From Civil Rights to Women's Liberation: Women's Rights in SDS and SNCC, 1960-1969

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History 4997: Honors Thesis Seminar

6 May 2019

"I had heard there was some infighting in the Women's March between Jewish women and Black women, and I'm a Native American woman and I think it's ridiculous that we're dividing ourselves like this. We're all women," proclaimed Barbara McIlvaine Smith as she prepared to attend the third annual Women's March in January of 2019.[1] Smith's comments succinctly summarized the ideological controversy over the intersection of race and gender—known since 1991 as intersectionality or intersectional feminism—that has plagued feminist activism since the emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement in 1968.[2] The concept of interactions between racial and sexual forms of oppression first emerged in the early 1960s, when women in the Civil Rights Movement began to identify similarities between the racial oppression they were fighting and the unequal treatment of women within their organizations. Many women asserted that their experiences as civil rights activists refined their understanding of gender inequality, improved their community organizing skills, and inspired their support of feminism.[3]

Historians have long acknowledged that women in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) first contemplated the connection between women's rights and civil rights in the early 1960s and ultimately inspired their fellow women in the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) to instigate the Women's Liberation Movement in 1968.[4] During the 1960s, SNCC and SDS both gained reputations as staunchly democratic organizations dedicated to empowering students and creating a more equal society. As SNCC devoted itself to achieving voting rights for Blacks in the Segregated South, SDS became a founding member of the New

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[1] Marissa J. Lang, "In Their Words: Women's March Activists on the Movement, Two Years Later," the *Washington Post*, January 17, 2019, file:///Users/annamanogue/Downloads/ProQuestDocuments-2019-02-12.pdf.

[2] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6, (July 1991): 1243, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1229039,

[3] Simon Hall, "Women's Rights—The Second Wave," in *American Patriotism, American Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011): 54-55, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fj25t.6; Kimberly Christensen, "'With Whom Do You Believe Your Lot is Cast?' White Feminists and Racism," *Signs* 22, no. 3, (Spring 1997): 621-622, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3175247.

[4] Kristin Cellelo, "A New Century of Struggle: Feminism and Antifeminism in the United States, 1920-Present," in *The Practice of U.S. Women's History,* eds. S. Jay Kleinberg, Eileen Boris, and Vicki L. Ruiz, (Camden: Rutger's University Press, 2007): 332-334, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5hhxxp.21; Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement & the New Left,* (New York : Knopf, distributed by Random House, 1979).

Left and sought to end economic inequality. Both groups saw each other as sister organizations in a new movement to inspire student activism across the United States.[5] The existing historical narrative argues that the contrast between the ideologies of equality and the existence of sexism within SDS and SNCC urged women to found the Women's Liberation Movement. While the juxtaposition between each organization's goals and its treatment of women certainly encouraged women to organize for their own rights, this perspective ignores the impact of the significant differences in the philosophies and goals of each group.

SDS and SNCC possessed profoundly different ideological approaches to protest, organizational structures, and internal cultures that encouraged their respective members to adopt opposing beliefs about the proper role of women's rights activism within the Civil Rights Movement. Women in SNCC internalized their organization's commitment to the ethic of nonviolence, tolerance, and love for all people when they argued that women's rights should be incorporated into the existing Civil Rights Movement. Women in SDS, conversely, applied their organization's radical rejection of the existing political, social, and economic systems when they asserted that women's rights necessitated their own, feminist movement. The failure of activists in SDS and SNCC to reconcile their different beliefs regarding the relationship between civil rights and women's rights divided the Women's Liberation Movement and triggered the foundation of increasingly specific types of feminist organizations throughout the 1970s.

Historiography

An investigation of the development of differing conceptions of feminist activism among women in SDS and SNCC joins a robust body of work on student organizations in the movement and contributes to the growing social history of feminism during the civil rights era. [6] The Civil

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[5] "Resolution on SNCC," Resolution passed by National Council of Students for a Democratic Society, June 18, 1966, http://content.cdlib.org/view?docId=kt9s20078c&brand=calisphere&doc.view=entire_text.

[6] Faith S. Holsaert, et. al., eds., *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC,* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010); James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, (New York: Macmillan, 1972); Evans, *Personal Politics*; Clayborne Carson, "Civil Rights Reform and the Black Freedom Struggle," in *The Civil Rights Movement in America,*

Rights Movement's relative youth and continued cultural relevance have produced a complex historiography prone to frequent revisions. The first generation of civil rights historians introduced a political narrative of the movement that emphasized the victories of famous, often male, leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.[7] In the mid-1980s, however, a new generation of social historians argued that political historians' focus on national victories strictly between the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and the 1965 Voting Rights Act inaccurately minimized the work of grassroots organizations that mobilized thousands of politically unengaged, southern Blacks in order to make the movement a national success.[8] Social historians astutely recognized that political studies' disregard for local organizations disproportionately silenced women, who were denied national leadership roles but filled crucial leadership positions in local organizations throughout the south.

Despite this early recognition of the need to further study women within the movement, social historians continued to minimize the role of female activists. In 1979, when historian Sara Evans challenged the prevailing political narrative of civil rights by publishing *Personal Politics,* a study of sexism in SDS and SNCC, few historians responded to her narrative. In fact, *Personal Politics* was most influential in establishing a dialogue with former civil rights activists. It was not until 2005, when historian Jacquelyn Dowd-Hall introduced the concept of the Long Civil Rights Movement, which included activism in Black communities dating back to the 1930s, that

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Charles W. Eagle, ed., (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1986); John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi,* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964.)

[7] Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp, *Search for the Beloved Community: The Thinking of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1974.); David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference,* (New York: William and Morrow, 1986); Frederick L. Downing, *To See the Promised Land: The Faith Pilgrimage of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986); Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: American in the King Years* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988); Jacquelyn Dowd-Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1234, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3660172.

[8] Joan C. Browning, "Invisible Revolutionaries: White Women in Civil Rights Historiography," *Journal of Women's History* 8, no. 3 (1996): 186, 193, https://muse-jhu-edu.libproxy.temple.edu/article/363814/pdf; Stephen F. Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now: The Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement," *American Historical Review* 96, no. 2 (1991): 456-459, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2163219; Kathryn L. Nasstrom, "Beginnings and Endings: Life Stories and the Periodization of the Civil Rights Movement," *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 2 (September 1999): 700, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2567054; Adam Fairclough, "Historians and the Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of American Studies* 24, no. 3 (December 1990): 392-394, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27555365.

historians began to publish extensive studies of the experiences of women in the Civil Rights Movement.

Their works have illuminated the critical actions of previously discounted figures like SNCC founder Ella Baker and analyzed the formative experiences of the generation of female students who were central to the creation of a renewed Feminist Movement.[9] Sara Evans' lasting importance as the leading example of the study of gender within the movement, however, reveals the limitations of the existing research on women during the civil rights era. Evans' argument that sexism within SDS and SNCC engendered the Women's Liberation Movement unduly ignores the influence of the protest philosophies within each organization and limits historiographical discussion of the process by which female activists began to conceptualize women's rights. Unlike Evans' research, this study can draw on the later works of activists-turned-scholars in order to fully understand the nuanced experiences of women in both organizations.

Organizational Structures and Early Conceptions of Feminism

The word "Feminism" first came into widespread usage during the 1910s, when women increasingly began campaigning for the right to vote. Even then, women who identified as feminists struggled profoundly with issues of race and gender. Many white suffragists supported the Nineteenth Amendment because they alleged that they deserved better rights than Black men, who had constitutionally been able to vote since the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment fifty years before. After the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, the feminist movement splintered into numerous factions. While some supported the creation of a constitutional amendment that would guarantee the equal treatment of men and women, others argued that such a measure would only benefit wealthy women.[10] Explicit acknowledgement of the inherent connections between socioeconomic status and race in the systemically racist United States, however, remained notably absent from the feminists' dialogue.

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[9] Simien and McGuire, "A Tribute to the Women," 414-415; Browning, "Invisible Revolutionaries," 198-201; Bettye Collier Thomas and Franklin P. Vincent, eds, *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*, (New York: New York University Press, 2001), ProQuest Ebook Central; Winifred Breines, *The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.)

