

Ending a war, inventing a movement: Mayday 1971

MAYDAY!

If the government
doesn't stop the war,
we will stop the government.



After SDS committed political suicide, and after the Jackson and Kent State shootings, one of the largest mass direct actions in US history took place under the slogan "If the Government won't stop the war, we'll stop the Government."

Ending a war: Inventing a movement: Mayday 1971

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MAYDAY. The largest and most audacious civil disobedience action in American history is also the least remembered, a protest that has slipped into almost complete historical obscurity. It was a protest against the Vietnam War, but it wasn't part of the storied Sixties, having taken place in 1971, a year of nationwide but largely unchronicled ferment. To many, "the Movement" had ended in violence and infighting two years earlier, in 1969. That year, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the totemic organization of the New Left, had

disintegrated into dogmatic and squabbling factions, one of which-Weatherman-took up street-fighting and bombings to pursue its chimerical program of revolutionary change.

Early in May 1971, after nearly two weeks of intense antiwar protest in Washington, D.C.- from a half-million-person march to large-scale sit-ins outside the Selective Service Agency, Justice Department, and other government agencies-upwards of 25,000 young radicals set out to do something brash and extraordinary: shut down the federal government through nonviolent direct action. They called themselves the Mayday Tribe, and their slogan was as succinct as it was ambitious: "If the government won't stop the war, we'll stop the government." An elaborate tactical manual, distributed in advance, detailed twenty-one key bridges and traffic circles for protesters to block nonviolently, with stalled vehicles, jury-rigged barricades, or their bodies. The immediate goal was to snarl traffic so completely that government employees could not get to their jobs. The larger objective was "to create the spectre of social chaos while maintaining the support or at least toleration of the broad masses of American people."¹

Opinions vary as to whether the action was successful. Most of the planned blockades held only briefly, if at all, because most of the protesters were arrested before they got into position: thanks to the detailed tactical manual, the government knew exactly where protesters would be deployed. The intended tactics had been highly controversial, and the mainstream media lost no time in calling it a rout. As Mary McGrory wrote in the Boston Globe, "It was universally panned as the worst planned, worst executed, most slovenly, strident and obnoxious peace action ever committed." Even Rennie Davis, the Chicago 7 defendant and New Left leader who originally conceived the Mayday action, announced at a press conference that the protest had failed.²

But the government's victory, if you can call it that, came only as a result of extreme measures. A force of more than 14,000 police and National Guardsmen was mobilized to remove the radicals from the streets, and a staggering 13,500 people were placed under arrest. (Many of these were uninvolved bystanders: as one protester noted, "[A]nyone and everyone who looked at all freaky was scooped up off the street.") Nominally, the government still functioned-but only as a result of the largest sweep-arrests in U.S. history, which turned the workaday bustle of the district's streets into "qualified martial law."³

The Mayday civil disobedience, moreover, was larger than any action organized by Mahatma Gandhi or Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In fact, more protesters were arrested on the first day of the action than in any other single event in U.S. history. According to one of the few historians to have studied the event, Mayday so unnerved the Nixon administration that it palpably speeded U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam. White House aide Jeb Magruder said that the protest had "shaken" Nixon and his staff, while CIA director Richard Helms called Mayday "a very damaging kind of event," noting that it was "one of the things that was putting increasing pressure on the administration to try and find some way to get out of the war."⁴

Yet Mayday has no place in our collective memory, thanks in part to the pop culture habit of shoe-horning protest history into "the Sixties." This nonviolent radical action, moreover, doesn't fit into the classic narrative of the New Left's rise and fall, a story in which noble democratic ideals degenerate into bitterness and violence; large movement organizations are painstakingly built and then collapse; and revolutionary phantasms overtake a radicalism based on homegrown traditions of dissent.

Mayday 1971 deserves rediscovery, for it occupies a pivotal place in American radical history. It was organized differently from any protest before it, in ways that have influenced the form of most major protests since. This flawed and daring action marks the birth of the

style of radicalism that vaulted onto the world stage at the Seattle World Trade Organization protests, the forgotten segue between the activism of the New Left and the decentralized direct action movements of today.

