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# Rethinking Global Sisterhood

## Peace Activism and Women's Orientalism

JUDY TZU-CHUN WU

In April 1971, approximately one thousand female activists from throughout North America gathered in Vancouver and Toronto, Canada, to attend the Indochinese Women's Conferences. The U.S. and Canadian women came from large metropolitan centers, small towns, and even rural communities to meet a delegation of women from Viet Nam and Laos. Some North American antiwar protestors had previously traveled to Southeast Asia. Others had learned through movement newspaper stories and photographs to empathize with the sufferings and to respect the heroism of Indochinese women who were fighting for national liberation. However, the Indochinese Women's Conferences of 1971 presented the first opportunities for large numbers of American and Canadian women to have direct contact with their "Asian sisters."

This essay examines the Indochinese Women's Conferences (IWC) of 1971 as a case study that illuminates how North American women sought to build an international, multigenerational, and multiracial movement based on antiwar politics. It expands on existing scholarship on social activism of the long decade of the 1960s in three ways. First, it highlights the variety of women's activism in the antiwar movement. Feminist scholars have identified the chauvinism within these circles as a catalyst for the emergence of a separate women's liberation movement.<sup>1</sup> Yet the IWC indicate that despite this disaffection with the male-led antiwar cause, women continued to pursue peace activism alongside new feminist initiatives. Furthermore, the conference was organized and attended by diverse groups of women. The cosponsors of the conference included "traditional" women's organizations,

“Third World” women, as well as women’s liberation activists who themselves ascribed to a variety of political viewpoints.<sup>2</sup> Second, the conference offers an opportunity to analyze the hopes for and the obstacles limiting the formation of multiracial and transnational alliances—that is, “global sisterhood.” Tensions among conference organizers and delegates tended to coalesce around race, sexuality, and nationality. Nevertheless, some American women regarded these conferences as life-transforming events; they experienced profound emotional and political connections with one another and, particularly, with the women from Indochina.

Finally, this study examines how North American activists both challenged and were influenced by Orientalist understandings of Asia and Asian women. Edward Said conceptualized Orientalism as a system of knowledge that the West developed about the East as the Occident colonized the Orient.<sup>3</sup> Within this framework, the East historically serves as a contrasting and not coincidentally inferior image to the West. This polarization not only created the Orient in the Occidental imagination but also defined the West to itself. Leila Rupp, in her study of interwar female internationalism, identifies a particularly female form of Orientalism that Western women exhibited toward their non-Western sisters. In their efforts to condemn repressive gender practices in these societies, Western women tended to reinforce colonial perceptions that these practices exemplified the essence—that is, the backwardness—of traditional non-Western societies.<sup>4</sup> In addition, they highlighted the need for Western women to rescue and modernize their less fortunate sisters.

This “politics of rescue” was also present during the movement to end the U.S. war in Viet Nam. However, during this period, North American women of varying racial backgrounds also exhibited what I characterize as a radical *Orientalist* sensibility. Through travel, correspondence, and meetings, they learned to regard Asian female liberation fighters, especially those from Viet Nam, as exemplars of revolutionary womanhood. These idealized projections countered classical Orientalist depictions of exotic, sexualized, and victimized Asian women. Nevertheless, these radical portrayals also tended to serve an Orientalist purpose in which the Orient again served as a mirror for Western self-definition. Now representing a contrasting image of revolutionary hope to oppressive gender roles in North American societies, Asian women helped female reformers in the West to redefine their aspirations and political goals.

## Sisterhood across Borders

The IWC in Canada resulted from a long history of North American and Southeast Asian women engaging one another politically. Through face-to-face meetings that took place in Europe, Asia, Cuba, Africa, and Canada, they had cultivated personal and political connections that laid the basis for fostering an international sisterhood rooted in the common goal of ending the U.S. war in Viet Nam.<sup>5</sup> The sponsors of the IWC—designated “old friends,” “new friends,” and “Third World” women—reveal both the variety of women engaged in this effort and also their unequal experience in traveling across national boundaries to foster women’s internationalism.

The term *old friends* referred to the U.S.-based Women Strike for Peace (WSP), the Canada-based Voice of Women (VOW), and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). These organizations were designated *old* not because of the age of their constituency—although all three did attract largely middle-aged to elderly women—but rather because of the history of friendship that these North American women established with Vietnamese women. For example, WSP had a history of contact going back to 1965, when two members of the group were among the first Americans to visit Hanoi after the commencement of U.S. bombing of North Viet Nam. That same year, a ten-person delegation from WSP met with representatives from North and South Viet Nam in Djakarta, Indonesia, to affirm women’s unique abilities to cross Cold War barriers and foster peace.<sup>6</sup> Although differences existed among WSP, VOW, and WILPF, they could be characterized as expressing a form of maternalist peace politics. For example, WSP originated in 1961 from the efforts of predominantly middle-class and middle-aged white women. As Andrea Estepa has argued, although the members of the organization had “wide-ranging professional identities,” the group chose to publicly identify themselves as “housewives and mothers.”<sup>7</sup> These women proclaimed their right to condemn the threat of global and nuclear warfare based on the desire to protect their families. In other words, they were not rejecting gender difference but embracing it to define a special role for women on the global stage. The roots of this maternalist form of peace politics can be traced back to Victorian and Progressive-era notions of gender difference. WILPF, an organization founded in 1919 under the leadership of Jane Addams, has a direct connection to this previous expression of maternalist activism.<sup>8</sup> Such an approach regained its political utility in the

early Cold War period as a seemingly “commonsense,” or nonideological, approach to defusing global conflict.<sup>9</sup>

The women from North and South Viet Nam who cultivated and encouraged these international contacts also articulated a unique gender role for women in the struggle for peace and national liberation. They represented women’s organizations in their respective regions, specifically the Vietnam Women’s Union (VWU) in the North and the South Vietnam Women’s Liberation Union. Although the phrase *women’s liberation* in the U.S. context referred to activists who sought to identify and subvert the workings of patriarchy, these Vietnamese organizations mobilized women primarily for anticolonial struggles. Because of the long history of political repression in their country, by both French and American colonizers, these women had an array of life experiences that generally exceeded those of their Western counterparts.

For example, Nguyen Thi Binh, who was present in Djakarta, became one of the most recognizable Asian female figures in Western women’s political circles. Like WSP members, she came from a relatively elite and educated background. However, unlike most WSP members, she also became an authorized political leader, eventually serving as the foreign minister of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Viet Nam and its chief negotiator at the Paris peace talks. Amy Swerdlow, an activist in WSP as well as the organization’s historian, noted the unequal status between the American and Asian women. While WSP publicly identified itself as consisting of “nonprofessional housewives, . . . the women who represented North and South Vietnam presented themselves as workers, students, professionals, and artists.”<sup>10</sup> Despite the disjuncture, Southeast Asian women like Binh also articulated their common connections in the language of sisterhood and motherhood. For example, in a fifteen-minute film produced in 1970 and intended for an American female audience, Binh explained:

I am so happy as a South Vietnamese woman and mother to have the opportunity to speak to you. . . . May I express my sincere thanks to the Women Strike for Peace for its contribution to the anti-war movements and its sympathy and support to our people, particularly the South Vietnamese women. . . . Our aspirations for peace are all the more ardent for over twenty-five consecutive years now, our compatriots, we women included, have never enjoyed a single day of peace.

