In January 1942, James Thompson, a 26-year old black cafeteria worker at a Kansas aircraft plant, wrote a letter to the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the largest African American newspaper at the time, expressing mixed feelings about supporting the war effort. At the end, he urged to “let us colored Americans adopt a double VV for a double victory” so as to not forget “our fight for true democracy at home.”  

Echoing black activists’ growing demands for social and economic equality as the government cast World War II as a defense of American democracy, Thompson’s letter led the *Courier* to officially launch a “Double V” campaign against fascism abroad and racism at home. Though the “Double V” logo became a symbol of African Americans’ fight against discrimination during the war, the idea of a “double victory” was also inherent in women’s participation in defense production and the armed forces.

“Women, let it be understood, have a double stake in the winning of this war,” wrote Susan B. Anthony II, the great-niece and namesake of the 19th century women’s rights activist, in her 1943 book *Out of the Kitchen—Into the War: Woman’s Winning Role in the Nation’s Drama*.  

Applauding women who had started working outside of the home for the first time, Anthony argued that the wartime mobilization of women was a “two-

---


edged sword” because it would not only provide the margin for victory on the battlefield but also “unlock millions of doors that have imprisoned millions of women.”³ In her view, the war had made women’s liberation from the home a national necessity—not simply because of the needs of the wartime economy but because maintaining “discrimination against women...because they are women…gives aid and comfort to our enemies.”⁴

Reinforcing the government’s promotion of the war as a struggle between American democracy and Nazi fascism, Anthony tapped into the patriotic spirit of the American public in arguing for the war as a “double V” for women. She went as far as to liken the significance of World War II to women to that of the Civil War to African Americans. Similarly, she noted that if the Ku Klux Klan symbolized the worst of white prejudice and violence against blacks, the Nazi slogan of “Kinder, Kuche, and Kirche” (Children, Kitchen, and Church) exemplified the oppression of women.⁵ Clearly both stood antithetical to the American ideal of freedom. Although Anthony couched her argument for women’s rights in the wartime rhetoric of freedom and democracy, her invocation of women’s liberation as a fight against the “fascist triple K” revealed a radical left-wing position that diagnosed society’s subordination of women as evidence of American fascism. Left-wing women relied on such language as they pressed for the participation of women in the war effort. Though the war came to an end in 1945, their attention to gender inequality did not. Instead, in the context of the Popular Front’s rebirth at the war’s end, progressive women unified and intensified their efforts through the organization Congress of American Women to ensure that women’s wartime gains would not be eroded while simultaneously embracing a maternalist tactic of protest. Although their coalition collapsed in the midst of

³ Ibid., 230, 246.
⁴ Ibid., 21.
⁵ Ibid., 4.
anticommunist persecution, Communist women resumed the fight with a newfound militancy. Their diverse efforts encompassed an attack on antifeminist cultural backlash, a critique of male chauvinism, and a treatment of the special aspects of black women’s oppression.

World War II: A Double V for Women?

While historians have more often treated the gains that women experienced during WWII as a minor rupture in a larger pattern of continuity, Anthony’s hopes for the war to provide a breakthrough in the struggle for women’s rights were not unfounded. In his study of American women in the 20th century, William Chafe similarly characterizes the war as a watershed moment, particularly in terms of elevating women’s economic status. Six million women entered the workforce between 1940-1945, more than doubling the number of working women; at the same time, their wages increased and women’s unionization grew fourfold. Importantly, in addition to filling secretarial positions and other traditionally female jobs, many women gradually gained access to higher paying heavy industry jobs such as riveting and welding aircraft and artillery. The iconic “Rosie the Riveter” epitomized propaganda that encouraged women to assume historically male positions. Women also broke into the military—“the last firmly guarded male stronghold in the country” according to Anthony—through newly established women’s reserves in the army, navy, air force, coast guard and Marine Corps. Finally, the war marked a significant change in the demographics of women in the workforce. Whereas most working women

---

8 Anthony, Out of the Kitchen, 53-54.
were young and single before the war, by the war’s end, married women, including many with young children, composed nearly half of all women workers and over three-quarters of new women workers. In Chafe’s view, the fact that urban middle-class housewives and mothers became a major constituency in the workforce for the first time underscored the extent to which the war changed public opinion about women’s place.

However, while the government did actively promote women’s employment during the war, the well-documented postwar reconversions suggest that it was largely out of necessity. Susan Hartmann documents how public discourse portrayed women’s wartime mobilization as a temporary way to serve their families, and thus, limited the potential for meaningful social change. Enduring notions of femininity confined the majority of women in the military to clerical and supply work while the media and their male counterparts often sexualized them and glamorized their work. Meanwhile, units such as the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots, which was notable for training and employing women to fly military aircraft, dissolved by the end of the war as Congress elected to deny the group military status and veterans’ benefits. Women in manufacturing and heavy industry similarly suffered the greatest setbacks as the men returned home. Indeed, even in instances where the crisis of war provoked the breakdown of traditional gender roles, it was only to be “for the duration,” a widely used qualifier.

Nonetheless the short-lived opportunities that the war opened to women seemed to leave a residual impact that posed an implicit challenge to the emergent postwar backlash. In terms of women’s attitude towards employment outside of the home, a 1945 survey

---

11 Ibid., 47.
conducted by the Department of Labor’s Women’s Bureau showed three out of four women who had taken jobs during the war wanted to continue working.\textsuperscript{12} That year, Bryn Mawr College also completed a study on women’s status for the Women’s Bureau. Co-authored by Anthony, the publication presented a strong case for continuing to support women’s participation in the workforce.\textsuperscript{13} Years earlier, Anthony had taken the same position in \textit{Out of the Kitchen}. Foreseeing the temporary nature of wartime changes, she warned against the displacement of women from their wartime jobs and insisted that women “need the assurance that \textit{never again will they be deprived of the right to work.”}\textsuperscript{14} In equal measure, Anthony called for the permanent provision and expansion of child-care centers that the government had set up during the war and additional public services to support working women.