Mayday took place a year after the Nixon administration invaded Cambodia, an escalation of the Vietnam War that had provoked angry walkouts on more than a hundred college and university campuses. At one of these, Kent State, National Guardsmen fired into a crowd of protesters, killing four and wounding nine; ten days later, two students were killed and twelve wounded at nearby Jackson State. The deaths sparked strikes at hundreds more campuses and inspired thousands who had never protested before to take to the streets. By the end of May 1970, it's estimated that half the country's student population—perhaps several million youth—took part in antiwar activities, which "seemed to exhaust the entire known repertoire of forms of dissent."⁵ While most of these demonstrators did not become anything like committed, full-time activists, so many people were radicalized during the spring 1970 uprising that the antiwar movement suddenly swelled with a new wave of organizers spread all throughout the country, in places that had seen relatively little activism before then.

The tumult of spring 1970 faded by the fall, however, and an air of futility hung over the established antiwar movement. Many of the longtime organizers who had persevered beyond the movement's crisis year of 1969 were now burning out. As one antiwar publication put it, for the previous seven years, "We have met, discussed, analyzed, lectured, published, lobbied, paraded, sat-in, burned draft cards, stopped troop trains, refused induction, marched, trashed, burned and bombed buildings, destroyed induction centers. Yet the war has gotten steadily worse—for the Vietnamese, and, in a very different way, for us." It seemed that everything had been tried, and nothing had worked. "Most everyone I know is tired of demonstrations," wrote New Left leader David Dellinger. "No wonder. If you've seen one or two, you've seen them all...[G]ood, bad, or in between, they have not stopped the war, or put an end to poverty and racism, or freed all political prisoners."⁶

In this climate of grim frustration, the national antiwar movement split, as long-standing tensions about the political value of civil disobedience divided activists who were planning the antiwar mobilization for spring 1971. The breakaway group named itself the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC), and called for a massive legal march and rally on 24 April. This coalition boasted a long and impressive list of endorsers, but was centrally controlled by the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and its offshoots. NPAC aimed to build a mass mobilization against the war-organizer Fred Halstead called it "an authentic united front of the masses"⁷—bringing together the widest possible array of offerees. Toward that end, NPAC put forth just one lowest-common-denominator demand, "Out of Vietnam now," rejecting any attempt to link the war to other issues, such as racism or poverty.

NPAC also vehemently opposed the use of any tactics that went beyond legally permitted protest. Civil disobedience, the coalition's leadership believed, accomplished little while alienating many from the cause. "[I]n our opinion, small civil disobedience actions—whether in the Gandhi-King tradition or in the vein of violent confrontation—are not effective forms of action," declared the SWP's newspaper, *The Militant*. "While we do not question the commitment and courage of those who deploy such tactics, we feel that they are not oriented toward winning and mobilizing a mass movement." The Mayday action came in for special criticism: "When people state that they are purposely and illegally attempting to disrupt the government, as the Mayday Tribe has done, they isolate themselves from the masses of American people."⁸

The remaining part of the antiwar movement ultimately renamed itself the Peoples Coalition for Peace and Justice (PCPJ), and was anchored by pacifist organizations ranging from the

Fellowship of Reconciliation to the War Resisters League. PCPJ favored a multiissue approach to antiwar organizing and worked to build alliances with nonpacifist organizations like the National Welfare Rights Organization, drawing connections between the foreign and domestic policies of the U.S. government. The coalition also felt that stronger tactics than mere marching were called for, and emphatically endorsed civil disobedience. "Massive One-Day Demonstrations Aren't Enough," read the headline of a PCPJ broadsheet issued that spring. "More's Needed to End the War."⁹ PCPJ didn't openly discourage people from attending the April 24 NPAC march, but focused its efforts on a multiday "People's Lobby," which consisted of sit-ins outside major government buildings.

Into this fractured political landscape came the Mayday Tribe, a new player with a very different approach. The group was launched by Rennie Davis, a New Left leader who had become nationally famous after the melees outside the Democratic National Convention in 1968, when the federal government prosecuted him and other prominent organizers—the Chicago 7—for conspiracy. In Davis's conception, the Mayday Tribe would bring the most politicized hippies of the time together with the hippest of the hardcore radicals. "Tribe" itself was a countercultural code word (the 1967 San Francisco "Be-In" that propelled hippiedom to the national stage, for instance, was known as "A Gathering of the Tribes"), and Mayday had a long-haired freaky flavor that was decidedly missing from either the Trotskyist or pacifist wings of the antiwar movement. Jerry Coffin, who teamed up with Davis when Mayday was only an idea, recalls it as an attempt "to create a responsible hip alternative" to the Weather Underground: "merging radical politics, Gandhian nonviolence, serious rock and roll, [and] lots of drugs." Many—perhaps most—of the people who took part in the action were relative newcomers to the movement, from the generation that had been radicalized by Cambodia and Kent State.¹¹