Let me tell you that in my own family, several members have been killed while some others are still jailed by the Saigon regime. I myself have had not much time to live with my husband and my children. The moments my son and daughter were allowed to be at my side have become so rare and therefore so precious to them.<sup>11</sup>

Her emphasis on the destructive impact of warfare on family life both reflected the actual experiences of women in Viet Nam and also resonated effectively with maternalist activists in the West who valued the sanctity of motherhood and home life.

The unique role that women performed in political revolution resonated differently for the “new friends” who cosponsored the IWC. This designation generally referred to a younger generation of women who became politically active through the civil rights, the New Left, and eventually the women’s liberation movements. For example, Vivian Rothstein, who was an activist in Students for a Democratic Society, traveled to Hanoi in 1967. When she returned to the United States, she helped form the Chicago Women’s Liberation Union, which she modeled on the VWU.<sup>12</sup> She viewed her trip to Viet Nam as a major influence on her political development in at least two ways. First, she noted that her invitation to Hanoi was at the insistence of the VWU, which at the time had a clear understanding of how women could and should perform important roles in political movements. She recalled that in fact the North Vietnamese women had a greater understanding of women’s potential than she or her fellow male New Left organizers did. Second, her exposure to what she describes as the “majoritarian” approach to political organizing in Viet Nam, characterized by an emphasis on building broad political movements, reinforced her desire to avoid sectarianism.<sup>13</sup> In cofounding the Chicago Women’s Liberation Union, Rothstein attempted to create an organization that could engage women in a variety of ways by creating committees that examined diverse issues ranging from health, politics, and economics to culture.

Just as American activists learned from the Vietnamese, their hosts in Viet Nam were eager to learn from them. Charlotte Bunch-Weeks, a student and civil rights activist who joined the women’s liberation movement in the Washington, D.C., area, traveled to Viet Nam as part of a multiracial and mixed-sex group in 1970. During her trip, she received a request to give a presentation on the origins, status, and goals of the women’s liberation

movement.<sup>14</sup> Consistent with the “majoritarian” approach, the North Vietnamese were interested in understanding and broadening their contacts with a variety of political movements.

Rothstein, Bunch-Weeks, and other women’s liberation activists who met with the Vietnamese in Asia or through travels to Cuba, Europe, and Africa became key organizers for the IWC. These face-to-face encounters inspired U.S. women profoundly. One individual, after meeting North Vietnamese women in Budapest, Hungary, in 1970, explained in a letter:

We have just had our first formal meeting with the Vietnamese & Cambodians. They are incredible out of sight people. Yesterday, when I first met them, I filled up with tears & wanted to take them in my arms & say ‘I’m sorry.’ . . . No matter how much you read & how much you know in your head what a monster imperialism is, it comes home to you with an emotional force that seems physical, meeting women who live under the threat of death. It seems impossible to think that I could ever, even for a minute, contemplate withdrawing or dropping out.<sup>15</sup>

By helping to organize the IWC, women’s liberation activists had the opportunity to re-create their political intimacy with Southeast Asian women for larger numbers of women who did not have the privilege or opportunity to travel to Asia and other parts of the world.

The final group of cosponsors of the IWC were “Third World women,” women from racially oppressed groups in North America who identified their status in the West as being akin to the status of Third World peoples globally. The category of Third World women, which could have been used to describe nonwhite individuals involved in mainstream women’s organizations, included instead women who were active during the late 1960s in identity-based liberation movements in race-based communities. Along with other antiwar activists, some of these women of color also traveled to Viet Nam. They included Elaine Brown of the Black Panther Party and Pat Sumi, who would emerge as a leader in the Asian American movement. These two women of color were part of an eleven-person delegation that visited North Korea, North Viet Nam, and the People’s Republic of China in 1970.<sup>16</sup> The Vietnamese were particularly aware of the vanguard role that the African American liberation movement played in the United States and sought to cultivate connections with key individuals and organizations.

The Vietnamese also were eager to learn about emerging liberation movements. For example, Betita Martinez, a Chicana activist based in New Mexico who was in the same delegation as Bunch-Weeks, was asked to answer questions about the Chicano movement in the United States.<sup>17</sup> For these “Third World” women, their sense of commonality with Vietnamese women was due not only to gender but also to what they perceived as a shared racial and colonized status. In her study of the Chicano antiwar movement, Lorena Oropeza quoted Martinez’s reflections about her journey:

“There are mountains and valleys and caves and big skies and glowing sunsets, as in New Mexico.” . . . The Vietnamese were *campesinos* (literally, people of the *campo* or countryside) who loved their land. Eastern medicine was like our *curanderismo* (folkhealing). . . . “The spirit of the people was like a force of nature itself, creating life in the shadow of death. The white people of the West with their unnatural soul and their unnatural weapons are a death people. . . . The Vietnamese are a life people [like Chicanos]. And anyone who thinks that a life people can really be conquered is a fool.”<sup>18</sup>

All three sponsoring groups of the IWC—old friends, new friends, and Third World women—were eager to re-create their intense political experiences for their fellow activists.<sup>19</sup> However, the three groups had varying degrees of experience in facilitating international contacts, internal coherence, and resources. In addition, they had limited interactions with one another, and the tensions that existed within North American movements were not overcome but in fact were magnified as they attempted to cosponsor and co-attend the IWC.

### Factions, Not Unity

On the last night of the IWC in Vancouver, North American women met for a criticism and evaluation session. A guerrilla theater group set up a sign announcing themselves to be “C.U.R.S.E. (Canadian Union of Rabid Senseless Extremists)” and attempted to perform a skit to express their critique of the conference. The reaction of the audience reflected the tense atmosphere of the entire event:

Immediately a woman stood up grabbing away the sign. She demanded the C.U.R.S.E. women leave. Other women then came forward shoving



and pushing, trying to get the guerrilla theatre woman out of the meeting. The C.U.R.S.E. woman linked arms and refused to leave. At this point, a couple of woman began beating on one woman in the theatre group; the other woman in the skit shouted "Don't hit her she's pregnant." But the American women kept on slugging her shouting "She shouldn't be here then." The five C.U.R.S.E. women then formed a circle so as to protect their pregnant sister.<sup>20</sup>

The audience finally allowed the performance to take place. The skit consisted of a series of vignettes that followed one woman's experiences of denigration in the male-dominated work environment, the double standard and sexual abuse that she experiences in the home, and the political repression that she faces in protesting for abortion. Although she is able to recover from these efforts to wound and humiliate her, she is not able to overcome the hostility that she faces from other women when she attends the IWC:

[First, the] heroine is stopped at door by a stern-faced security guard demanding her revolutionary credentials. The security guard begrudgingly lets her pass. She is met by three women mechanically chanting "Off the Pig." And raising their fists in synchronized time. She innocently offers her [hand] in friendship to a delegate wearing a sign saying "Third World."