As someone of Quaker background and whose social activism began with peace work through the American Friends Service Committee, Anthony’s strong endorsement of the war was grounded in her belief that it had the potential to catalyze a feminist movement.\textsuperscript{15} Anthony outlined a broad vision of women’s emancipation that included both political reforms and a distinctly socialist reorganization of housework and domestic life. While strongly supportive of women’s participation in the workforce, she did not believe that women’s employment alone would result in greater equality. Highlighting numerous cases of discrimination against women in the workplace, she joined the camp of working-class progressive women against the National Women’s Party’s (NWP) Equal Rights

\textsuperscript{12} Chafe, \textit{The American Woman}, 178.
\textsuperscript{13} See Bryn Mawr College Carola Woerishoffer Graduate Dept. of Social Economy and Social Research. \textit{Women During the War and After} (Philadelphia: Curtis Pub. Co., 1945).
\textsuperscript{14} Anthony, \textit{Out of the Kitchen}, 242. (emphasis in original)
\textsuperscript{15} For biographical information, see Jacqueline Castledine, “Gendering the Cold War: Race, Class and Women’s Peace Politics, 1945-1975,” (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2006), 68-73.
Amendment (ERA) on the grounds that it would eliminate protective labor legislation for women. Accordingly, she maintained that women needed to campaign for an “equal pay for equal work” bill as well as female politicians to ensure equal representation in government. However, beyond these reforms, Anthony drew from early 20th century socialist feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s ideas about the sexual division of labor and called upon the government to implement an extensive system of social supports to “abolish housekeeping-as-usual.”16 These included a 12-hour day-care program, low-cost cafeterias, federal housing projects, public laundries and housekeeping and shopping services. While Anthony repeatedly defended these measures as wartime necessities, in the final pages she conceded “but they are more than that—they are the key to the post-war position of women.”17 It was clear that she expected an upsurge of reactionary sentiment at the war’s end—and for women to respond against it.

Progressive Women & Popular Front Politics

Though Anthony was not a member of the Communist Party, her ideas in Out of the Kitchen suggested a strong Communist influence. First, Anthony’s assertions of the similarities between the status of African Americans and that of women was a common comparison used by Communists (as well as other leftists) when speaking on the “woman question.”18 Repeatedly referring to discrimination against women as a “Jim Crowism,”

---

16 Ibid., 73. In the 1980s, Anthony publicly acknowledged that her feminism was strongly influenced by Charlotte Perkins Gilman by way of Mary Inman.
17 Anthony, Out of the Kitchen, 234.
18 Weigand, Red Feminism, 33. Social-democratic economist Gunnar Mydral’s characterized discrimination against women as “a parallel to the Negro problem” in the appendix of An American Dilemma, his highly influential study of race relations. See Appendix 5 to Gunnar Mydral, An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944). In addition, see Florynce Kennedy, “A Comparative Study: Accentuating the Similarities of the Societal Position of Women and Negroes” in Color Me Flo: My Hard Life and Good Times (Englewood Cliffs,
Anthony implied that sexism and racism were both historically rooted and institutionalized in American society. Since the CP held relatively advanced positions on racial equality, Communist women used such comparisons to advance the Party’s work on women. Additionally, Anthony’s treatment of the problem of housework exhibited an understanding of working-class women’s work in the home on top of that in the factory, a kind of double oppression that Communist women had articulated as a “double yoke” and a “double burden” in the 1930s.¹⁹ Most prominently, CP member Grace Hutchins discussed the issue at length in *Women Who Work* (1934) and advocated solutions nearly identical to the socialized services that Anthony argued for.

Anthony likely gained exposure to such Communist insight on the “woman question” through her relationship with California CP member Mary Inman. It was Inman who introduced Anthony to Charlotte Perkins Gilman by way of her book *In Woman’s Defense* (1940), a Marxist critique of women’s oppression that reflected Communist women’s writings of the 1930s. Inman’s book drew the most attention for her theorization of housework as productive labor, but it also importantly went beyond the economic in an early effort to show the cultural oppression of women.²⁰ For example, she drew up a list of ninety-nine derogatory names used for women, pointing out that few existed for men.²¹ In a letter to Inman, Anthony credited Inman’s book for having “crystallized the vague ideas

---


²⁰ Mary Inman, *In Woman’s Defense* (Los Angeles: Committee to Organize the Advancement of Women, 1940). Inman’s book was serialized in the West Coast Communist newspaper, *People’s Daily World* in 1939.

²¹ Ibid., 53-56.
that had been wandering around my brain”—not the least was her realization that “the role that even my very progressive husband expected of women [was] that of the docile servant of detail, whose main thoughts should be concentrated on buying a new chair cover and fascinating menus.”22 From there, the two began a series of exchanges about how to create “new down-to-earth women’s organization,” in which Inman stressed the need for a “Woman’s Congress” that “would be a powerful force for peace and would weld together existing women’s organizations, trade union auxiliaries, the most progressive of the women’s social clubs.”23 In fact, Communist women had first pushed for a Women’s Congress in 1936 as the CP’s National Women’s Commission sought to reach out to women during the Popular Front.24 After their efforts failed, Inman renewed agitation for the Congress with Al Richmond, a *People’s Daily World* editor only to meet opposition from the Party leadership.25 Relations between Inman and the Party grew increasingly strained as a controversy developed over her argument that housework was productive labor, and in late 1941, Inman resigned from the CP.26

Following Inman’s increasing bitterness and isolation after the dispute, Inman and Anthony also had an apparent falling-out and cut off their correspondence. However, their plans for the creation of a “Woman’s Congress” lived on as Anthony joined a diverse coalition of progressive women to found the Congress of American Women (CAW) in 1946. Buoyed by the momentum of the war, the CAW was born out of an international

---

25 Ibid.
26 The Party initially supported Anthony before reversing its position, due to fear that Inman’s argument not only sought to re-define “wage-labor” but also “glorified” housework and would keep women in the home. Kate Weigand also believes that personality issues were involved. For the rest of life, Inman worked to vindicate herself from what she perceived to be a Party conspiracy against women. For an account of the “Inman debate” see Chapter 2 in Weigand, *Red Feminism*, 28-45.
effort to unite women in the fight to secure a global postwar peace. In November 1945, a
group of French women involved in the wartime resistance movement, organized the first
World Congress of Women. Meeting records indicate that 850 women delegates
representing forty countries and 181 organizations attended the weeklong conference in
Paris to found a global sisterhood for peace called the Women’s International Democratic
Federation (WIDF). The four topics addressed during the Congress laid out the primary
concerns of the WIDF: the eradication of fascism, the fight for democracy and peace, the
advancement of women’s rights, and the education and development of children.

