

SISTERS RESIST!:

WOMEN'S PEACE ACTIVISM IN WEST AFRICA AND NORTH AMERICA

JENNIFER PEDERSEN

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## **Preface to the CADAIR Electronic Version**

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Jennifer Pedersen

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the Women in Peacebuilding Program (WIPNET) of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and the Raging Grannies, two current women's movements at the frontlines of organizing for peace in their respective contexts. Based on fieldwork in West Africa and North America, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and content analysis of relevant documents, the thesis locates these groups within the wider politics of both the feminist movement and the peace movement. The thesis draws on three bodies of literature: feminist international relations, especially literature on women and war, feminist analyses of security and the relationship between militarism and patriarchy; peace studies, especially the concepts of the "positive" and "negative" peace, conflict transformation, and nonviolence; and social movement theory, especially in reference to collective identity and tactical repertoires of protest. The thesis investigates the relationship between "women", "motherhood", "feminism" and peace, concluding that, while women peace activists may organize around gendered identities, the relationship between women and peace is more complex than an essentialist position would propose. A detailed analysis of the tactical repertoires used by women peace activists examines activists' gendered use of bodies and the manipulation and exploitation of gender and age stereotypes. This is followed by an analysis of the internal and external outcomes of activism, such as personal empowerment, collective identity formation, and policy impacts. The study concludes that women peace activists operate on understandings of "peace" and "security" that are distinct from those of mainstream actors; that they manipulate, challenge, and subvert gender stereotypes; and they use a range of protest and peacebuilding tactics, some of which attract reprisals from the state. Women's peace activism also creates new political opportunities for women to express opposition to patriarchal militarism, thus challenging the marginalization of women within international and national politics on issues of peace and security. Following Cynthia Cockburn (2007), the thesis draws conclusions not about what women's peace activism definitively *is*, but rather what it *can* look like and what it *might* achieve.

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My research has led me to some exciting places, from the middle of a women's march in Monrovia, Liberia to the middle of a mass demonstration complete with riot police in Montebello, Quebec. It has also given me the opportunity to work closely with two passionate groups of women activists who have taught me more than I ever imagined. In West Africa, I thank the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) for hosting me in 2005 – 2006, especially the Women in Peacebuilding Program (WIPNET) and my supervisor there, Ecoma Alaga. I am grateful to the women of WIPNET for welcoming me to Liberia. In Monrovia the Gbowee family were excellent hosts, as were the WIPNET members and staff, especially Leymah Gbowee, Lindora Howard, and Cecelia Danuweli. I also thank the Raging Grannies in Ottawa, Victoria, and San Francisco, who made time for me, inspired me, and made me see the humour in just about everything. I like to say that I had more fun on my fieldwork than is appropriate, but with the Grannies, fun comes with the territory. I am especially appreciative of the Ottawa gaggle who in many ways became my surrogate grandmothers during the Fall of 2007.

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As I reflect on the last four years I am reminded of my late grandfather Jimmy who always wanted to do a PhD but never found the time. I embarked on this process in part because of him. In the end I accomplished this process with significant help from my family, to whom this thesis is dedicated: my parents Lorraine, Tom, and Carolyn, who have been unwavering in their love, encouragement and support; my outstanding brother David, who never fails to crack me up - especially in joking that I would never finish this thesis; my aunt Brenda and grandparents Marjory and Arne; TK and Betsy; Marilyn; and my extended family in Victoria and Naramata. I am truly blessed; thank you!

## ABBREVIATIONS

AFELL	Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia
AFRICOM	United States African Command
AVEGA	Association of Genocide Widows (Rwanda)
AWDF	African Women's Development Fund
CADSI	Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries
CANSEC	Canadian Security Arms Exhibition
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2003)
DDRR	Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration
DPKO	United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAS	Femmes Africa Solidarité
FGW	Female Genital Mutilation
GWOT	Global War on Terror
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organizations
IOs	International Organizations
IR	International Relations
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
LWI	Liberian Women's Initiative
MARWOPNET	Mano River Union Women's Peace Network
MODEL	Movement for Democracy and Elections in Liberia



