jackson emerged from the underground in 1956, rejoining a family that had been without him for five years. He was sentenced to prison upon resurfacing, but was saved by the Supreme Court, which in a 1957 case, declared the Smith Act unconstitutional, and began the slow process of dismantling the Cold War surveillance and intimidation apparatus. His wife, Esther Cooper Jackson, founded *Freedomways*, the influential political and cultural African American magazine in 1961. Together, these stories of individuals rebuilding their lives in the wake of McCarthyism illustrate that the collapse of the CPUSA did not foretell the destruction of radicalism or the end of a movement for social and economic justice for workers and other oppressed populations.

That radical feminism survived the 1950s at all is largely due to the Communist Party's stalwart organizers and activists. For to do so required that feminists consider how to make their advocacy relevant to Cold War women who were exposed to a variety of messages about the gender and sexual deviance of Communist women. Communist women recognized that there were aspects of Cold War consumer culture—like makeup and motherhood—from which they at times derived great pleasure. And they built upon these discourses to articulate a new version of the Communist woman and her place in American society. By not rejecting these pleasures

wholesale, they constituted a feminist subjectivity that delicately negotiated resistance and belonging while remaining uniquely American. Their brand of feminism, which unfolded between 1945 and 1956, did not merely accommodate and accept Cold War society. Beginning in 1945, Communist women used satire and humorous personal narratives to begin to insert domesticity, consumerism, and femininity into conversations about gender and class. These hedging strategies allowed the beginnings of critique without alienating male CPUSA members. Likewise, when Betty Millard set out in 1948 to make the Party take seriously the burgeoning feminist discussions she was hearing, she also used a rhetorical performance of femininity, coupled with a transnational ethos. Yet, as she crafted this gendered performance to make palatable her radical theoretical revisions, she also critiqued domesticity narratives to claim a larger place for women in public.

While Millard's 1948 pamphlet represented a turning point for Party discourse, it was far from an encompassing feminist theory. For one thing, as Claudia Jones argued in 1949, it used a racialized narrative of domesticity as its exigence. Black women's labor was systematically erased in these feminist narratives that required them to do domestic work if white women moved into waged labor. Yet, to force the Party to attend to the unique factor of race alongside gender, Jones penned a theoretical article that demonstrated her prowess as an objective builder of theory. Yet, theory was only the beginning. Communist women also moved into practice, seizing the opportunity to participate in a global petitioning drive. Here, they rhetorically marshaled their own positions as mothers to encourage women to sign petitions and build transnational coalitions. Peace petitioning showed the blind spots in propaganda about nuclear defense and middle-class narratives of motherhood. Mothers had to do more than just protect

their own kin in nuclear war because they were complicit in the capitalist drive to war, petition discourse claimed.

The petition drive and its attendant publicity was a thorn in the U.S. government's side. Once the Supreme Court effectively criminalized communism and revoked civil liberties from its adherents in *Dennis v. U.S.*, Communist women began an extended engagement with the U.S. state. They used these public platforms as a chance to take their ideas to a broader audience. Using this opportunity to shed previously theoretical language and speak in personal terms, they collectively imagined a new society, free from repression. These rhetorical acts were not merely a response to surveillance, but also an extension of the Communist feminism growing since WWII, as they called forth a politically active U.S. citizen.

Considering the activism of Communist women during the early Cold War period provides a more complete picture of the U.S. women's movement. Looking beyond single-issue and self-defined feminist groups recognizes that working-class women had different encounters with feminism as they articulated perspectives profoundly shaped by their identities as workers and their frustrations with organized labor. It also challenges dominant narratives of the civil rights movement, which locate bastions of resistance to Jim Crow America in black churches and clubs. In the face of today's assaults on organized labor, it is important to recover a history of labor activism geared toward building coalitions, while also recognizing the importance of diversity to those very coalitions. These historiographical interventions provide the inventional resources and inspiration for today's advocates and organizers. As Sara C. VanderHaagen reminds us, discourse about a shared past "enables a community to reconstitute its identity in ways that render it more capable of change, flexibility, and thus resilience."<sup>8</sup>

Attending to the rhetorical strategies of Communist women specifically provides important insights on organizing for change. It calls rhetoricians to account for the interplay of external and internal rhetoric in social movements. Communist women's institutional affiliation with the CPUSA granted them an important lever—as long as they could demonstrate their Marxist credentials, they could direct arguments for change in a targeted manner. This allowed them to make claims to the legacy of Marx and Engels while calling the CPUSA to live up to its founding theories. Given the attack on feminism during the conservative Cold War, the institutional structure of the Party proved an important centralizing function. Likewise, the ability of the internal rhetoric—directed at the Party's membership—to gain an audience depended partly upon its success in promoting the external goals of the Party: resisting nuclearism, recruiting members, and organizing unions. The success of these endeavors, I argue, was crucially tied to women's alignment with the CPUSA. Studying Communist women's rhetoric also points to the necessity of studying Cold War feminism in a transnational lens. As organized feminist groups in the 1940s struggled to stay alive, Communist women turned their attention abroad, both for inventional resources and for the opportunity to strengthen their cause in coalition. This allowed them to craft new arguments against domesticity, imagine a new world, and promote their own Communist credentials to male leaders. Indeed, their understanding of the political identity of a Communist woman was constructed transnationally.

Communist women's rhetoric was geared toward calling women to act against what they saw as injustices in the world. And while the diverse and creative strategies that they used to resist consumer culture and build feminist theory may not strike today's labor advocates as significant, Communist women were astutely aware of their need to overcome obstacles and build a critical mass of support within the Party. Thus, their rhetoric of gradualism that moved

from humor to theory to militancy reminds us of the various ways that people may feel called to see themselves as political actors with the power to dissent and make change. As the power of organized labor wanes in the United States, it is important to remember that the complex feelings of belonging and loyalty that bind people to political movements, organizations, and nations, can be powerful motivators of individual action. Seeking to make their political home more inclusive, Communist women used collective resources from the Party to call women to join them in their persuasive campaign. Calling the variety of women to work for change through the Party required that they recognize the intersections of oppression and the power of difference in the coalitions that they sought to build. As we continue to deliberate about how to strengthen and link the labor and women's movement in the United States, reminding ourselves of what these women discovered in a hostile climate is a worthwhile enterprise.

The repression that cultivated creative gendered performances and subtle resistance colored the feminist rhetorics possible in 1950s America. Rhetoricians have long recognized that rhetoric emerges out of specific contexts that it then has the power to reshape. Yet, the context of the American Communist Party is worth further reflection as we consider the legacy of Communist feminism. Resources unique to communism like Marxist theory and Soviet propaganda provided resources for women to build and then sustain a class-conscious feminist advocacy. Through examples of Soviet women and Soviet society, American women imagined a different future beyond the limitations of a conservative American culture. The irony is that in seeking alternatives to the repression of Cold War culture, they selected a system far more repressive to idealize. Yet, examining the rhetorical force of American Communist women's appropriations does not require the critic to take a stand on the Soviet project itself.

As Communist women idolized the Soviet Union and held up the gender equality allegedly achieved under socialism, they remained ignorant to the lived reality of life under Stalin. Indeed, their words constituted an idealized Soviet Union where socialism had been achieved, and they presented this new, remade socialist society to American women as an example of the heights that could be achieved with revolutionary thought and action. These words did not make it so. The Soviet Union remained corrupt, violent, dangerous, and Soviet citizens lacked the basic goods necessary for life. Indeed, as is now well known, millions died in Stalin's gulags—including at least one American Communist—or found themselves exiled to Siberia for no apparent reason other than displeasing the leader. My intention is certainly not to excuse the gulag system in the service of feminism.<sup>9</sup> Nor should American Communists be excused for not thinking more independently and critically about their beloved Soviet Union. Yet, even the most totalitarian monologues have dialogic potential, argue Ekaterina V. Haskins and James P. Zappen.<sup>10</sup> Communist feminists' appropriation of Soviet discourse was open to contestation in ways that Stalin's rhetoric never was. Party members *did* discuss and contest the role of the Soviet Union in their own radical projects, even as many of them also had little interest in what was happening overseas.<sup>11</sup>

Fidelity to the Soviets is a limitation of American Communism and its resulting feminist consciousness. Flynn, Jones, Millard, and the rank-and-file women and men examined here had moments of shortsightedness in their feminist activism. I have not meant to suggest that Communist women became the archetype of feminist excellence in these chapters, but that their rhetoric did indeed sustain, expand, and advance prior feminist conversations in the United States. Likewise, the language they invented to talk about race, class, and gender in the postwar United States would be appropriated by younger women in the 1960s, thanks in part to the

enterprising historians like Gerda Lerner, Aileen Kraditor, and Eleanor Flexner who began their work while members of the CPUSA. Communist women's affiliation with the CPUSA undoubtedly limited their reach and scope during the 1940s and 1950s. But even mainstream feminist groups had limited range during the Cold War. Without the institutional commitments of the CPUSA, the publications in which to work out new ideas, and enterprising leaders like Flynn and Jones, it is doubtful that feminists in the 1960s and 1970s would have been able to turn to these sources and discover language that continued to resonate with their experiences.

Women active in the CPUSA of the 1940s and 1950s left another legacy that linked them to the activism of the New Left in the 1960s and 1970s: their children. Termed "red diaper babies," these children grew up in households animated by discussion of what was published on the pages of the *Daily Worker*. While they likely did not know the intricacies of the theoretical debate, they did grow up knowing that there was a woman question and that women's oppression was a concern for members of the working class. They also saw their parents attempt to create equal relationships at home. When these red diaper babies became active in organizations like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), some of them expressed dismay at the unexpected amounts of sexism that they encountered in these progressive groups.

When they began speaking up against it, words that frequently appeared in 1940s pamphlets and newspaper articles like "women's liberation," "male supremacy," and "women's oppression" made a resurgence. For instance, when disaffected SDS alums Kathy McAfee and Myrna Wood published "Bread and Roses" in an underground newspaper in 1969, they used the frame of "male chauvinism" to explain the uniqueness of women in the working class and their frustration with the New Left. "Male chauvinism...sets women apart from the rest of the working class," they insisted. "Even when they do the same work as men, women are not

considered workers in the same sense. . . . Apart from the direct, material exploitation of women, male supremacy acts in more subtle ways to undermine class consciousness.”<sup>12</sup> Their insistence that “militant women” struggling could make change and their argument that socialism could not be a panacea for women’s oppression share hearty resonances with the rhetoric of Flynn, Jones, and their comrades. The emphasis on the political nature of personal problems, the use of women’s history to make visible the legacy of women’s activism, and the efforts to build women’s unity while recognizing difference are all legacies of these women from the Old Left.<sup>13</sup>

Against significant obstacles, Communist women garnered a sustained commitment to women’s liberation within a dogmatic and rigid political organization. As one 1956 reader reminded the editor of the *Daily Worker*, “An occasional Woman’s Day feature article does not take the place of regular constant emphasis [on unique problems facing working women and housewives].”<sup>14</sup> This reader, and others like her, called attention to the Party leadership’s propensity to celebrate women in March, during the holiday International Woman’s Day, while forgetting that oppression remained a lived experience for working-class women year round and that women were stalwart Party members year round as well. Rank-and-file women also expressed their commitment to their own unique history and their organizational potential. “I am ready to help in any way to bring the news of women’s struggles past and present to the readers of *The Worker*,” L.N. affirmed from Brooklyn in 1955.<sup>15</sup>

The power that this diverse group of women claimed in the CPUSA was borne of many voices. It included voices speaking with humor, with militancy, with passion, and with the gravity of Marxist theory. These voices sought coalition with the middle class, with male leaders, and with women across the globe. And even as Cold War culture extolled the power of consumerism and domesticity for women and as male leaders in the CPUSA fought to preserve

their power, these voices were not silenced. They merely changed tactics. Possibly as a result of her time as a member in the CPUSA, working amongst women who felt the same way, historian Eleanor Flexner deeply believed in the power of history to change and shape the present.

“Perhaps,” she wrote at the end of *Century of Struggle*, one of the first histories of the U.S. women’s movement, “in learning more of the long journey these [women], and hundreds more, made into our present time, we can face our own future with more courage and wisdom, and greater hope.”<sup>16</sup>

## Notes

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### Introduction

<sup>1</sup> This quotation appears throughout literature on postwar suburbia. I encountered it in *The Suburb Reader*, ed. Becky M. Nicolaides and Andrew Wise (New York: Routledge, 2006), 268.

