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## Weather Underground Organization Collection

1918-1978 (*Bulk:* 1970-1978)  
2 boxes (2 linear feet)  
Call no.: MS 1145



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These records from a member of the Weather Underground Organization document the struggles, critiques, and accomplishments of the radical group in the late 1960s through 1978; giving us a glimpse at what it was like to try and uphold a tenet with such extreme methods.

### Background

The 1960s and 1970s were decades rich with activist organizations intent on radically transforming U.S. politics and society as well as striving to end racial and gender inequity. One such group was Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Launched in 1962 with the infamous Port Huron Statement, SDS helped the nascent anti-Vietnam war movement gain traction in 1965 by organizing the first national demonstration in Washington, D.C. Over the course of the next four years, the organization grew at a rapid pace, claiming over 300 chapters under its moniker. Arguments over tactics and strategy culminated during an eventful national convention in 1969 in which three factions, all claiming to represent “the true SDS” split the organization apart.

The most notorious of the factions to arise from the split was the Weathermen, later renamed the less patriarchal Weather Underground Organization (WUO). The WUO aimed to spark a revolution in the United States, initially, through the use of targeted political bombings, political communiques, and support of Black liberation movements. Following the March 1970 accidental self-bombing of three of its members in a New York collective, the organization opted to conduct more targeted bombings where no one would be hurt.

After two-to three-years of high-profile bombings, including the U.S. Capitol, Pentagon, corporate buildings, and law enforcement institutions, with minimal impact, the organization began to consider how to regain influence with the greater Left. This began WUO’s “inversion” phase which included the publication of a book/manifesto called *Prairie Fire*, the establishment of the *Prairie Fire* Organizing Committee, and a periodical- *Osawatimie*. The WUO’s Central Committee believed

that this inversion strategy would allow them to influence and lead the greater anti-war/anti-imperialist movement according to their philosophy.

The inversion strategy did not spark the all-encompassing revolution imagined by the WUO and members slowly began to surface, breaking apart the organization in the mid-late 1970s. While the WUO did not accomplish what they set out to do, their extreme tactics and notoriety with the FBI left lasting impressions on American society and the history of activism in the 1970s.

## Scope of collection

his small collection of materials donated by a member of the WUO includes books, pamphlets, manuscripts, military manuals, and maps of correctional facilities, as well as correspondence between members from 1970 to 1978, many of them coded through the use of letters replacing names. It also holds papers critical of the WUO written by its own members between 1976 and 1978. This represents the period when Clayton Van Lydegaf gathered members in his "Cadre School", to rigorously analyze and document how the organization fell apart, including a transcript from a recorded interview session in which Bernadine Dohrn repudiated all methods and practices of the WUO. These papers reflect the power struggle seen later within the WUO, as well as the contempt that many of its members grew to nurture for the organization as it strayed from its original purpose.

The collection also contains many political papers on subjects such as women and their place within the WUO, the anti-fascist movement, Black liberation movements, and the origins of fascism. It also holds multiple accounts of the WUO's history, along with critiques, notes, and adaptations for their manifesto, Prairie Fire.

## Inventory

Journal describing a visit to Cuba [author unidentified]

1960

Box 1: 1.

IMP pamphlet

1960

Box 1: 2.

Papers concerning the proposal for rectification

1968

Box 1: 3.

"Breakthrough" criticisms [more on women]

ca.1970

Box 1: 4.

Critiques/notes on "their paper"

ca.1970

Box 1: 5.

L.C., "Surviving the hospital"

ca.1970

Box 1: 6.

Notes/papers on Prairie Fire

ca.1974

Box 1: 7.

Origins of fascism [handwritten paper]

ca.1970

Box 1: 8.

Letters to Sonia and Jane

ca.1970

Box 1: 9.

Outline history of the WUO

ca.1972

Box 1: 10.

Notes for "long paper" [notebook]

ca.1972

Box 1: 11.

Children's Vietnam song

1972

Box 1: 12.

Criticisms/correspondence between women of the WUO

ca.1973

Box 1: 13.

Correspondence to "S" from "L"

ca.1973

Box 1: 14.

Ali (writer) and Carmen (consult), on military strategy [paper]

ca.1973

Box 1: 15.

Capitalism and crisis [political study paper]

ca.1973

Box 1: 16.

Of the forest, stating the problems [paper]

1973-08-01

Box 1: 17.

Notes/papers on "red zinger"

ca.1973

Box 1: 18.

"C" papers

ca.1973-1975

Box 1: 19.

Personal thoughts from a WUO member

1974-1979

Box 1: 20.

FOCO theory and the present rectification

ca.1974

Box 1: 21.

Discussion proposal for national meeting

Spring 1974

Box 1: 22.

Notes/papers on "Manzanita"

1974

Box 1: 23.

Six sisters [study on women in struggle for HEW]

1974

Box 1: 24.

Notes/thoughts on leadership

Summer 1975

Box 1: 25.