The chanting stops as the Third World delegate screams "Racist" and then hits her with a sign reading "Guilt." Somewhat beaten, she timidly approaches the next delegate with "Gay Lib" on her T-shirt, who says "Heterosexual!" Again she is clobbered with guilt. Beaten to her knees she crawls to the USA Women's Lib delegate but, as she reaches out to touch her, she's accused of being a "Liberal." This final blow of guilt knocks her flat to the floor where she drags herself off-stage, completely beaten.<sup>21</sup>

This theatrical depiction illuminated three axes of difference—race, sexuality, and nationality—which precipitated great hostility among North American women at the conference.

Racial tensions emerged early on. Unlike the old and new friends, Third World women were not initially and consistently part of the planning process for the conference. The women from Southeast Asia as well as women's liberation activists expressly desired Third World women to be represented.

When women's liberation representatives gathered in New York City in September of 1970 to select delegates to attend a planning meeting in Budapest, they discussed ways to avoid the exclusivity that characterized previous international teams. International delegations were often selected "through personal contacts, choosing known individuals rather than groups, choosing friends, etc.," and they "felt it was of utmost importance to the success of the Canada conference to get away from this kind of elitism and to involve as many women as possible in the planning for the Conference . . . through broad, grass-roots representation and collective responsibility."<sup>22</sup>

In order to involve Third World women, women's liberation organizers decided to contact the Third World Women's Alliance (TWWA), a New York-based African American and Puerto Rican organization, and the Black Panthers, whose national headquarters was in Oakland, California. They asked whether these groups wanted to participate in planning the conference and whether they were interested in sending representatives to Budapest, with the financial support of women's liberation groups. In one of a series of criticism/self-criticism statements following the conference, women's liberation organizers acknowledged their good but misguided intentions in these efforts. After all, "we knew early that we did not want to be put in the position of 'choosing' which third world women should go, be represented, etc. We even had trouble with our decision that we should contact the Third World Women's Alliance and the Panthers for we felt that we were making the organizational choices for third world women."<sup>23</sup> Neither TWWA nor the Panthers sent representatives to Budapest, but TWWA did eventually participate in the planning process, although they generally organized with other Third World women: "[Initially] three or four third world women did attend New York planning meetings in the Fall. [However] they finally stopped attending, probably because the WL [women's liberation] women were struggling among themselves for the most part. [Instead] by December a number of third world groups were meeting separately and regularly in NYC. Sometimes third world representatives would come to the New York WL meetings."<sup>24</sup> Brown of the Black Panthers never responded to the letter sent to her. She had returned from visiting socialist Asia in the summer of 1970 to the volatile and contentious split between Huey Newton, who was released from prison during her travels, and Eldridge Cleaver, who had led the delegation of travelers. However, other Third World women, particularly in Los Angeles and San Francisco, began meeting on their own to discuss the conference.

On the West Coast, the political determination and organizational efforts of Third World women eventually resulted in a decision to divide the Vancouver conference into three segments. The Vietnamese initially suggested a division into two meetings, one for old and one for new friends because the two groups of women had such different political backgrounds and would want to engage in different types of discussion. Third World women from Los Angeles, led by Sumi (who had traveled to socialist Asia with Brown), demanded time in the conference schedule so they could engage with Indochinese delegates autonomously. As their statement explained, "Since we have been denied an equal participation *with* white groups, we can only ask for equal but separate conferences. The possibility of a confrontation between Third World and white women's groups at a joint conference would be disrespectful to the Indochinese women and would further reinforce the tensions that exist among North American women."<sup>25</sup> Their proposal received the support of white women from Los Angeles, who explained, "Why should Third World women unify with white women who claim to recognize the need of self-determination for the Indochinese, but who do not recognize the right of self-determination of all peoples in this country, as manifested in the 'small' way of planning a conference for people instead of with them."<sup>26</sup>

There were similar suggestions for a separate conference for Third World women in Toronto, but the effort did not appear to be as organized as the one in Vancouver. Neither Third World women or women's liberationists on the East Coast formulated an identifiable position statement acknowledging the need for political autonomy. There also did not appear to be sustained coordination between the Vancouver and Toronto conferences so that the organizers on the two coasts could share their decisions. Only afterward, in another criticism/self-criticism statement, did women's liberation organizers on the East Coast recognize the problem:

We didn't know and didn't consciously try to find out what third world women's needs might have been with respect to the conference. On some levels we always saw the conference as "ours" with third world "participation." . . . When we talked about joint sessions with the third world women we were mostly considering our interests—that is to force women's movement women to see their racism, to learn from third world women, etc., etc. We seldom were conscious of whether a

joint conference would in fact meet their needs; whether in fact they had a reason or need to meet with us. In addition, our vision of the potential of women from different race and class backgrounds coming together and struggling together in a sisterly way was far ahead of our practice and the practice of third world women. If we had considered all these factors and if we had had some real practice with third world women at the time the conference was initiated, we might have decided then that the most useful arrangement would be for separate conferences of third world and white women with the Indochinese—that separate conference would be O.K. politically.<sup>27</sup>

On the East Coast, where activists tried to work across racial lines, and even on the West Coast, where a degree of autonomy was validated, tensions surfaced particularly around issues related to security. Given the destructiveness of COINTELPRO (the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Counter Intelligence Program) in targeting organizations like the Black Panthers, Third World women tended to be highly sensitive to potential harassment of themselves as well as of the Indochinese delegation.<sup>28</sup> All U.S. participants, regardless of race, were issued instructions about how to cross the border safely: "You should 1) be prepared to look as straight as possible (there is no way of getting around this) 2) have \$15 to \$20 per day for the length of time you are planning to stay . . . 3) have good I.D. . . . 4) have *no dope*. People are often thoroughly searched, stripped, etc. 5) no literature, especially anything pertaining to border crossing."<sup>29</sup> However, Third World women received additional advice about getting to Canada and being safe in another country:

All of us from the U.S. and Hawaii are foreigners in a nation colonized and exploited by U.S. imperialism. . . . Since the Indochinese are not guests of the Canadian government, the Third World advance group decided that delegates themselves would take on the responsibility for the safety for the Indochinese friends with no dependency on the Vancouver or national Canadian pig forces. . . . If your delegation is fairly large, break down into brigades of ten women each. Each brigade should have a leader who will be responsible for getting everyone up on time, and keeping track of sisters so everyone is accounted for at all times. . . . Don't go around by yourself. Always take someone

with you. And don't wear your delegate card as a badge. Canada has a large group of fascist racists who may gather around the conference to hassle delegates, so be careful.<sup>30</sup>