<sup>2</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 7

<sup>3</sup> On this interaction, called the “kitchen debate,” see Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 197; Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, rev. ed (1988; repr. New York: Basic Books, 2008), 19-22. For these quotations, see William Safire, “The Cold War’s Hot Kitchen,” *New York Times*, June 23, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/24/opinion/24safire.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes, *The American Communist Movement: Storming Heaven Itself* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 100-102, 109. See also David A. Shannon, *The Decline of American Communism: A History of the Communist Party of the United States since 1945* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1959), 91-95; Joseph R. Starobin, *American Communism in Crisis, 1943-1957* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), 113.

<sup>5</sup> Claudia Jones, “An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman,” *Political Affairs* 28, no. 6, (June 1949), 61.

<sup>6</sup> As cited in Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, “Life of the Party,” *Daily Worker*, September 20, 1948, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Clara Zetkin, *Lenin on the Woman Question*, (New York: International Publishers, 1919), 15.

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, “Life of the Party,” *Daily Worker*, March 29, 1948, 10.

<sup>9</sup> J. Gerard, “Married Woman’s First Task is Care of Home,” *Worker*, June 27, 1948, 9. Of course, not all men agreed with these ideas. Some wrote in defending women’s right to be active outside of their homes.

<sup>10</sup> Lenin himself declared in 1920 that feminism was a dangerous right-wing invention created by the bourgeoisie. Also, from the 1920s to the early 1960s, the National Woman’s Party (NWP) claimed the term “feminism.” Because the NWP worked within the traditional political system, Communists stayed away from the term “feminism.” See Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Betty Millard, *Woman Against Myth* (New York: International Publishers, 1948), 9.

<sup>12</sup> Circulation numbers are notoriously difficult to come by for radical publications, but historian David Shannon notes that nearly all communists read the Sunday-issued *Worker*, while circulation of the *Daily Worker* was usually about one-third of party membership. He puts the

circulation of the *Worker* at 63,348 in 1948, and the *Daily Worker* at 23,400 in 1949. See Shannon, *The Decline of American Communism*, 88. By contrast, CPUSA places the circulation of the *Daily Worker* in 1948 at 23,944 and the *Sunday Worker* at 95,815. (See “Worker Circulation up by 38,000” in the June 20, 1948, *Worker*.)

<sup>13</sup> Historian Nancy Walker notes that the *Ladies' Home Journal* had the largest circulation of any magazine in the world in 1940. Women's magazines like these had circulations of between two and eight million, while actual readership was likely much higher. See Nancy A. Walker, “Introduction: Women's Magazines and Women's Roles,” in *Women's Magazines, 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press*, ed. Nancy A. Walker, 1-20 (Boston: Bedford St. Martins, 1998), 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> For studies of the Cold War speeches of Truman, see, e.g., Arnold Offner, *Another Such Victory President Truman and the Cold War, 1945-1953* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Denise M. Bostdorff, *Proclaiming the Truman Doctrine: The Cold War Call to Arms* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008). For studies of the speeches of Eisenhower, see, e.g., *Eisenhower's War of Words: Rhetoric and Leadership*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994); Ned O'Gorman, “Eisenhower and the American Sublime,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94, no. 1 (2008): 44-72; Martin J. Medhurst, “Text and Context in the 1952 Presidential Campaign: Eisenhower's ‘I Shall Go to Korea’ Speech,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (2000): 464-484; Chris Tudda, *The Truth is our Weapon: The Rhetorical Diplomacy of Dwight D. Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006); Meena Bose, “Words as Signals: Drafting Cold War Rhetoric in the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations,” *Congress and the Presidency* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 23-41; Robert L. Ivie, “Eisenhower's ‘Chance for Peace’: Quest or Crusade?” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 1, no. 2 (1998): 227-243; Ira Chernus, “Eisenhower and the Soviets, 1945-1947: Rhetoric and Policy,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 2, no. 1 (1999): 59-82. For studies of the speeches of Kennedy, see, e.g., James J. Kimble, “John F. Kennedy, the Construction of Peace, and the Pitfalls of Androgynous Rhetoric,” *Communication Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2009): 154-170. For Reagan, see Robert L. Ivie, “Speaking ‘Common Sense’ about the Soviet Threat: Reagan's Rhetorical Stance,” *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 48 (Winter 1984): 39-50.

<sup>15</sup> On the rhetoric of Cold War science and nuclearism, see, e.g., Rachel L. Holloway, “The Strategic Defense Initiative and the Technological Sublime: Fear, Science, and the Cold War,” in *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst and H.W. Brands (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), 209-232. On Cold War propaganda, see, e.g., Shawn Parry-Giles, “Militarizing America's Propaganda Program, 1945-55,” in *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History*, 95-133; Shawn J. Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda, and the Cold War, 1945-1955* (New York: Praeger, 2001); J. Michael Hogan, “The Science of Cold War Strategy: Propaganda and Public Opinion in the Eisenhower Administration's ‘War of Words,’” in *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History*, 134-168. On the rhetoric of liberalism, see, e.g., H. W. Brands, “Liberals All! Politics and Rhetoric in Cold War America,” in *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History*, 169-187; Randall Bennett Woods, “The Rhetoric of

Dissent: J. William Fulbright, Vietnam, and the Crisis of International Liberalism,” in *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History*; Ned O’Gorman, “‘The One Word the Kremlin Fears’”: C.D. Jackson, “Cold War ‘Liberation,’ and American Political-Economic Adventurism,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 12, no. 3 (2009): 389-428. On the rhetoric of democracy, see, e.g., Robert L. Ivie, “A New Democratic World Order?” in *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History*, 247-265; Robert J. McMahon, “‘By Helping Others, We Help Ourselves’: The Cold War and the Rhetoric of American Foreign Policy,” in *Critical Reflections on the Cold War: Linking Rhetoric and History*, 233-246. On Cold War idealism, see Robert L. Ivie, “Metaphor and the Rhetorical Invention of Cold War ‘Idealists,’” *Communication Monographs* 54 (June 1987): 165-182.

<sup>16</sup> Ned O’Gorman, *Spirits of the Cold War: Contesting Worldviews in the Classical Age of American Security Strategy* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011), 5.

<sup>17</sup> For rhetorical studies of other radical leaders, see, e.g., Janet Lee, “‘From Missionary to Bolshevik’: Grace Hutchins and the Politics of Devotion,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 26, no. 2 (2003): 181-190; Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Pat Creech Scholten, “Militant Women for Economic Justice: The Persuasion of Ella Reeve Bloor, Rose Pastor Stokes, Rose Schneiderman, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn” (PhD diss, Indiana University, 1979); Audrey Perryman Olmsted, “Agitator on the Left: The Speechmaking of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, 1904-1949” (PhD diss, Indiana University, 1971); Mark Wilcox Lee, “An Analysis of Selected Speeches of William Z. Foster During the Reconstitution Period of the Communist Party, 1945-1960” (PhD Diss, University of Washington, 1966); Rosalyn Fraad Baxandall, *Words on Fire: The Life and Writing of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987); Brown, “Savagely Fathered.”

<sup>18</sup> On suffrage, see, Angela G. Ray, “The Rhetorical Ritual of Citizenship: Women’s Voting as Public Performance, 1868–1875,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 93, no. 1 (2007): 1-26; Angela G. Ray and Cindy Koenig Richards, “Inventing Citizens, Imagining Gender Justice: The Suffrage Rhetoric of Virginia and Francis Minor,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93, no. 4 (2007): 375-402; E. Michele Ramsey, “Inventing Citizens During World War I: Suffrage Cartoons in the Woman Citizen,” *Western Journal of Communication* 64, no. 2 (2000): 113-48; Amy R. Slagell, “The Rhetorical Structure of Frances E. Willard’s Campaign for Woman Suffrage, 1876-1896,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 4, no. 1 (2001): 1-23; Jennifer Keohane, “‘In The Bonds of Woman and the Slave’: Analogy and Collective Identity in Woman’s Rights Discourse, 1860-1869,” in *Rhetoric Concord and Controversy*, ed. Antonio de Velasco and Melody Lehn, 142-154 (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 2012). On women in the abolition and temperance movements, see Melissa Fiesta, “Homeplaces in Lydia Marie Child’s Abolitionist Rhetoric, 1833-1879,” *Rhetoric Review* 25, no. 3 (2006): 260-274; Phyllis M. Japp, “Esther or Isaiah? The Abolitionist-Feminist Rhetoric of Angelia Grimké,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71, no. 3 (1985): 355-369; Karen Sánchez-Eppler, “Bodily Bonds: The Intersecting Rhetorics of Feminism and Abolition,” *Representations* 24 (1988): 28-59; Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*; Stephen H. Browne, *Angelina Grimké: Rhetoric, Identity, and the Radical Imagination* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999); Bonnie J. Dow, “The ‘womanhood’ Rationale in the Rhetoric of Frances

E. Willard,” *Southern Communication Journal*, no. 4 (1991): 298-307; Carmen Heider, “Suffrage, Self-Determination, and the Women’s Christian Temperance Union in Nebraska, 1879-1882,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 8, no. 1 (2005): 85-107. On consciousness-raising, see, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “The Rhetoric of Women’s Liberation: An Oxymoron,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59, no. 1 (1973): 74-86; Stacey K. Sowards and Valerie R. Renegar, “The Rhetorical Functions of Consciousness-Raising in Third Wave Feminism,” *Communication Studies* 55, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 535-552; Tasha N. Dubriwny, “Consciousness-Raising as Collective Rhetoric: The Articulation of Experience in the Redstockings’ Abortion Speak-Out,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91, no. 4 (2005): 395-422. On women’s liberation more generally, see Katie L. Gibson, “The Rhetoric of *Roe v. Wade*: When the Male Doctor Knows Best,” *Southern Communication Journal* 73, no. 4 (2008): 312-331; Bonnie J. Dow, “Fixing Feminism: Women’s Liberation and the Rhetoric of Television Documentary,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 1 (2004): 53-80.

<sup>19</sup> Anne Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Dorothy Sue Cobble, *Dishing it Out: Waitresses and their Unions in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women’s Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). See also Dennis A. Deslippe, “Rights, not Roses”: *Unions and the Rise of Working-Class Feminism, 1945-1980* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Nancy F. Gabin, *Feminism in the Labor Movement: Women and the United Auto Workers, 1935-1975* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

<sup>20</sup> On the upper-class feminists of the 1940s, see Leila J. Rupp and Verta Taylor, *Survival in the Doldrums: the American Women’s Rights Movement, 1945 to the 1960s* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990).

<sup>21</sup> On Communist women in the postwar period, see Weigand, *Red Feminism*; Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Kathlene McDonald, *Feminism, the Left, and Postwar Literary Culture* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> Karma R. Chávez, “Counter-Public Enclaves and Understanding the Function of Rhetoric in Social Movements,” *Communication Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2011): 13.

<sup>23</sup> Chávez, “Counter-Public Enclaves,” 2.

<sup>24</sup> Karma R. Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 7.

<sup>25</sup> Aimee Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines: On the Subject of Feminist Alliances* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 4.

<sup>26</sup> See Sarah Kornfield, "The E-man-ci-pation of Jeannie: Feminist Doppelgangers on U.S. Television," *Communication, Culture, & Critique* 5, no. 3 (2013): 445-462; Karrin Vasby Anderson and Jessie Stewart, "Politics and the Single Woman: The 'Sex and the City Voter' in Campaign 2004," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 8, no. 4 (2005): 595-616; Sherryl Vint, "The New Backlash: Popular Culture's 'Marriage' with Feminism, or Love is All You Need," *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 34, no. 4 (2007): 160-169; Bonnie J. Dow, "Fixing Feminism: Women's Liberation and the Rhetoric of Television Documentary," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 1 (2004): 53-80; Bonnie J. Dow, "Ellen, Television, and the Politics of Gay and Lesbian Visibility," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 18, no. 2 (2001): 123-140; Bonnie J. Dow, "Hegemony, Feminist Criticism, and the Mary Tyler Moore Show," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 7, no. 3 (1990): 261-274; Bonnie J. Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women's Movement Since 1970* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996); Mary Douglas Vavrus, "From Women of the Year to 'Soccer Moms': The Case of the Incredible Shrinking Women," *Political Communication* 17, no. 2 (2000): 193-213; Danielle M. Stern, "Consuming the Fractured Female: Lessons from MTV's *the Real World*," *Communication Review* 12, no. 1 (2009): 50-77; Elana Levine, "Remaking *Charlie's Angels*," *Feminist Media Studies* 8, no. 4 (2008): 375-389; Dee Amy-Chin, "'Tis Pity She's a Whore," *Feminist Media Studies* 6, no. 2 (2006): 175-189; Nancy A. Walker, *Shaping our Mother's Worlds: American Women's Magazines* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000).