MRU	Mano River Union
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NTGL	National Transitional Government of Liberia
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OWAAM	Okinawa Women Act Against Military Violence
PETA	People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals
PGA	People's Global Action
PPCLI	Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry
RAWA	Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SCR 1325	Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
SDQ	Sûreté du Québec
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SPP	Security and Prosperity Partnership
SRSR	Special Representative of the Secretary General
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women

UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
WEFFJP	Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WIPNET	Women in Peacebuilding Program
WIPSEN	Women in Peace and Security – Africa
WPP	Women's Peace Party
WPS	Women's Peace Society
WPU	Women's Peace Union
WSP	Women Strike for Peace
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

## Chapter One

### Introduction

In August 2005 I moved to Accra, Ghana to take a position with the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). At the time I had little knowledge of the conflicts that had ravaged West Africa but was quickly immersed in the world of grassroots peacebuilders, especially the women working under WANEP's Women in Peacebuilding Program (WIPNET).

In November 2005 I met Leymah Gbowee, the WIPNET coordinator in Liberia who led the Women's Mass Action for Peace at the height of the Second Civil War in 2003. At a conference for women peacebuilders held in Benin, Gbowee described the work the women of Liberia had done to end the conflict in their country. Their struggle for peace was inspiring, creative, effective - and, at that point, under-documented. It also seemed unusual in that the women played a significant role in the peace process and in "maintaining and sustaining" the peace in the post-conflict period. What was it that had made the Liberian women's movement so committed, united, and visible, and how did it become such a force for nonviolent change in Liberia?

By 2006 it was clear to me that Liberia was a country in which major achievements were being made in terms of women, peace and politics. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first woman to be elected President of Liberia, had just taken office, and it seemed that the world was focused on the roles of women in post-conflict Liberia. So in March 2006, with WANEP's assistance, I went to Liberia to learn more about the women's action in 2003 and the situation for women in the aftermath of the Second Civil War.

My experience in Liberia gave me my first impression of what women's peace activism can look like and what it can achieve. Later, after reading Cynthia Cockburn's *From Where We Stand*,<sup>1</sup> which opened my eyes to the countless examples of women's peace activism around the world, I became more curious about the links between patriarchy, militarism

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<sup>1</sup> Cynthia Cockburn, *From Where We Stand: War, Women's Activism, and Feminist Analysis* (London: Zed Books, 2007)

and imperialism in my own community at home in Canada. Friends in the peace movement had spoken of a group of radical grandmothers who seemed to possess the same spirit of resistance as the Liberian women. From that point on, the Raging Grannies were my second case study. I wanted to understand how groups of women in two completely different contexts – one in a war-torn country in the Third World, another in a First World country involved in an overseas war - could organise against war and militarism in such similar ways. Both of these case studies were examples of sustained, creative and gendered direct action by women, where women claimed a political voice and performed acts of resistance that often went unnoticed in the works I was reading on international relations.

### *Theoretical and Empirical Concerns*

This thesis is an attempt to examine the motivations, visions, methods and impacts of women peace activists in West Africa and North America. Over the last twenty years feminist research has shown that women are not exclusively victims of conflict, but can play roles as “victims, perpetrators, (and) actors.”<sup>2</sup> As Caroline Moser and Fiona Clark argue, “stereotypical essentializing of women as ‘victims’ and men as ‘perpetrators’ of political violence and armed conflict assumes universal, simplified definitions of such phenomena. Such a positioning, in treating both men and women as ‘objects’, denies each their agency and associated voice as ‘actors’ in the processes.”<sup>3</sup> Women’s experiences of war range from suffering in silence to firing the guns, from marching for peace to supporting the troops – and some women engage in several of these activities, potentially being at once a victim, perpetrator and actor. More research is required on women’s experiences of and responses to conflict, given that women’s voices - especially at the grassroots - remain marginalised in international politics. By ignoring the experiences of those who are less powerful, we run the risk of reproducing the same inequalities that lead to their marginalisation in the first place. I take as my starting point feminist international relations theories that look to women’s experiences at the

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<sup>2</sup> “Victims, perpetrators, or actors?” is a phrase used in the title of a collection edited by Caroline Moser and Fiona Clark. See Moser and Clark, eds. *Victims, Perpetrators, or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence* (London: Zed Books, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Moser and Clark, “Introduction,” in Moser and Clark, eds. *Victims, Perpetrators, or Actors?*, p. 4.