On March 8 1946, International Women’s Day, the CAW was formally established
as the American affiliate of WIDF in a public meeting at the City Center Casino in New
York City. At the meeting, American women delegates shared their experiences at the
World Congress and issued a press release reaffirming their commitment to advancing
women’s status:

The Congress of Women recounted in many ways the heroic role of women in the
struggle against fascism and the place in the life of their countries which they have
won and must sustain…women in the days of privation and suffering proved that
they were superbly capable of sharing responsibility with men for the…
regeneration and growth of their countries. These women told of the old and the
new status which women hold, of their determination to achieve complete
citizenship by reason of the fact that they earned it.

Recalling “the heroic role of women” in wartime, the statement suggested that the CAW
was imbued with a sense of hope and optimism about the possibilities of the postwar world.
Caught between an “old” and a “new” status, women were at a crucial juncture at which the
civil rights that they had earned were in reach. Further emphasizing the urgency and
momentum of the moment, one CAW member at the meeting declared that “these new-old
women are the most powerful factor in their part of the world.”³⁰ At a national meeting of
600 delegates in May of that year, the CAW adopted a three-part platform of world peace,
women’s rights, and child welfare and set up corresponding commissions named Peace and
Democracy, Women’s Status, and Child Welfare and Education.³¹

As their agenda mirrored the aims of the WIDF, the CAW also situated its pursuit of
women’s rights as part of a continued antifascist struggle. While neither the WIDF nor the
CAW was officially affiliated with any political party, their worldview reflected the
influence of the Communist movement. The WIDF included the representation of many
communist Eastern European countries and received financial support from the Soviet
Women’s Anti-Fascist Committee.³² French and Soviet women with Communist Party
connections dominated its leadership. In the U.S., the CAW leadership also featured
prominent CPUSA women such as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Claudia Jones, both
members of the CP National Committee, and later, Betty Millard, an editor at New Masses,
a major CP organ. From this angle, it is not surprising that the CAW became the first
independent women’s organization endorsed by the CPUSA.

The CAW remained close to the WIDF as it publicized the work of its sister
organizations around the world, hosted Soviet women at organizational functions, and sent
delegates to attend international gatherings of leftist women. Moreover, the CAW’s focus
on anti-fascism and world peace aligned with American Communists’ postwar efforts to

³² Francisca de Haan, “Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational
Women’s Organisations: the case of the Women’s International Democratic Federation,” Women’s
History Review 19 (September 2010), 555.
maintain an alliance with the Soviet Union and to fight the onset of U.S. Cold War policies. Muriel Draper, CAW vice-president and chairman of the Commission on Peace and Democracy, persistently criticized the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan as manifestations of American fascism. In preparation for the 1948 elections, the group decided to break its non-affiliation principle to campaign for the CP-endorsed Progressive Party. Given the CAW’s Communist connections and growing anti-communist fervor, it was easy for the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) to characterize the group as a “Red hoax” after it landed on the Attorney General’s list of “subversive” organizations in 1948. The CAW’s existence proved to be untenable in the repressive climate and, just in 1950, the CAW would vote to dissolve rather than pay hefty fines and register as a “foreign agent.”

However, although the CAW displayed communist leanings and was open to Communists when many feminist organizations were not, the bulk of its members (and leaders) likely never joined the CP. Instead, it aimed to recruit women involved in a wide range of progressive causes to work together for peace and a women’s rights agenda. As exemplified by the diverse American delegation to the World Congress of Women, the CAW emerged out of the unification of women such as Ann Bradford of the Congress of Industrial Organizations Auxiliary, Muriel Draper of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, Elinor Gimbel of the National Association for Child Welfare, Jeannette Stern Turner of the National League of Women Shoppers, and Ruth Young of the United Electrical Workers, and Gene Weltfish, a Columbia University anthropologist and eventual

34 Castledine, “Gendering the Cold War,” 67.
CAW president.® Black women had a noticeably strong presence in the CAW and included Mary McLeod Bethune, Vivian Carter Mason, Thelma Dale, Dr. Charlotte Hawkins Brown, and Thyra Edwards, representing organizations like the National Negro Congress and the National Council of Negro Women. According to historian Amy Swerdlow, the number of African American women in the CAW leadership was and remains unprecedented for a women’s or mixed-gender peace organization.© Notably, the CAW also won unexpected allies in upper-class women such as actresses Faye Emerson and Florence Eldridge, suffragist Cornelia Pinchot, and ERA advocate Nora Stanton Blatch Barney, the granddaughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. A minority of the women mentioned above have been identified as CP members.® Instead, women who joined the CAW were active in a broad political left of Communists and non-Communists. As such, the CAW belongs in the progressive milieu of the late 1940s that evolved out of the wartime Popular Front.

When Communists joined New Deal liberals and the non-Communist left to support the war against fascism, a wartime Popular Front emerged as these groups temporarily healed their divisions. Soon to split as a new anti-communist liberalism consolidated in the face of the “Red Scare,” this left-liberal coalition nonetheless appeared to reinvigorate itself after the war and remained a significant force until the defeat of Henry Wallace and the Progressive Party in 1948.® Even though the CP dismissed Popular Front leader Earl

---

39 Mary Sperling McAuliffe, Crisis on the Left: Cold War Politics and American Liberals, 1947-1954 (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1978). Though McAuliffe focuses on the breakdown of the left-liberal coalition, she maintains that it remained “a large, diverse, and potentially powerful
Browder in favor of the more leftist William Z. Foster as Party chair, it remained united with the New Deal left in opposition to the conservatism of the Truman administration. So while Gene Weltfish, Muriel Draper and Susan B. Anthony II, three of the CAW’s leading spokespersons, were never in the CP, CAW member Gerda Lerner remembers that, when she joined the Party in 1946, it seemed like an inconsequential and natural step up from her previous activism in the Democratic Party. She explains that “I had no particular love for the Soviet Union” and “believed I was joining a strong international movement for progress and social justice.”40 Lerner’s comments make it clear that the CAW grew out of a hopeful alliance of women based upon their shared progressive values rather than rigid adherence to the CP. The renewed coalition building of the Popular Front also fostered the anti-colonialist and anti-racist activism of the Civil Rights Congress (CRC), in which several CAW women took part.