For a more nuanced perspective that mentions the pleasure we derive from popular culture, see Bonnie J. Dow, "Ally McBeal, Lifestyle Feminism, and the Politics of Personal Happiness," *Communication Review* 5, no. 4 (2002): 259-264.

<sup>27</sup> See Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

<sup>28</sup> Juliana Mansvelt, *Geographies of Consumption* (New York: Sage, 2005), 6, 226.

<sup>29</sup> For a good example of scholarship that focuses on the ways in which popular culture in the form of gangsta rap provided a parodic performance to resist dominant discourses of black criminality, see Bryan J. McCann, "Contesting the Mark of Criminality: Race, Place, and the Prerogative of Violence in N.W.A.'s Straight Outta Compton," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 29, no. 5 (2012): 367-386.

<sup>30</sup> James Arnt Aune, *Rhetoric and Marxism* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1994); Dana L. Cloud, "The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric," *Western Journal of Communication* 58 (1994): 141-163; Dana L. Cloud, Steve Macek, and James Arnt Aune. "'The Limbo of Ethical Simulacra': A Reply to Ron Greene," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 39, no. 1 (2006): 72-84.

<sup>31</sup> See David A. Carter, "The Industrial Workers of the World and the Rhetoric of Song," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (1980): 365-74; James Darsey, "The Legend of Eugene Debs: Prophetic Ethos as Radical Argument," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* (1988): 434-452; Joseph

Zompetti, "César Chávez's Rhetorical Use of Religious Symbols," *Journal of Communication and Religion* 29 (November 2006): 262-284; Dana L. Cloud, "Fighting Words: Labor and the Limits of Communication at Staley, 1993 to 1996," *Management Communication Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (2005): 509-542; Charles J. Stewart, "The Internal Rhetoric of the Knights of Labor," *Communication Studies* 42, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 67-82; Matthew S. May, "Hobo Orator Union: Class Composition and the Spokane Free Speech Fight of the Industrial Workers of the World," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97, no. 2 (May 2011): 155-177. See also Dana L. Cloud, "The Null Persona: Race and the Rhetoric of Silence in the Uprising of '34," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 2, no. 2 (1999): 177-209; Thomas A. Discenna, "The Rhetoric and Graduate Employee Unionization: Critical Rhetoric and the Yale Grade Strike," *Communication Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2010): 19-35; Borda, "Negotiating Feminist Politics in the Third Wave"; Mark Hlavacik, "The Democratic Origins of Teachers' Union Rhetoric: Margaret Haley's Speech at the 1904 NEA Convention," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 15, no. 3 (2012): 499-524; Dana L. Cloud, *We are the Union: Democratic Unionism and Dissent at Boeing* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011). These obstacles were especially pronounced for female labor leaders. See Mari Boor Tonn, "Militant Motherhood: Labor's Mary Harris 'Mother' Jones," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82 (1996): 1-21; Mari Boor Tonn and Mark S. Kuhn, "Co-Constructed Oratory: Speaker-Audience Interaction in the Labor Union Rhetoric of Mary Harris 'Mother Jones,'" *Text and Performance Quarterly* 13 (1993): 313-330; Mari Boor Tonn, "'From the Eye to the Soul': Industrial Labor's Mary Harris 'Mother' Jones and the Rhetorics of Display," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (2011): 231-249; Mary E. Triece, "'Appealing to the Intelligent Worker': Rhetorical Reconstitution and the Influence of Firsthand Experience in the Rhetoric of Leonora O'Reilly," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (2003): 5-24; Anne F. Mattina, "'Rights as Well as Duties': The Rhetoric of Leonora O'Reilly," *Communication Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (1994): 196-205.

<sup>32</sup> Most likely due to source limitations, most rhetorical scholarship on labor has focused on the words of labor leaders, not ordinary workers. An important exception is Matthew S. May, *Soapbox Rebellion: The Hobo Orator Union and the Free Speech Fights of the Industrial Workers of the World, 1909-1916* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2013).

<sup>33</sup> Revisionist historians tend to focus on the grassroots accomplishments of local Party chapters, at times divorcing CPUSA from its place in the international communist movement. By contrast, traditionalist historians, mainly writing in the 1950s, focus on the Party's national leadership and Soviet domination of the American Party to the exclusion of how rank-and-file members understood their role in the Party. For a useful summary of this debate, see the preface in Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party during the Second World War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982). Although these two camps do continue to polarize scholarship on CPUSA, I do not dwell on the differences and nuances of this debate here, as it has little direct bearing on the research question at hand. Moreover, almost every scholar of both traditionalist and revisionist bent has come to recognize that Party members did have agency within the disciplinary structures and that the Soviet Union was a significant presence in the theory and organizing of the Party, but perhaps not all members' daily lives. For a useful explanation of the problems with the agency debate, see Theodore Draper, "American Communism Revisited," *New York Review of Books*, May 9, 1985, 32. Here, Draper explains that his central point in the traditionalist Bible, *American Communism and Soviet*

*Russia*, was not that Party members did not have agency and did not sometimes take action against national Party leaders' wishes. Instead, the argument was that in the case where a direct order from the Soviet Union contradicted policies CPUSA was pursuing, the CP would immediately change their policy to conform with Soviet wishes. Revisionist historians have been unable to refute this argument by providing direct evidence of Soviet demands that were flouted by CPUSA. Thus, it seems that the best scholarship ought follow a moderate path that recognizes member agency while recognizing the heavy hand of the Comintern and the Soviet Union.

<sup>34</sup> Ellen Schrecker, *Many are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), xiii.

<sup>35</sup> On this historiographical debate, see Alan M. Wald, *Writing from the Left: New Essays on Radical Culture and Politics* (New York: Verso, 1994), 121.

<sup>36</sup> Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History*, 91, no. 4 (2005): 1235.

<sup>37</sup> See, e.g., Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>38</sup> Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Agency: Promiscuous and Protean," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 2, no. 1 (2005): 5.

<sup>39</sup> Saba Mahmood, *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 17; Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power; Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 12.

<sup>40</sup> Failing to recognize Communists' agency is a hallmark of the traditional approach to Communist history.

<sup>41</sup> Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship*, 4-5.

<sup>42</sup> Campbell, "Agency," 6.

<sup>43</sup> Isaac West, "Performing Resistance in/from the Kitchen: The Practice of Maternal Pacifist Politics and La WISP's Cookbooks," *Women's Studies in Communication* 30, no. 3 (2007): 364.

<sup>44</sup> See Robert Asen, "A Discourse Theory of Citizenship," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 189-201. For case studies utilizing this approach, see, Angela G. Ray, *The Lyceum and Public Culture in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2005); Angela G. Ray, "The Permeable Public: Rituals of Citizenship in Antebellum Men's Debating Clubs," *Argumentation & Advocacy* 41 (2004): 1-16; Kirt H. Wilson, "The Racial Politics of Imitation in the Nineteenth Century," *Quarterly Journal of*

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*Speech* 89, no. 2 (January 1, 2003): 89–108; Robert Hariman and John Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Ross Louis, “Reclaiming a Citizenship Site: Performing New Orleans in the Superdome,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 29:3 (2009): 279-295.

<sup>45</sup> Lionel, Cantú, Jr, *The Sexuality of Migration: Border Crossings and Mexican Immigrant Men*, ed. by Nancy A. Naples and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 40.

<sup>46</sup> Cantú, *Sexuality of Migration*, 40.

<sup>47</sup> Asen, “A Discourse Theory of Citizenship,” 191.

<sup>48</sup> Wendy S. Hesford and Eileen E. Schell, “Configurations of Transnationality: Locating Feminist Rhetorics,” *College English* 70, no. 5 (2008): 463.

<sup>49</sup> See Eithne Luibhéid, *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xxiv.

<sup>50</sup> Here, Jasinski is describing what he terms “abduction.” See James Jasinski, “The Status of Theory and Method in Rhetorical Criticism,” *Western Journal of Communication* 65 (2001): 256.

<sup>51</sup> Stuart Hall, “The Work of Representation,” in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall, 13-75 (London: Sage, 1997), 22.

<sup>52</sup> See, e.g., Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men & Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 4. For examples of gender analysis in public address scholarship, see Susan Zaeske, “‘The South Arose as One Man’: Gender and Sectionalism in Antislavery Petition Debates, 1835-1845,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 12:3 (2009): 341-368; Susan Zaeske, “Hearing the Silences in Lincoln’s Temperance Address: Whig Masculinity as an Ethic of Rhetorical Civility,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 13:3 (2010): 389-420.

<sup>53</sup> Hall, “Long Civil Rights Movement,” 1262-3.

<sup>54</sup> Ruth Milkman and Kim Voss, eds., *Rebuilding Labor: Organizing and Organizers in the New Union Movement* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

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## Chapter One

### Cold War, Hot Commodities: Gendering Consumer Culture Post-WWII

<sup>1</sup> “Mail Order Catalogues a Hit Around the World,” *New York Times*, October 5, 1955, 24. For descriptions of these propaganda activities, see Laura A. Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 127-130.

<sup>2</sup> Frank Sullivan, “Our Best Seller Abroad,” *New York Times Magazine*, November 13, 1955, 30.

<sup>3</sup> Betsy Israel, *Bachelor Girl: A Social History of Single Women in the Twentieth Century* (London: Aurum Press, 2004), 192-3.

<sup>4</sup> “Girlish Glamor Banned by Reds in German Zone,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 9, 1951, 13.

<sup>5</sup> “Girlish Glamor Banned,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 9, 1951, 13.

<sup>6</sup> Ted Tinsley, “Men: How to Get them, Hold Them, Keep Them,” *Daily Worker*, April 22, 1948, 12.

<sup>7</sup> Joshua I. Miller, “Fashion and Democratic Relationships,” *Polity* 37, no. 1 (2005): 6.

<sup>8</sup> Joanne Sharp, *Condensing the Cold War: Readers’ Digest and American Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), xii.

<sup>9</sup> Belmonte, *Selling the American Way*, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Asen, “A Discourse Theory of Citizenship,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 189-201.

<sup>11</sup> Shawn J. Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda, and the Cold War, 1945-1955* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), xxvi.

<sup>12</sup> On the national government propaganda campaigns of Truman and Eisenhower, see Shawn J. Parry-Giles, “Rhetorical Experimentation and the Cold War, 1947-1953: The Development of an Internationalist Approach to Propaganda,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80 (1994): 448-467; Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda, and the Cold War*. On cultural infiltration, see Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Gender is usually only mentioned during discussions of the 1959 American Exhibition in Moscow. An important exception is Belmonte, *Selling the American Way*.

<sup>14</sup> Two books exist on Cold War fashion, including Jane Pavitt's *Fear and Fashion in the Cold War*, (New York: V&A Publishing, 2008), which focuses primarily on Western Europe, and Djurdja Bartlett's *Fashion East: The Spectre that Haunted Socialism* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2010), which looks at fashion in the Soviet Bloc.

<sup>15</sup> See especially Nancy Walker, *Shaping our Mothers' World: American Women's Magazines* (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 2000); Eva Moscovitz, "'It's Good to Blow Your Top': Women's Magazines and a Discourse of Discontent," *Journal of Women's History* 8:3 (1996): 66-98; Meyerowitz, Joanne, ed. *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994.

<sup>16</sup> The scholarship on Soviet women's magazines is much sparser. See in particular Attwood, *Creating the New Soviet Woman*; Natasha Tolstikova, "Rabotnitsa: The Paradoxical Success of a Soviet Women's Magazine," *Journalism History* 30:3 (2004): 131-140; Greta Bucher, "Struggling to Survive: Soviet Women in the Postwar Years," *Journal of Women's History* 12:1 (2000): 137-159. For a 1950s look at a Soviet magazine, see Dorothea L. Meek, "A Soviet Women's Magazine," *Soviet Studies* 4:1 (1952): 32-47.