“margins, silences, and bottom rungs;”<sup>4</sup> Ann Tickner has noted that for feminist scholars, “Knowledge grows out of experience at the grass roots.”<sup>5</sup>

I am interested in how women peace activists go beyond advocating an immediate end to armed conflict to focusing on the transformation of entrenched patriarchal and militarist structures that they claim are at the root of violent conflict. Women peace activists challenge assumptions about war and militarism by questioning where power lies, who uses it, and for what purpose. They draw links between militarism, violence and gender discrimination, while also exposing other inequalities and forms of oppression. They question how power is used to construct and maintain stereotypes of masculinity and femininity.<sup>6</sup> As Nira Yuval-Davis writes, “some women’s antimilitaristic and antiwar groups see their work as a spearhead in the fight against the patriarchal social system as a whole that they see as dominated by male masochism and violence.”<sup>7</sup>

While there are many individual studies of different women’s peace groups around the world, such as those on the Greenham Common women, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, the Four Mothers movement in Israel, or the Women in Black, there are still questions to be asked about the purpose, strategies and tactics of women peace activists in different contexts, not to mention the intended and unintended outcomes of their activism. Further, there are many women’s peace movements that have not been examined. Cynthia Enloe has recently argued that “we need to find ways to listen to those grassroots organizers who *right now* are using feminist ideas to make sure that post-war is not as militarized and patriarchal as pre-war.”<sup>8</sup> This thesis therefore analyses two current women’s movements that are “at the frontlines”<sup>9</sup> of organising for peace in their respective contexts.

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<sup>4</sup> See Cynthia Enloe, *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), especially the chapter titled “Margins, Silences, and Bottom Rungs: How to Overcome the Underestimation of Power in the Study of International Relations,” pp. 19 – 42.

<sup>5</sup> J. Ann Tickner, *Gendering World Politics: Issues and Approaches in the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 126.

<sup>6</sup> See Cynthia Enloe, “Feminism and war: stopping militarizers, critiquing power,” in Robin Riley, Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Minnie Bruce Pratt, eds., *Feminism and War: Confronting U.S. Imperialism* (London: Zed Books, 2008), pp. 258 – 263.

<sup>7</sup> Nira Yuval-Davis, “Gender, the Nationalist Imagination, War, and Peace,” in Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman, eds., *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) p. 186.

<sup>8</sup> Cynthia Enloe, “Feminism and war: stopping militarizers, critiquing power,” p. 262. Emphasis mine.

<sup>9</sup> Marguerite Waller and Jennifer Rycenga, eds., *Frontline Feminisms: Women, War, and Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2001)

While these two movements are coming from very different perspectives, they both offer insight into the research questions of this thesis:

1. How do women peace activists respond to mainstream understandings of peace and security, and what alternative visions do they propose?
2. How do women peace activists manipulate, challenge and subvert gendered stereotypes in acts of protest? What are their tactical repertoires, how do they decide on these tactics and what happens on the ground?
3. What are the impacts of their activism? For example, do they experience personal transformations through protest? Do they create new political spaces for women to operate in? In what ways are they challenging the traditional marginalisation of women in international politics and in decision-making on peace and security?

### *The Case Studies*

The first case study is the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) in Liberia, who were active in opposing the Second Liberian Civil War in 2003. Through mass mobilisation of women from different communities (rural and urban, Christian and Muslim), WIPNET persuaded the warring parties to the peace table and monitored the implementation of the peace agreement. They also worked alongside the UN Mission in Liberia on the disarmament process and have continued throughout the post-conflict period to advocate for women's decision-making on issues of peace and security.

The second case study is the Raging Grannies. A network of older women activists, they started in Victoria, British Columbia in the 1980s as part of the anti-nuclear movement, and have grown in numbers to the point where there are dozens of *gaggles*<sup>10</sup> of Grannies in major cities across North America. They are not exclusively anti-war activists, as many gaggles are also active on social justice and environment issues, but they generally see these other issues as falling under a broader "peace" umbrella. Raging Grannies in North America are currently focused on opposing the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and criticising post-9/11 security policies in both Canada and the United States.