Davis took the idea of nonviolently blockading the federal government from a failed 1964 attempt by the Brooklyn chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) to paralyze New York City traffic on the opening day of the World's Fair. The tactic was to be a "stall-in" at strategic points on the city's highways, with protesters deliberately allowing their cars to run out of fuel so that the vehicles would block the roadways. "Drive a while for freedom," read one leaflet. "Take only enough gas to get your car on exhibit on one of these highways." The Brooklyn civil-rights group—younger and more radical than CORE as a whole—announced the planned disruptions as a way of pressuring the city government to take action on housing, education, police brutality, and other issues of urgent concern to New York City's black population. But the outcry over this obstructive plan was enormous, leading CORE'S national director, James Farmer, to suspend the Brooklyn chapter; in the end, very few people went through with the highway action (though civil disobedience protests inside the fair led to three hundred arrests).¹²

The Mayday protest, with its goal of blockading the nation's capital, echoed the CORE plan in mischievous tone and disorderly intent. The Mayday protest was to entail "action rather than congregation, disruption rather than display." As one Mayday leaflet circulated in advance of the 1971 event declared, in a clear allusion to the 24 April NPAC event, "Nobody gives a damn how many dumb sheep can flock to Washington demonstrations, which are dull ceremonies of dissent that won't stop the war." Mayday wouldn't be a standard protest rally, where a series of speakers (usually chosen through an acrimonious behind-the-scenes struggle) would lecture to a passive crowd. It wouldn't be a conventional protest march, where demonstrators would trudge along a route that had been pre-arranged with the police, shepherded by movement marshals controlled by the protest leadership.¹³ With much antiwar protest having become dreary and routinized ("Should I take pictures, I kept

questioning myself, or would photographs from past identical rallies suffice?" asked one radical after 24 April), Mayday promised to be novel and unpredictable.¹⁴

Mayday would also diverge from the traditional form of civil disobedience that PCPJ supported. That type of action, the tactical manual explained, usually "involved a very small group of people engaging in 'moral witness' or action that involved them breaking a specific law, almost always with advance notice to authorities." In a typical civil disobedience protest, participants would sit down at the entrance to a building or inside some official's office and wait until police—who knew ahead of time what the protesters would do—carried them off to jail. If they were attacked or beaten, they would neither fight back nor run away. "Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering," Gandhi had declared. The philosophy of civil disobedience that he and King propounded, and most pacifists embraced, entailed a willingness to accept violence and a refusal to engage in it, even in self-defense.¹⁵

In the activist climate of the late 1960s and early 1970s, this kind of civil disobedience had acquired an aura of piety and passivity, distasteful to many radicals; as Jerry Coffin observes, "very few of [the Mayday protesters] would have identified themselves as being members of a nonviolent movement." The organizers of Mayday had a somewhat difficult sell to make, and the tactical manual emphatically distinguished their disruptive direct-action scenario from conventional nonviolence: "We need to be clear that we are not talking about an exercise in martyrdom; we are not talking about negotiated arrests; we are talking about using a tactic to attain an objective." Explains S.J. Avery, who was working with the Quaker Project on Community Conflict at the time and ran some of the training sessions in nonviolence for the Mayday protest, "The kind of nonviolent direct action that we had always been talking about was the very classic, traditional Gandhian sort, where you did your action and then you stayed there and you took your consequences. That was not part of the Mayday rhetoric. People wanted to keep it nonviolent, but I think a lot of people went down there thinking it was going to be pretty much guerrilla action. And that some people would get arrested, and some figured if they could get away, that was great."¹⁶

The Mayday organizers hoped to tap into the revulsion many felt toward the tactics of the Weather Underground and other violent groups, while steering clear of the submissiveness and sanctimony radicals associated with nonviolence. Explained one participant, "[T]he idea of 'we've tried everything, now there's nothing left but violence' was pretty much replaced with the notion that now that violence-trashing, bombing, off the pigging—had failed it was time for a really radical approach: nonviolent civil disobedience." The tactical manual explained that Mayday would be militant in a way "that conforms more with our new life style" and deploys "joy and life against bureaucracy and grim death." An organizing leaflet elaborated: "[T]he overall discipline will be non-violent, the tactic disruptive, and the spirit joyous and creative." To underscore the point, Mayday's planners adopted as their symbol an irreverent drawing of Gandhi with a raised fist.¹⁷