<sup>17</sup> Vanessa Beasley, *You, The People: American National Identity in Presidential Rhetoric* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 9. See also M. Lane Bruner, *Strategies of Remembrance: The Rhetorical Dimensions of National Identity Construction* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Carol Mattingly has argued that dress and clothing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were important components of women's rhetorical performances in the sense that they preceded verbal communication and established gendered identities for speakers. See Carol Mattingly, *Appropriate[ing] Dress: Women's Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002). Other rhetoricians note that restrictive dress could be both disciplining and productive. See Wendy Dasler Johnson, "Cultural Rhetorics of Women's Corsets," *Rhetoric Review* 20:3/4 (2001): 203-33. On the political value of fashion to form allegiances and democratic links to other citizens, see Joshua I. Miller "Fashion and Democratic Relationships," *Polity* 37, no. 1 (2005): 18. On fashion as a transformative force both positively and negatively, see Mary Louise Roberts, "Samson and Delilah Revisited: The Politics of Women's Fashion in 1920s France," *American Historical Review* (June 1993): 662-665. On fashion's ability to constitute collective identity, see Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

<sup>19</sup> On the importance of women in state surveillance and nations, see, Eithne Luibhéid, *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xi; Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval Davis, "Introduction," in *Woman, Nation, State*, 1-15, ed. Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 8-11.

<sup>20</sup> Rhetorical scholars have often studied representations of bodies during wartime in order to argue that soldiers' bodies function as metonyms for the health of the body politic. See Paul

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Achter, "Unruly Bodies: The Rhetorical Domestication of Twenty-First-Century Veterans of War," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 96:1 (2010): 46-68. They've also recognized the argumentative function of bodies in the public sphere, see Kevin Michael DeLuca, "Unruly Arguments: The Body Rhetoric of Earth First!, ACT UP, and Queer Nation," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 36 (Summer 1999): 9-21; Michael L. Butterworth, "Purifying the Body Politic: Steroids, Rafael Palmeiro, and the Rhetorical Cleansing of Major League Baseball," *Western Journal of Communication* 72:2 (2008): 145-161.

<sup>21</sup> Catherine H. Palczewski, "The Male Madonna and the Feminine Uncle Sam: Visual Argument, Icons, and Ideographs in 1909 Anti-Woman Suffrage Postcards," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91:4 (2005): 373.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Asen, "Imagining in the Public Sphere," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 35: 4 (2002): 354.

<sup>24</sup> For more on this approach, which studies visual and verbal communication as clues to the social process of collective imagining, which can then reconfigure social norms and hierarchies, see Robert Asen, "Women, Work, Welfare: A Rhetorical History of Images of Poor Women in Welfare Policy Debates," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 6:2 (2003): 287.

<sup>25</sup> For circulation data, see Alfred Politz Research, Inc., *The Audiences of Nine Magazines, Their Size and Characteristics* (Minneapolis: Cowles Magazines, 1955).

<sup>26</sup> Jordynn Jack, "Acts of Institution: Embodying Feminist Rhetorical Methodologies in Space and Time," *Rhetoric Review* 28:3 (2009): 290-1.

<sup>27</sup> Jonathan Walford, *Forties Fashion: From the Siren Suits to the New Look* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2008), 96.

<sup>28</sup> Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 35-42.

<sup>29</sup> James L. Baughman, *The Republic of Mass Culture: Journalism, Filmmaking, and Broadcasting in America since 1941* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 1.

<sup>30</sup> Walford, *Forties Fashion*, 95.

<sup>31</sup> This document is included in Rosalyn Fraad Baxandall, *Words on Fire: The Life and Writing of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn* (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 188.

<sup>32</sup> Angela Partington's essay on popular fashion and the working-class focuses on London, but given the intensity of connection between the two locales, these observations fit with my archival research in American magazines. See Angela Partington, "Popular Fashion and Working-Class

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Affluence,” in *Chic Thrills: A Fashion Reader*, 145-161, ed. Juliet Ash and Elizabeth Wilson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>33</sup> For more on the relationship between the popular press and the government, see Walker, *Shaping our Mothers' World*, 192-3. While the U.S. government stopped sending propaganda packets to publishers, the interests of magazines editors, advertisers, and D.C. closely aligned. Meanwhile, the 1956 “People’s Capitalism” campaign spurred by the public diplomacy branch, U.S. Information Agency made it official policy to rescue the image of capitalism while showing its benefits.

<sup>34</sup> Nancy A. Walker, “Introduction,” in *Women’s Magazines, 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press* (New York: McMillan, 1998), 2.

<sup>35</sup> Walker, “Introduction,” in *The Press and Gender Roles*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> *Good Housekeeping*, October 1946, 318.

<sup>37</sup> qtd. in Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage, 2004), 121.

<sup>38</sup> *Ladies' Home Journal*, July 1949, 9.

<sup>39</sup> Israel, *Bachelor Girl*, 192-3.

<sup>40</sup> *Good Housekeeping*, January 1956.

<sup>41</sup> Susan E. Reid, “Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union Under Khrushchev,” *Slavic Review* 61:2 (2002): 222.

<sup>42</sup> *Ladies' Home Journal*, August 1955.

<sup>43</sup> qtd. in Hixson, *Parting the Curtain*, 167.

<sup>44</sup> E.g., Achter, “Unruly Bodies,” 46-68.

<sup>45</sup> Gertrude Samuels, “Why Russian Women Work Like Men,” *New York Times Magazine* November 2, 1958, 22.

<sup>46</sup> Elsa Schiaparelli, *Shocking Life: The Autobiography of Elsa Schiaparelli* (New York: Harry Abrams, 2007), 80.

<sup>47</sup> Unsurprisingly, Soviet magazines were subject to censorship and toed the Party line. See Tolstikova, “*Rabotnitsa*,” 138.

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<sup>48</sup> Galina Shergova. "Soviet Byelorussia is 30 Years Old." *Soviet Woman*, March-April 1950, 42-46.

<sup>49</sup> Bartlett, *FashionEast*, 136.

<sup>50</sup> Bucher, "Struggling to Survive," 139.

<sup>51</sup> Bucher, "Struggling to Survive," 140.

<sup>52</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, "Life of the Party," March 29, 1948, 10.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Hariman, "Political Parody and Public Culture," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94: 3 (2008): 251.

<sup>54</sup> Jonathan Gray, Jeffrey P. Jones, and Ethan Thompson, "The State of Satire, the Satire of State," in *Satire TV: Politics and Comedy in the Post-Network Era*, ed. Jeffrey Jones, Ethan Thompson (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 7.

<sup>55</sup> Barbara Foley, *Radical Representations: Politics and Form in U.S. Proletarian Fiction, 1929-1941* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 65.

<sup>56</sup> Nancy Walker, "Humor and Gender Roles: The 'Funny' Feminism of the Post-World War II Suburbs," *American Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (1985): 113.

<sup>57</sup> Vivian Howard, "Housewives are Simply Wonderful," *New Masses*, December 23, 1947, 9

<sup>58</sup> Howard, "Housewives," 9.

<sup>59</sup> Howard, "Housewives," 9.

<sup>60</sup> Howard, "Housewives," 9.

<sup>61</sup> Howard, "Housewives," 10.

<sup>62</sup> Howard, "Housewives," 9.

<sup>63</sup> Howard, "Housewives," 10.

<sup>64</sup> Howard, "Housewives," 10.

<sup>65</sup> Howard, "Housewives," 9.

<sup>66</sup> Howard, "Housewives," 9.

<sup>67</sup> Howard, "Housewives," 9.

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<sup>68</sup> Howard, "Housewives," 9.

<sup>69</sup> Howard, "Housewives," 9.

<sup>70</sup> Howard, "Housewives," 10.

<sup>71</sup> For an instance of a letter to the editor that seems to miss the point of Tinsley's satire, see Muriel Reitman, "The Woman Question Again," *Worker*, January 4, 1948, 9. Tinsley also had his defenders. See Kay Whitney, "Assures Ted He's Still Loved," *Daily Worker*, January 13, 1948, 9. Others were more ambivalent, like Mrs. Cynthia Rinsler, "Thoughts on the 'Woman Question,'" *Worker*, January 11, 1948, 8.

<sup>72</sup> Tinsley, "Men: How to Get Them," 12.

<sup>73</sup> Tinsley, "Men: How to Get Them," 12.

<sup>74</sup> Hariman, "Political Parody," 264.

<sup>75</sup> Tinsley, "Men: How to Get Them," 12.

<sup>76</sup> Tinsley, "Men: How to Get Them," 12.

<sup>77</sup> Tinsley, "Men: How to Get Them," 12.

<sup>78</sup> Tinsley, "Men: How to Get Them," 12.

<sup>79</sup> Gray, Jones, and Thompson, "The State of Satire, the Satire of State," 7.

<sup>80</sup> qtd. in Baxandall, *Words on Fire*, 252.

<sup>81</sup> Flynn, "Life of the Party," September 20, 1948, 10.

<sup>82</sup> Flynn, "Life of the Party," September 20, 1948, 10.

<sup>83</sup> Flynn, "Life of the Party," September 20, 1948, 10.

<sup>84</sup> Flynn, "Life of the Party," September 20, 1948, 10.

<sup>85</sup> Tatyana Tess, "One of the First," *Soviet Woman*, January-February 1949, 25.

<sup>86</sup> See, e.g., "The Soviet Look: Moscow's 'House of Models' has produced a new line," *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, July 10, 1949, 6; William J. Jordan, "Portraits of the Soviet Woman," *New York Times*, February 3, 1957, 176.

<sup>87</sup> On Lesser's journalism career, see his obituary in the London Independent. Jim Jump, "Sam Lesser," Independent [UK], November 1, 2010, accessed September 24, 2014, [www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/sam-lesser-veteran-communist-journalist-who-served-with-the-international-brigade-during-the-spanish-civil-war-2121708.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/sam-lesser-veteran-communist-journalist-who-served-with-the-international-brigade-during-the-spanish-civil-war-2121708.html).

<sup>88</sup> Sam Russell, "Moscow Miss has Style—By GUM!" *Worker*, March 25, 1956, 11.

<sup>89</sup> See page 75 of the April 1950 issue of the *Ladies' Home Journal* for this advertisement.

<sup>90</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, "Women's Rebellion," in *Words on Fire: The Life and Writing of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn*, Rosalyn Fraad Baxandall (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 252-254. The original article is from the Sunday *Worker*, October 29, 1947.

<sup>91</sup> "Turning Points: New Look," *Voguepedia*, [http://www.vogue.com/voguepedia/New\\_Look](http://www.vogue.com/voguepedia/New_Look), accessed September 4, 2013.

<sup>92</sup> Richard B. Gregg, "The Ego-Function of the Rhetoric of Protest," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 4 (Spring 1971), 71-91.

<sup>93</sup> This picture comes from "Gloria Whalen," *Daily Worker*, July 21, 1947, 5. It is representative of the type of pictures.

<sup>94</sup> J. Bilotta, "Bouquets for Elizabeth Gurley Flynn," *Daily Worker*, December 16, 1948, 8.

<sup>95</sup> Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 121.

<sup>96</sup> Phyllis and Morty, "Against Pictures that Slur Women," *Daily Worker*, January 18, 1949, 8.

<sup>97</sup> MAC, "Prefers Chips to Cheese Cake," *Daily Worker*, January 21, 1949, 8.

<sup>98</sup> Qtd. in Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 88.

<sup>99</sup> A. Kutzik, "The Cheesecake Question," *Daily Worker*, January 26, 1949, 8.

<sup>100</sup> Qtd. in Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 88.

<sup>101</sup> Not every Communist saw the cheesecake pictures as problematic for the Party's women. A January 24, 1949, letter defended the pictures. "We are two members of the progressive thinking section of the male population of America. We are for socialism and participate in the struggle to make it possible in our own small way. And yet we still like pictures of the body beautiful (female)! Besides, the pictures of the girls appearing in the *Daily Worker* not only show us pretty legs, but those girls look darned intelligent!" Mike and Neil exclaimed. They then called for equalizing the playing field by providing pictures of beautiful men for their female comrades to ogle. Letters like this one, of which several appeared, disavowed the argument that representations of bodies could be oppressive to women by disciplining them to fit their dictates.