These may seem like two incomparable cases, in that the first case study is from a war-ravaged country in West Africa where decades of armed conflict have affected every

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<sup>10</sup> A collective of Raging Grannies is known as a "gaggle."

individual, and the second is spread over two developed countries where war is still something that seems to happen “over there.” By choosing these two cases, I am not able to make generalisations about women’s peace activism in any one continent. However, I take inspiration from Cockburn’s study which draws on women’s peace movements in very different contexts in order to show not what women’s peace activism definitively *is*, but what it *can* look like and what it *might* achieve. The benefit of choosing these two case studies is in observing how women peace activists approach patriarchal militarism in their own contexts. I will argue in this thesis that there are some striking similarities in how these women think about, and organise against, war, despite coming from such different places.

### *Ethics, Methodology, and Fieldwork*

I conducted fieldwork in West Africa, including Liberia, in 2005-2006, and fieldwork with Raging Grannies in Canada and the United States in 2007-2008. My approach to the ethics of fieldwork was informed by several sources. There are several recent works on the challenges and opportunities of field work in violently divided societies that were crucial to the development of my research plan. These works address issues of accountability, “insider/outsider” dilemmas, and power relationships between researcher and “subject.” Marie Smyth<sup>11</sup> argues that the first principle of participative action research is to “do no harm;” further, trust and accountability must be priorities of the researcher. Phil Scraton<sup>12</sup> notes that researchers must be aware of how their approach to research could have a potentially negative impact on their respondents, while Albrecht Schnabel<sup>13</sup> urges researchers to analyse their own assumptions before entering the conflict or post-conflict zone. Carolyn Nordstrom’s<sup>14</sup> ethnographic study of violence in Mozambique was particularly helpful as she recounts her experiences of participant

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<sup>11</sup> Marie Smyth, “Using participative action research with war-affected populations: lessons from research in Northern Ireland and South Africa,” in Marie Smyth and Emma Williamson, eds. *Researchers and their ‘subjects’: Ethics, power, knowledge and consent* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2004), pp. 137 - 156.

<sup>12</sup> Phil Scraton, “Speaking Truth to Power: Experiencing Critical Research,” in Marie Smyth and Emma Williamson, eds. *Researchers and their ‘subjects’: Ethics, power, knowledge and consent* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2004), pp. 175 – 194

<sup>13</sup> Albrecht Schnabel, “One Size Fits All? Focused Comparison and Policy-Relevant Research on Violently Divided Societies,” in Marie Smyth and Gillian Robinson, eds., *Researching Violently Divided Societies: Ethical and Methodological Issues* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2001), pp. 193 – 206.

<sup>14</sup> Carolyn Nordstrom, “War on the Front Lines,” in Carolyn Nordstrom and Antonius Robben, eds., *Fieldwork under fire: contemporary studies of violence and survival* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 129 – 154.

observation and the delicate relationship between the researcher and the “subject.” Additional essential reading on this topic included Bina D’Costa’s<sup>15</sup> research on gender in Bangladesh, in which she stresses the importance of remaining open to unforeseen challenges in the field and adapting one’s methodology as necessary, and Tamar Hermann<sup>16</sup> on how “involved outsiders” need to be aware of their identification with research subjects or with a particular political stance, such as a commitment to nonviolence.

When researching a violently divided society there are many ethical considerations that may not be immediately obvious. Feminist postcolonial scholars like Gayatri Spivak, Chandra Mohanty and bell hooks urge us to “unlearn” our privilege through self-examination.<sup>17</sup> I do not claim to be an unattached or objective researcher, and as such, my own subjectivities and background are relevant. In the West African case, I needed to reflect on my experience as a white woman studying African women. Questions that I considered in preparation for fieldwork included: How am I perceived and what are my interactions with my “subjects,” who may also be my friends? What kind of “distance,” if any, should there be between me and these “subjects?” Given that I am using a participatory action methodology, what should and shouldn’t I do? Am I an outsider or a participant in the process, and what does that mean for my research findings? To whom am I accountable? In considering these questions, I read works in the field of postcolonial theory, discussions on ethics of research in conflict situations, such as Smyth and Robinson<sup>18</sup> and Nordstrom and Robben,<sup>19</sup> as well as feminist methodologies of fieldwork.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Bina D’Costa, “Marginalized identity: new frontiers of research for IR?” in Brooke Ackerly, Maria Stern, and Jacqui True, eds. *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 129 – 152.