The most novel aspect of Mayday, though, was its organizing plan. Unlike any national demonstration before it, this action was to be created through a decentralized structure, based on geographic regions. "This means no 'National Organizers,'" the tactical manual explained, in contrast to all the big D.C. marches and rallies that had come before. "You do the organizing. This means no 'movement generals' making tactical decisions you have to carry out. Your region makes the tactical decisions within the discipline of nonviolent civil disobedience."¹⁸

This approach reflected a major shift in activist temper over the previous two years or so: a growing disdain for national organizations, movement celebrities, and structured leadership, all of which were felt to stifle creativity and action. "Following the disintegration of SDS,"

the radical magazine *Liberation* explained, "there were many in the movement who were thoroughly disillusioned with the whole idea of a national political structure. They came to feel that authentic radicalism must grow out of involvement in local or small-group activity, that it cannot flourish within a national organization." The now-defunct SDS certainly came in for special scorn, along with the "movement heavies"-influential or hardline radical men-who so often represented the group to the media. But the criticism also extended to the national antiwar movement in its various organizational guises, which had "really well-known people who were on the letterhead and [acted as] spokespeople for the movement," as Ed Hedemann of War Resisters League put it.¹⁹

An anonymous pamphlet published not long before Mayday (and circulated among anarchists ever since) outlined an underlying critique of the very idea of a national or mass movement. *Anti-Mass: Methods of Organization for Collectives* defined "the mass" as an intrinsically alienating and repressive structure of capitalist society, designed purely to facilitate consumption. Radicals who aspired to create a mass movement-like the Socialist Workers Party with its 24 April NPAC march and rally-were reproducing the very structure they should be challenging. "We don't fight the mass (market) with a mass (movement)," the essay argued. "This form of struggle, no matter how radical its demands, never threatens the basic structure-the mass itself." The antidote to mass society, the pamphlet declared, was a decentralized movement based on small, self-organized collectives.²⁰

This impulse toward decentralization was to some extent echoed in the activism of the radical identity-based movements that had emerged between 1966 and 1969-the multihued array of "power" movements (Black Power, Puerto Rican Power, Chicano Power, Yellow Power, Red Power), and the women's and gay liberation movements. A central theme of each was the question of representation: who speaks for whom; who makes decisions, and in whose name.²¹ As Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton wrote in their influential 1967 manifesto, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, "Black people must redefine themselves, and only they can do that. Throughout this country, vast segments of the black communities are beginning to recognize the need to assert their own definitions, to reclaim their history, their culture; to create their own sense of community and togetherness."²² By 1971, identity-based movements were fixtures of the radical landscape, whose very existence challenged the idea of an overarching capital-"m" Movement that could speak with one voice. A mass movement-or, to put it another way, a movement of masses-seemed to drown out difference in the name of unity, something that many activists could no longer accept.

The radical women's liberation movement challenged mass or national organizing even more directly. Its signature contribution to radical activism was the assertion that the personal is political, a proposition that was electrifying in its day. Building upon the New Left project of countering personal alienation by uncovering "the political, social, and economic sources of [one's] private troubles" (to quote from the 1963 Port Huron Statement, the founding document of SDS), radical feminists made consciousness-raising a centerpiece of their politics. This process of self-examination and collective discussion was best suited for small groups, which facilitated intimacy and internal democracy. By the early 1970s, the small group was the predominant radical feminist form, characterized by "a conscious lack of formal structure, [and] an emphasis on participation by everyone." Though there was very little direct feminist influence on Mayday-there was a women's tent and a women's contingent, but that was about it-the decentralized and radically democratic organizing principles of the women's liberation movement helped shape the larger political climate that gave rise to the Mayday Tribe.²³

The Mayday organizers proposed that everyone who wanted to help shut down the federal government organize themselves into "affinity groups." Affinity groups are small

assemblages of roughly five to fifteen people who take part in an action jointly, planning their participation collectively. Mayday was the first time they were used in a national demonstration in the United States, as well as the first time they were used in an explicitly nonviolent context. Ever since, affinity groups have been a defining feature of most direct action protests. Movements with such wide-ranging concerns as nuclear power, U.S. military intervention in Central America, environmental destruction, AIDS, and reproductive rights—not to mention the movement that shut down the World Trade Organization in late 1999—have organized themselves on the basis of affinity groups. The history of this practice, though, is little known. It's a history, moreover, that's steeped in irony, for these groups that have been so central to nonviolent activism in our time began as underground guerrilla cells, and entered American radical circles through the most violent segment of the New Left.