The concerns were not simply a product of paranoia. Some Asian American women recalled, "In Vancouver, we were reminded that racism is not confined to the United States. Throughout our stay there, the Third World candidates were followed whenever we traveled in our chartered buses. One night when we visited Chinatown, the delegates were harassed by Canadian police for charges such as jaywalking."<sup>31</sup>

This concern for security extended to policies regarding all conference participants. For example, Third World women "wanted no personal cameras at all" because photographs of conference attendees could be subsequently used to target activists.<sup>32</sup> They also warned white women that they "must be prepared for agents and provocateurs in our midst." Finally, Third World women took their responsibilities on the security force seriously, too seriously for many of the other delegates. Naomi Weisstein, a pioneer feminist scholar, recalled being body searched before her Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band was finally allowed to perform as part of the Cultural Exchange Night at the Toronto conference. Her attempt to protest this action through humor by chanting "Don't touch me unless you love me" was not well received.<sup>33</sup> Even in Vancouver, the policies instituted regarding security led women's liberation activists to "feel that in some ways the whole 'show' of security was a way for groups to flex their muscles and gain power positions at the conference. By the third day the disputes over security between the Third World and white women were becoming so divisive that it was decided (partly as a result of discussion with the Indochinese) that the security would be much relaxed. Immediately the tension was reduced."<sup>34</sup>

The tensions concerning security were particularly intense between women of color and women's liberation activists because the women's liberation activists believed in the principle of involving everyone in planning and managing the conference. Although the old friends acceded to the cosponsorship by Third World women, WSP, VOW, and WILPF had less direct contact with actual women of color. However, even the old friends expressed criticism of what they perceived to be the militancy, arrogance, and dictatorial nature of the Third World women.<sup>35</sup> In turn, women of color criticized the manipulation that they perceived on the part of some white women who

had “direct contact with the Indochinese women . . . [and] used this privilege as a source of power and status for their own groups. . . . Because we do not have the direct contacts ourselves, we have . . . been left dependent on the whim of groups who apparently disseminate information only if and when it is advantageous.”<sup>36</sup> Both Third World women and white women perceived each other as seeking to assert “control” and “power.” The tensions can be traced to profound differences between white and nonwhite women’s histories of involvement in the conference planning as well as to their diverse life experiences and political perspectives. Although some women were able to engage in political conversation across racial lines, it was extremely difficult for larger groups and especially those who were new to these encounters or unused to sharing authority to recognize and understand different approaches. Instead, because of the urgency of organizing and executing the conference, their differences exploded into hostile and derogatory interactions.

Another volatile set of tensions emerged around issues of sexuality, specifically whether lesbianism should be a point of discussion at the anti-war gathering. Like the racial-identity liberation movements, lesbianism as a sexual-identity liberation movement emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>37</sup> The debates concerning sexuality at the IWC revealed the variety of ways that the women’s liberation movement understood colonialism and liberation.

In a memo issued to IWC attendees in Vancouver, members of the San Francisco branch of Radicalesbians criticized the organizers of the conference for eliminating lesbianism as a topic of discussion. The statement decried that “lesbianism apparently is not seen as a primary or relevant subject at an Indochinese Women’s Conference.”<sup>38</sup> This set of conflicts reflected broad tensions within the women’s movement. In 1969, the National Organization for Women president Betty Friedan infamously denounced lesbians as a “lavender menace” for providing “enemies with the ammunition to dismiss the women’s movement as a bunch of man-hating dykes.”<sup>39</sup> In response to these charges, which were raised in multiple movement circles, lesbians criticized gay baiting as a form of false consciousness. The group Radicalesbians, initially formed in New York City in 1970, issued the now-classic statement “Woman-Identified Woman,” which the San Francisco branch reproduced for IWC attendees and quoted in its own memo. For them, “lesbianism is not a sexual preference but a lifestyle in which women

get their love, identity, and support from other women.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, lesbianism represented the ultimate expression of a separatist women’s movement that sought to subvert male domination.<sup>41</sup> The Radicalesbians argued that lesbianism was thus a subject particularly appropriate for a conference devoted to anti-imperialism. Using the anticolonial analogy of the Third World being dominated by the West, the Radicalesbians argued that women were colonized subjects under male domination. By extension, lesbians as women-identified women were de facto anti-imperialists because of their efforts to obtain female liberation from male control.<sup>42</sup>

Those who opposed addressing lesbianism at the conference ranged widely in their motivations. Some were no doubt fearful of lesbianism and dismissed the issue as irrelevant because of their own heteronormativity. The old friends, who tended to base their peace activism on their identities as housewives and mothers, were not particularly inclined to discuss lesbianism, for instance, even though some later identified themselves as lesbians. The Third World contingent also tended to distance themselves from this issue. Again, although some women of color attending the conference were lesbians, the dominant perspective in these circles emphasized gay liberation as a white women’s issue. Maria Ramirez and Nina Genera, two Chicana antiwar activists from the San Francisco Bay Area, recalled that they and other Mexican American women activists tended to be “traditional” in their appearance. They experienced culture shock while being housed with women’s liberation activists in a large auditorium in Vancouver. As they and their Chicana friends were trying to put on makeup to get themselves “dolled up” for the conference, they saw “white” women sporting unshaved legs, fatigues, and combat boots.<sup>43</sup> This dichotomy between “femme” and “butch” gender presentations did not necessarily distinguish heterosexuals and homosexuals. However, in the minds of Ramirez and Genera, these differences concerning body adornment were not only indicative of distinct gender identities but also mapped onto racial divides.

Other Third World women did not comment on racial gender differences. Instead, they argued that lesbianism should not be a central issue for a conference focused on ending the war. In fact, they viewed the insertion of this topic as another expression of white Western women’s chauvinism. Judy Drummond, an antiwar activist who was involved with the San Francisco Bay Area Chicano movement and traced her ancestry to Native American communities in California, recalled that “some of the radical lesbians just pissed

me off. They pissed everybody off. . . . They had asked if the [Vietnamese] women had sex together in the fields. . . . And, it was, like, how rude. I mean, you know, these women are fighting for their lives and you're asking what we thought was a trivial question." Drummond subsequently acknowledged that the question was not trivial, but at the conference she and other women of color sought to silence these questions from radical lesbians. Drummond recalled that she did so at the request of the Indochinese female representatives, some of whom "walked off the stage . . . when they [the Radicalesbians] asked that question. You know, you don't ask those kinds of questions to these women. It is sort of inappropriate. You need to think. . . . You have your own agenda but . . . we're here for their agenda."<sup>44</sup> While the Radicalesbians regarded themselves as anti-imperialists, the Third World Women from North America and Indochina regarded lesbianism as secondary to the efforts to obtain national liberation in Southeast Asia.