Personal thoughts/letters

Summer 1975

Box 1: 26.

Notes on ideological issues

Fall 1975

Box 1: 27.

Papers/notes on women [and women's cadre]

ca.1976  
Box 1: 28.  
Paper on first school  
ca.1976  
Box 1: 29.  
Organization's notes/letters/papers on women  
ca.1976  
Box 1: 30.  
Reflections/self-criticisms/notes [politics, papers]  
ca.1976  
Box 1: 31.  
Letters/criticisms/responses to political papers within WUO  
ca.1976  
Box 1: 32.  
Post banquet papers/notes  
1976  
Box 1: 33.  
A description of issues in WUO [along with reactions to "W"'s paper and "A"'s visit  
1976  
Box 1: 34.  
Bernadine Dohrn, denouncing WUO politics [tape transcript]  
1976 November  
Box 1: 35.  
Criticism of self-criticism of "CC", "RZ", and another proposal  
1976  
Box 1: 36.  
Self-criticisms/notes  
1976-1977  
Box 1: 37.  
Thoughts/notes [organizing white people, women, white supremacy, etc.]  
1976-1977  
Box 1: 38.  
Roots of the economic crisis [political paper]  
ca.1977  
Box 1: 39.  
Personal papers from "G"  
1976-1978  
Box 1: 40.  
Personal thoughts/poems/notes from a WUO member  
1976-1978  
Box 1: 41.  
Personal self-criticism of a WUO member  
1976-1977  
Box 1: 42.  
Self-criticisms of the WUO  
1976-1977  
Box 1: 43.  
Response to NA crit  
1977  
Box 1: 44.  
Letter from ex-WUO members [to Native Americans]  
1977  
Box 1: 45.  
Letters/notes from A ["notes from the radishes"]  
1977  
Box 1: 46.  
Analysis of WUO history [notes/critiques of it included]  
1978  
Box 1: 47.  
Drafts/notes of papers  
ca.1978  
Box 1: 48.  
Personal thoughts/written notes  
1978 Jan. - 1978 Sep.  
Box 1: 49.  
Notes/critiques for "paper"  
ca.1978  
Box 1: 50.  
"You can't get to heaven in a rocking chair" [paper on revolutions]  
ca.1978  
Box 1: 51.  
Trinitrotoluene [printed book]  
1918  
Box 2: 1.  
Printed book with information on field engineering and demolitions  
1942  
Box 2: 2.  
Manual of explosives, military pyrotechnics, and chemical warfare agents  
1943  
Box 2: 3.  
Booklet on silencers  
ca.1946  
Box 2: 4.  
Explosives and bomb disposal guide  
ca.1950  
Box 2: 5.  
Institute of makers of explosives, explosives in agriculture  
1955  
Box 2: 6.  
The combat bookshelf, explosives and demolitions  
1959-05-14  
Box 2: 7.  
Maps [Rikers Island and other correctional facilities]  
ca.1963  
Box 2: 8.  
Maurer, William C. quarterly of the Colorado school mines [annotated]  
1963 Apr.  
Box 2: 9.  
Lenz, Robert C. explosives and bomb disposal guide  
1965  
Box 2: 10.  
Headquarters, department of the army, special forces operational techniques  
1965 Dec.

Box 2: 11.  
Hi-Low-Boom explains different explosions  
1966  
Box 2: 12.  
ROTC manual, individual weapons and marksmanship  
1965-09-01  
Box 2: 13.  
Du Pont, blaster's handbook, fifteenth edition  
1969  
Box 2: 14.  
DA Pam, M16A1 rifle operation and preventative maintenance  
1969-07-01  
Box 2: 15.  
Blasting Forum, the back pocket guide to drilling and blasting  
1969 Sep.  
Box 2: 16.  
Intl. liberation school, firearms and self-defense handbook  
1969 Dec.  
Box 2: 17.  
Guide to Vietcong boobytraps and explosive devices  
1969  
Box 2: 18.  
Book on devices by Reds  
ca.1970  
Box 2: 19.  
WUO communiques/statements [handouts and pamphlets]  
ca.1970  
Box 2: 20.  
Sing a battle song [poems written by women in WUO]  
1975 Jan.  
Box 2: 21.

## Administrative information

### Access

The collection is open for research.

### Provenance

Gift of Jeff Perry

### Processing Information

Processed by Sarah Tonks, February 2022.

### Language:

English

### Copyright and Use ([More information](#) )

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## Search terms

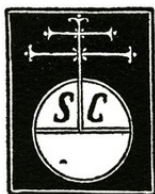
### Subjects

- Activists--United States
- Dohrn, Bernardine
- Feminism
- Imperialism
- Political activists--United States
- Racism against Black people
- Revolutionaries
- Women revolutionaries

### Contributors

### Genres and formats

- Blueprints (reprographic copies)
- Correspondence
- Manuals (instructional materials)



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