Between 1920 and 1960, activism that promoted the rights of women occurred largely within labor and communist groups that sought to improve rights for the working class. Labor organizations fought to earn better pay for women and childcare provisions for working mothers. Although these organizations often boasted multiracial memberships, members' shared status as workers superseded their racial identities and united them in support of better working conditions.[11] The term "Feminism" did not reemerge until the 1960s and these groups did not identify themselves as feminist. Instead, they constituted the base of the liberal feminist organizations that emerged in the mid-1960s, shortly before the Women's Liberation Movement. Liberal feminist groups sought to revise the existing patriarchal system to improve the treatment of women. Radical feminist groups, on the other hand, developed in opposition to liberal feminist organizations in the late 1960s and argued that the only way to achieve equality for women was to overthrow the existing system.[12]

The National Organization for Women (NOW), which was founded in 1966, became the leading liberal feminist organization of the 1960s. The women who founded NOW belonged to the generation of women who participated in labor unions, civil rights groups, and religious organizations during the 1940s and 1950s. Unlike the students who joined SDS and SNCC in the early 1960s, the founders of NOW possessed dozens of years of experience as activists when they decided to create an organization intended to be an "NAACP for women."[13] NOW organization emerged in 1965 largely in response to civil rights organizations' failure to challenge violations of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VII outlawed discrimination on the basis of sex, but established civil rights groups like the NAACP often refused to pressure organizations to enforce equal treatment of men and women. Author Betty Friedan, who published *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, and renowned civil rights and feminist activist Pauli Murray began to recruit women to a distinctly woman's organization in 1965. By 1966, they garnered enough support from women in Washington to publish their Statement of Purpose. As increasingly radical Women's Liberation groups emerged throughout the latter half of the 1960s, NOW became one of the most influential liberal women's organizations of the twentieth century.[14]

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[10] Kristin Cellelo, "A New Century of Struggle," 331; Christensen, " 'With Whom Do You Believe Your Lot is Cast," 617.
[11] Cellello, "A New Century of Struggle," 334, 335.
[12] Cellello, "A New Century of Struggle," 336.
[13] Carol Giardina "MOW to NOW: Black Feminism Resets Chronology of the Founding of Modern Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 44, no. 3 (2018): 738, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.15767/feministstudies.44.3.0736.

SDS and SNCC, which were both active in the early- and mid-1960s acted as a crucial transition between the covertly feminist actions of civil rights groups in the 1950s and the explicitly feminist goals of organizations in the Women's Liberation Movement after 1968. As the Civil Rights Movement gained national attention in the late 1950s, hundreds of students independently participated in sit-ins at segregated stores and restaurants throughout the south. Although unaffiliated with well known civil rights groups like the NAACP and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the sit-in movement proved remarkably effective in forcing establishments to face the economic consequences of segregation.[15]

Experienced community organizer and SCLC member Ella Baker quickly recognized the untapped potential of students who wanted to support the movement but did not wish to join existing organizations whose members belonged to older generations. In April of 1960, Baker organized a student leadership conference at Shaw College where 126 student leaders from more than 12 states collaborated with SCLC members to create a student division of the Civil Rights Movement. By October of 1960, the temporary student coordinating committee that emerged from the conference had become the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.[16] At the Shaw College conference in April, future SNCC members affirmed their commitment to the philosophies of democratic leadership, nonviolence, and love.

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[14] Giardina, "MOW to NOW," 753-754.

[15] Mary Aikin Rothschild, "White Women Volunteers in the Freedom Summers: Their Life and Work in a Movement for Social Change," *Feminist Studies,* vol. 5, no. 3 (Autumn 1979): 467, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3177508; Winifred Breines, "Together and Apart: Women and SNCC" in *The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006), 2, http://www.oxfordscholarship.com.libproxy.temple.edu/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195179040.001.0001/acprof-9780195179040-chapter-2?print=pdf.

Baker began the conference with her famous "Bigger Than a Hamburger" address, which established the egalitarian philosophy that guided SNCC in the early 1960s. She argued that the students' commitment to shared leadership that was not centered on a charismatic leader appealed to many older activists who lamented the failures of more hierarchical organizations.[17] The recommendations, statement of purpose, and meeting notes that the students authored at the conference established a democratic organization dedicated as much to empowering students as to enfranchising Black voters throughout the south. SNCC's statement of purpose espoused a firm belief in nonviolent protest and love for humanity as the only successful approach to achieving equality.[18] The founding members accepted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. of the SCLC as one of their advisors and nominated two male conference attendees, Marion Barry and Henry James Thomas, to the positions of chairman and secretary, respectively.[19] The conference established SNCC's headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, and created a system by which elected delegates from each of the twelve participating states met monthly to determine the committee's trajectory.[20]

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[16] "Delegates to Student Leadership Conference," (conference paper, Shaw College Leadership Conference, Raleigh, North Carolina, April 1960), https://www.crmvet.org/docs/6004_shaw_delegations.pdf; Ella Baker and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "Youth Leadership Meeting," (flyer, Shaw College Leadership Conference, Raleigh, North Carolina, April 1960), https://www.crmvet.org/docs/6004_sncc_call.pdf.

[17] Ella Baker, "Bigger Than a Hamburger," (address presented at Shaw College Leadership Conference, Raleigh, North Carolina, April 1960), https://www.crmvet.org/docs/sncc2.htm.

[18] "Statement of Purpose," (SNCC Statement of Purpose presented at Shaw College Leadership Conference, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1960), https://www.crmvet.org/docs/600417_sncc_statement.pdf.

[19] "Present Status of SNCC," *The Student Voice* 1, no. 1, June 1960, https://www.crmvet.org/docs/sv/sv6006.pdf.

In the meetings between April and October of 1960, SNCC shed its close affiliation with SCLC and confirmed its egalitarian values. In the inaugural issue of SNCC's internal newsletter, *The Student Voice,* in April 1960, students reminded members that they "strongly encourage[d] letters of information, criticism, comment, and of any concern that [they], as responsible participants, might want circulated."[21] The explicit connection between active participation and responsible activism established open communication as an integral part of SNCC's organizational values. At the October meeting, the delegates released a statement that further clarified that "all members of the committee shall have equal status and shall equally be considered spokesmen for the movement."[22] The students thus enshrined equal participation and created the democratic structure that would define SNCC during the early 1960s.

Although SNCC's ultimate goal was to enfranchise southern voters, the founding members' devotion to establishing an internal student community encouraged an open culture in which all members could participate regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, or racial identity. As the organization expanded its activism between 1960 and 1964, it created specific posts devoted to outreach on college campuses and promoted students to titled project manager positions. Project managers led field projects in rural areas deep in the Segregated South and coordinated with the central office in Atlanta in order to ensure that their activists had the resources and protections that they needed. While SNCC's democratic culture encouraged all members to participate in shaping organizational goals, the practical realities of activism in the Segregated South tightly regulated the positions that members could hold.[23]

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[20] "Recommendations of the Findings and Recommendations Committee are as Follows," (paper presented at Shaw College Leadership Conference, Raleigh, North Carolina, April 1960), https://www.crmvet.org/docs/6004_shaw_recommendations.pdf; Ella Baker, "Report of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee," (paper presented at The first meeting of the Temporary Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia, May 13, 1960), https://www.crmvet.org/docs/6005_sncc_cc-rpt-r.pdf.

[21] "Your Publication," *The Student Voice* 1, no. 1, June 1960, https://www.crmvet.org/docs/sv/sv6006.pdf.

[22] "Recommendations Passed by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Conference, Atlanta, Georgia, October 14-16, 1960," (paper presented at the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Conference, Atlanta, Georgia, October 1960), https://www.crmvet.org/docs/6010_sncc_decs.pdf.

Black men were mostly likely to assume project manager and executive leadership positions, although Black women also led field projects and held titled positions in the national office. White members in SNCC were much less likely to hold leadership positions to protect both member safety and organizational ideology. White women often assumed office or university outreach and press positions because their presence in the field endangered all activists. Segregationists reacted most violently when they witnessed white women interacting with Black communities, and particularly with Black men.[24] Between 1960 and 1963, SNCC maintained close internal ties partially because many of its members had grown up in the Segregated South and shared similar understandings of segregated, southern culture. Members' shared comprehension of the conservative culture throughout the Segregated South and the egalitarian structure of SNCC largely precluded internal tensions over individual responsibilities.

SNCC's growing reputation and the successes of the Civil Rights Movement, however, soon created new opportunities for northern, white students to join the movement. By 1963, SNCC had chapters in New York and several other northern states. The 1964 and 1965 Freedom Summers inspired more than seven hundred northern, white students to join SNCC and consequently destabilized the organization's internal culture. Northern volunteers lacked southern students' inherent understanding of segregationist culture and created tensions within

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[23] Rothschild, "White Women Volunteers," 468; Cynthia Griggs Fleming, "Black Women Activists and The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee: The Case of Ruby Doris Robinson Smith," *Journal of Women's History* 4, no. 3 (Winter 1993): 72, file:///Users/annamanogue/Downloads/DPT/doc.pdf; Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Introduction," in *How and Why Did Women in SNCC (the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) Author a Pathbreaking Feminist Manifesto, 1964-1965?*, http://womhist.alexanderstreet.com/SNCC/intro.htm.

[24] Ruby Sales, "I Can't Deal With Her: White and Black Women in the Movement," *The Spirit House Project* (blog section), 2008, http://www.spirithouseproject.org/reflections/reflection-2008.php; Sklar, "Introduction," in *How and Why Did Women in SNCC Author a Pathbreaking Feminist Manifesto*.