Even some lesbian antiwar activists had concerns about raising lesbianism at the conference. Bunch-Weeks was in the process of coming out as a lesbian when she helped to organize the Toronto IWC. She recalled experiencing enormous pressure, particularly from her lover, Rita Mae Brown, to place lesbianism on the agenda.<sup>45</sup> However, because of Bunch-Weeks's previous trip to Hanoi and her prior contact with Southeast Asian women, she recalled: "I did not feel that it was the right time and place to try to raise lesbian feminism, but I felt enormous guilt because I was just a new lesbian. . . . So what happened to me, which I now understand, . . . is that I got sick. . . . I couldn't handle it. . . . I couldn't see a way to make it better . . . and I just . . . withdrew from the process. . . . I felt very guilty about not going because I also felt like I should try and make it better, but I couldn't see any way to make it better and so my whole body just collapsed."<sup>46</sup> The tensions that exploded at the IWC literally imploded in Bunch-Weeks. Just as different factions at the conferences could not reconcile their different interpretations of anti-imperialist politics, Bunch-Weeks could not intellectually or emotionally process her own conflicting understandings of what constituted liberation.

In addition to the conflicts surrounding race and sexuality, nationality constituted a third flash point. Although the IWCs were held in Vancouver and Toronto, Canadian organizers and attendees criticized their U.S. guests for their chauvinistic and imperialist behavior toward their hosts. Because of these dynamics, the Canadian female activists, irrespective of their



racial backgrounds, tended to identify themselves as colonized subjects whose status was akin to Third World women from Southeast Asia and the United States.

The selection of Canada as a site for the IWCs reflected a general practice within the North American antiwar movement. During the course of the U.S. war in Viet Nam, representatives from North Viet Nam and from the resistance movement in South Viet Nam could not enter the States. However, Canada, as an officially neutral country, served not only as a refuge for U.S. draft dodgers but also as a communication node that facilitated face-to-face contact between Southeast Asian anticolonial spokespersons and the North American antiwar movement.<sup>47</sup> In fact, the idea for the 1971 IWC originated at a 1969 gathering in Eastern Canada of WSP, VOW, and female representatives from the North and South Vietnamese women's unions. Because the U.S. peace movement encouraged travel and relocation across the Forty-Ninth parallel, some of the Canadian organizers of the IWC were in fact former U.S. residents and veterans of the civil rights, New Left, and women's movements in the States.

Despite the existence of these international alliances and transnational connections, the Canadian organizers, particularly those who were identified as new friends, believed they were unequal partners in organizing the IWC. Fewer criticisms were raised by the old friends than by the new friends from Canada, most likely because VOW had worked closely with WSP. However, the Canadian women's liberation activists, especially those in Vancouver, who did not have a history of ongoing political partnerships with their U.S. "sisters," expressed a sense of frustration and imposition. For example, Liz Breimberg, a British Canadian women's activist who had participated in the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, recalled:

This conference was in April of 1971 and we only heard of it in December of 1970. And we only heard of it by accident by a woman from . . . the United States, I think from California, [who] was up visiting someone here and came to one of our women's caucus meetings. . . . [She] told us . . . that this was being organized by women in the United States and it was like we were just being used. . . . They never even bothered to let us know. . . . The conferences were to be for the Indochinese people to meet the . . . women from the United States who were involved in the women's liberation movement. . . . I mean, we were treated as if we didn't exist.<sup>48</sup>

The lack of communication resulted partly from the difficulties of organizing across national boundaries and coordinating the efforts of women from Southeast Asia, the United States, and Canada. After all, these political networks were being created as part of the conference organizing process. However, the conference planning also revealed power inequalities. Breimberg recalled that she and other women's liberation activists in Vancouver became responsible for arranging the conference venue and housing for several hundred delegates. They also assumed many of the financial costs associated with the event. In other words, they performed much of the "grunt" work for the conference, even though they had limited input into the decision-making process.

Despite the fact that Canadian women served as hosts for the IWC, their presence remained marginal. Conference organizers decided early on to establish a quota system so that they could ensure diversity among the attendees. Half the U.S. quota was allocated to women of color. Cities with large activist populations, like San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York City, Boston, and Washington, D.C., received higher allocations. However, not everyone who wanted to attend could do so because other spots were reserved for participants from smaller towns and from the interior and southern states. Strikingly, Canada, the site of the conferences, was granted a small fraction of the overall slots. As Breimberg emphasized, the events were intended for U.S., not Canadian, women.

To add insult to injury, the female activists from south of the border did not always recognize that they had crossed into another country. Breimberg recalled: "One of the problems we had with the whole thing was the total chauvinism of the United States delegation. It was just absolutely astounding to the point where . . . when they spoke in the conference they would talk about this country as if this country was their country." In contrast, Breimberg recalled being painfully aware of the Forty-Ninth parallel. She and other Canadian activists crossed over to the United States in February 1971 for a preconference planning meeting in Portland, Oregon. Because they brought activist literature with them, the U.S. border patrol ordered a strip search, which took place in front of a giant poster of President Richard Nixon.<sup>49</sup> Based on these preconference interactions, some of the Canadian women anticipated the need to educate their U.S. sisters and to curb their sense of entitlement. Toward that end, the Canadian organizers authored a cartoon history of their nation that highlighted women's contributions.

This forty-page publication, entitled *She Named It Canada: Because That's What It Was Called*, was subsequently distributed to the conference attendees.<sup>50</sup>

As a result of the dynamics between white American and Canadian women, the Canadians identified themselves as colonized subjects. They tended to regard themselves as occupying a status similar to women of color from the United States because both groups suffered from the chauvinism of the U.S. women's liberation movement. The Canadian women also sympathized strongly with Southeast Asian women as colonial subjects. This analogy was particularly intense for activists who supported the French separatist movement based in Quebec. Initially, the IWCs were to take place in three cities, Toronto for East Coast participants, Vancouver for West Coast activists, and Montreal for those from the Midwest. Advocates for the last site noted the similarities between Quebec and Viet Nam as colonies seeking self-determination and liberation; they also highlighted the significant population of Afro-Caribbeans in Montreal and emphasized a sense of racial camaraderie with the black liberation movement in the United States.<sup>51</sup> In the end, the Montreal conference did not take place because the escalation of separatist protest and government repression resulted in the imposition of martial law in Quebec in 1970. Thus, even the cancellation of the conference emphasized the similarities between the political persecution of the Front de Liberation Quebecois and the sufferings of the Vietnamese National Liberation Front.

