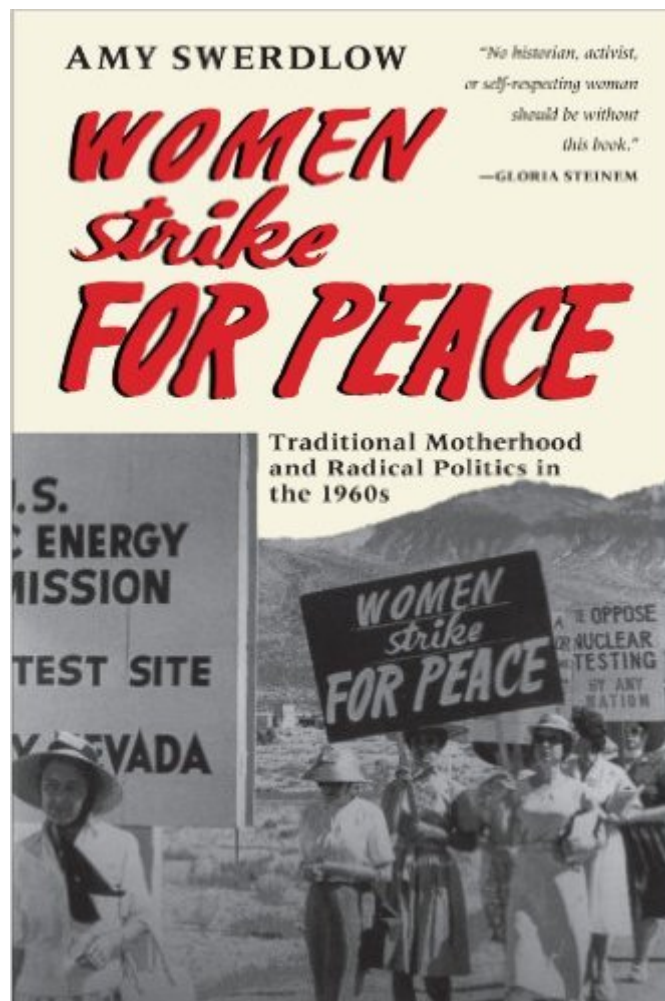


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Women Strike For Peace: Traditional Motherhood And Radical Politics In The 1960s (Women In Culture And Society)



Synopsis

Women Strike for Peace is the only historical account of this ground-breaking women's movement. Amy Swerdlow, a founding member of WSP, restores to the historical record a significant chapter on American politics and women's studies. Weaving together narrative and analysis, she traces WSP's triumphs, problems, and legacy for the women's movement and American society. Women Strike for Peace began on November 1, 1961, when thousands of white, middle-class women walked out of their kitchens and off their jobs in a one-day protest against Soviet and American nuclear policies. The protest led to a national organization of women who fought against nuclear arms and U.S. intervention in Vietnam. While maintaining traditional maternal and feminine roles, members of WSP effectively challenged national policies—defeating a proposal for a NATO nuclear fleet, withstanding an investigation by the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and sending one of its leaders to Congress as a peace candidate. As a study of a dissident group grounded in prescribed female culture, and the struggle of its members to avoid being trapped within that culture, this book adds a crucial new dimension to women's studies. In addition, this account of WSP's success as a grass roots, nonhierarchical movement will be of great interest to historians, political scientists, and anyone interested in peace studies or conflict resolution. "Swerdlow has re-created a unique piece of American political history, a chapter of the international peace movement, and an origin of the modern feminist movement. No historian, activist, or self-respecting woman should be without Women Strike for Peace. It shows not only how one group of women created change, but also how they inevitably changed themselves."—Gloria Steinem

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This history of Women Strike for Peace, a creative bold, and effective women-led grass-roots political movement for an end to nuclear testing and against the Vietnam War is particularly relevant today as women seek to register their opposition to U.S military policies. Gloria Steinem advised: "No historian, activist, or self-respecting women should be without this book." Anne Davidon in the Philadelphia Enquirer stated:"Amy'Swerdlow's throughly researched book is a crucial piece of too-easily forgotten recent history. Swerdlow, a history professor and former director of the graduate program in women history at Sarah Lawrence College was a founder of WSP. While her personal involvement provided motivation for this literary labor or love, her clear eyed sense of history enabled her not to be blind to the movements limitations." Particularly fascinating are the chapters on the peace women's rout of the House Un-American Activities Committe and on Bella Abzug's role as legislative director of the movement and how it led to her decision to run for Congress.

When I started this book while researching the peace movement in the 1960s, I already had an admiration for these great women. After I read Swerdlow's book, I felt even more inspired and moved. This book is entertaining, factual and intellectual. Swerdlow writes a fantastic narrative of how these women turned the tide of the McCarthy Era and broke out of an era of domestic containment (read the chapter "Ladies Day at the Capital" to see what I mean). Using motherhood as a method of protest, these women truly were pioneers of their time. When we think of the 60s and protest we often think of the youth in SDS or SNCC, but Swerdlow shows that protest in the 60s was more complex and more ordinary than we think. As a future teacher, parts of this book would also work well in a lesson about why stereotypes of the 60s don't always reflect reality.

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