SNCC by challenging the practical regulations that had governed activists' placement and behavior during the organization's first three years.[25]

The subsequent passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act further undermined SNCC's internal structure. The organization had realized its initial goal of enfranchising Black voters and suddenly faced the challenge of organizing hundreds of new volunteers without a clear goal to unite them. The political gains of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts promised to improve the lives of Blacks throughout the Segregated South, but created new tensions within urban, Black communities that still endured rampant economic racism. As the broader Civil Rights Movement became increasingly militant, SNCC members faced growing internal tensions and uncertainty about their organization's future.[26] In 1964, SNCC called a conference in Waveland, North Carolina and invited all members to share statements about their visions for the organization's future.

Although SNCC faced growing internal strife during the mid-1960s, its unprecedented and successful mobilization of southern students inspired students at the University of Michigan to found Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Alan Haber, a graduate student at the university's Ann Arbor campus, first formed SDS out of the campus's chapter of the Student League for Industrial Democracy in 1959.[27] He quickly began recruiting members, but struggled to define the organization's primary goals. In 1960, many of SDS's first members attended SNCC's founding conference and visited SNCC projects throughout the year. By 1962, the founding members of SDS decided that they wished to create a movement that could support civil rights activism in the south by revolutionizing American politics, economy, and society.

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[25] Rothschild, "White Women Volunteers," 470; Breines, "Together and Apart," 19-20.

[26] Charles Cobb, Letter to Mary King, January 9, 1966, https://www.crmvet.org/lets/660109_sncc_cobb-let.pdf; Fay Bellamy, "A Little Old Report," c. 1966, https://www.crmvet.org/lets/661100_sncc_bellamy_memo.pdf.

[27] Francesca Polletta, *Freedom is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 124, http://search.ebscohost.com.libproxy.temple.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=518379&site=ehost-live&scope=site&authtype=uid&user=ebony&password=lewis.

They invited a number of successful organizers in SNCC and other civil rights organizations to attend the first SDS National Convention in June of 1962 in Port Huron, Michigan.[28]

At the conference, members ratified the SDS constitution and drafted the *Port Huron Statement*, which articulated the organization's ideologies and goals for the first time. In the constitution, the students presented their broad intention to create a Leftist coalition that could work toward the realization of "a democratic society, where at all levels the people have control of the decisions which affect them and the resources on which they are dependent." They rejected both the Communist and conservative American movements as socially, politically, and economically authoritarian and warned that they would refuse membership to "advocates or apologists for any [totalitarian] principle."[29] This strict wording emphasized the camaraderie of members, but rejected outsiders and did little to encourage open dialogue surrounding the issues of economic equality and democratic representation that formed the backbone of SDS's policies.

The SDS Constitution also established a hierarchical structure in which a National Committee controlled membership and maintained discretion over the formation of chapters at different universities. Although members later modified the constitution to create regional councils that could oversee individual chapters, the original document stipulated that the National Committee would determine the organization's policies and could dissolve wayward chapters. In an annual National Convention, elected delegates from each chapter would meet to set programmatic goals, elect national officers, and debate the future of the organization. The constitution also established a National Council, which met twice yearly until 1964, in order to set procedures for electing representatives and organizing the National Convention.[30]

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[28] Barbara Haber, "A Manifesto of Hope," in *The Port Huron Statement: Sources and Legacies of the New Left's Founding Manifesto*, eds. Richard Flacks and Nelson Lichtenstein, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 141, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt13x1mxp.12.

[29] SDS Constitution (Presented at SDS National Conference, Ann Arbor, Michigan, June 1962), https://www.sds-1960s.org/sds_wuo/sds_documents/sds_constitution.txt.

[30] SDS Constitution.

The creation of numerous national bodies limited the agency of individual chapters and emphasized the organization's hierarchy. New chapters could only form with the permission of the National Committee, which was controlled by the National Council, which could be adjusted only at the National Convention. The constitution most directly enshrined hierarchy when it declared that the National President "shall be responsible for carrying out organizational policy and shall convene the National Council."[31] SDS's overt support of a president who steered the organization in collaboration with the elected National Council sharply contrasted with SNCC's efforts to elicit member feedback and create titled positions only when administratively necessary.

Early SDS members' decision to establish a hierarchical organization that replicated many of the bureaucratic systems that they criticized in existing Leftist organizations reflected their inexperience and idealism. Founding members Alan Haber and Tom Hayden recruited most of the few hundred members who had joined the organization by the time that SDS created its founding documents in 1962. The recruitment process depended both on a person's political ideologies and on their passion and energy. Haber and Hayden often invited new members into the organization not because of the person's views, but because they appreciated the person's personality and commitment to the creation of radical new version of Leftist politics.[32]

The highly personal recruitment system created a tight-knit organization, but stymied debate over legitimate differences in ideology and organizational style. The potential shortcomings of such a loosely organized system became clear to SDS members when they struggled to respond to the Cuban Missile Crisis in October of 1962. While members followed protests around the nation, SDS itself only succeeded in organizing a small protest on the campus of the University of Michigan that failed to generate any support from the university's student body.[33] Members responded by coopting the existing organizational systems they had experienced as members of labor unions and democratic organizations during the late 1950s. While SDS's new structure mimicked the hierarchy that members despised in many other democratic organizations, they hoped to avoid bureaucratization by establishing a rotating system of power that limited the amount of time that a person could hold an organizational office.[34] Despite these efforts to avoid the failures that SDS members had witnessed in other organizations, the organizational system they established remained steeped in hierarchical approaches to power that differed sharply from SNCC's egalitarian structure.

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[31] SDS Constitution.

[32] John McMillian, “”Our Founder, the Memeograph Maching”: Participatory Democracy in Students for a Democratic Society's Print Culture,” *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 2, no. 2 (2009): 90-91, https://doi.org/10.1353/jsr.0.0010.

SDS and SNCC also differed greatly in the scope of the issues that they chose to address. SDS members recorded their ideologies in the *Port Huron Statement*, which specified their plans to rectify perceived injustices in American society. The statement questioned the discrepancies between the United States' political, social, and economic policies and its democratic ideals. While *The Port Huron Statement* echoed the yearning for a student movement espoused in many of SNCC's founding documents, SDS members offered a much broader array of issues that they hoped to resolve. The students who authored *The Port Huron Statement* recognized their own status as affluent Americans who attended some of the nation's most elite universities even as they lambasted the United States for promoting an income gap that crushed the poor.[35]

The students understood *The Port Huron Statement* as a sort of manifesto that would guide the creation of a revolutionary, new society in the United States. They began the statement with a discussion of their personal disillusionment with the hypocrisy of post-war American democracy. They then elucidated the values that they hoped to enshrine in SDS and the new movement that they intended to create. The authors deliberately rejected the blanket values statements that members associated with the previous generation of activists and instead affirmed their support of freedom, reason, and love. They argued, "Human relationships should involve fraternity and honesty. (…) human brotherhood must be willed however, as a condition of future survival and as the most appropriate form of social relations."[36] Such general statements about the status of the American people dominated the document's limited discussions of racial tensions and the Civil Rights Movement and reflected the authors' tendency to favor masculinized diction.

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[33] McMillian, "Our Founder," 92-93.

[34] Rich Rothstein, "Representative Democracy in SDS," (presented at the New University Conference, Chicago, Illinois, 1971), 3, https://www.sds-1960s.org/RepresentativeDemocracyInSDS.pdf.

[35] *The Port Huron Statement*, (presented at SDS National Conference, Ann Arbor, Michigan June 1962), http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/SDS_Port_Huron.html.

The authors' use of masculine pronouns and descriptions accurately reflected the gender norms of the 1960s, but hinted at members' insensitivity to the manner in which sex and race conditioned a person's experience. They preferred instead to emphasize the failures of universities and societal institutions that had forced students to form their own, fractured movement. Society, they argued, had failed to foster brotherhood between Americans, who endured emptiness and isolation despite allegedly living in the greatest democracy in history. They ended *The Port Huron Statement* by defining a list of characteristics that they planned to cultivate as they created a revolutionary social movement that they termed the New Left.[37]

SDS's efforts to create a movement that resonated with university students proved remarkably successful. By 1966, the organization had formed chapters across the United States and had propelled the student and anti-war movements that dominated the second half of the 1960s. The foundation of so many new chapters presented significant organizational challenges, however, and SDS repeatedly revised its initial constitution to better coordinate its members.[38] The broad geographic range between chapters meant that the National Office often struggled to successfully manage the organization's programmatic goals. Members became disillusioned with the hierarchical structure that afforded more significance to the opiniond of National Office, Council, and Committee members who had little understanding of individual chapters' community-specific goals. As both SDS membership and the scope of the Civil Rights Movement expanded after 1965, SDS faced profound internal dissention. Members formed into subgroups that disagreed not only over ideological approaches to protest—for example, the use of violence—but also over programmatic issues regarding the formation of their national policy.[39]

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[36] *The Port Huron Statement.*
[37] *The Port Huron Statement.*
[38] Carl Oglesby, "Let Us Shape the Future," (address at March on Washington, Washington, D.C., November 27, 1965," https://www.sds-1960s.org/sds_wuo/sds_documents/oglesby_future.html; "An Introduction to Students For a Democratic Society," in *Democracy Vol. I,* (San Francisco, SDS Regional Office, 1965), https://www.sds-1960s.org/sds-introduction.pdf; SDS Constitution.