Yet even as white Canadian women regarded themselves as colonized subjects, women of color in Canada distinguished themselves from their white counterparts. Gerry Ambers, a Native Canadian, or First Nations, activist, recalled that she and other members of her community received a request from IWC organizers to cook for the Indochinese delegates.<sup>52</sup> She remembered that the Indochinese appreciated the meals that she and other First Nation women prepared, which tended to feature foods "traditional" to her community, such as salmon and other seafood. In Ambers's mind, it was not just a coincidence that these items were familiar to and well-liked by the Vietnamese; their dietary similarities symbolized a deeper rapport between the First Nations and the Third World. In contrast, Ambers recalled that the white Canadian women offered unpalatable food, like raw carrot sticks, that were both unfamiliar to the Vietnamese and difficult to digest, especially given the poor dental health of some of the Southeast Asian representatives who resided in rustic revolutionary base camps. This disconnect suggests

that the First Nations women did not readily accept the Canadian women's claim to being colonized subjects.

### Meeting Woman Warriors

As much as the North American women critiqued one another, they expressed adulation for their Indochinese sisters. The delegation from Southeast Asia consisted of three teams of two women and one male translator each for North Viet Nam, South Viet Nam, and Laos.<sup>53</sup> A fourth delegation from Cambodia had intended to travel to Canada as well but was unable to do so. The inclusion of the Laotians and the planned presence of Cambodians reflected a pan-Indochinese strategy that was increasingly necessary as the U.S. war in Viet Nam spread to all of Southeast Asia. The Indochinese women, whose ages ranged from twenty-nine to fifty and who included a housewife, several teachers, a literature professor, and a physician, presented themselves to North American women in large plenaries, smaller workshops, and discussions over meals. Because the conversations occurred via translation, some North American women questioned why the Indochinese chose to send male interpreters. Other women thought little of this gendered division of labor because the Indochinese women made such a powerful impression not only through presentations and responses to questions but also through their laughter and physical intimacy. One Canadian conference organizer recalled:

Most remarkable about these women were their gentle dignity, self command, and deep concern for others, both individually and as nations. They laughed often with the women they met, hugged them when they felt common feelings, wept a little as they heard of each others' sufferings, and comforted us when (as too often happened) we ran late with the program or failed with the conference arrangements. Although their competence and dedication awed us, we felt that we, too, might cope better in future, as women and as citizens, for having met them.<sup>54</sup>

The newspaper coverage of the conference in North American women's publications revealed both Western women's desire to "rescue" their sisters as well as their tendency to place the Indochinese on idealized political pedestals. The delegates from Southeast Asia who tended to receive the most

attention in these publications were the women who either suffered traumatic abuse or could testify to wartime atrocities. Dinh Thi Hong received featured coverage. Hong, a forty-six-year-old housewife from South Viet Nam, had not been politically engaged in the movement for liberation, but she was arrested, tortured, and detained in a series of the most notorious prisons in the South. Her detailed account of her experiences appeared in several movement publications produced by the New Left and Third World communities and by women's organizations.<sup>55</sup> She recalled having "pins [planted] in my fingertips," having "electrodes . . . attached to my ears and to my fingers, nipples and genitals . . . and [being] tortured with electricity until I was unconscious." In addition, her interrogators "forced water, lye and salt into my stomach and trampled on my stomach until I vomited blood and was unconscious." These dramatic episodes illustrated the visceral and sexualized nature of militarized violence to her audience. In addition, her accounts conveyed the dehumanizing day-to-day indignities of trying to survive in crowded cells with inadequate facilities and either little food or "rotten rice." One cell that measured approximately 9 feet by 4½ feet held "15 to 32 people at a time—women and men in the same cell. In this cell the prisoners eat, go to the bathroom. Prisoners could only stand. I was not allowed to bathe from November 1955 to August 1956."<sup>56</sup> After nearly six years, Hong was finally found "not guilty" and released. During that time, her weight dropped from 108 to 78 pounds.<sup>57</sup> In addition, other family members had died or were imprisoned. Following her release, Hong decided to "join my people to fight against the Americans and puppets." As she surmised, "The more barbarous the army is, the stronger the struggle of the people."<sup>58</sup>

Another delegate who received extensive coverage was Nguyen Thi Xiem, a physician from South Viet Nam, who worked in Hanoi for the Institute for the Preservation of Mothers and Newly Born Children. While Hong offered personal testimony regarding the brutality of the South Vietnamese government, Xiem provided an analysis of the widespread and long-term impact of the war on the Vietnamese people and land. North American attendees recalled:

Dr. Xiem presented an account, including pictures, of the Vietnamese wounded by pellet bombs, napalm and defoliants. Tremendous pain and mutilation, as well as death, have resulted from the use of bombs that release thousands of tiny pellets to become embedded in vital

organs—napalm that burns and suffocates—defoliant sand that cause[s] blindness, genetic damage and other destruction to human beings, in addition to . . . devastating the countryside. 44% of the forests and cultivated land of South Vietnam have been affected by toxic chemicals.<sup>59</sup>

Xiem's status as a physician gave her report an air of authority. However, she also underscored that expert forms of testimony were not always necessary. When asked about the psychological effect of bombing on young children, the doctor replied, "This bombing is not suitable for their development. It is not necessary to make an analysis. Our experiences as mothers should indicate this. Thank you for your attention to our baby children."<sup>60</sup> These accounts of atrocities reminded North American women of the atrocious nature of the U.S.-supported warfare in Southeast Asia. Although many antiwar activists no doubt had absorbed similar information from movement publications, the impact of hearing these stories in person was profound.

However, reports of oppression in Viet Nam sometimes reinforced a sense of moral obligation that resembled a politics of rescue. In a series of letters published in *Memo*, the newsletter of WSP, a statement by the president of VOW, Muriel Duckworth, bore the headline "They Must Be Saved."<sup>61</sup> The phrase suggests that Duckworth or the editor of *Memo* regarded North American women as the saviors of their Asian sisters. In contrast, the Indochinese women tended to highlight their own political agency as well as the ways in which the U.S. war in Southeast Asia also victimized Americans and damaged U.S. society more broadly. The sense of "paternalistic" maternalism that Duckworth's letter conveyed in many ways resonated with the political and cultural orientation of "older" women's peace organizations.