The CRC came out of the merger of multiple left-wing groups in 1946 and, like the CAW, contained several prominent CP members. However, as historian Gerald Horne stresses, it was not a “Communist front” for it frequently went beyond the CP line and succeeded in “popularizing the term ‘civil rights’ itself as a goal of progressives.”41 From 1946 to 1956, the CRC organized both legal action and mass protest in support of victims in what the CRC saw as rape “frame-up” cases, usually involving black men and white women in the south. The CAW often collaborated with the CRC. Among the CAW’s first actions was the establishment of an anti-lynch committee. The group circulated letters on recent

___

movement with a mass base in the left-led CIO trade unions” in the immediate postwar years. Ibid., 9. Also see Barrett, “Rethinking the Popular Front.”


lynchings with actions for members to take and threw its support behind a national campaign for anti-lynching legislation in 1946. Due to the participation of black women and its attention to both racism and sexism, the CAW received significant coverage in the black newspapers such as the *Chicago Defender*, the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, and the *New York Amsterdam News*. In fact, Rebecca Stiles Taylor, a black trade union activist and Chicago CAW member, reported on the CAW in her weekly “Federated Clubs” column in the *Chicago Defender* with more regularity and in more detail than the Communist press ever did. Incidents such as the conviction of Rosa Lee Ingram, a black woman sharecropper, for killing a white man who attempted to rape her prompted the CRC and the CAW to work together as sexism and racism became intertwined. The Ingram case became a major focus of the CAW’s work. CAW leaders repeatedly publicized the injustice of the case and sent a delegation of its members to visit and consult Ingram in her Atlanta prison in 1949.

While the interracial and cross-class unity of the CAW and diverse scope of its peace and civil rights activism places it within a Popular Front tradition, it is clear that the CAW was intent on organizing women solely on the basis of their sex. Their constitution emphasized this point, declaring that “it is our aim to organize all women—from home, farm, office, professions and from industry, without regard to race, religion, national origin or political party, in their common interest.” To do so, the CAW sought to unite existing women’s organizations, acting upon the tactic that Inman had suggested to Anthony years earlier. While membership was available on an individual or group basis, the CAW

---

conceived of itself as an umbrella organization that would “cut through a vertical line, embracing women through all walks of life to work together on a common program, wherein existing organizations work along a horizontal line reaching women of only one particular economic or social strata.” Under this formulation, local CAW chapters popped up in urban areas across the country such as Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Chicago, Seattle, and Los Angeles. Although they never came close to their goal of one million members and a chapter in every state, by 1947, they claimed to have a nonetheless impressive membership of 250,000 and over twenty active chapters. The inclusive nature of CAW allowed the group to reach out to women who may not have been necessarily interested in the self-conscious feminism of the National Women’s Party. In a description of its recruitment goals, the CAW openly acknowledged that “a particular stress will be made to bring in the working women, who constitute a large section of our population heretofore inactive.” With this need in mind, the CAW promoted a broad feminist ideology with special attention to the issues of women workers and black women. Therefore, though largely left unsaid, implicit in the CAW’s ambitions to unite women was an understanding of inequities rooted in the intersection of race, class, and gender.

Providing separate commissions for women to work for the three objectives of peace, women’s rights and child welfare, the CAW sought to take action “in defense of their full rights as equal citizens, their rights as mothers, the rights and future of their children.” As they reconciled activism for women’s rights as “equal citizens” with a strong focus on

---

46 Woman Power, Vol I, No. 2, June 24, 1946. For actual figures, see Swerdlow, “Congress of American Women,” 299. However, Swerdlow and other historians (including former CAW member Gerda Lerner) believe that 250,000 is an overestimate.
women’s roles as mothers and responsibilities to their children, a distinctly maternalist
feminism arose. Much of their organizing was comparable to that of Popular Front women
in the 1930s. The Detroit chapter led a citywide movement for a “50-cent meat week” in
response to growing meat prices. Los Angeles CAW women organized a demonstration
on the steps of the State Capitol during a hearing on an increase in milk prices. Nationally, the CAW participated in a “March to Washington” to lobby for the extension of
the Office of Price Administration, a wartime institution for rationing and price control.
Organizing for child welfare and safety was also a popular initiative. In New York, the
Manhattan chapter sponsored a “Conference to Make Manhattan Safe for Our Children,” at
which it presented proposals for more traffic lights and play facilities with supervisors; the
Brooklyn chapter held meetings to arrange a “planned summer vacation for every Brooklyn
child” over concerns about teenage gang violence. The CAW’s overriding objective of
peace also emphasized women’s unique roles in bearing and rearing children. CAW leader
Mary Jane Melish called on women to vote for peace in the 1946 elections because “if
women use their ballots wisely, their sons will never have to use bullets.” Similar
language was used at other rallies against Truman’s foreign policy; photographs of children
adorned signs declaring “These are our children…We Won’t Give Them To War.” While
these types of protests undoubtedly gave women a public voice, they also implicitly reified

51 Woman Power, Vol. I, No. 2 June 24, 1946, p.4; “March on Washington Marks Protest Against Living
Costs: Children Hungry in Land of Plenty, Women Tell Congress” Afro-American, Dec. 20, 1947, p.11. A
general account of activism related to the Office of Price Administration can be found in Meg Jacobs,
Pocketbook Politics.
54 Photograph of CAW protest, March 25, 1947, in Alonso, Peace as a Woman’s Issue, 188.
stereotypical gender roles. Thus, it is particularly noteworthy that the organization appeared to simultaneously challenge its maternalism with calls for gender equality.

The CAW’s Commission on the Status of Women took on a more equalitarian women’s rights perspective. Anthony, who headed the Commission, issued a report that emphasized the ways in which society misrepresented and degraded women. She defined the “social status” of women as the “Jim Crow status of women and public opinion of American women.”55 Underlying her word choice was her belief that American culture propagated a harmful ideology that subordinated women as a sex, irrespective of class and race. At a 1946 CAW conference, she made her position clear when she called for the formation of a permanent sub-committee to fight against the “misrepresentation of American women, long a favorite pastime and profession of maladjusted novelists, radio writers, playwrights (some unfortunately women) and reporters…to present the majority of women as they are—simple and dignified.”56 In many ways, Anthony’s attack on media and entertainment continued Mary Inman’s critique of the narrow and demeaning portrayal of women in culture. Most damaging, Anthony suggested, was when women internalized their oppression and “feel that they do not deserve and therefore should not ask for a better place in the world.”57 Thus, it was necessary to make the fight against the cultural sources of women’s oppression a permanent fixture on the CAW’s agenda. However, despite Anthony’s articulation of this need, there is no indication that such a sub-committee was ever formed or that any other attempts to address sexist prejudice gained support.