Indeed, Mike and Neil's suggestion that women with long, bare legs looked intelligent seemed to mock those writing in suggesting that the representations of the female body had political consequences.

## Chapter Two

### Spheres of Influence: Building Theory in *Woman Against Myth*, 1948

<sup>1</sup> Clara Zetkin, *Lenin on the Woman Question*, (New York: International Publishers, 1919), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Betty Millard, *Woman Against Myth* (New York: International Publishers, 1948), 21.

<sup>3</sup> Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 64.

<sup>4</sup> Communist Mary Inman published a lengthy book in 1941 entitled *In Woman's Defense* that made claims similar to Millard's about women's oppression. Because of her falling out with CPUSA leadership over the policies of former chairman Earl Browder, the ideas were not widely taken up beyond women in the Congress of American Women. For her analysis, see Mary Inman, *In Woman's Defense* (Los Angeles: Committee to Organize the Advancement of Women, 1941). For more on how Inman's ideas were taken up in the party at large, see Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 50, 76.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of "The Feminine Mystique": The American Left, the Cold War, and Modern Feminism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 127.

<sup>6</sup> Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 167-8; Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 167; Kathlene McDonald, *Feminism, the Left, and Postwar Literary Culture* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 25; Julia M. Allen, *Passionate Commitments: The Lives of Anna Rochester and Grace Hutchins* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013), 237-9. Weigand's *Red Feminism* gives Millard the closest scrutiny.

<sup>7</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 16.

<sup>8</sup> "Line Forms Early in Sale of Houses," *New York Times*, March 7, 1949, 21.

<sup>9</sup> Joanne Meyerowitz makes a case for the reductive nature of the 1950s domestic stereotype in her introduction to *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, edited by Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

<sup>10</sup> May, *Homeward Bound*, 14. May also suggests that part of the confinement of women in the home was sexual. Women's sexuality, she suggests, was to be confined in the nuclear family and heterosexual marriages. This can be contrasted with circulating discourses about the sexual nonconformity of communists, who were frequently linked to homosexuals during this time. See, e.g., Robert D. Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy*, Culture, Politics, and the Cold War (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); K. A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 52-63.

<sup>11</sup> Ruth Feldstein, *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930-1965* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 116. For a sustained discussion of continuing concerns brought about by consumerism, see Daniel Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939-1979* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> May, *Homeward Bound*, 165.

<sup>13</sup> May, *Homeward Bound*, 166.

<sup>14</sup> Horowitz, *Anxiety of Affluence*, 50.

<sup>15</sup> Harry Schwartz, "Russia Itself Reveals Russian Weakness," *New York Times Magazine*, April 25, 1948, 12.

<sup>16</sup> See Schwartz, "Russia," 13.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's 1959 "Kitchen Debate" is another example of the centrality of the American home and capitalism in Cold War discourse. See, e.g., Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture*, 181-2; Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 197.

<sup>18</sup> "Dewey Proclaims Home Week Here," *New York Times*, September 11, 1952, 53.

<sup>19</sup> This quotation appears throughout literature on postwar suburbia. I encountered it in *The Suburb Reader*, ed. Becky M. Nicolaidis and Andrew Wise (New York: Routledge, 2006), 268.

<sup>20</sup> Susan E. Reid, "Communist Comfort: Socialist Modernism and the Making of Cosy Homes in the Khrushchev Era," *Gender & History* 21:3 (2009): 467.

<sup>21</sup> Harrison E. Salisbury, "Russia Re-Viewed: Life of Soviet Common Man is a Constant Struggle," *New York Times*, September 24, 1954, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture*, viii.

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<sup>23</sup> Oriana Atkinson, *Over at Uncle Joe's: Moscow and Me* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill company, 1947).

<sup>24</sup> See, e.g., Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture*, 9-17; Philip Wylie, *Generation of Vipers* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1942), 189.

<sup>25</sup> Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*, 12; Tom Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man: American Magazines and Consumer Culture, 1900-1950* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 206.

<sup>26</sup> Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 80.

<sup>27</sup> Harold B., "Fight for Women's Rights Impractical," *Worker*, June 13, 1948, 9.

<sup>28</sup> G.P., "Two Sided Question," *Worker*, July 4, 1948, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, "Life of the Party," *Daily Worker*, January 16, 1948.

<sup>30</sup> Leila J. Rupp, *Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement, 1945 to the 1960s* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990), 18.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (New York: International Publishers, 1972 [1884]). See chapter nine in particular.

<sup>32</sup> For more on this and Ella Reeve Bloor's early challenges to this Marxist reification of the workplace as the only political location, see Kathleen A. Brown, "The 'Savagely Fathered and Un-Mothered World' of the Communist Party, U.S.A.: Feminism, Maternalism, and 'Mother Bloor,'" *Feminist Studies* 25, no. 3 (October 1, 1999): 539.

<sup>33</sup> Eva Fodor, "Smiling Women and Fighting Men: The Gender of the Communist Subject in State Socialist Hungary," *Gender and Society* 16, no. 2 (2002): 241.

<sup>34</sup> This claim and my approach to Millard's pamphlet is based upon the premise that gender is a performance. By this, I mean that Communist women used discursive practices to constitute their own subjectivities, and these discursive practices also constituted gendered components to these subjectivities. These gendered components stemmed from a variety of Cold War norms defining what comprised appropriate masculine and feminine behavior. For more on the theoretical background of gender performativity, see Judith Butler's landmark work on the topic, in particular, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," in *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990): 519-531; Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, "Life of the Party," *Worker*, April 9, 1939.

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- <sup>36</sup> Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 61.
- <sup>37</sup> Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 63.
- <sup>38</sup> Gerda Lerner, *Fireweed, A Political Autobiography* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 257.
- <sup>39</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, "Life of the Party," *Daily Worker*, February 2, 1948, 11.
- <sup>40</sup> Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 81.
- <sup>41</sup> Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 80.
- <sup>42</sup> "Asks Articles on Male Chauvinism," *Daily Worker*, January 28, 1948.
- <sup>43</sup> Allen, *Passionate Commitments*, 237. I analyze the pamphlet as opposed to the newspaper articles in this chapter, as more people would have read the pamphlet.
- <sup>44</sup> Allen, *Passionate Commitments*, 237.
- <sup>45</sup> For these quotes and stories, see her obituaries. Eric A. Gordon, "Feminist Pioneer Betty Millard Dies at 98," *People's World*, <http://peoplesworld.org/feminist-pioneer-betty-millard-dies-at-9/>, accessed 14 August 2013; Jim Luce, "Memorial for Social Activist Betty Millard," *Huffington Post*, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-luce/memorial-for-social-activ\\_b\\_575069.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-luce/memorial-for-social-activ_b_575069.html), accessed 14 August 2013.
- <sup>46</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 5.
- <sup>47</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 5.
- <sup>48</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 6.
- <sup>49</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 7.
- <sup>50</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 9.
- <sup>51</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 18.
- <sup>52</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 20.
- <sup>53</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 16.
- <sup>54</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 16.
- <sup>55</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 9.

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<sup>56</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 16.

<sup>57</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 16-17.

<sup>58</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 4-5.

<sup>59</sup> On the labor uprisings in Europe, see, e.g., Priscilla Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); Mike Rapport, *1848: Year of Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

<sup>60</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 23.

<sup>61</sup> See, e.g., “Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, 1848” in Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, vol 2. *Key Texts of the Early Feminists* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1988), 33.

<sup>62</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 23.

<sup>63</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 14-15.

<sup>64</sup> See, e.g., Mary Louise Roberts, *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siecle France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 92.

<sup>65</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 14.

<sup>66</sup> Most of Millard’s analysis is taken from chapter nine of Engels’s *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* entitled “Barbarism and Civilization.” This particular narrative comes from pages 218-220 of the 1972 edition of the book.

<sup>67</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 15. This quotation from Engels is on page 221 of the 1972 edition of the book.

<sup>68</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 15-16.

<sup>69</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 13.

<sup>70</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 53.

<sup>71</sup> Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 56.

<sup>72</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 12.

<sup>73</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 5.

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<sup>74</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 12.

<sup>75</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 52.

<sup>76</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 18.

<sup>77</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 18.

<sup>78</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 18.

<sup>79</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 19.

<sup>80</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 19.

<sup>81</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 19-20.

<sup>82</sup> For more on this tradition in Communist thought, see Brown, "Savagely Fathered," 551.

<sup>83</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 20-21.

<sup>84</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 21.

<sup>85</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 21-22.

<sup>86</sup> See, e.g., Jonathan Corpus Ong, "The Cosmopolitan Continuum: Locating Cosmopolitanism in Media and Cultural Studies," *Media Culture Society* 31 (2009): 449-467; Eithne Luibhéid, *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xxiv

<sup>87</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 22.

<sup>88</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 18-19.

<sup>89</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 20.

<sup>90</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 21-22.

<sup>91</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 21.

<sup>92</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 19.

<sup>93</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 20.

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<sup>94</sup> On educating children and the Left during the Cold War, see Julia L. Mickenberg, *Learning from the Left: Children's Literature, the Cold War, and Radical Politics in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 5, 15.

<sup>95</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 4.

<sup>96</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 4.

<sup>97</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 13.

<sup>98</sup> Millard, *Woman Against Myth*, 23.

<sup>99</sup> See, e.g., "Can You Help This Wife?" *Worker*, June 6, 1948; "Readers Replies to Request for Aid," *Worker*, June 13, 1948.

<sup>100</sup> See, e.g., Harold B., "Fight for Women's Rights Impractical," *Worker*, June 13, 1948; J. Gerard, "Married Woman's First Task is Care of the Home," *Worker*, June 27, 1948.

<sup>101</sup> Milton Howard, "Male Superiority Debunked in 'Woman Against Myth,'" *Worker*, June 20, 1948.

<sup>102</sup> We can't know exactly how many people read Millard's pamphlet because circulation data was not collected for pamphlets.

<sup>103</sup> William Z. Foster, "On Improving the Party's Work Among Women," *Political Affairs* 27, no. 10 (October 1948): 988-9.

<sup>104</sup> Allen, *Passionate Commitments*, 239.

<sup>105</sup> Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 101.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Militancy and Loyalty: The Rhetorical Challenge of Black Feminism in the Postwar Communist Party U.S.A.**

<sup>1</sup> Claudia Jones, "An End to the Neglect of the Negro Woman!" *Political Affairs* 28, no. 6 (June 1949): 51.

<sup>2</sup> Jones, "An End," 61.

<sup>3</sup> "Goodbye Mammy, Hello Mom," *Ebony*, March 1947, 36.

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<sup>4</sup> Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, From Slavery to the Present* (New York: Vintage, 1985), 4.

<sup>5</sup> The role of African Americans in the Communist Party has been a topic of some contention in historical scholarship. See especially Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Randi Storch, *Red Chicago: American Communism at its Grassroots, 1928-35* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); Mark Solomon, *The Cry was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-1936* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1998); Glenda Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008). Most historians contend that CPUSA was a significant proponent of civil rights when few others were. Their efforts to organize African Americans into trade unions and to protest racial segregation formed a significant part of “the long civil rights movement.” See Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *Journal of American History*, 91, no. 4 (2005): 1249.

<sup>6</sup> Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women’s Liberation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 64. There were exceptions to the celebration of Millard’s theorizing, as one reviewer in the Communist newspaper the Worker dismissed it as, at times, “too feminist.” See Milton Howard, “Male Superiority Debunked in ‘Woman Against Myth,’” *Worker*, June 20, 1948. It is hard to dispute the fact, though, based on an exploration of CPUSA newspapers, that the acceptance of Millard’s arguments marked a significant discursive change in attention to women’s activism.

<sup>7</sup> Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 78.

<sup>8</sup> He identifies Beulah Richardson’s 1951 poem “A Black Woman Speaks of White Womanhood” as the other. Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 171.

<sup>9</sup> Erik S. McDuffie, “A ‘New Freedom Movement of Negro Women’: Sojourning for Truth, Justice, and Human Rights during the Early Cold War,” *Radical History Review* 101 (2008): 85.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Helen Washington, “Alice Childress, Lorraine Hansberry, and Claudia Jones: Black Women Write the Popular Front,” in *Left of the Color Line: Race, Radicalism, and Twentieth Century Literature of the United States*, ed. Bill V. Mullen and James Smethurst (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 185.