The Civil Rights Movement as a whole shifted ideologically and geographically between 1964 and 1966. The plight of southern African Americans faded slightly from the national spotlight and other marginalized groups began to protest for their rights. In SDS, this meant that members vehemently disagreed over how best to approach the creation of the New Left. The organization gradually divided itself into various labor, feminist, populist, and anti-war factions.[40] These factions seemed the natural result of the organization's failure to define its approach to achieving its goals. Members initially formed factions that reflected their protest ideologies, but still sought to achieve the same political goals regardless of their factional memberships. As the organization grew, however, members increasingly debated the political goals that should form the organization's primary focus. Some members adopted a populist approach to political organizing that hoped to address the difficulties facing middle and working class Americans. Others felt that the Vietnam War presented the greatest threat to the United States and SDS should thus devote itself wholly to anti-war protest.

SDS chapter meetings in the late 1960s often collapsed into a series of factional debates as members sided with the political or ideological division with which they best identified. By 1967, women in the organization had begun to form a controversial faction united by the argument that SDS should focus on women's issues as part of its primary platform. Agreement or discussion across factional lines became increasingly problematic and throughout the latter half of the 1960s, groups splintered off from SDS and formed their own organizations. By 1970, the remaining members of SDS renamed themselves Weatherman and began a domestic terrorist campaign in protest of the atrocities that the United States was perpetrating against the Vietnamese in the Vietnam War.[41]

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[39] Rothstein, "Representative Democracy in SDS", https://www.sds-1960s.org/RepresentativeDemocracyInSDS.pdf.

[40] Tom Hayden, "The Dream of Port Huron," in *Inspiring Participatory Democracy: Student Movements from Port Huron to Today*, ed. Tom Hayden, (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2013): 18-19; Alice Echols, *Daring To Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967-1975,* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 39-40.

In SNCC, which had been formed to mobilize students and enfranchise southern Blacks, the changes in the Civil Rights Movement meant the complete redefinition of the organization's goals. The ideological shift toward a more militant approach to achieving rights particularly threatened SNCC's initial commitment to nonviolence and love. Many of the SNCC's original members ultimately left the organization in 1966 when it embraced Black Power and expelled any remaining white members.[42] After 1965, both organizations faced influxes of new members and shifts in the broader Civil Rights Movement that enabled activists to reassess their ideologies and goals. Although both groups eventually strayed from their initial ideals during this period, their efforts to evaluate their strategies and intentions enabled female activists to consider the appropriate role of women's rights activism in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left.

Women in SNCC and SDS

Between 1960 and 1964, SNCC closely adhered to its core values of nonviolence and love for all people. Members repeatedly hail this period as one of fraternity and friendship in which a limited number of volunteers and workers—largely from the south—formed the basis of the southern student movement. Women in the organization in these early years described a feeling of sisterhood rooted in a joint understanding of their individual places within SNCC and a mutual respect for each other as activists. Race, social background, and personality, however, all impacted an individual woman's experience in SNCC. Many Black women denied that there was any sexism in the organization, while white women were more likely to assert that they felt discriminated against by male activists.[43] Regardless of their opinion about the existence of sexism, however, many women in the organization maintained that they believed SNCC could incorporate women's rights into its platform. Ruby Sales, Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, and Mary King each occupied very different roles during this period, yet they all argued that women's rights were an inherent part of civil rights activism within SNCC.

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[41] Ron Chepesiuk, Interview with Jane Adams, audio, 1996.

[42] Breines, "Together and Apart," 24.

Ruby Sales was just sixteen years old when she became a member of SNCC in 1963. She joined the organization after she heard Stokely Carmichael speak at Tuskegee Institute, where she attended school. Sales quickly earned a position as the sole organizer of the Black community of more than 2,000 people in Lowndes County, Alabama.[44] Although Sales was still a teenager during her time in the movement, she credited SNCC with enabling her to develop a more nuanced understanding of the social roles of men and women. Sales' project sought to protest illegal restrictions on the voting rights of southern African Americans by organizing voter registration opportunities for Blacks in the local community. Sales and her fellow activists also assisted community leaders in creating local organizations that could continue organizing without SNCC members' direct involvement.[45]

SNCC field projects were organized by location and enjoyed significant autonomy in their daily activities. Organizers worked in small teams and slept at Freedom Houses owned by members of the local Black community each night. The interaction between organizers and local community members in this capacity enabled activists to convince community members to risk their lives by registering to vote. Freedom houses were integrated completely. Male and female organizers slept in the same homes—sometimes even in the same rooms—and equally risked torture and death while organizing.[46] Sales' project in Lowndes County, for example, was located in an area that so violently resisted integration that it earned the moniker "Bloody Lowndes." Sales herself experienced the area's brutal violence when, after she and several others were released from prison after a protest, she watched a white man murder her fellow organizer right next to her.[47]

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[43] Trinity College, "SNCC Conference Pt. G: The S.N.C.C. Woman and the Stirrings of Feminism," 1988, *We Shall Not Be Moved: videos of a 1988 conference on the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee,* https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/sncc/7.
Trinity College, "SNCC Conference Pt. G" (1988); Winifred Breines, "Sixties Stories and Silences: White Feminism, Black Feminism, Black Power," *NWSA Journal* 8, no. 3, (1996): 111, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4316463.

[44] Ruby Sales, ""I Can't Deal with Her." http://www.spirithouseproject.org/reflections/reflection-2008.php. ; Blackside, Inc., Interview with Ruby Sales, *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads 1965 to 1985,* Washington University Libraries, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection, December 12, 1988, transcript, http://digital.wustl.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eop;cc=eop;rgn=main;view=text;idno=sal5427.0903.142.

[45] Jean Wiley and Bruce Harford, Interview with Ruby Sales, *Civil Rights Movement Veterans,* September 2005, transcript, https://www.crmvet.org/nars/rubysale.htm#rubytuskegee.

Sales and many other activists argued that the extreme danger and fear that they endured daily superseded any traditional conceptions of gender roles and enabled them to adopt asexual identities within their project. Sales explored her own status as a woman because, as she recalled, "[I] began to develop a deep trust in men, because we worked together and had to depend on each other."[48] She noted that she never perceived herself as subservient to men, but that working closely with men in SNCC meant that she developed an understanding of how men and women could relate platonically. In the years after her involvement in SNCC ended, Sales staunchly maintained that she only felt empowered by the movement. SNCC helped her to develop new relationships with men and to understand her own strength.

Sales outright rejected the accusation of sexist behavior within SNCC and instead asserted that the Civil Rights Movement was inherently a woman's movement. She argued that Rosa Parks' refusal to relinquish her seat in the 1950s protested not only racism, but also the sexist exploitation that Black women endured from white, male bus drivers. The movement, she believed, "went to the very heart of black womanhood" and Black women enabled its success.[49]

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[46] Joseph Mosnier, Interview with Ruby Sales, *U.S. Civil Rights History Project, Library of Congress*, March 25, 2011, transcript, 11-12, https://www.loc.gov/item/2015669106/
[47] Joseph Mosnier, Interview with Ruby Sales, transcript, 25.
[48] Joseph Mosnier, Interview with Ruby Sales, transcript, 11, 14.
[49] Joseph Mosnier, Interview with Ruby Sales, transcript, 34.

This view of the Civil Rights Movement asserts that race and gender were inherently and intrinsically connected. There would be no need for a Women's Liberation Movement if the Civil Rights Movement were at its core a movement of southern Black women. SNCC affirmed Sales' belief by providing a welcoming culture in which she witnessed interactions between white and Black women, all of whom were driven by their unfailing commitment to achieving equality in the Segregated South.

White women were notably absent from Sales' analysis of the relationship between civil rights and women's rights. Sales acknowledged that the limitations on the work of white women within SNCC exacerbated their existing understandings of societal restrictions on their activities. She also recognized that in the first half of the 1960s, white and Black women within SNCC formed unique friendships based on their shared commitment to achieving racial equality.[50] She suggested, however, that relationships between women of different races within SNCC began to fray because white women could never share in the empowerment that Black, female members felt. In Sales' opinion, then, the Women's Liberation Movement later struggled to inspire support among Black women because many Black women felt that women's rights were already intertwined with civil rights. Although Sales' opinion was certainly informed by her personal background and individual experiences, her perspective was relatively common among Black activists in the organization.

Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons,[51] another Black activist in SNCC, shared Sales' sense of empowerment, but argued that sexism and mistreatment of women also existed within the organization. Like Sales, Simmons quickly assumed a position of power after she joined SNCC during the Freedom Summer of 1964. After a series of coincidences precluded the leadership of more experienced men, Simmons became the manager of her field project in Laurel, Mississippi.

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[50] Ruby Sales, “"I Can't Deal with Her.”

[51] Known during the Civil Rights Movement as Gwendolyn Robinson.

SNCC leader Jim Forman told Simmons that he chose her to lead the project because she was a Black woman from the South whose experience as an activist in high school had given her experience in southern jails.[52] Forman's thought process revealed the importance of understanding Southern culture as a member of SNCC and especially as a project leader. Project managers had to be able to understand how their activism would be perceived in both the communities that they were organizing and in the white communities that their activism threatened.

Simmons described her organization style as feminist because she internalized SNCC's ethic of bottom-up organization. She argued that the "ultra-democratic" style of organizing within SNCC inspired her to cultivate an environment in which her staffers would meet for hours in order to reach a consensus before each decision. This style created opportunities for women to receive equal treatment within SNCC, but it did not at all guarantee equality. Simmons noted that she and the other female project directors in Mississippi during the summer of 1964 had to fight for resources that were often allocated to male leaders first. She also recalled her personal struggle to stand up to her white, male peers. Simmons had grown up in an entirely segregated community and had never had any interaction with white men, let alone white men who were technically her subordinates.[53] Although these complex racial and sexual dynamics complicated Simmons' first summer as project manager, they did not hinder her success as a leader or her belief in the mission of SNCC.

Simmons remembered her efforts to address male members' tendency to assume their superiority over the women in the project. She recalled reminding men on her project that they could not direct their female colleagues to perform certain tasks—taking meeting minutes or typing flyers, for example—because all activists held equal standing within the organization. In a 2011 oral history interview, Simmons also asserted that behavior that would today be termed sexual harassment was common within SNCC.[54] At the same time, however, SNCC was revolutionary in its willingness to name multiple women to titled positions of power.[55] Simmons' post as a project manager meant that she possessed the final discretion in all aspects of her project's daily efforts. SNCC leaders' willingness to nominate a woman to a position of such significant power and the members' acceptance of a woman's leadership revealed the limitations of sexism within SNCC.

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[52] Joseph Mosnier, Interview with Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, *U.S. Civil Rights History Project, Library of Congress,* September 14, 2011, transcript,13, 20, https://cdn.loc.gov/service/afc/afc2010039/afc2010039_crhp0049_simmons_transcript/afc2010039_crhp0049_simmons_transcript.pdf; Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, "From Little Memphis Girl to Mississippi Amazon," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, eds. Faith S. Holsaert, et al. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 27, http://web.a.ebscohost.com.libproxy.temple.edu/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzE0Mjc1MjRfX0FO0?sid=36a3500e-935a-4517-9f4f-0c9a9484ff76@sessionmgr4010&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp_33&rid=0.

[53] Joseph Mosnier, Interview with Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, transcript, 19, 20.

Although SNCC members certainly shared society's sexist perceptions of women in the 1960s, they also willingly joined an organization that professed love and empowerment for all people. Even as members like Simmons recognized that women were treated differently because of their sex, SNCC continued to promote an environment in which Simmons could lead an entire field project. In fact, although there were only twelve Black women in SNCC's Mississippi staff of fifty members during the summer of 1964, Simmons was one of seven Black, female field secretaries. Female project managers were more likely to lead smaller projects, however. Male leaders often had at least three members on their staffs, while women often had only one subordinate member.[56] Still, more than half of the Black women who worked in Mississippi in the summer of 1964 held positions as managers of their projects.

Simmons and Sales shared a perception that women's rights were an inherent part of the Civil Rights Movement because SNCC created a structure and culture that empowered Black women. Coupled with the necessary restrictions on the roles of white women in SNCC, the racism and sexism institutionalized in American society during the 1960s meant that Black women were more likely to earn titled positions. White activists who joined SNCC before the 1964 Freedom Summer remained particularly staunch, however, in their assertions that they never wished to overstep their roles. Many white activists argued that they fully recognized that SNCC ultimately sought to empower local Black communities by connecting them to broader movement ideologies. White women like Mary King, who joined SNCC before the Freedom Summer and left a year after it ended, argued that northern white volunteers failed to respect their limitations. King posited that southerners and full-fledged members better understood the realities of organizing for equality in the Segregated South, while northerners and volunteers struggled to fully grasp extreme overlap between segregation and southern culture. [57] Even some white women who volunteered during the Freedom Summer later acknowledged that they failed to appreciate Southern culture and were insensitive to the complex racial and sexual dynamics within SNCC.[58]

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[54] Joseph Mosnier, Interview with Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, transcript, 20.
[55] Judy Richardson, "Women in SNCC," https://sncdigital.org/our-voices/women-in-sncc/; Trinity College, "SNCC Conference Pt. G."; Ella Baker, "Bigger Than a Hamburger."
[56] Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Introduction," in *How and Why Did Women in SNCC (the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) Author a Pathbreaking Feminist Manifesto, 1964-1965?* http://womhist.alexanderstreet.com/SNCC/doc43.htm

King maintained that she respected the restrictions that her gender and race necessarily imposed on her role in SNCC. Yet, unlike Sales and Simmons, she repeatedly urged SNCC to better recognize the rights of women. Notably a northern, white woman, King was perhaps SNCC's most vocal proponent of women's rights. She joined the organization after she graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University in 1962. She recalled that SNCC only had 16 members when she first learned of its existence on an Ohio Wesleyan student trip to Atlanta. She was so impressed by the members' convictions and by Ella Baker, however, that she forfeited her plans to pursue a Master's Degree in English in order to join the southern movement. King obtained a position working with Baker on a grant-funded project that sought to connect white and Black university students by organizing secret, interracial meetings with amenable student groups at different schools. During her weekends she volunteered with SNCC before joining the organization as a full-time employee in 1963.[59]

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[57] Sara Boyte, Interview with Mary King, *Southern Oral History Program Collection,* July 24, 1973, transcript, 8, https://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/sohp/id/11210/rec/1.
[58] Kish Sklar, "Introduction," in *How and Why*.

King worked in the organization's communications department as a sort of publicist and journalist. Her job entailed drawing mass-media attention to the violence that Blacks and civil rights workers endured throughout the South. SNCC staffers became extremely vulnerable when they were arrested, and King and her colleague Julian Bond shrewdly recognized that attention from major newspapers and television stations could actually protect members. King noted that during the Freedom Summers, their communications work became a matter of life and death as SNCC struggled to protect the approximately 700 northern volunteers who were organizing throughout the South. About 80 percent of the northern volunteers who entered Mississippi that summer were white students, whose presence brought both press attention and increased danger for all field activists.[60] King herself called Andrew Goodman's mother after she learned that he, James Chaney, and Michael Schwerner had been brutally murdered in Mississippi in 1964. Despite the importance of King's work, however, her job remained limited to the SNCC office.[61]

Although King long insisted that SNCC members treated women differently than men, she has also maintained that SNCC was a fundamentally democratic organization.[62] King herself did not hold a position of leadership in its traditional sense, but she still participated in meetings where all staff members gathered to build strategy. King noted that field organizers often contributed more than office workers at these meetings because they possessed a more nuanced understanding of the community they were organizing. In these sessions, King recalled, white members of the project that she joined in 1963 seemed careful not to overstep their role.[63] Like Sales, King recognized that white members joined the movement because they fundamentally believed in equality for all people. King articulated her own belief that every member of SNCC before 1964 recognized their duty to support the movement where they could be most useful. White women like herself, she argued, understood that they would not be particularly valuable as field organizers because they would endanger activists and would likely struggle to galvanize support from deeply segregated communities.