Thus, while acknowledging the “social” element to gender inequality, the Commission was more active on the economic, political, and legal front. Coming out of

WWII, the need to protect and support women’s right to work was particularly stressed. For instance, the CAW took issue with the neglect of sex-based discrimination in the Fair Employment Practices legislation passed during the war. A left-wing socialist feminism pervaded its calls for government-run childcare services and an expansive domestic service program that families could opt into.\textsuperscript{58} The establishment of socialized services was necessary to ease the burden of childcare and housework so that women could pursue work outside out of the home. Institutional supports were sorely lacking as a member charged that “our school systems are based on the assumption that the father works, the mother stays at home” without realizing that “working mothers will not want to return from an arduous task at an assembly belt to play nurse maid for another five or six hours.”\textsuperscript{59} Furthermore, the woman argued that in addition to reducing working mothers’ double burden, nursery schools and extended after-school programs would also improve the quality of child care and benefit children. This justification subtly moved parenthood out of being an individual woman’s innate duty to the realm of social responsibility. The CAW’s discourse on women’s right to work notably encompassed all classes of women and extended the advocacy of workplace protections and equal pay for equal work to professional women as well. The Commission articulated the need for “women’s right to work with commensurate compensation in fields of their own choosing,” and addressed issues such as discriminatory quotas for women in medical school admissions.\textsuperscript{60}

Another focus of the CAW’s women’s rights activism was the advancement of women’s political and legal status. Despite the passage of suffrage, the Commission believed that a great deal remained to be achieved in these areas since women were

\textsuperscript{59} Taylor, “Federated Clubs,” Chicago Defender, April 26, 1947.
\textsuperscript{60} Woman Power, Vol. 1. No. 1, May 20, 1946, p. 3; Swerdlow, “Congress of American Women,” 305.
politically only “half awake” and legally only “half free.”61 In terms of women’s legal status, Anthony noted that, in 1946, over one thousand state marriage and property laws still maintained “feudal discriminations” against women and treated them as “something less than a human being” by giving their rights to their husbands.62 The continued existence of these laws paralleled the lack of women in political power aside from a small number of token candidates. In 1946, the CAW launched a “48 Congresswomen in ‘48” campaign to promote women candidates in the 1948 elections. In line with its view of itself as “political action committee,” the CAW embraced electoral politics along with mass protest. Utilization of the vote was not discounted as a means to achieve progressive legislation and women’s economic, legal, and political equality. This reflected their respect for the long struggle for women’s suffrage and their desire to unite women along gender lines.

When speaking of women’s status, the CAW frequently referenced figures and events in women’s history and positioned itself as the contemporary heirs of a long struggle. In the preamble to their constitution, a dedication was made to Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton as well as less obvious choices such as the religious dissident Anne Hutchinson, colonial era flag maker Betsy Ross, abolitionists Harriet Beecher Stowe and Harriet Tubman, and the garment workers of the early 20th century.63 They looked to these women as sources of inspiration and sought to use their achievements to empower the women of CAW. Moreover, their invocation of such a diverse collection of women demonstrated an understanding of the continuity of the struggle for women’s rights and its

63 See “Preamble” to Congress of American Women, “Constitution.”
indelible connection to women’s participation in other social justice causes ranging from religious toleration to the anti-slavery movement to trade union activism. If anything, the CAW sought to articulate an inclusive all-encompassing feminism that reflected such a perspective. The conclusion to a 1946 report on women’s present-day status made the CAW’s position clear:

Until the day when the American woman is free to develop her mind and abilities to their fullest extent, without discrimination because of her sex, is free to work without neglecting her children, to live with her husband on an equal level, with adequate provision made for the care [of] that home without injury to her health; until she takes her full responsibilities as citizen and individual, supporting herself if necessary and her family where she has a family, at a decent wage, paid equally with men for the work she does; until she is freed from the terror of war, and lives in a world of peaceful friendship between nations, in a society without prejudice against Negro, Jew, national groups or women- her struggle for emancipation must continue.  

While this expansive vision of women’s liberation exhibited great idealism, it also reflected the spirit and solidarity of the Popular Front and its social democratic ideals. Gerda Lerner, now a feminist historian, remembers her time in the CAW as “the best experience of its kind I ever had.”

In a recent interview with historian Nancy MacLean, Lerner also offered some insight into the organization’s maternalist impulse. Did relying on women’s roles as mothers and caretakers to work for the well-being of children and peace compromise the CAW’s goals for gender equality? Lerner adamantly rejected this possibility. She asserted that having children was and is a “very good organizing tool” and criticized later feminists who “didn’t understand the power of organizing women as mothers” because “there’s nothing unfeminist about it…part of the occupation of women in their lifetime is to be mothers…Not all of them but most of them…it’s like saying we’re going to organize

---

65 Lerner, Fireweed, 256.
workers but we won’t go in the factory.”66 Later, Lerner likened organizing women as mothers to “organizing women as women.”67 To Lerner, appealing to women through their shared identities as mothers was not a call for a return to domesticity but a valuable tactic in unifying women along gender lines. Moreover, she suggested that it was a necessary tactic because it addresses a significant element of women’s realities and concerns, thus constituting a materialist feminism. The underlying assumption was, of course, that most women wanted to and would become mothers. Lerner’s intrinsic linkage of womanhood and motherhood suggests her personal maternalism but may also hint at how the dominant cultural and social expectations of the postwar era informed her feminism and that of other women in the CAW.

**The “Woman Question” in the Communist Party**

As with the postwar Popular Front, the “Red Scare” ultimately drove the CAW to its end as well as the progressive coalition that enabled its diverse membership and expansive outlook. Liberal supporters and non-Communist members like Anthony were among the first to leave the organization when the red-baiting began in 1948.68 Meanwhile, the CP’s influence over the CAW grew stronger and several CP women came into leadership positions. CP member and *New Masses* editor Betty Millard took over Anthony’s position as chair of the Commission on the Status of Women. Around this point, CP member Eleanor Flexner claims that she was “drafted” by the Party to become CAW’s executive

---

66 Gerda Lerner, interview by Nancy MacLean, transcript of video recording, September 13, 2003, Voices of Feminism Oral History Project, Sophia Smith Collection, p. 3.
67 Ibid., 27. (emphasis in transcript)
In an interview with Amy Swerdlow, Millard remembered that by 1950, the final year of the CAW’s existence, the CP was essentially running the CAW with prominent black Communist leader Claudia Jones as the designated “ideologue of the movement.”

As it turned out, the HUAC’s charge that the CAW was dictated by a “hard core of Communist Party members” became somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy. However, by this time, the CAW’s membership had drastically dwindled and the organization left ineffectual due to the purge.