<sup>16</sup> Tamar Hermann, “The Impermeable Identity Wall: The Study of Violent Conflicts by ‘Insiders’ and ‘Outsiders,’” in Marie Smyth and Gillian Robinson, eds., *Researching Violently Divided Societies: Ethical and Methodological Issues*. (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2001), pp. 77 – 91.

<sup>17</sup> Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean, eds, *The Spivak Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); bell hooks, *Ain’t I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (London: Pluto, 1981)

<sup>18</sup> Marie Smyth and Gillian Robinson, eds. *Researching Violently Divided Societies: Ethical and Methodological Issues*. (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2001)

<sup>19</sup> Carolyn Nordstrom and Antonius Robben, eds., *Fieldwork under fire: contemporary studies of violence and survival* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995)

<sup>20</sup> Brooke Ackerly, Maria Stern, and Jacqui True, *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).



Erin Baines<sup>21</sup> argues that researchers studying gender in a violently divided society should collaborate with their participants on research design to ensure mutual benefit from the research. When preparing for my fieldwork in Liberia in 2006, I designed my research plan with the advice and assistance of my then-supervisor, Ecoma Alaga, the programme coordinator of the Women in Peacebuilding Program (WIPNET) at the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). In Liberia I was hosted by the WIPNET programme, who gave me the space in their office to interview their members. They also gave me access to all WIPNET documents, and, thanks to my experience interning with the organisation in Accra over six months, the WIPNET staff considered me as part of their team. Lindora Howard, then the WIPNET co-ordinator in Liberia, suggested names of people to interview in Monrovia, and WIPNET member Cecelia Danuweli assisted me in contacting officials with the UN, government and police. She also accompanied me to the Jah Tondo internally-displaced persons camp outside Monrovia where I interviewed a WIPNET member who lived in the camp. While in Liberia I resided with the family of WIPNET co-founder Leymah Gbowee, who led the Mass Action for Peace in 2003. I believe my association with WIPNET in Liberia gave me access to some officials that I would not have access to had I been an unaffiliated researcher. For example, I was invited to sit in on an inter-agency meeting on sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV), where I met employees of international NGOs working on this issue, one of whom invited me to visit a clinic for rape survivors outside of Monrovia. In addition to interviews, while interning with WANEP I attended and participated in workshops, conferences and training sessions, and in Liberia I participated in a march of Liberian women commemorating International Women's Day.

In the case of my fieldwork with the Raging Grannies, I had no prior connection to the Ottawa gaggle who were my primary research subjects, and was introduced to them through a mutual friend in the peace movement. This gave me a great deal of access. I was invited to attend their bi-weekly meetings and their protest "rehearsals," where they practised songs and dance routines. While my research design had begun with a plan for semi-structured interviews and some observation, I soon found myself engaging in participant observation at the encouragement of the Grannies, who warned me that I

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<sup>21</sup> Erin Baines, "Gender Research in violently divided societies: Methods and ethics of 'international' researchers in Rwanda," in Elisabeth Porter, Gillian Robinson, Marie Smyth, Albrecht Schnabel, and Eghosa Osaghae, eds. *Researching Conflict in Africa: Insights and Experiences* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2005), pp. 140 – 155.

“might learn something subversive!” Participant observation included marching alongside the Grannies in protests, occasionally carrying placards or props; in one protest, I joined the Grannies in canoeing down a river. Eventually the activities I participated in as researcher went beyond participant observation – a few months into my fieldwork, I was invited to participate as a Raging Granny-in-training in protests. On more than one occasion this meant dressing up in a flowered hat and shawl and singing Raging Granny songs. I also volunteered to take minutes at their bi-weekly meetings and send them to the gaggle by email. Over the four months I spent in Ottawa I developed friendships with many of the Grannies in Ottawa, and by the end of my fieldwork and my return to Aberystwyth they hosted a good-bye luncheon for me. They also rescheduled an annual event – an anti-war toys campaign at a local shopping mall – several weeks earlier than normal so that I could be there. This gave me cause to reflect upon the insider-outsider and researcher-subject dichotomies, and I have continued to reflect upon this, and the question of critical distance, over the course of the writing-up period.