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[59] Boyte, Interview with Mary King, transcript, 1.
[60] Rothschild, "White Women Volunteers," 469-470.
[61] Boyte, Interview with Mary King, transcript, 4-5.
[62] Trinity College, "SNCC Conference Pt. G."
[63] Boyte, Interview with Mary King, transcript, 6-8

King acknowledged that some tension did exist between white women who wished to work as field organizers and other members who recognized the danger inherent in sending a white woman to organize in segregated areas. She asserted that only volunteers, however, believed they had a right to work in the field whereas longtime staffers respected the existing practice of restricting the number of white, female organizers. In King's recollection, then, cultural tensions arose as liberal, northern women threatened the conservative ideals of many southern, Black women in SNCC. Northern women, King suggested, were more likely to dress provocatively, smoke, and altogether fail to understand Southern culture.[64]

While King was certainly correct that cultural tensions emerged as more northerners joined SNCC in 1964, it is doubtful that there were no tensions between Black and white women before the Freedom Summer. Indeed, it seems most likely that SNCC's small size and firm ethic of love for all people enabled women to overcome interracial tensions until the organization swelled in size. As cultural tensions threatened SNCC's structure in 1964, the dichotomies between the kinds of work that Black and white women could perform exacerbated these existing tensions between members. King believed that her position of relative powerlessness actually enabled her to call for a better dialogue on women's rights within SNCC because she did not feel that she had the clout to disrupt any projects.[65] King chose to alert SNCC members to the need to better represent women at a 1964 conference in Waveland, Mississippi.

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[64] Boyte, Interview with Mary King, transcript, 8.

[65] Boyte, Interview with Mary King, transcript, 17

SNCC leaders called the Waveland Conference in an attempt to restructure the organization in order to better accommodate the hundreds of volunteers who had chosen to stay on as full-time members after the Freedom Summer. Every member of SNCC was invited not only to attend the conference, but also to draft a memo on a topic that they felt members should consider as they planned the future trajectory of their organization.[66] It was thus SNCC's open culture and egalitarian structure that enabled King, a relatively powerless employee in the communications department, to collaborate with another white woman, Casey Hayden, to draft a memo urging a better dialogue on women's rights in SNCC. Together, Hayden and King authored Position Paper #24 and sent it anonymously to the conference organizers.

Their position paper was not the only anonymous memo presented at the conference, but it was the only memo that explicitly discussed the treatment of women within the organization. In the memo, Hayden and King provided a list of 11 instances in which male members treated women as inferiors by assigning them trivial or demeaning tasks. They then argued that SNCC should better consider the limitations that it imposed on women merely because of their sex. King and Hayden published the memo anonymously because they feared that they would not be taken seriously if they signed their names. They later recollected that there was barely any support for the memo at the conference and noted that only a few men were willing to agree with their analysis. Indeed, in the memo itself they claim that they would suffer personal mockery and derision if their names were known. [67]

The memo asserted the similarities between the treatment of women—in SNCC and in society at large—and the treatment of African Americans. Women in SNCC, King and Hayden argued, were often limited to secretarial work, cleaning, and cooking even though they were educated, intelligent, and brave enough to do more direct work for the movement. They asserted "in SNCC, women are the crucial factor that keeps the movement running on a day to day basis" and argued that SNCC must recognize and address their unequal treatment. They ended the memo by proclaiming their hope that one day everyone would recognize that "this is no more a man's world than it is a white world."[68] The clear parallel that Hayden and King drew between sexism and racism in this first anonymous memo implored SNCC members to broaden their understanding of their mission within the Civil Rights Movement. Their perception of the importance of women in SNCC echoed Sales' belief that the Civil Rights Movement was a woman's movement.

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[66] Francis Shor, "Utopian Aspects of the Black Southern Freedom Movement," *Utopian Studies* 15, no. 2 (2004): 182, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20718673; Jim Foreman "Opening Remarks" (speech presented at the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Conference, Waveland, Mississippi, November, 1964), https://www.crmvet.org/info/6411_sncc_forman-waveland.pdf; Trinity College, "SNCC Conference Pt. G."

[67] [Mary King and Casey Hayden], Position Paper #24, (memo submitted at Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Conference, Waveland, Mississippi, November, 1964), in *How and Why Did Women in SNCC (the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) Author a Pathbreaking Feminist Manifesto, 1964-1965?* http://womhist.alexanderstreet.com/SNCC/doc43.htm

The similarities in the women's perspectives suggested that Hayden and King successfully applied SNCC's ideologies about racial discrimination to sexual discrimination. In later reflections on the Waveland Memo, King and Hayden both stressed that it reflected their intention to push SNCC in a different direction as it considered its future.[69] The memo represented one of the first instances in which women promoting a fundamentally feminist issue—in this case the equal treatment of women within SNCC—acknowledged the relationship between racism and sexism. Although King and Hayden did not analyze the unique position of Black women in this memo, they laid the groundwork for women to begin to consider how race and gender both informed the experiences of women of color.

The memo received little support at the Waveland conference and SNCC members remained much more concerned about the future of their organization. Growing Black Power sentiments and confusion about the appropriate structure for SNCC led King and Hayden to step back from their SNCC roles after the Waveland conference.[70] By November of 1965, however, Hayden and King again met in Virginia, where they authored a second version of the Waveland Memo. This time they titled the memo *Sex and Caste* and signed their names. They mailed copies of *Sex and Caste* to 40 women—whose names have been lost in the pages of history—involved in community organizing, including members of SDS, before it was published in the April 1966 edition of *Liberation* magazine.[71]

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[68] [King and Hayden], Position Paper #24, 3-4.
[69] Trinity College, "SNCC Conference Pt. G."

Sex and Caste expanded the Waveland Memo's focus on SNCC to include society as a whole. Hayden and King argued "women we've talked to who work in the movement seem to be caught up in a common-law caste system that operates, sometimes subtly, forcing them to work around or outside hierarchical structures of power which exclude them."[72]This unacknowledged caste system governed the roles of women in society and made it impossible for them to advance in the same manner as men. Most importantly, they noted that there was no broader discussion about this issue among women: there was no community fighting this caste system. The memo became a call to action to the 40 organizers already active in the peace and freedom movements who had received it. King and Hayden urged women involved in the movement to lobby their organizations to better incorporate women's rights activism. *Sex and Caste* was particularly important in inspiring women within SDS to gather in informal women's groups—often termed "bitch sessions" by their participants—where they could air their grievances about the treatment that they experienced.[73] Those women's groups became the precursor to the Women's Liberation Movement.

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[70] Boyte, Interview with Mary King, transcript, 11; Trinity College, "SNCC Conference Pt. G."

[71] Boyte, Interview with Mary King, transcript, 21; Trinity College, "SNCC Conference Pt. G."

[72] King, Mary and Casey Hayden. "Sex and Caste: A Kind of Memo" in *Liberation Magazine,* April 1966, https://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/sexcaste.html.

[73] Echols, *Daring To Be Bad,* 34.

At the 1965 SDS National Convention, a group of women met to consider the content of *Sex and Caste*. They ultimately recommended that the convention leaders create a resolution acknowledging the existence of unequal treatment of women within SDS. The resolution passed, but many convention attendees recalled the controversy that it engendered among members who felt that women's rights should not intervene in the New Left.[74] In part because SDS did not fully define its goals until it published the *Port Huron Statement* in 1962, women in SDS often served first as activists in civil rights organizations like SNCC, the Congress of Racial Equality, and other campus activist groups.[75] The organizing experience that a woman brought with her to SDS informed her expectations for the roles that she would fulfill and the treatment that she would receive from her fellow members. Whereas women in SNCC often promoted different approaches to women's rights based on their race, women in SDS typically agreed that women's rights required their own organizations. Female SDS members debated the urgency with which they should address women's rights in comparison to other New Left issues that formed the core of SDS's platform. Barbara Haber, Cathlyn Wilkerson, and Jane Adams all supported the concept of feminist separatism, or a women's liberation movement, but belonged to opposing factions within SDS that approached women's rights differently.

Barbara Haber joined SDS before its membership boomed in the mid-1960s and was one of the only early members who expressed concern about unequal treatment from male activists. Like many of the women who joined SDS, Haber possessed a strong belief in her abilities as an organizer, which she had developed as a student at Brandeis University in the late 1950s. At Brandeis, Haber had been an officer in the campus chapter of the Socialist Club. She quickly expanded her activism by attending SNCC's founding conference after she graduated in 1960 and joining the Baltimore chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Between 1960 and 1962, Haber worked on the Woolworth's Sit-ins as part of CORE's desegregation project in Baltimore.[76] SDS leaders then invited Haber to the Port Huron convention in 1962 because of her impressive work as an organizer.[77]

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[74] Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 304.
[75] Polletta, *Freedom is an Endless Meeting,* 125.