Conversely, no doubt influenced by the CAW, attention to women’s issues in the CP was greater than ever in 1948. The CP took an early stand to renew their Popular Front commitment to women by resurrecting the Party’s National Women’s Commission (NWC) in 1947, which had been dismantled in 1940 following the collapse of the Popular Front in light of the Hitler-Stalin Pact. The Party instated its two most visible women, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and rising star Claudia Jones as its chair and secretary respectively. While not known for speaking out in support of women’s rights, Flynn, also a CAW vice-president, wrote several pieces in support of advancing women’s status in 1947. In an article printed in the CP’s main theoretical journal, Political Affairs, Flynn used the occasion of International Women’s Day to publicize the work of the WIDF and CAW and to emphasize that “Red-baiting, labor-baiting, anti-Semitism, racial and male superiority” were all part of

---

69 Eleanor Flexner memoir, p.II(e), Eleanor Flexner Papers, Box 1, Folder 8, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Study, Cambridge, MA.
71 “National Women’s Commission, CPUSA,” in Encyclopedia of the American Left, ed. Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas, (New York: Garland Pub., 1990), 511-512. According to Claudia Jones, the NWC was formally reinstated in 1945 but no actions were taken until 1947.
72 Rosalyn Baxandall, Words on Fire: The Life and Writing of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987). Over her long career in the CP, Flynn wrote few articles on women’s rights. In Baxandall’s view, she was not a feminist but an “Aunt Tom.”
the “Nazi pattern.” In a pamphlet written in anticipation of the 1948 elections, Flynn promoted the CP as an advocate for women. Once again condemning the fascist tendencies of American society, Flynn claimed that “American women have the power to help stop it. Women are 50.6 per cent of our population. Let the voice of American women be heard.”

Flynn also employed the Popular Front politics of the CAW to appeal to women based on their sex and their roles as mothers in the fight for peace. At the end, she outlined an eleven-point program that the CP advocated for women. The list included demands such as legislation for maternity supports and child welfare, equal pay and workplace regulations in recognition of women’s “double duty,” removal of “legal disabilities” on women and quota systems in education and the professions, funding for child care centers, and full equality for black women. In short, it was all but identical to the issues raised by the CAW’s Commission on the Status of Women.

That year, Flynn also wrote a scathing review of Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia Farnham’s best-selling *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (1947) in *Political Affairs*. As Rosalyn Baxandall notes, the review is noteworthy since the Party’s main theoretical journal typically did not concern itself with mainstream publications. Her review, titled “Hitler’s 3 K’s for Woman—An American Rehash,” picked up on Anthony’s indictment of the rise of cultural propaganda against women. Flynn voiced particular distress as she noted that *Modern Women* was not a singular text but part of “a veritable flood” of literature “for every slander and misrepresentation of women, for every argument for the home as a ghetto

---

75 Ibid., 16.
and for depriving women of political, social, legal and economic rights.” In fact, Lundberg and Farnham’s use of psychoanalysis to show that women who strayed from the home were an unfulfilled “lost sex” sparked several angry rebuttals from Communist women who used it to attack the tide of domestic ideology of the postwar era. Writing under the pseudonym Irene Epstein, Eleanor Flexner argued that Modern Woman was predicated on a “pseudo-scientific ideological basis for Hitler’s Big Lie about women.” Popular Front feminist Elizabeth Hawes opted to use satire in her 1948 book Anything But Love: A Complete Digest of the Rules for Feminine Behavior from Birth to Death; Given out in Print, on Film, and Over the Air; Read, Seen, Listened to Monthly by some 340,000,000 American Women. The lengthy subtitle reflected Hawes’ position that if women were a “lost sex” it was due to the barrage of “feminine rules” that indoctrinated them from birth. Hawes, a fashion designer and union activist, had written similarly satirical proto-feminist books including Why Women Cry; or, Wenches with Wrenches (1943) and Hurry Up Please It’s Time (1946). However, she soon abandoned her left-wing politics and moved to the Virgin Islands in 1950.

Out of this small but nonetheless significant influx of writing against the antifeminist cultural backlash following the war, the most influential within the CP was Betty Millard’s “Woman Against Myth,” a two-part essay published in New Masses and reprinted in pamphlet form in 1948. Historian Kate Weigand attributes Millard’s essay with sparking a new phase of discussion on the “woman question” by rank-and-file Communist

women. Given that 1948 was the hundredth anniversary of both the Communist Manifesto and the Seneca Falls convention, Millard offered a historical analysis of the “woman question” that linked women’s liberation to a class struggle. In this respect, she reiterated the CP’s orthodox position on the “woman question” that placed the struggle towards a socialist America at its center. Citing Frederick Engels’ *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, Millard went through the phases of women’s oppression beginning with the advent of private property to their isolation from production and subjugation to household “drudgery” to the “new slavery and new freedom” brought by capitalism and wage labor. Ultimately, Millard held up the Soviet woman as exemplar of the liberated woman and maintained that women’s full emancipation could only be realized under socialism.

However, the main aim of her essay was to expose the myth that “women like to be dominated.” She perceived this myth to be unceasingly promulgated as truth by social institutions and cultural forces such as “laws, customs, language, religion…day-to-day attacks in books, films, radio shows, and magazine articles.” Her articulation of a myth that “women like to be dominated” spoke to an understanding that mainstream culture not only sought to confine women to the domestic realm but also to convince them, “if only subconsciously—of their inferiority to men.” Thus, when Millard articulated that “women must continue to be a major force in their own advance,” she wrote of the need to join unions and work towards the class struggle as well as the need to start “a serious attack on male chauvinism, and its reflection among women.” Millard’s use of the term “male

---

82 Ibid., 9.  
83 Ibid., 7.  
84 Ibid., 22.
“chauvinism” reflected a significant shift within the CP from focusing solely on the economic and social structure of society as women’s oppressor to relations between men and women. The term originated from Communists’ formulation of the term “white chauvinism” during organized campaigns to root out the racist behaviors of white CP members during the 1920s and early 1930s. Mary Inman was one of the first to modify the term to “male chauvinism” to disparage the sexism of Communist men in her 1940 treatise In Women’s Defense. However, as with many of Inman’s ideas, a critique of male chauvinism did not gain currency in the CP until after the war.