My access to Grannies in Victoria and San Francisco was slightly different, part of which was due to my limited time in both cities. I was told by one Victoria Granny that researchers were very rarely invited to attend their meetings, usually only after working with the group for several months. This was in contrast to my experience with the Ottawa Raging Grannies, where I was attending their meetings regularly within a few weeks of knowing them. In Victoria I was also asked if I had read their book about the history of the movement – Alison Acker and Betty Brightwell’s *Off Our Rockers and Into Trouble*<sup>22</sup> - before I contacted them, which I had. Presumably this was because they were the most popular gaggle of Grannies in terms of requests from researchers and journalists, and they wanted to ensure I was already familiar with the gaggle’s history. With the San Francisco Grannies I initiated email contact with no introductions from third parties, and as a result I was asked to prove my credentials to them before they would meet with me, as they were concerned about government surveillance – which is not surprising given the California National Guard had been accused of spying on them a few years earlier. (I will discuss surveillance and this particular case further in Chapter Six.)

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<sup>22</sup> Alison Acker and Betty Brightwell, *Off Our Rockers and Into Trouble: The Raging Grannies* (Victoria, BC: Touch Wood Press, 2004)

In each of the three gaggles of Raging Grannies I interviewed – in Ottawa, Victoria, and San Francisco – I was told up-front to ask any questions I wanted and that I could write whatever I wanted about them. None of the Grannies asked to verify any of my observations or writing before publishing, and they all gave me full freedom to write about them what I saw fit, with the exception of a few minor requests, which I have respected, to not include references to family members in my research. Nonetheless, for each interview I conducted in Ottawa and San Francisco, I sent the transcripts to the interviewees for verification, and I kept in contact with each of the gaggles over the next two years. I did not do the same for my Liberian interviewees; in this case I had not promised the interviewees I would send them transcripts; further, the transcription happened some time after the interviews and the recordings were of low quality and challenging to transcribe fully. In addition, I did not have email contacts for all of my interviewees. However, given that I was affiliated with WANEP at the time of the interviews in Liberia and was not yet a doctoral student, I was careful to seek permission in each interview to use the material in later academic work.

### *Sources*

The primary sources used in this thesis are my interview transcripts and field notes. Over two weeks in Liberia in March 2006 I conducted twenty-four interviews. Interviewees included eleven members of WIPNET, including the organisers of the Mass Action as well as a woman living in an internally displaced persons camp; three women from other advocacy and civil society groups such as the YWCA and the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia; four Liberian civilians with whom I stayed during my field work; three UN staffers including a Public Information official, the UNMIL Gender Advisor and an official with UNIFEM; the acting Gender Minister and the SGBV coordinator with the Liberian government; and an American nurse working at a clinic for rape survivors on the outskirts of Monrovia. Three of these interviews were not recorded at the request of the interviewees. I used the same list of questions with each of the WIPNET members I interviewed, asking about their experiences and observations of the Mass Action for Peace in 2003 and their assessment of gender and security in post-conflict Liberia. In interviews with UN officials I asked for their perspective of WIPNET's impact on the 2003 peace process and their work leading up to 2006.

Interviews also formed a significant part of my fieldwork with the Raging Grannies. I conducted ten semi-structured interviews with Ottawa Raging Grannies, which ranged from 30 minutes long to three hours long. In every case except for one<sup>23</sup> I emailed the list of questions beforehand to give my interviewees an idea of what I would be asking. In San Francisco, I interviewed four Raging Grannies as a group and one individually. In Victoria I spoke to several Grannies during two demonstrations, but I did not conduct semi-structured interviews due to limited time. In addition to my interview material, I relied there on notes from demonstrations and meetings I attended. I was also given access to the Ottawa Raging Grannies' email listserv and have followed their daily conversations over the three years since. The Ottawa Raging Grannies and San Francisco Raging Grannies also maintain websites, which I have monitored.