In contrast, Third World women, women's liberation activists, and even other maternalist peace advocates tended to regard the Indochinese as idealized revolutionary figures. In contrast to the divisiveness and factionalism among North American women, who were in many ways engaged in a politics of "blame," the Indochinese "never let us feel guilty of the crimes they described. Furthermore, they expressed sincere compassion for the suffering the war has brought to Americans. These women, whose families were scattered by our armies, whose villages were leveled, whose loved ones were murdered, these women recognized that 'young Americans are scapegoats'

forced to fight the war. Over and over the Indochinese women reiterated their confidence that if the American people only knew what was going on in Indochina, Americans would demand an end to atrocities and the war.”<sup>62</sup> The ability of the Indochinese to forgive and to distinguish between the people of the United States and their government led many conference attendees to “place them on a pedestal because of their revolutionary courage, spirit and warmth.”<sup>63</sup> For Third World women in particular, the opportunity to interact with and learn from nonwhite female leaders was especially empowering. As Ramirez and Genera recalled, this was the first time that they had witnessed such strength and leadership from Third World women; the Indochinese women represented the first women of color role models who were in the vanguard of an actual revolution.<sup>64</sup>

This idealization of Southeast Asian women reflects what I have defined as a radical Orientalist sensibility. The revolutionary social movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s tended to endow the most oppressed with the greatest political capital. In the minds of many North American activists who attended the IWC, the Indochinese women, as targets of Western militarism, imperialism, racism, and sexism, represented the ultimate underdogs. Furthermore, they fought against nearly impossible odds with a sense of strength, clarity, and unity. As warm, dedicated, courageous, and revolutionary heroines, the Southeast Asian representatives reminded North American women what it was possible to achieve both individually and collectively. After all, women of color, lesbians, and Canadians all utilized the colonial analogy to conceptualize and resist oppression. Following in an Orientalist tradition, the imagined East helped to redefine the imagined West.

It should be noted that the exemplary status of Southeast Asian female revolutionaries was promoted by the Indochinese delegates themselves. As one representative explained, “Cadres must make the masses love them. This is a question of principle. If the masses love the cadres, they will listen to what they say and give them protection. That is why you must be exemplary. You must be exemplary in sacrifices. You must be the first to give your life, and the last to get rewards.”<sup>65</sup> The heroism and humanity of the Indochinese women, which resulted from concerted political effort, ironically led North American women to examine themselves even more critically than before for their failure to achieve that ideal.

## Conclusion

In Benedict Anderson's now famous account of the nation, he argues that the nation is an "imagined community" because "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact . . . will never know most of their fellow-members . . . yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."<sup>66</sup> During the U.S. war in Viet Nam, as in all wars, a sense of nationalism was intensely promoted by mainstream culture and government agencies. However, the North American activists who traveled to Vancouver and Toronto sought to imagine themselves as members of an international community. Their face-to-face interactions and their shared identities as women helped to foster communion across national boundaries.

Ironically, the ability of North Americans to espouse a sense of sisterhood with Indochinese women was greater than their capacity to generate solidarity among themselves. In some ways, the racial, sexual, and national differences among North American women were more contentious because these activists lived and worked in closer proximity to one another. In contrast, they encountered briefly a very select group of female political leaders from Indochina who could fulfill and exceed their romantic visions of victimhood and heroism. As much as the North American delegates brought home with them stories of conflict with one another, they also carried and nurtured revolutionary hopes for political change. Although some became disillusioned by the tensions among North American women, others became even more dedicated than they had been to exposing and ending the horrors of the war in Southeast Asia.

Although the male-dominated antiwar movement has commonly been regarded as a catalyst for the emergence of female separatism, the IWC reveal the passionate engagement for peace and liberation by women of varying generations, racial backgrounds, sexual orientations, and nationalities. One indication of the importance of this female internationalism can be gleaned by a celebration in Hanoi that marked the official end of the U.S. war in Southeast Asia. On January 19, 1973, the Washington, D.C., branch of WILPF received an urgent cable from the VWU. The message, written in French and translated into English, invited a small delegation from WILPF to visit the capital of North Viet Nam for a week, beginning on January 27.<sup>67</sup> Even though the travelers had only eight days to prepare for their journey and were not provided with a reason for their visit, WILPF accepted the invitation. On their



arrival, the delegates were joined by “five women representing the Women’s International Democratic Federation, one each from Argentina, Russia, India, France, and the Republic of Congo. To our knowledge, we were the only two visiting Americans in Hanoi for the signing of the Peace Accord.”<sup>68</sup> The staging of this international female celebration to mark the end of the U.S. war in Viet Nam conveys the significance of women’s peace activism. The invitation from the Vietnamese indicates how much they valued and consciously fostered global female networks as part of their campaign to obtain national liberation and reunification. The acceptance of the invitation by WILPF representatives, given the limited information provided to them and the enormous resources necessary to travel across the world on such short notice, reveals how much U.S. women believed in the profound possibilities of global sisterhood.

#### NOTES

1. Sara M. Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1979).
2. Scholars of sixties radicalism are increasingly emphasizing the diversity of backgrounds and political perspectives of activists from this era. For examples, see Stephanie Gilmore, ed., *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), and Cynthia A. Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).
3. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
4. Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women’s Movement* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).
5. For discussions of travel and the antiwar movement, see James W. Clinton, *The Loyal Opposition: Americans in North Vietnam, 1965–1972* (Newt: University Press of Colorado, 1995); Mary Hershberger, *Traveling to Vietnam: American Peace Activists and the War* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998); and Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, “Journeys for Peace and Liberation: Third World Internationalism and Radical Orientalism during the U.S. War in Viet Nam,” *Pacific Historical Review* 76, no. 4 (November 2007): 575–584.
6. Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 214–215.
7. Andrea Estepa, “Taking the White Gloves Off: Women Strike for Peace and ‘the Movement,’ 1967–73,” in *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States*, ed. Stephanie Gilmore (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 87.

8. Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993), 83. The organization evolved from the Women's Peace Party, which was founded in 1915.
9. Estepa, "Taking the White Gloves Off," 88.
10. Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 216.
11. "Madame Nguyen Thi Binh Speaking to American Women," text of film, October 1970, Women Strike for Peace Collection (WSPC), Series A, 2, Box B, 2, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, PA, p. 1 (hereafter cited as SCPC).
12. Vivian Rothstein, telephone interview with author, Los Angeles, March 9, 2007.
13. Amy Kesselman, a close friend of Rothstein's and a fellow member of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union, believed that Rothstein already had a "majoritarian" approach to politics prior to her trip to North Viet Nam. In other words, in Kesselman's eyes, Rothstein's travels there tended to confirm rather than transform her politics. Amy Kesselman, conversation with author, Boston, June 26, 2008.
14. Charlotte Bunch, interview with author, New York City, November 30, 2006.
15. Alice Wolfson to "Companeras," n.d., Accession Number 87-M149-88-M18, Box 1, F. 34, Charlotte Bunch Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA, 1-2 (cited hereafter as Bunch Papers).
16. The group was led by Black Panther Leader Eldridge Cleaver and *Ramparts* editor Robert Scheer. The delegation included five white women as well: Jan Austin, Regina Blumenfeld, Ann Froines, Janet Kranzberg, and Randy Rappaport.
17. Betita Martinez, telephone interview with author, San Francisco, December 7, 2006.
18. Lorenz Oropeza, *Raze Si! Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism during the Viet Nam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 99-100.
19. For example, WSP leader Cora Weiss played an instrumental role in arranging trips for American antiwar activists to visit North Viet Nam through the Committee of Liaison with Families of Prisoners Detained in Vietnam. In addition, WSP was aware of its primary demographic base and attempted to involve women of color and younger women, as well as working-class women.
20. "Curses," *Georgia Straight*, April 8-13, 1971, 17.
21. *Ibid.*
22. "Projected Conference in North America with Indochinese Women," F-III, Subject Files, Folder "Indochinese Women Conference," Kathleen Hudson Women's Bookstore Collection, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, British Columbia, 1-2 (cited hereafter as Women's Bookstore Collection).
23. "An Evaluation of the Canadian Conference Process," Access. No. 87-M149-88-M18, Box 1, Folder 34, Bunch Papers, 11.
24. *Ibid.*, 10.