Kate Weigand’s detailed research of the Communist press during this period shows that the rise in awareness of the pervasive male chauvinism within the CP was in part due to the activism of rank-and-file Communist women. Beginning in 1946, letters from Communist women increasingly appeared in the pages of the Daily Worker. In these letters, they pressed for more attention to the “woman question.” Moreover, they often shared details about their personal lives such as the neglect and condescension they routinely dealt with as wives of Communist men. In 1949, women readers of the Daily Worker and People’s World successfully initiated a campaign for the newspapers to stop printing “cheesecake” in reference to the stereotypically sexualized photographs of female models, celebrities and beauty pageant contestants. One letter to the editor concisely summarized the opinions of many readers who wrote in, asserting that “these pictures have no liberating effect for women and the working class, but on the contrary, are used to perpetuate male supremacy though the idea that sex is women’s only attribute.” While the Party did not

---

85 Weigand, Red Feminism, 24.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid., 88.
publicly address the issue, the newspapers acquiesced to readers’ requests and eliminated cheesecake-style images from their pages later that year.

The Party’s decision to republish Millard’s “Woman Against Myth” for distribution in pamphlet form is another indication of its receptivity to the discussion of women’s issues. However, the seemingly insignificant elimination of a footnote in the pamphlet edition may suggest the limits of the Party’s tolerance. If the anti-cheesecake campaign subtly addressed women’s sexual exploitation, Millard directly approached the topic of rape as form of male chauvinism in her footnote:

It might be interesting…to consider the question of rape as a form of violence practiced against women…it is a criminal act of a special kind—an anti-woman act…the lynching of a Georgia Negro is the violent expression of a pattern of white supremacy; rape is a violent expression of a pattern of male supremacy, an outgrowth of age-old economic, political and cultural exploitation of women by men.\textsuperscript{88}

While possibly purely unintentional, the deletion of these comments corroborates with the CP’s silence on issues of sex and sexuality as well as its general conservative morality and separation of the political from the personal. Millard’s interpretation of rape as an “anti-woman act” clearly challenged these boundaries as she connected sexual violence against women to their economic, political, and cultural oppression. As evidenced by a report written by a subcommittee of the NWC but published under Party chairman William Z. Foster’s name in \textit{Political Affairs}, some Communist women took note of the Party’s failure to discuss sexual relations and considered it one of the Party’s major shortcomings on the “woman question.”\textsuperscript{89} They charged that “a pronounced reticence in dealing with questions of sex” would make it “impossible for us to combat the male supremacy ‘theory’ and to

\textsuperscript{89} Historians believe that Foster was not the sole author of the article but that it was printed under his name so that it would be taken seriously. The article bears an unmistakable resemblance to an unsigned letter written to NWC secretary Claudia Jones. See Weigand, \textit{Red Feminism}, 86, 179-181.
discuss fundamentally the relationship of woman to man and to society.” It is significant that Foster supported the subcommittee’s work by lending his name to the article. However, the fact that the article’s true authorship remained obscure and that the Party made no motion to correct its shortcomings on the subject of sex suggests the Party’s overall hostility to this aspect of women’s liberation.

While Millard’s comments on rape were not printed, an overtly feminist analysis of sex and sexuality was published that year in poet Ruth Herschberger’s collection of essays entitled Adam’s Rib (1948). Avoiding any discussion of politics, Herschberger articulated a radical critique of the socialization of women’s physiological difference. In her essay on rape, she similarly characterized rape as form of male domination, supported by “the legend of man’s natural sexual aggression toward women” While a woman could technically rape a man, Herschberger claimed that he would emerge “socially unscathed.” Conversely, man’s rape of woman implicitly resulted in her personal humiliation and loss of honor. In other sections, Herschberger sought to empower women in their sexual lives as she dispelled various myths of women’s sexual submissiveness and argued for the existence of the clitoral orgasm. Her positions anticipated many of the arguments that radical feminists would make more than two decades later. In correspondence with historian Shira Tarrant, Herschberger recalled her strained relationship with the publishers and how the book was soon dropped after making “quite a splash;” the experience appeared to dishearten her and she chose remain “only emotionally involved with feminism.”

Historians Verta Taylor and Leila Rupp were surprised to find that feminists associated

92 Ibid., 20.
with the NWP paid no attention to *Adam’s Rib*. Despite their many differences, Communist women also showed no acknowledgement of Herschberger’s book as it fell to obscurity.

**Claudia Jones and the Intersection of Sex, Race, and Class**

While readers’ letters to the Daily Worker continued to be a major source of Communist women’s activism for greater attention to the prevalence of gender inequality, Claudia Jones emerged to become the CP’s main theoretician of the Party’s work on the “woman question.” As a member of the Party’s National Committee and secretary of the NWC, Jones was not only the highest-ranking black woman in the CP but also the highest ranking woman aside from Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. It is important to note that Jones was elected to the National Committee in 1945 following the replacement of Popular Front leader Earl Browder with the more leftist William Z. Foster as Party chair. While historians have generally evaluated Foster’s leadership of the CP as not significantly different from that of Browder since a Popular Front-style alliance continued after WWII, it is apparent that Foster did return the Party to a markedly more radical stance on the “Negro Question.”

As a Trinidadian-born black Harlem activist, Jones’ staunch support of Foster was undoubtedly linked to this development. Shortly following Foster’s return to power, Jones began to voice her formulation of African Americans as an “oppressed nation” and their right to self-determination. When she aimed to introduce a more militant line of

---

thinking about women’s oppression, this element of Jones’ thought and her identity as a black woman would figure prominently.

In retrospect, former CP leader Dorothy Healey believes that Flynn and Jones were resentful of being appointed to lead the NWC because it barely registered in the scheme of the Party’s hierarchy. In fact, whereas Flynn publicly defended the CP’s work at all times, Jones strongly criticized the Party for its isolation and neglect of the NWC. Regardless of whether or not she was resentful, she used her position as NWC secretary to continually push women’s issues to the forefront of the Party’s ideological work during the late 1940s and early 1950s. In a 1948 article in *Political Affairs*, Jones discussed her experiences traveling around the country to help Communist women set up women’s commissions in local districts. She identified with the many woman comrades who were “skeptical with justifiable reason” about the Party’s efforts to promote the work of women. This was understandable, she wrote and argued that “we would have to conclude that it is primarily due to the fact that our Party has failed to place the question of theoretical understanding of the woman question as a ‘must’ for every Party member...[it] has resulted in failure to combat male-chauvinist tendencies which are rampant in our Party.” She called for the need to integrate the work of the women’s commissions into the Party as well as increased support for Communist women’s Party work by increasing training and educational opportunities for women and social services for childcare. Finally, she stressed that the Party would benefit from “greater attention to the triple handicaps of Negro women.”