Many of my observations in Liberia have been confirmed by secondary data and published interviews with Leymah Gbowee. Among the sources that were most helpful was the documentary *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*,<sup>24</sup> released in 2008, which documents the 2003 Mass Action. This film includes footage from the 2003 demonstrations that I had not previously seen, as well as interviews with four people I had interviewed in 2006: Leymah Gbowee, Asatu Bah Kenneth, Vaiba Flomo, and Etweda "Sugars" Cooper. I have drawn on the interviews in the film here, as well as other published work by Leymah Gbowee in the years since 2006.

Secondary sources on the Raging Grannies have also been very helpful, especially the work of Carole Roy, who has published extensively on the Grannies. Acker and Brightwell's memoir offers the Raging Granny perspective, and other pieces written by Raging Grannies, such as those appearing in the newsletter *The Granny Grapevine*, have also been used. In both case studies I have also relied on newspaper coverage of demonstrations.

### *Chapter Outline*

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<sup>23</sup> This was with a 91-year old Granny who did not have email access.

<sup>24</sup> *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* (Fork Films, 2008)

My theoretical approach is discussed in Chapter Two. Following from Erin Baines' work on refugee women, I use a "hybrid approach"<sup>25</sup> to theory, drawing on concepts in feminist, peace and social movement literature. I argue that traditional theories of international relations do not adequately explain women's peace activism, but these three bodies of literature provide tools with which to analyse the assumptions, actions, and impacts of women peace activists. Feminist theories of international relations explain why women's experiences are absent from mainstream discussions on peace and security and why women are generally excluded from decision-making. Feminists also draw attention to the interrelationship between patriarchy and militarism, a relationship that is also highlighted by women peace activists. In addition, feminist theories allow us to see how war and peace are gendered, and why policy on peace and security needs to take this into account. From peace studies literature I draw on the concepts of *conflict transformation*, which notes the distinctions between "negative" and "positive" peace and the importance of transformation among individuals and communities. The concept of the *culture of peace*, as articulated by Elise Boulding,<sup>26</sup> reflects the end goals of many women peace activists. Further, *nonviolence*, which can be both a strategic and moral concept, is a feature of nearly every women's peace movement. Finally, I draw on the social movement literature to understand both the methods and outcomes of women's peace movements. Here the practices of the movement – strategic and tactical choices, organisational structure, and frames (such as the concepts of *collective identity* and *oppositional consciousness*) – are helpful in explaining the political ideologies and relevance of these movements.

In Chapter Three I look at how "peace" is connected to the concepts of "women," "motherhood," and "feminism" in women's peace movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. I first note the dangers in essentialism – assuming that women are naturally peaceful, or equating "women" with "peace" – which ignores the complexity of women's relationship to war and peace. I look at how the concept of motherhood has been used by women peace activists in protest, while noting that, like the relationship between "women" and "peace," the relationship between "motherhood" and "peace" is equally complicated. Similar observations are made in the discussion of "feminism" and "peace," where I note that some women peace activists connect gender equality with peace, but

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<sup>25</sup> Erin Baines, *Vulnerable Bodies: Gender, the UN, and the Global Refugee Crisis* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 16.

<sup>26</sup> Elise Boulding, *Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

there are also dangers in assuming that feminism is necessarily nonviolent. Following the discussion of these three concepts and how they relate to “peace,” I turn to examples in which women peace activists of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries have grappled with controversial issues such as the relationship between suffrage and the war effort, and support for “Just Wars” versus anti-militarism. I then note how the late 1970s and early 1980s were a significant period in the development of a feminist peace politics. The chapter ends with a discussion of contemporary women’s peace movements and the current state of feminist peace politics, setting the stage for the analysis of our two case studies in later chapters.

Chapter Four, titled “Whose Peace? Whose Security?” is the first of three central chapters in which I analyse the two case studies, the Women in Peacebuilding Network of Liberia and the Raging Grannies. In Chapter Four I explore the alternative visions of peace and security expressed by these movements. I argue that women peace activists understand “peace” and “security” differently from power-holders, and that they draw on their own personal experiences of security and insecurity to develop their visions of peace. The first section sets out examples of how women peace activists’ understandings of “security” challenge mainstream understandings. Four examples are used. The first is the war in Liberia, which was a period of great insecurity for women but was also the catalyst for women’s collective direct action. The second example is post-conflict Liberia, in which women lobbied to be included in peace processes and decision-making on security issues. I then discuss the nuclear threat of the 1980s, in which women peace activists challenged the presence of nuclear weapons in their community, criticised the government and military’s claims to rationality, and exposed security lapses that proved how their lives were in fact made more insecure by the existence of nuclear weapons. The fourth example is the Global War on Terror (GWOT), in which women peace activists criticise the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as counter-terrorism policies and the Security and Prosperity Partnership, which they argue make people around the world, especially women, *less* secure. In each of these four examples women peace activists criticise mainstream conceptions of “security,” asking “whose peace” and “whose security” we are really ensuring.