25. "We as Third World Women . . .," statement, F-III, Women's Bookstore Collection.
26. "Statement from a Number of the White Women in Los Angeles Who Are Working on the Indochinese Women's Conference," F-III, Women's Bookstore Collection, 2.
27. "An Evaluation of the Canadian Conference Process," II.
28. Jeremy Varon points out that white activists in the United States tended to not face the same type of state-sponsored repression as activists of color; *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). For an account of Canadian state surveillance of IWC, see Steve Hewitt and Christabelle Sethna, "'Sweating and Uncombed': Canadian State Security, the Indochinese Conference and the Feminist Threat, 1968–1972," paper presented at the Canadian Historical Association, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, May-June 2008.
29. Letter to "Dear Sisters" from the Indochinese Conference Committee, F-166, Folder "Indo-Chinese Women's Conference" # 3, Anne Roberts Women's Movement Collection, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, British Columbia (cited hereafter as Women's Movement Collection), 1–2.
30. "General Information for All Third World Delegates," F-166, Folder "Indo-Chinese Women's Conference" # 3, Women's Movement Collection, 1–2.
31. "Indochinese Women's Conference," *Asian Women* (University of California, Berkeley) (1971), 79.
32. "An Evaluation of the Canadian Conference Process," 12.
33. Naomi Weisstein, telephone interview with author, New York City, February 5, 2007.
34. Anne Roberts and Barbara Todd, "Murmurings after the Indochinese Conference," *Pedestal* (May 1971): 6.
35. Madeline Deckles, interview with author, Berkeley, California, October 21, 2006.
36. "We as Third World Women . . ."
37. Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2000), 164–175.
38. "Hello sisters! We are Radicalesbians . . .," F-166, Folder "Indo-Chinese Women's Conference" # 3, Women's Movement Collection, 1.
39. Quoted in Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 166.
40. "Hello sisters!," 1.
41. *Ibid.*, 2.
42. The San Francisco Radicalesbians incorporated this analysis from the "Fourth World Manifesto," a lengthy statement issued by a group of women's liberation activists based in Detroit; "Fourth World Manifesto," F-166, Folder "Indo-Chinese Women's Conference" # 1, Women's Movement Collection.
43. Maria Ramirez and Nina Genera, interview with author, Chabot, California, February 27, 2007.

44. Judy Drummond, interview with author, San Francisco, March 21, 2007.
45. For Brown's critique of women's involvement in the antiwar movement and the need to center lesbianism as a primary political issue, see Rita Mae Brown, "Hanoi to Hoboken, a Round Trip Ticket," in *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*, ed. Karla Jay and Allen Young (New York: Douglas, 1972), 195–201.
46. Bunch interview.
47. Canada's support for the U.S. antiwar movement should not be overstated. Although the country was officially neutral, Canadian citizens volunteered to fight in the U.S.-led war in Southeast Asia; in addition, the Canadian government engaged in "secret missions, weapons testing and arms production": [http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-71-1413/conflict\\_war/vietnam/](http://archives.cbc.ca/IDD-1-71-1413/conflict_war/vietnam/)
48. Liz Breimberg, interview with author, Vancouver, British Columbia, November 2, 2005. For related accounts of U.S.-Canadian tensions, see Hewitt and Sethna, "Sweating and Uncombed."
49. Breimberg interview.
50. The original publication was authored by the Vancouver Corrective Collective in 1971. The members were identified as Karen Cameron, Collette French, Pat Hoffer, Marge Hollibaugh, Andrea Lebowitz, Barbara Todd, Cathy Walker, and Dodie Weppler.
51. The Montreal International Collective, "Memorandum to the Interim Work Committee," 19 December 1970, F-166, Folder "Indo-Chinese Women's Conference" #2, Women's Movement Collection. The signers of the memo were Anne Cools, Marlene Dixon, Estelle Dorais, Susan Dubrofsky, Vickie Tabachnik, and Eileen Nixon.
52. Gerry Ambers, telephone interview with author, Vancouver, British Columbia, April 4, 2007.
53. "The Indochinese Women's Conference," *Goodbye to All That* ("The Newspaper by San Diego Women"), no. 13, April 20–May 4, 1971, 3.
54. Kathleen Gough, "An Indochinese Conference in Vancouver," F-166, Folder 1, Women's Movement Collection, 2.
55. A dissertation by Agatha Beins examines how women's movement periodicals created political meaning and fostered a sense of community among activists; Agatha Beins, "Free Our Sisters, Free Ourselves! Locating U.S. Feminism through Feminist Publishing" (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2008), and Agatha Beins, "Sisters Rise Up! Feminist Identities and Communities in the Women's Liberation Movement," seminar paper, NEH Summer Institute: "Sequel to the 60s," Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA, 2008.
56. "Dinh Thi Hong: A Prisoner of War," *Goodbye to All That*, no. 13, April 20–May 4, 1971, 4.
57. "Indochinese Women's Conference," *Asian Women*, 84.
58. *Ibid.*
59. "Indochinese Women's Conference," *Goodbye to All That*, 3.

60. "A Reaction," *Goodbye to All That*, no. 13, April 20–May 4, 1971, 2.
61. Muriel Duckworth, in "Impressions from the Conference of Indochinese and North American Women, April 1971, Sponsored by Voice of Women, WILPF, WSP," *Memo 2*, no. 1 (Fall 1971), 16.
62. "A Reaction," 2.
63. "Indochinese Women's Conference," *Asian Women*, 78.
64. Ramirez and Genera interview.
65. "Learning How to Do It," *Pedestal* (May 1971): 11.
66. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 6.
67. Vietnam Women's Union, cable to Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), 1 January 1973, DG 043, Part III: U.S. Section, Series A, 4, and Series H, 4, box 20, F, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Collection (hereafter WILPF Collection). "WILPF delegation to Hanoi (Vietnam), Feb. 1973," SCPC.
68. "Statement of Dorothy R. Steffens, National Director of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom," on her return from Hanoi, and "Visit to Hanoi (Vietnam), Jan. 1973.," 7 February 1973, 1, Part II, H, 4, box 20, F, WILPF Collection.