99 Ibid.
100 Ibid., 743.
With the “triple handicaps” being black women’s oppression on the basis of sex, race, and class, Jones’ articulated a position radically different from her Popular Front feminist contemporaries. Whereas the CAW advocated for women’s rights across lines of race and class, Jones did not believe that a woman’s sex could be isolated from her identities of race and class. In a 1949 essay that is now recognized as one of the founding texts of black left feminism, Jones asserted that “Negro women—as workers, as Negroes, and as women—are the most oppressed stratum of the whole population.” However, Jones did not originate the theory of black women’s triple oppression so much as promote and popularize it so that it became central to the CP’s position on the “woman question.”

Due to the intersection of sex, race and class, Jones emphasized that black women experienced a “super-exploitation” and, being the most oppressed group in society, were also the most militant. Therefore, black women represented the vanguard of the black struggle, the class struggle, and women’s struggle for liberation. When Jones spoke of the need for “Negro-white unity” between women, she meant that white women had to “realize that this fight for equality of Negro women is in their own self interest, inasmuch as the super-exploitation and oppression of Negro women tends to depress the standards of all women.”

Accordingly, Jones was not afraid to indict white women for their indulgence in white chauvinism while fighting against male chauvinism. In particular, she condemned white women’s economic exploitation of and paternalistic attitudes toward black women in

103 Jones, “An End to the Neglect,” 60.
the “madam-maid” relationship. Whereas Communist women argued against women’s
place in the home, Jones did not hesitate to point out that “Negro women are in other
people’s kitchens.” These charges led to her most controversial point:

A developing consciousness on the woman question today, therefore, must not fail
to recognize that the Negro question in the United States is prior to, and not equal,
to the woman question; that only to the extent that we fight all chauvinist
expressions and actions as regards the Negro people and fight for the full equality of
the Negro people, can women as a whole advance their struggle for equal rights. For
the progressive women’s movement, the Negro women, who combines in her status
the worker, the Negro, and the woman, is the vital link to this heightened political
consciousness.105

As the CP’s main spokesperson on the need for a struggle against male chauvinism, Jones
received some resent from white Communist women for her perspective that the struggle
against racism preceded that of sexism. In interviews with Kate Weigand and Lynn
Shapiro, CP and CAW member Harriet Magill accused Jones of engaging in “the most
awful reverse chauvinism” and for destroying the “original, wonderful broad leadership” of
the CAW with her involvement.106 Magill’s comments speak to the tension between Jones’
analysis of sex, race, and class and the CAW’s desire to “organize women as women.”
However, it is clear that Jones’ intention was not to hinder the women’s fight for equality.
Rather, she believed that so long as white women perpetuated racial supremacy and left
black women’s “super-exploitation” unaddressed, a women’s movement would not be
successful.

Jones’ commitment to promoting women’s rights is evident in numerous other
articles she devoted to the subject in Political Affairs. She always reiterated the standard

104 Ibid., 61.
105 Ibid., 63.
106 Magill, as quoted in Weigand, Red Feminism, 107; Lynn Shapiro, “Red Feminism: American
Communism and the Women’s Right Tradition, 1919-1956,” (PhD diss., American University, 1996),
283.
Marxist line that women’s complete emancipation would only be achieved in a Socialist America and often quoted Marx and Lenin. Similarly, she rallied against the “bourgeois idiocy of the ‘battle of the sexes’” since “according to bourgeois feminism, women’s oppression stems, not from capitalism, but from men.”\textsuperscript{107} She explicitly argued that there were real fights for women to wage under capitalism and within the CP:

True recognition of the special aspects of equality for women means fighting to squeeze out every concession right here under capitalism relative to fighting women’s numerous disabilities and inequalities in the home, on the job, in the community. It means all fighting for the economic equality of women, because of her economic dependence on men in our society, her exclusion from production, makes for a double exploitation of women (and triply so for Negro women)...It means support to her special demands, for child care centers, health centers, etc. It means elevation of women to leadership on all Party levels. It means also taking into account biological differences which contribute to women’s special problems. Greater education on what is meant by equality is also needed, with special emphasis...to men in our Party who should be more self-critical of these weaknesses, and who must overcome their patronizing attitudes to women.\textsuperscript{108}

Her conception of the “special aspects of equality for women” also stands as a criticism of bourgeois feminism, which lacked an understanding of women’s “special problems” and “special demands.” In the same way that she criticized white women for failing to see how the categories of race and class called for a “special approach” to black women’s liberation, Jones was articulating the important ways in which woman’s sex differentiated her oppression from that of a man, and thus called for more than just a simplistic understanding of equality. Thus, she also criticized the “petty-bourgeoisie ‘equalitarianism’ fostered by Social-Democracy” as she felt that the socialists were merely arguing for women to enjoy the rights of men.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{107} Claudia Jones, “International Women’s Day and the Struggle for Peace” \textit{Political Affairs} 29 (March 1950): 44.
\textsuperscript{108} Claudia Jones, “For the Unity of Women in the Cause of Peace!” \textit{Political Affairs} 30 (February 1951): 166.
\textsuperscript{109} Jones, “International Women’s Day,” 44.
As the Korean War set in, the topic of peace played an increasingly important role in Jones’ later writings. Ultimately, she saw the need for an autonomous women’s movement and for it to be a movement for peace. The fact that she stressed that it should be a “distinct women’s peace movement” is significant because the participation of men was central to the CP’s struggle against male chauvinism. She referred to the position of peace in the leftist sense of the word—an “anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, anti-war coalition”—and advocated for a “united front peace policy.” Her argument seems strikingly similar to the purpose of the WIDF and the CAW despite her earlier reservations about the accommodation of Popular Front politics. In fact, Jones played a strong hand in creating two organizations that succeeded the CAW and involved many of its former members: American Women for Peace, an interracial women’s peace group, and Sojourners for Truth and Justice, a black women’s social protest group. Both groups were associated with the CP and neither lasted beyond 1953 mainly due to McCarthyist repression. Moreover, neither group espoused a women’s rights agenda. Thus, while Jones called for women to unite in the cause of peace, the turn towards peace ultimately subordinated the cause of women’s liberation.

110 Jones, “International Women’s Day,” 45; “For the Unity of Women in the Cause of Peace!” 158.