Haber recalled her personal pride in being invited to the Port Huron convention where she felt she was participating in the formation of a new wing of politics. She also noted, however, that her parents, professors, fellow activists, and friends had always respected her intellect and talent as an organizer. Haber asserted that she expected that respectful treatment to continue as she joined SDS, particularly after her experience drafting the *Port Huron Statement*.[78] Haber remembered a sense of excited collectivism and passion at the Port Huron convention and asserted that she felt no sense of sexism despite her status as one of the only women in a group of about fifty—mostly white—students.[79]

Although it is almost certain that sexist practices existed at the convention, Haber insisted that the process by which the *Port Huron Statement* was drafted equally included all attendees, whether men or women.[80] At the convention, Haber worked on the values committee, which she argued anticipated many of the same principles that feminists espoused only a few years later. The connection between individual experiences and society in the *Port Huron Statement* presaged the consciousness-raising blueprint that feminists utilized to educate women during the second half of the 1960s. Haber argued that the idyllic sense of camaraderie created at the Port Huron convention and enshrined in the *Port Huron Statement* created expectations that SDS members quickly failed to uphold.[81]

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[76] Debra L. Schultz, *Going South: Jewish Women in the Civil Rights Movement,* (New York: New York University Press, 2001): 31, 32, 97, file:///Users/annamanogue/Downloads/Going_South_Jewish_Women_in_the_Civil_Rights_Movem....pdf.

[77] Haber, "A Manifesto of Hope," 141; Haber, "Port Huron: A Template for Hope," in *Inspiring Participatory Democracy: Student Movements from Port Huron to Today*, ed. Tom Hayden, (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2013): 59.

[78] Rebecca Klatch, *A Generation Divided: The New Left, the New Right, and the 1960s,* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 167, http://web.b.ebscohost.com.libproxy.temple.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=3221769a-41a0-42cf-8ed9-198d595a970e%40sessionmgr101&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#AN=42283&db=nlebk.

[79] Haber, "A Manifesto of Hope," 141.

[80] Haber, "Manifesto of Hope," 141-144.

[81] Haber, "Manifesto of Hope," 143, 144.

Only weeks after the Port Huron convention, Haber began working in the organization's National Office in Ann Arbor. Male leaders at the National Office denied Haber the opportunity to contribute during programmatic meetings, ignored her suggestions, and demoted her to a secretarial position where they often communicated their instructions through written notes. In later writings, Haber recollected her outrage at these experiences for which she had no explanation and no name.[82] The concept of sexism did not yet exist, but Haber felt slighted that male members failed to respect and utilize her considerable experience as an organizer. Haber's frustration that male members of SDS dismissed her suggestions ultimately led her to develop a system by which her husband, Alan Haber, repeated her ideas in group meetings so that male members would consider her suggestions.[83] Like many women in SDS, Haber discovered that her ability to substantively contribute to the organization depended entirely on her personal relationship with male members.

Haber attributed her slow awakening to the existence of sexism and the concept of feminism to her meetings with other SDS women during the mid-1960s. SDS's hierarchical structure limited Haber's ability to achieve a position of power within the organization. Her status as one of SDS's few female activists before its expansion in 1965 exacerbated her frustration and isolation. Male leaders might outwardly acknowledge her concerns, but they largely refused to promote women or implement policies that would affect real change. Haber's frustration with SDS became so overpowering that by the second half of the 1960s, as more women joined the organization and women's groups emerged, she had begun deliberately identifying herself as a feminist, rather than as an SDS activist.[84] The distinction that she drew between feminism and SDS activism demonstrated her conception of women's rights as necessarily separate from both Civil Rights and the New Left.

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[82] Haber, "Manifesto of Hope," 145; Klatch, *A Generation Divided,* 167.
[83] Klatch, *A Generation Divided,* 168.
[84] Haber, "Port Huron: A Template for Hope," 61.

Like many women in SDS, however, Haber's recognition of the need for a separate women's movement contradicted her commitment to the New Left ideologies that she had helped enshrine in *The Port Huron Statement.* While many of the ideas that SDS promoted in this document alluded to democracy and egalitarianism, the SDS Constitution never promised members an equal voice in the organization. Haber ultimately realized that women could never obtain positions of power because male leaders would routinely deny their attempts to advance. Haber remained in SDS until its descent into factionalism in 1968 partially because of her membership in the many women's groups that emerged within the organization throughout the 1960s. These groups crossed the factional divisions that otherwise plagued organizational meetings and instead enabled women to share their experiences of marginalization within SDS regardless of their differing political perspectives. This form of consciousness-raising further convinced Haber and many other women that feminism would ultimately require its own movement.[85] As activists who had initially joined SDS because of their radical commitment to the New Left, however, many women struggled profoundly to abandon SDS's anti-war and labor activism.

Cathlyn Wilkerson, who joined SDS in 1966, shared Haber's belief that women's rights could only be achieved through a separate movement, but did not wish to join that movement herself. Wilkerson first learned about SDS as a sophomore at Swarthmore College in 1963. She briefly joined the campus chapter, but left quickly after she realized that many of the members did not value her participation. Wilkerson later identified the male-dominance of the campus chapter as the reason that she ultimately left. She argued that she struggled to connect to the organization both because leaders used too much intellectual terminology to express their ideas and because the female members never spoke at any of the meetings.[86] During her brief time in the Swarthmore SDS chapter, however, Wilkerson participated in the Woolworths sit-ins in Cambridge, Maryland. She cited the sit-in activists' passion and inclusive message as her first real inspiration to join the student movement. Although Wilkerson's parents foiled her plan to join the Freedom Summers by refusing to permit her to drop out of Swarthmore, she joined SDS in 1966, shortly after she graduated.[87]

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[85] Christensen, "With Whom Do You Believe Your Lot Is Cast?," 619.

Wilkerson differed slightly from Haber and many other women in SDS, therefore, because she lacked considerable activist experience before she joined the organization. Furthermore, although she ultimately became an organizer in Washington, D.C., she spent her first six months in SDS in Chicago as the editor of the *New Left Notes*.[88] This position afforded her a unique understanding of the internal challenges that SDS faced in the latter half of the 1960s. By 1967, Wilkerson decided that she wanted to expand SDS by recruiting new members at college campuses. Her yearning for more direct organizing experience mimicked the organization's broader efforts to return to its earliest years of democratic organizing. Wilkerson moved to Washington D.C., which had no active SDS chapters, in 1967 and organized a group of fellow activists to begin recruiting at campuses throughout the city. At the same time, Wilkerson remained active in the National organization and was even elected to the interim national committee.[89]

Despite her personal success in gaining titled positions as the leader of the chapters in D.C., a member of the interim national committee, and the editor of *New Left Notes*, Wilkerson still faced unequal treatment within SDS. She joined a women's group in Washington D.C. that included current and former SDS activists.[90] She recalled that although every woman in the group held supreme admiration for the others, their meetings were often tense. While each woman agreed that unequal treatment existed in SDS, they debated how best to address women's issues. Wilkerson particularly struggled to understand her feminist beliefs within the context of her staunch commitment to anti-war protest. She remembered furious arguments with former SDS members who believed that current members were traitors to the feminist cause because they continued to work with male SDS members who denied sexism and diminished feminism.[91] Even working collaboratively with men in SDS challenged the emerging feminist ideology that women should rely on each other to realize their rights.

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[86] Klatch, *Generation Divided*, 99, 169; Ron Grele, Excerpt of Interview with Cathlyn Wilkerson, February 17, 1985, *Columbia University Oral History Collection,* transcript, http://historymatters.gmu.edu/search.php?function=find.

[87] Ron Grele, Excerpt of Interview with Cathlyn Wilkerson, transcript.

[88] Klatch, *Generation Divided*, 99-100.

[89] Hayden, "The Dream of Port Huron," 19; Klatch, *Generation Divided*, 100; Grele, Excerpt of Interview with Cathlyn Wilkerson, transcript.

Wilkerson chose to remain in SDS until 1969, when the organization's internal divisions led to its dissolution into a series of smaller, more radical groups. Wilkerson followed the radical Weatherman faction that utilized domestic terrorism to protest the Vietnam War in the early 1970s. She recalled the pressure she felt to choose one protest movement—feminist separatism, anti-war protests with Weatherman, or labor activism through other offshoots of SDS—and noted that she chose to join Weatherman because their anti-war protests best aligned with her personal commitment to ending the Vietnam War. Wilkerson asserted that she, along with many other women in Weatherman, felt that Women's Liberation organizations failed to properly support anti-war protests and unduly ignored many of the civil rights issues that had first sparked their interest in activism.[92]Although Wilkerson refused to join the Women's Liberation Movement, she understood and respected the need to form a women's movement outside of SDS.

Jane Adams, who became one of the only women to obtain a titled position within SDS, also supported the creation of a separate Women's Liberation Movement and struggled with her own commitment to the political ideologies of the New Left. Like Haber, Adams already possessed significant community organizing experience when she joined SDS in 1965. As a student at Southern Indiana University, she had volunteered with SNCC in the Freedom Summer protested the Vietnam War with the Southern Peace Union. Adams' success and skill as a Freedom Summer volunteer impressed activists in the Southern Peace Union, who offered her a position as their National Secretary in early 1965. Adams declined the offer, however, and instead left the south in order to become more involved with SDS activism in the north. Like many activists in the south in the mid-1960s, Adams worried that her presence as a white organizer perpetuated white supremacy by denying southern Black communities the opportunity to organize themselves.