In the second section of Chapter Four I turn to women peace activists’ alternative visions of peace and security. Many women peace activists advocate a “positive” peace based on the elimination of all forms of violence, including structural, cultural and

economic violence, in preference to a “negative” peace based simply on the absence of armed conflict. In addition, they argue that peace and justice cannot be separated. They suggest that rather than seeing states as the referent of security, *children* should be the main referents of security. They emphasise the need to promote values of cooperation and caring instead of aggression, competition and oppression. In sum, Chapter Four is meant to show how women peace activists reject the values of militarism and aggression in favour of holistic approaches to conflict transformation, where the eradication of militarism, patriarchy, racism, capitalism and other forms of oppression would lead to the creation of a culture of peace. The “rationality” of power-holders is exposed as *irrationality*, given that their security policies make people, especially those most vulnerable, less secure.

Chapter Five, “Tactical Repertoires of Women Peace Activists,” examines the different forms of resistance employed by women peace activists in public protest. I have structured the chapter according to Gene Sharp’s three categories of methods of nonviolent action: *nonviolent protest and persuasion*, which include symbolic public acts such as marches, vigils, and street theatre; *noncooperation*, which includes social, economic and political pressure on power-holders; and *nonviolent intervention*, where more disruptive methods, such as occupying militarised spaces, are employed.<sup>27</sup> I argue that women peace activists make strategic use of their bodies, manipulating, embracing and exploiting gendered stereotypes. Symbols of domestic life are incorporated in protest, bringing what is traditionally private into the public sphere and showing how security policies affect women’s lives at a very personal level.

In the second section of the chapter I turn to tactical innovation and decision-making processes, examining how these women learn about and choose from methods of nonviolent action and how they plan and organise demonstrations. I then discuss the risks of protest, including arrests and beatings, before turning to the question of “nonviolence” in protest. I ask to what extent women peace activists remain committed to the principles of nonviolence and nonconfrontation in protest, and how they navigate these issues when demonstrating alongside allies in the wider peace movement who may choose violent or more confrontational methods of action. Many women peace activists choose to see their adversaries not as “enemies” but as members of the wider

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<sup>27</sup> Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, 3 vols. (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973)

community. This can mean refusing to engage in “othering” of members of the military or police, and extending the hand of nonviolence<sup>28</sup> towards their opponent.

In Chapter Six I turn to the outcomes of women’s peace activism, both internal to the movement and external to the movement. I ask to what extent women peace activists achieve their goals of transforming patriarchal militarist structures, and what other impacts they might have at individual, collective and societal levels. How successful are women peace activists in influencing policy change, and are there other unforeseen outcomes of their activism that are equally important? In terms of internal outcomes, I argue that participation in women’s peace movements can result in significant transformation among individual women, in regards to empowerment, politicisation, and the development of a feminist consciousness. Through participation in women’s peace movements many of these women leave behind the notion of being passive victims of conflict and begin to see themselves as key actors in peacebuilding processes. I argue that, at the collective level, the development of an oppositional consciousness and the role of emotions are both important factors in the construction of collective identities – which foster feelings of belonging and political relevance in individuals, and also help the movement gain external support. In the second section on external outcomes, I analyse four ways in which women peace activists have an impact on international politics: first, through influencing public opinion on issues of peace and security; second, by claiming a role in post-conflict peacebuilding processes; third, by provoking responses from the state; and fourth, by challenging patriarchal structures and gendered stereotypes.

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<sup>28</sup> Barbara Deming, “On Revolution and Equilibrium,” in Jane Meyerding, ed., *We Are All Part of One Another: A Barbara Deming Reader* (Philadelphia: New Society, 1984), pp. 168 – 188.



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