<sup>11</sup> Weigand, *Red Feminism*; Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*; Carole Boyce Davies, ed., *Claudia Jones: Beyond Containment* (Oxfordshire, UK: Ayebia, 2011); Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Connie Johnson,

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“Reclaiming Claudia Jones: When a Black Feminist Marxist Defies McCarthyism,” *Michigan Feminist Studies* 22, no. 1 (2008): 26-44; Kathlene McDonald, *Feminism, the Left, and Postwar Literary Culture* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, & Class* (New York: Random House, 1981; New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011), 168. Citations are to the Knopf Edition.

<sup>13</sup> Despite the body of scholarship on militant rhetoric, a clear definition has not emerged. It tends to be older scholarship on the Black Panther Party and Black Power movements that assumes militant rhetoric justifies violence. This scholarship also often dismisses it as an ineffective, irrational strategy. See, e.g., Robert L. Scott, “Justifying Violence-the Rhetoric of Militant Black Power,” *Central States Speech Journal* 19, no. 2 (June 1, 1968): 96–104; James W. Chesebro, “Rhetorical Strategies of the Radical - Revolutionary,” *Today’s Speech* 20, no. 1 (January 1, 1972): 37–48; Parke G. Burgess, “The Rhetoric of Black Power: A Moral Demand?,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 54, no. 2 (April 1, 1968): 122–33. By contrast scholarship on the woman’s suffrage movement typically views militant rhetoric as aggressive defiance that stops short of violence. See in particular, Belinda A. Stillion Southard, “Militancy, Power, and Identity: The Silent Sentinels as Women Fighting for Political Voice,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10, no. 3 (2007): 399-417.

<sup>14</sup> Anna Eblen, “DEEDS NOT WORDS: English Militant Suffragists’ Rhetoric,” *Florida Communication Journal* 21, no. 2 (September 1993): 67–79; Belinda A. Stillion Southard, “Militancy, Power, and Identity: The Silent Sentinels as Women Fighting for Political Voice,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10, no. 3 (2007): 399–417; Cheryl R. Jorgensen-Earp, *The Transfiguring Sword: The Just War of the Women’s Social and Political Union* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 1997); 1. Mari Boor Tonn, “Militant Motherhood: Labor’s Mary Harris ‘Mother’ Jones,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82, no. 1 (February 1996): 1-21.

<sup>15</sup> Robert L. Scott, “Justifying Violence-the Rhetoric of Militant Black Power,” *Central States Speech Journal* 19, no. 2 (June 1, 1968): 96–104; Celeste Michelle Condit and John Louis Lucaites, “Malcolm X and the Limits of the Rhetoric of Revolutionary Dissent,” *Journal of Black Studies* 23, no. 3 (March 1, 1993): 291–313; James W. Chesebro, “Rhetorical Strategies of the Radical - Revolutionary,” *Today’s Speech* 20, no. 1 (January 1, 1972): 37–48; Parke G. Burgess, “The Rhetoric of Black Power: A Moral Demand?,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 54, no. 2 (April 1, 1968): 122–33.

<sup>16</sup> Steve Estes, *I Am a Man!: Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 6-8.

<sup>17</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*, 1st Free Press paperback ed (New York: Free Press : Distributed by Simon & Schuster, 1996), 121.

<sup>18</sup> Qtd. in Laura A. Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 167.

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<sup>19</sup> Qtd. in Belmonte, *Selling the American Way*, 160.

<sup>20</sup> Hughes never publically affiliated with the CP, although he was sympathetic to communism. For this quote, see, Langston Hughes, "Here to Yonder," *Chicago Defender*, June 1, 1946, 14.

<sup>21</sup> Lem Graves, Jr., "Paul Robeson's Story," *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 17, 1949, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 13.

<sup>23</sup> Yanick St. Jean, *Double Burden: Black Women and Everyday Racism* (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 7.

<sup>24</sup> Patricia A. Turner, *Ceramic Uncles & Celluloid Mammies: Black Images and Their Influence on Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994), 50-1.

<sup>25</sup> Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 113.

<sup>26</sup> Michael C. Dawson, *Blacks In and Out of the Left* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 32, 33, 40.

<sup>27</sup> Naison, *Communists in Harlem*, 19.

<sup>28</sup> Kelley, *Race Rebels*, 115; Naison, *Communists in Harlem*, 51; Solomon, *Cry was Unity*, 258.

<sup>29</sup> Solomon, *Cry was Unity*, 258.

<sup>30</sup> Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left*, 132-3; Naison, *Communists in Harlem*, 57.

<sup>31</sup> Gilmore, *Defying Dixie*, 6; Naison, *Communists in Harlem*, 300.

<sup>32</sup> Gilmore, *Defying Dixie*, 128.

<sup>33</sup> Solomon, *Cry was Unity*, 249.

<sup>34</sup> Qtd. in Maxwell, *New Negro*, 128.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Rodgers Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-Twentieth Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 6.

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<sup>37</sup> For a look at the Party's activism along these lines, see Randi Storch, *Red Chicago: American Communism at its Grassroots, 1928-1935* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

<sup>38</sup> Qtd. in *Beyond Containment*, 11.

<sup>39</sup> Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 57.

<sup>40</sup> Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 102.

<sup>41</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 5. See also McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom*, 21.

<sup>42</sup> Jones, "An End," 51.

<sup>43</sup> Jones, "An End," 60.

<sup>44</sup> Jones, "An End," 60.

<sup>45</sup> Jones, "An End," 51.

<sup>46</sup> For a description of the characteristics of the sociology discourse community, see Peshe C. Kuriloff, "What Discourses Have in Common: Teaching the Transaction between Writer and Reader," *College Composition and Communication* 47, no. 4 (1996): 487.

<sup>47</sup> Jones, "An End," 57.

<sup>48</sup> Jones, "An End," 55.

<sup>49</sup> Jones, "An End," 55.

<sup>50</sup> Jones, "An End," 55.

<sup>51</sup> Jones, "An End," 59.

<sup>52</sup> McDuffie, "A 'New Freedom Movement of Negro Women,'" 83.

<sup>53</sup> Jones, "An End," 52.

<sup>54</sup> Jones, "An End," 67.

<sup>55</sup> Jones, "An End," 66.

<sup>56</sup> Jones, "An End," 53, 55.

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<sup>57</sup> Jones, "An End," 53.

<sup>58</sup> Jones, "An End," 58.

<sup>59</sup> Jones, "An End," 63-4.

<sup>60</sup> Jones, "An End," 58.

<sup>61</sup> Jones, "An End," 66.

<sup>62</sup> Jones, "An End," 59.

<sup>63</sup> Jones, "An End," 59.

<sup>64</sup> Jones, "An End," 60.

<sup>65</sup> Jones, "An End," 56.

<sup>66</sup> Jones, "An End," 62.

<sup>67</sup> See especially Hazel Carby, "White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood," in *Black British Cultural Studies, a Reader*, ed. Houston A. Baker, Manthia Diawara, Ruth H. Lindeborg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996): 61-86.

<sup>68</sup> Jones, "An End," 66.

<sup>69</sup> Jones, "An End," 59.

<sup>70</sup> Jones, "An End," 59.

<sup>71</sup> Jones, "An End," 59.

<sup>72</sup> Jones, "An End," 61.

<sup>73</sup> Jones, "An End," 63.

<sup>74</sup> Jones, "An End," 63.

<sup>75</sup> Jones, "An End," 53.

<sup>76</sup> Jones, "An End," 51.

<sup>77</sup> Jones, "An End," 52.

<sup>78</sup> Jones, "An End," 52.

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<sup>79</sup> Feminist communication scholars have long recognized asymmetries between men and women wherein women's communication is devalued, invisible, or studied simplistically. This asymmetry stems from complex lines of power. See Radha S. Hegde, "A View from Elsewhere: Locating Difference and the Politics of Representation from a Transnational Feminist Perspective," *Communication Theory* 8, no. 3 (1998): 285; Radha S. Hegde, "Narrative of Silence: Rethinking Gender, Agency, and Power from the Communication Experiences of Battered Women in South India," *Communication Studies* 47, no. 4 (1996): 304. They have begun to recognize as well the asymmetries between women of different race and class statuses, for instance in how elite white women were idealized while black women were brutalized as slaves. See, Susan Zaeske, "'The South Arose as One Man': Gender and Sectionalism in Antislavery Petition Debates, 1835-1845," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 12, no. 3 (2009): 349, 357.

<sup>80</sup> Jones, "An End," 63.

<sup>81</sup> Jones, "An End," 52.

<sup>82</sup> Jones, "An End," 52.

<sup>83</sup> Jones, "An End," 55.

<sup>84</sup> Jones, "An End," 51.

<sup>85</sup> Jones, "An End," 62.

<sup>86</sup> Jones, "An End," 59.

<sup>87</sup> Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 107.

<sup>88</sup> Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 107.

<sup>89</sup> McDonald, *Feminism, the Left, and Postwar Literary Culture*.

## Chapter Four

### "Articulate and Organized": Peace Petitions, Working-Class Motherhood, and Transnational Witnessing

<sup>1</sup> "Schools to Hold First A-Bomb Defense Drill," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 24, 1950, 16.

<sup>2</sup> "Chicago Women Picture Perils of Atom Bomb Raid in Leaflet," *Daily Worker*, October 24, 1950, 4.

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<sup>3</sup> Bernard Burton, "75,000 Marchers Demand Peace," *Daily Worker*, May 2, 1950, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph North, "Dove of Peace is Symbol of Parade," *Daily Worker*, May 2, 1950, 2.

<sup>5</sup> "May Day Warning," *New York Times*, May 1, 1950, 24.

<sup>6</sup> "Two Million March in a Jubilant Moscow," *Daily Worker*, May 2, 1950, 2.

<sup>7</sup> See in particular, Matthew S. May, *Soapbox Rebellion: The Hobo Orator Union and the Free Speech Fights of the Industrial Workers of the World, 1909-1916*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> This is a key insight in Mari Boor Tonn's, "Militant Motherhood: Labor's Mary Harris 'Mother' Jones," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82, no. 1 (February 1996): 1-21. See also Thomas A. Discenna, "The Rhetoric of Graduate Employee Unionization: Critical Rhetoric and the Yale Grade Strike," *Communication Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2010): 19-35; Dana L. Cloud, "Fighting Words: Labor and the Limits of Communication at Staley, 1993 to 1996," *Management Communication Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (May 2005): 509-42; 1; Jennifer L. Borda, "Negotiating Feminist Politics in the Third Wave: Labor Struggle and Solidarity in Live Nude Girls Unite!," *Communication Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2009): 117-35.

<sup>9</sup> Angela G. Ray, "The Rhetorical Ritual of Citizenship: Women's Voting as Public Performance, 1868-1875," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93, no. 1 (2007): 18.

<sup>10</sup> Tonn, "Militant Motherhood," 2.

<sup>11</sup> Isaac West, "Performing Resistance in/from the Kitchen: The Practice of Maternal Pacifist Politics and La WISP's Cookbooks," *Women's Studies in Communication* 30:3 (2007): 364.

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., James J. Kimble, "John F. Kennedy, the Construction of Peace, and the Pitfalls of Androgynous Rhetoric," *Communication Quarterly* 57:2 (2009): 154-170; Ira Chernus, "Eisenhower and the Soviets, 1945-1957: Rhetoric and Policy," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 2:1 (1999): 59-82; J. Robert Cox, "Perspectives on Rhetorical Criticism of Movements: Antiwar Dissent, 1964-1970," *Western Speech* 38:4 (1974): 254-268.

<sup>13</sup> Martin J. Medhurst, "Eisenhower's 'Atoms for Peace' Speech: A Case Study in the Strategic Use of Language," *Communication Monographs* 54:2 (1987): 204-220; Robert L. Ivie, "Dwight D. Eisenhower's 'Chance for Peace': Quest or Crusade?" *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 1:2 (1998): 227-243.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Janis L. Edwards and Amanda Leigh Brozana, "Gendering Anti-War Rhetoric: Cindy Sheehan's Symbolic Motherhood," *Journal of the Northwest Communication Association* 37 (Spring 2008): 78-102; Laura Knudson, "Cindy Sheehan and the Rhetoric of Motherhood: A Textual Analysis," *Peace & Change* 34, no. 2 (2009): 164-83.