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[90] Klatch, *Generation Divided,* 198.

[91] Grele, Excerpt of Interview with Cathlyn Wilkerson, transcript.

[92] Grele, Excerpt of Interview with Cathlyn Wilkerson, transcript; Bill Ayers, Interview with Bernadine Dohrn, *PBS: The Weather Underground,* 2003, transcript, http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/weatherunderground/interview.html.

Adams became interested in SDS because she supported its economic ideology and hoped it would enable her to channel her organizing knowledge toward broader society. After visiting the National Office in Chicago in 1965, she assumed a position as the head of the SDS Midwest Regional Office. This position enabled Adams to escape office work and instead travel to campuses throughout the Midwest region in order to organize university students. Adams reflected fondly upon her time as Midwest regional organizer, and asserted that she enjoyed considerable freedom to travel and work directly with students. As Adams' power in the National Office increased, however, she noted that she began to notice increasing tensions with her male colleagues.[93]

Adams became the first woman to hold a position at the national office in 1966, when she was named National Secretary. Her ability to obtain a titled position within the national organization represented the impact of *Sex and Caste* within SDS. The resolution on women's rights passed at the 1965 National Convention urged members to think carefully about how women were represented in their leadership.[94] As Adams and other women in SDS quickly discovered, however, the 1965 resolution encouraged the promotion of a few token women whom male SDS leaders utilized to combat accusations of unequal treatment of women in the National Office. Adams remembered, in fact, that her interest in women's liberation began in earnest after she endured repeated expressions of personal animosity from her male subordinates as National Secretary. Although some men in the National Office respected Adams and expressed support of her position, she recalled her bewilderment at the treatment she received from the majority of the male activists that she encountered. Only later would Adams recognize that her male subordinates likely felt threatened by her power and her clear willingness to overstep gendered boundaries.[95]

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[93] Ron Chepesiuk, Interview with Jane Adams, audio, 1996.

In January of 1967, Adams authored "People's Power: on equality for women," which Cathy Wilkerson published in the January 20th issue of *New Left Notes.* In the article, Adams openly criticized the existence of what she termed "male chauvinism"—sexism and sexual harassment by today's terms—in SDS.[96] In December of the same year, Adams led the first official "Women's Liberation Workshop" at the SDS National Convention in Ann Arbor, Michigan. This meeting, in which women sought to identify a pattern by sharing their individual experiences in the first of many consciousness-raising sessions, engendered considerable hostility from male conference attendees. The participants in the Women's Liberation Workshop drafted a statement analyzing sexual inequality in which they declared that "women are in a colonial relationship to men and we recognize ourselves as part of the Third World."[97] The members of the workshop hoped that SDS would heed their recommendations to begin to educate members about women's liberation as a movement. Instead, many male members rejected the analogy to the Third World and became infuriated when the convention chairs accepted the statement without debate.

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[94] Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity,* 304.
[95] Chepesiuk, Interview with Jane Adams, 1996.
[96] Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity,* 304.
[97] Quoted in Echols, *Daring to Be Bad,* 44.

Adams remembered feeling perplexed that men in SDS could not understand the need to form a distinct movement for women's liberation. She likened the motivation to form the Women's Liberation Movement to the decision to expel white members from SNCC in 1966. Adams argued that she always supported SNCC's decision to welcome only Black members because she recognized and respected the need for Black activists to empower Black communities. Women, she argued, could likewise only realize full sexual equality by empowering each other.[98] Adams, like Wilkerson and Haber, believed that women's rights did not directly relate to the goals of SDS because the organization's policies failed to recognize the nuanced forms of oppression that women endured.

Much of the rhetoric that SDS used to define and promote its organizational goals depended on the belief that all Americans—regardless of race or sex—experienced certain, class-based oppressions. Unlike the women in SNCC, Haber, Wilkerson, Adams and others who shared their beliefs never gained the opportunity to express their ideas because SDS refused to promote women and often ignored their contributions. Whereas SNCC had invited its members to share their thoughts on the organization in 1964 and routinely promoted women to titled position, women in SDS began to independently organize to discuss their grievances. In 1968, a group of women marched out of the SDS National Convention in protest of sexism within SDS in one of the most important moments of the fledgling Women's Liberation Movement. Their decision to publicly reject SDS's handling of sexism marked the final break between the Civil Rights Movement, the New Left, and Women's Liberation. It also signified the last time that women who subscribed to different ideologies regarding the relationship between women's rights and civil rights were united in a broader protest movement.

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[98] Chepesiuk, Interview with Jane Adams, 1996.

Conclusion

Indeed by the mid-1970s, many of the feminist organizations founded during the early years of the Women's Liberation Movement struggled to overcome internal disunity. In a reversal of activists' initial struggle to understand feminism in a Civil Rights Movement devoted to issues of race, the foundation of new feminist organizations throughout the 1970s reflected the ongoing conflict over the proper place of race in the feminist movement. Although some activists believed that women could overcome racial tensions through a universal approach to feminism, many others disagreed.[99]

SNCC and SDS exemplified these differences as women in both organizations had the unique opportunity to approach feminism from within the broader Civil Rights Movement. Many women maintained that the multiple oppressions endured by Black, LGBTQ, and poor women required specific responses that major organizations like NOW simply could not provide. In 1970, Frances Beale, a former SNCC activist and supporter of the politically radical wing of the Women's Liberation Movement, succinctly summarized the beliefs of many women of color when she passionately asserted that "any white group that does not have an anti-imperialist and anti-racist ideology has absolutely nothing in common with the Black woman's struggle."[100] Beale's argument astutely recognized the intrinsic connections between systemic racism and economic oppression that often defined the experiences of minority and poor women.

Feminist scholars like Michele Wallace and Alice Walker have consistently echoed Beale's arguments about the intersections between race and gender by arguing that Women's Liberation really meant the liberation of white women. By 1975, Wallace asserted that Black feminists existed as individuals, isolated from Women's Liberation by their race and separated from each other by disagreements over the importance of their gender.[101] Walker likewise coined the term "womanist," which she defined in 1979 as someone who is "*instinctively* pro woman" and noted that its use seemed necessary because, unlike Black Feminism, it did not require qualifiers and originated in Black women's culture.[102] By the 1990s, many women still struggled to understand the role of race in the feminist movement. Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the concept of intersectionality to describe the overlapping natures of gender, race, and socioeconomic class that created multiple forms of oppression for women of color and women of lower socioeconomic status.[103]

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[99] Ruby Sales, ""I Can't Deal with Her."

[100] Frances Beale, "Double Jeopardy: To be Black and Female," in *The Black Woman: An Anthology*, ed. Toni Cade Bambara, (New York City: Penguin Books, 1970), 98.

The continual efforts to expand feminism to include the unique oppressions of all groups of women reflected inherent differences in beliefs about women's rights. In the early 1960s, the generation of women who would go on to found the Women's Liberation Movement were participating in civil rights activism in student organizations like SDS and SNCC. The crucial differences in the beliefs that they developed about the role of feminism within the Civil Rights Movement constituted the first discussions of intersectionality. The nonviolent ethic and democratic culture of SNCC encouraged its activists to understand women's rights as part of the Civil Rights Movement. The hierarchical structure and political culture of SDS urged its activists to create their own, strictly feminist organizations that existed outside of the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left. These fundamentally different approaches to intersectional feminism—one which located women's rights within a broader movement to achieve racial equality and one which viewed racial and sexual equality as independent, parallel movements—inspired two generations of debates that have continued to define the feminist movement in the modern day.

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[101] Michele Wallace, "A More Personal View of Black Feminism," in *Modern American Women: A Documentary History,* ed. Susan Ware (Chicago: The Dorsey Press, 1989), 365-374, file:///Users/annamanogue/Downloads/Wallace_A%20More%20Personal%20View%20of%20Black%20Feminism%20(2).pdf

[102] Alice Walker, "Coming Apart," in *The Womanist Reader* ed. Layli Phillips, (New York, NY: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 100, https://muse-jhu-edu.libproxy.temple.edu/article/486705/pdf.

[103] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins."

The work of SNCC and SDS activists in the 1960s enabled the institutionalization of feminism during the 1970s and 1980s. The community organizing skills and protest ethics that these women acquired in the Civil Rights Movement defined their approach to feminist activism. Their willingness to openly discuss the connections between different forms of oppression—even if they ultimately failed to agree on the importance of an intersectional approach to feminism—spurred the surge in feminist scholarship and activism after 1968 and enabled the emergence of intersectionality in the 1990s. Present day feminists' have utilized intersectional ideologies and practices to continue to push for a more inclusive feminist movement. The ease with which feminists like Barbara McIlvaine Smith and other Women's March protesters promote intersectional ideologies in 2019 reflects the lasting legacy of the work of activists in SDS and SNCC.

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