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<sup>15</sup> See Lawrence S. Wittner, *Rebels Against War: The American Peace Movement, 1933-1983* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); Lawrence S. Wittner, *One World or None: A History of the Nuclear Disarmament Movement through 1953* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

<sup>16</sup> Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993).

<sup>17</sup> Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 5.

<sup>18</sup> The only monograph about Communists in the peace movement is Robbie Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream: Communism, Anticommunism and the U.S. Peace Movement, 1945-1963* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000). Wittner, *One World or None* includes several chapters on the Communist-led peace movement as well. Scholars that have explored the role of communists in the peace movement have concerned themselves with trying to discern whether a communist presence in the postwar peace movement was a help or a hindrance. Studies like Wittner's, largely published before the official end of the Cold War, have been very critical of the role Communists played in peace organizations, concluding that their motives were not genuine and that they drew the forces of McCarthyism to organizations in which they were active. By contrast, Robbie Lieberman's 2000 monograph takes a more nuanced perspective, lauding the organizing and mobilization power Communists brought to the American peace movement while also noting the attacks they provoked. Her interviews with those involved in the Communist-led peace movement make a persuasive case that activism for peace was a large part of the political commitments of these activists, not just when it was convenient for the Soviet Union. I am sympathetic to this perspective, without staking a central claim in this debate. The benefit to centering the Communist-led peace movement, I contend, lies in its ability to foreground the activities of African American and working-class women, while allowing us to observe and analyze the different rhetorical resources they had at their disposal. Scholars have not explored the feminist potential and relationship to citizenship that grew out of this peace movement during the early Cold War. Instead, most have dismissed the 1950s as a nadir in feminist activism for peace. I explore these frictions as productive and dissident, while shifting the question to think about how motherhood and peace remade dominant discourse that expanded the role for women in politics.

<sup>19</sup> Susan Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 3. For more on the historical power of petitioning, see Colin Leys, "Petitioning in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *Political Studies* 3:1 (1955): 45; Gregory A. Mark, "The Vestigial Constitution: The History and Significance of the Right to Petition," *Fordham Law Review* 66 (1998): 2153.

<sup>20</sup> Susan Zaeske, "Signatures of Citizenship: The Rhetoric of Women's Antislavery Petitions," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88:2 (2002): 161.

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<sup>21</sup> The phrase “Grandma’s Pantry was Ready” also circulated in local newspapers. See *Lewiston Daily Sun* [Idaho], April 8, 1955, 9. See also Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 101.

<sup>22</sup> Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia Foot Farnham, *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), 93.

<sup>23</sup> Lundberg and Farnham, *Modern Woman*, 120, 164, 167.

<sup>24</sup> Morris L. Ernst and David Loth, *Report on the American Communist* (New York: Henry Holt, 1952), 168.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Rogin, “Kiss me Deadly: Communism, Motherhood, and Cold War Movies,” *Representations* 6 (1984): 6

<sup>26</sup> Philip Wylie, *Generation of Vipers* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1942), 197.

<sup>27</sup> For more analysis on these two films, see Rogin, “Kiss me Deadly.”

<sup>28</sup> Harold Stassen, “Atoms for Peace,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, August 1955, 48-9.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Bacon Hales, “Imagining the Atomic Age: *Life* and the Atom,” in *Looking at Life Magazine*, ed. Erika Doss, 103-119 (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 117.

<sup>30</sup> Howard Fast, “The Lovable Atom,” *Daily Worker*, May 2, 1956, 6.

<sup>31</sup> “Text of President Truman’s Wake Forest Speech on Peace with the Soviets,” *New York Times*, October 16, 1951, 22.

<sup>32</sup> Anthony Leviero, “Truman Charges Reds Block Peace, Prepare for War,” *New York Times*, June 11, 1950, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 12, 90.

<sup>34</sup> Richard H. Parke, “Our Way Defended to 2,000 Opening ‘Culture’ Meeting,” *New York Times*, March 26, 1949, 1.

<sup>35</sup> “Panel Discussions of the Cultural Conference Delegates Cover a Wide Range of Subjects,” *New York Times*, March 27, 1949, 44.

<sup>36</sup> Richard H. Parke, “Culture Sessions Center on Conflict Of East and West,” *New York Times*, March 27, 1949, 1.

<sup>37</sup> Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream*, 63, 67.

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<sup>38</sup> “Robeson Concert Balked by Melee,” *New York Times*, August 28, 1949, 1.

<sup>39</sup> Qtd. in Wittner, *Rebels Against War*, 222.

<sup>40</sup> In Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream*, 95.

<sup>41</sup> William Z. Foster, “On Improving the Party’s Work Among Women,” *Political Affairs* 27 (November 1948): 989.

<sup>42</sup> Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 86.

<sup>43</sup> Claudia Jones, “For New Approaches to Our Work Among Women,” *Political Affairs* 27, no. 8 (August 1948): 742.

<sup>44</sup> Allan Taylor, “Story of the Stockholm Petition,” *New York Times*, August 13, 1950, E6.

<sup>45</sup> Qtd. in Wittner, *One World or None*, 202-3.

<sup>46</sup> These numbers are in Taylor, “Story of the Stockholm Petition,” E6.

<sup>47</sup> Qtd. in Committee on Un-American Activities, *The Communist ‘Peace Petition’ Campaign*, July 13, 1950 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 3.

<sup>48</sup> Taylor, “Story of the Stockholm Petition,” E6.

<sup>49</sup> The petition is reproduced in Alexander Feinberg, “Moscow Decrees ‘Peace’ Sabotage,” *New York Times*, July 22, 1950, 4.

<sup>50</sup> It is likely that this quotation from Lie is a general statement on peace that petitioners used in a different context. I have been unable to find any direct evidence that Lie signed the petition, and the capitalist press in the United States explicitly claimed that the quote was taken out of context. See Feinberg, “Moscow Decrees,” 4.

<sup>51</sup> “Q&A on Peace,” *Daily Worker*, June 20, 1950, 2.

<sup>52</sup> “To sign up 5 million for ban on atomic war,” *Daily Worker*, June 9, 1950, 1.

<sup>53</sup> For more on military service during WWII, see Timothy Stewart-Winter, “Not a Soldier, Not a Slacker: Conscientious Objectors and Male Citizenship in the United States during the Second World War,” *Gender & History* 19:3 (2007): 519-542.

<sup>54</sup> This masculinity is termed by historian Robert Dean as “imperial.” See Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*.

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- <sup>55</sup> “UE Local Sets Aim of 50,000 Peace Signers,” *Daily Worker*, June 16, 1950, 1.
- <sup>56</sup> “Peace Panics the Press,” *Daily Worker*, June 26, 1950, 8.
- <sup>57</sup> “This Mother Learned that Many Share her Desire for Peace,” *Worker*, February 24, 1952, 8.
- <sup>58</sup> “Women for Peace,” *Worker*, March 9, 1952, 6; “Queens Casts 8,000 Votes for Peace,” *Daily Worker*, May 22, 1950, 1.
- <sup>59</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, “A Better World,” *Daily Worker*, March 6, 1952.
- <sup>60</sup> “Women’s Rally Tonight to Open Peace Petition Drive,” *Daily Worker*, March 15, 1950, 4.
- <sup>61</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, “Mark Women’s Day,” *Daily Worker*, March 8, 1950, 8.
- <sup>62</sup> Flynn, “Mark Women’s Day,” 8.
- <sup>63</sup> Committee on Un-American Activities, *The Communist ‘Peace Petition’ Campaign*, 1-3.
- <sup>64</sup> Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream*, 91.
- <sup>65</sup> “This Mother Learned that Many Share Her Desire for Peace,” 8.
- <sup>66</sup> Flynn, “Mark Women’s Day,” 8.
- <sup>67</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, “Life of the Party,” *Daily Worker*, February 8, 1950, 8.
- <sup>68</sup> Flynn, “Mark Women’s Day,” 8.
- <sup>69</sup> Flynn “Mark Women’s Day,” 8.
- <sup>70</sup> Joseph North, “Here’s How Much New Yorkers Want Peace,” *Daily Worker*, June 22, 1950, 1.
- <sup>71</sup> Clark, “Mothers Bring,” 3.
- <sup>72</sup> Karma R. Chávez, “Counter-public Enclaves and Understanding the Function of Rhetoric in Social Movement Coalition-Building,” *Communication Quarterly* 59:1 (2011): 3.
- <sup>73</sup> “3,000 Newark Shoppers Vote for Peace,” *Daily Worker*, May 18, 1950, 5.
- <sup>74</sup> This text comes from a petition circulated by the Women’s Division of the Queens County American Labor Party on May 22, 1950. See “Queens Casts 8,000 Votes for Peace,” *Daily Worker*, May 22, 1950, 1.

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<sup>75</sup> Arabella Lyon and Lester C. Olson, “Traditions of Testifying and Witnessing,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 41:3 (2011): 207.

<sup>76</sup> Emily Dianne Cram, “‘Angie was Our Sister:’ Witnessing the Trans-Formation of Disgust in the Citizenry of Photography,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98:4 (2012): 417, 423.

<sup>77</sup> Kevin DeLuca, “Unruly Arguments: The Body Rhetoric of Earth First!, ACT UP, and Queer Nation,” *Argumentation and Advocacy* 36 (1999): 12.

<sup>78</sup> “To American Mothers from Women of Asia,” *Worker*, March 12, 1950, 3.

<sup>79</sup> Debra Hawhee, “Looking Into Aristotle’s Eyes: Toward a Theory of Rhetorical Vision,” *Advances in the History of Rhetoric* 14, no. 2 (2011): 159.

<sup>80</sup> “From the Women of Korea,” *Worker*, March 4, 1951, 8.

<sup>81</sup> “Int’l Women’s Group Sends Peace Appeal to America,” *Daily Worker*, September 26, 1950, 4.

<sup>82</sup> Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), 94.

<sup>83</sup> On the active nature of spectatorship and its relation to citizenship, see Jeffrey Edward Green, *The Eyes of the People: Democracy in an Age of Spectatorship* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>84</sup> Claudia Jones, “International Women’s Day and the Struggle for Peace,” *Political Affairs*, 1951, 33-4.

<sup>85</sup> Flynn, “Mark Women’s Day,” 8.

<sup>86</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, “Make Mother’s Day Peace Day,” *Daily Worker*, May 12, 1950, 8.

<sup>87</sup> Betty Millard, *Women on Guard: How the Women of the World Fight for Peace* (New York: New Century, 1952), 3.

<sup>88</sup> Millard, *Women on Guard*, 8.

<sup>89</sup> Millard, *Women on Guard*, 8.

<sup>90</sup> Millard, *Women on Guard*, 8.

<sup>91</sup> Millard, *Women on Guard*, 6.

<sup>92</sup> Millard, *Women on Guard*, 4.

<sup>93</sup> Millard, *Women on Guard*, 13.

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<sup>94</sup> Millard, *Women on Guard*, 19-20.

<sup>95</sup> Millard, *Women on Guard*, 20.

<sup>96</sup> Millard, *Women on Guard*, 15.

<sup>97</sup> Millard, *Women on Guard*, 16.

<sup>98</sup> Millard, *Women on Guard*, 3.

<sup>99</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, "Mothers Appeal to Mothers," *Daily Worker*, November 6, 1950, 8.

<sup>100</sup> See "U.S. Adds 20 Groups to Subversive List," *New York Times*, July 22, 1953, 4; "U.S. Adds 20 Groups to Subversive List," *New York Times*, February 5, 1954, 14.

<sup>101</sup> Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream*, 102.

<sup>102</sup> Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream*, 105.

<sup>103</sup> For more on this, see Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>104</sup> Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 225.

## Chapter Five

### "I Speak My Own Piece": Imagining New Possibilities in McCarthy's Heyday

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *The Alderson Story: My Life as a Political Prisoner* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), 9-10.

<sup>2</sup> Flynn, *Alderson Story*, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Weigand does note that the trials and repression made women even more important to the Party, but she does not explore the rhetoric of the leaders on trial.

<sup>4</sup> Starobin's *American Communism in Crisis*, for instance, devotes one sentence to the trial of the second leaders and does not mention Flynn by name. See Joseph R. Starobin, *American Communism in Crisis, 1943-1957* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 209.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Asen, "Imagining in the Public Sphere," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 35, no. 4 (2002): 348.

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<sup>6</sup> Asen, "Imagining," 351.

<sup>7</sup> Karma Chavez, *Queer Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities* (University of Illinois Press, 2013), 31.

<sup>8</sup> Geoffrey R. Stone, *Perilous Times: Free Speech in Wartime from the Sedition Act of 1798 to the War on Terror* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004): 246-7.

<sup>9</sup> Stone, *Perilous Times*, 251.

<sup>10</sup> Stone, *Perilous Times*, 252.

<sup>11</sup> Helen C. Camp, *Iron in Her Soul: Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and the American Left* (Pullman, Wash: Washington State University Press, 1995), 252.

<sup>12</sup> *Dennis et al. v. United States*. 341 U.S. 494 (1951), 509.

<sup>13</sup> Scott Martelle, *The Fear Within: Spies, Commies, and American Democracy on Trial* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Joseph R. McCarthy, "First Speech Delivered in Senate by Senator Joe McCarthy on Communists in Government; Wheeling Speech," in *Major Speeches and Debates of Senator Joe McCarthy Delivered in the United States Senate, 1950-1951*, Reprint from the Congressional Record (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, n.d.), 8.

<sup>15</sup> Lippmann, qtd. in Robert Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 91.

<sup>16</sup> Ellen Schrecker, *Many are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), xv-xvi.

<sup>17</sup> Stone, *Perilous Times*, 336-7.

<sup>18</sup> Stone, *Perilous Times*, 348-50.

<sup>19</sup> Laura A. Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 95.

<sup>20</sup> Belmonte, *Selling the American Way*, 108.

<sup>21</sup> I do not mean to suggest that there were not American Communists engaged in espionage activities. Recently declassified Soviet documents prove that there were. Scholars remain divided on the nature, extent, and impact of these activities.

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- <sup>22</sup> Sara Elizabeth Rzeszutek, "Love and Activism: James and Esther Cooper Jackson and the Black Freedom Movement in the United States, 1914-1968," (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2009), 180.
- <sup>23</sup> Martelle, *The Fear Within*, 245-6.
- <sup>24</sup> Peggy Dennis, *Love and Politics: Living in the Eye of McCarthyism*, 35. *Love and Politics* is an unpublished memoir completed in 1981 about the CPUSA during the Cold War years that appears in full on reel 10 of the Eugene and Peggy Dennis Papers microfilm collection.
- <sup>25</sup> Dennis, *Love and Politics*, 30-31.
- <sup>26</sup> Flynn, *Alderson Story*, 22.
- <sup>27</sup> Harold Faber, "Communist Trial—Debate on Marxism-Leninism," *New York Times*, May 25, 1952, E6.
- <sup>28</sup> Faber, "Communist Trial," E6.
- <sup>29</sup> For more on trial atmosphere, see Jay Walz, "Hearing on Subversives Drags into Second Year," *New York Times*, June 15, 1952, E10; "Sixteen Reds Challenge Choosing of Juries," *New York Times*, April 1, 1952, 3.
- <sup>30</sup> "16 Reds," 3.
- <sup>31</sup> Camp, *Iron in her Soul*, 252.
- <sup>32</sup> Camp, *Iron in her Soul*, 251.
- <sup>33</sup> "Cumminst [*sic*] Defense Cost Put at \$10,000 a Week," *New York Times*, February 2, 1949, 7.
- <sup>34</sup> Helen C. Camp, *Iron in Her Soul: Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and the American Left* (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1995), 248-50.
- <sup>35</sup> Russell Porter, "All 13 Convicted in Red Trial Here by Jury out 7 Days," *New York Times*, January 22, 1953, 1.
- <sup>36</sup> Rosalyn Fraad Baxandall, *Words on Fire: The Life and Writing of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn* (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 60-1.
- <sup>37</sup> Baxandall, *Words on Fire*, 61.
- <sup>38</sup> I base this claim largely on its inclusion in *Words of a Century: The Top 100 American Speeches, 1900-1999*, comp. Stephen E. Lucas and Martin J. Medhurst, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

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- <sup>39</sup> B.L.Ware and Wil A. Linkugel, "They Spoke in Defense of Themselves: On the Generic Criticism of Apologia," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59, no. 3 (1973): 273.
- <sup>40</sup> Bower Aly, "The Gallows Speech: A Lost Genre," *Southern Speech Journal* 34, no. 3 (1969): 207.
- <sup>41</sup> This strategy is not unlike Campbell's read of Susan B. Anthony's 1872 speech in defense of her ballot. See, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, vol. 1, *A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989), 105-119.
- <sup>42</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, "Statement at the Smith Act Trial," in *Words of a Century: The Top 100 American Speeches, 1900-1999*, comp. Stephen E. Lucas and Martin J. Medhurst, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 318.
- <sup>43</sup> Flynn, "Statement," 320.
- <sup>44</sup> Flynn, "Statement," 319.
- <sup>45</sup> Flynn, "Statement," 320.
- <sup>46</sup> Flynn, "Statement," 319-20.
- <sup>47</sup> Flynn, "Statement," 320.
- <sup>48</sup> Flynn, "Statement," 320-1.
- <sup>49</sup> Flynn, "Statement," 320.
- <sup>50</sup> Flynn, "Statement," 322.
- <sup>51</sup> Flynn, "Statement," 321.
- <sup>52</sup> For a description of this exchange, see Edward Ranzal, "Convicted Communists Snub Offer to go to Russia Instead of Prison," *New York Times*, February 3, 1953, 1.
- <sup>53</sup> Carol Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 202-204. See also Joseph Keith, *Unbecoming Americans: Writing Race and Nation from the Shadows of Citizenship, 1945-1960* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2013).
- <sup>54</sup> *13 Communists Speak to the Court* (New York: New Century Publishers, 1953), 19.
- <sup>55</sup> *13 Communists*, 19.

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<sup>56</sup> *13 Communists*, 20.

<sup>57</sup> Asen, "Imagining," 355.

<sup>58</sup> *13 Communists*, 25. Jones uses "we" when discussing the crimes against black Americans and identifies as a Negro throughout even though she was not born in the United States.

<sup>59</sup> *13 Communists*, 22.

<sup>60</sup> *13 Communists*, 24-25.

<sup>61</sup> *13 Communists*, 25.

<sup>62</sup> *13 Communists*, 24.

<sup>63</sup> *13 Communists*, 25.

<sup>64</sup> Baxandall, *Words on Fire*, 60-1.

<sup>65</sup> Flynn, *Alderson Story*, 29.

<sup>66</sup> Flynn, *Alderson Story*, 197-8.

<sup>67</sup> Recounted in Baxandall, *Words on Fire*, 64.

<sup>68</sup> Qtd. in Keith, *Unbecoming Americans*, 192.

<sup>69</sup> Erik S. McDuffie, "A 'New Freedom Movement of Negro Women': Sojourning for Truth, Justice, and Human Rights During the Early Cold War," *Radical History Review* 101 (Spring 2008): 95-7.

<sup>70</sup> Rzeszutek, "Love and Activism," 167.

<sup>71</sup> Deborah A. Gerson, "Is Family Devotion Now Subversive?: Familialism Against McCarthyism," in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz, 151-176 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 152-4.

<sup>72</sup> Rzeszutek, "Love and Activism," 169.

<sup>73</sup> Esther Cooper Jackson, *This Is My Husband: Fighter For His People, Political Refugee*, (New York: National Committee to Defend Negro Leadership, 1953), 5.

<sup>74</sup> Iris Marion Young, "House and Home," in *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 154.

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<sup>75</sup> Jackson, *This is my Husband*, 13.

<sup>76</sup> Jackson, *This is my Husband*, 7.

<sup>77</sup> Jackson, *This is my Husband*, 12.

<sup>78</sup> A counterpublic, according to Robert Asen, is essentially a “public within a public sphere.” They are “explicitly articulated alternatives to wider publics that exclude the interests of potential participants. Counterpublics in turn reconnect with the communicative flows of a multiple public sphere,” he writes. See Robert Asen, “Seeking the ‘Counter,’ in Counterpublics,” *Communication Theory* 10, no. 4 (2000): 425. I use the term because it captures the ways in which Cooper Jackson articulated the uniqueness of the discourse amongst the marginalized communities her husband belonged to while appreciating their situatedness in the Cold War United States.

<sup>79</sup> Jackson, *This is my Husband*, 22.

<sup>80</sup> Jackson, *This is my Husband*, 18.

<sup>81</sup> Jackson, *This is my Husband*, 23.

<sup>82</sup> Jackson, *This is my Husband*, 34.

<sup>83</sup> Jackson, *This is my Husband*, 26.

<sup>84</sup> “Red Aide Missing Since ’51 Gives Up,” *New York Times*, December 3, 1955, 8.

<sup>85</sup> “Red Party Hails Yielding of Two,” *New York Times*, December 5, 1955, 15.

<sup>86</sup> Justice Harlan’s opinion is quoted in Stone, *Perilous Times*, 414.

<sup>87</sup> Rzeszutek, “Love and Activism,” 251.

<sup>88</sup> Peggy Dennis, *The Autobiography of an American Communist: A Personal View of a Political Life, 1925-1975* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill & Co, 1977), 193.

<sup>89</sup> Baxandall, *Words on Fire*, 68-70.

<sup>90</sup> Baxandall, *Words on Fire*, 71-2.

<sup>91</sup> Camp, *Iron in her Soul*, 321-2.

<sup>92</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *I Speak my Own Piece: Autobiography of “The Rebel Girl,”* (New York: Masses and Mainstream, 1955), 50-54.

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<sup>93</sup> Flynn, *I Speak*, 53.

## Conclusion

<sup>1</sup> Senate Resolution 301, December 2, 1954; SEN 83A-B4, Records of the United States Senate; Record Group 46; National Archives.

<sup>2</sup> “Text of Speech on Stalin by Khrushchev as Released by the State Department,” *New York Times*, June 5, 1956, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Peggy Dennis, *Autobiography of an American Communist: A Personal View of a Political Life* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill, 1977), 224-5.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph R. Starobin, *American Communism in Crisis, 1943-1957* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), 225.

<sup>5</sup> Starobin, *American Communism*, 226.

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Lawson, “Abolition of Housework seen Possible with Public Planning,” *Worker*, May 6, 1956, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Helen C. Camp, *Iron in Her Soul: Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and the American Left* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1995), 280.

<sup>8</sup> Sara C. VanderHaagen, “Renewing Tradition in Community: George W. Bush, Calvin College, and the Controversy over Identity,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 11, no. 4 (2008): 536.

<sup>9</sup> Whether or not American Communists should have known about the extent of Stalin’s brutality is up for debate. Glenda Gilmore suggests that rumors that they heard about starvation and brutality during the Great Terror (1932-1934) simply did not register as being truthful. Likewise, Stalin worked to disguise the dire conditions in the Soviet Union as a promotion of socialism. See *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008), 148-154. Discussion of forced labor camps in the Soviet Union had occurred in the 1930s, but resurged in 1951 with the publication of a map of camps circulated by the AFL-CIO. See Timothy Barney, “‘Gulag’—Slavery, Inc’: The Power of Place in the Life of a Cold War Map,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 16, no. 2 (2013): 317-353. Yet, it is likely that many Communists did not have an idea of the extent of the network of camps. The phrase “gulag” would not gain wide purchase in the West until the 1973 publication of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipelago*.

<sup>10</sup> Ekaterina V. Haskins and James P. Zappen, “Totalitarian Visual ‘Monologue’: Reading Soviet Posters with Bakhtin,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (2010): 328.

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<sup>11</sup> Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 190.

<sup>12</sup> Kathy McAfee and Myrna Wood, "Bread and Roses," in *Feminism in Our Time: The Essential Writings: World War II to the present*, ed. Miriam Schneier, 130-147 (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 134.

<sup>13</sup> Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 151, 157.

<sup>14</sup> H.L. "Letters to the Editor," *Worker*, June 3, 1956, 3.

<sup>15</sup> L.N. "Dear Editor," *Worker*, March 27, 1955, 10.

<sup>16</sup> Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*, rev. ed (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 345.

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