The term dates back to Spain in the late 1920s and 1930s, when small bands of militants from the Iberian Anarchist Federation (F.A.I.) undertook a series of guerrilla actions: first against the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera; next against real or suspected fascists during the Spanish Republic; and finally, against the fascist regime of Francisco Franco during the sanguinary Spanish Civil War. They called their underground cells "grupos de afinidad," explains Murray Bookchin, the writer and social ecologist who first introduced the term to the United States, "because people were drawn together not by residence, not even by occupation, but on the basis of affinity: friendship, individual trust, background, history." The groups reflected both anarchist ideals of free association and military needs for security. The stakes were tremendous: a small slip-up could lead to torture and death. Because affinity groups were small and formed only by people who knew each other well, they were difficult to infiltrate or uncover. Because the groups acted autonomously, with no central command, the discovery or destruction of one would not obliterate the underground altogether.²⁴

The phrase and structure entered the American New Left around 1967, when the movement's most radical activists were beginning to reject nonviolence and were shifting, as the saying of the time went, "from protest to resistance." Initially, that meant employing "mobile tactics" during demonstrations, notably the fall 1967 Stop the Draft Weeks in Oakland and New York. Sitting down and awaiting arrest increasingly seemed only to invite beatings from the police—and to accomplish little or nothing in the process; nonviolence had come to seem like passivity. Young radicals began to experiment with more chaotic and aggressive measures: dragging mailboxes or automobiles into the streets to serve as temporary blockades; blocking traffic; remaining always in motion, in order to create "disruptive confrontation."²⁵

To pull that off well, you needed some kind of agile, streetwise organization—something, perhaps, like "a street gang with an analysis." That's how the Motherfuckers, the SDS chapter from Manhattan's Lower East Side, defined the affinity group in a broadside published around 1968. The Motherfuckers, in their own words, were "flower children with thorns," a fierce and disruptive group devoted to creating a "total break [from the present]: cultural, political, social, everything." Ben Morea, the founder of the Motherfuckers, had learned about affinity groups from conversations and debates with Murray Bookchin, who did extensive research on the Spanish Civil War during the 1960s. "Murray really understood the history of Spain and was telling me about the grupos de afinidad. And I immediately saw the possibility," remembers Morea. He was intrigued by the idea of "groups of like-minded people that weren't public," the sort of group that was "totally unknown to anyone else." Embracing this clandestine structure, the Motherfuckers engaged in outrageous actions, ranging from dumping garbage at New York's Lincoln Center on its opening night (its construction having displaced a Puerto Rican neighborhood) to pelting then-secretary of state Dean Rusk with bags of cow's blood.²⁶

The Motherfuckers' conception of affinity groups partly mirrored their Spanish antecedents: "Relying on each other," explained one leaflet, "the individuals in an affinity group increase their potential for action and decrease the dangers of isolation and/or infiltration. The necessity for these relationships should be obvious at this stage of our struggle." But security was not their only purpose. The Motherfuckers viewed affinity groups in grander terms as well. "In the pre-revolutionary period," they wrote, "affinity groups must assemble to project a revolutionary consciousness and to develop forms for particular struggles. In the revolutionary period itself they will emerge as armed cadres at the centers of conflict, and in the post-revolutionary period suggest forms for the new everyday life."

Morea and the Motherfuckers soon introduced the idea of affinity groups as teams for street combat to Weatherman, the faction of SDS that aspired to be a revolutionary fighting force and to "bring the war home" to the United States. It was during the October 1969 "Days of Rage," perhaps Weatherman's most notorious action, that affinity groups made their true American debut. Some three hundred of the group's followers converged on Chicago, where they literally went on a rampage: battling cops, smashing windshields, running through the streets, and creating mayhem. Jeff Jones, one of the founders of Weatherman, explains that as early as 1967, militant members of SDS began debating whether to adopt more violent tactics during street protests. "We had that discussion over and over again," he recalls today, "and each demonstration that we went to became a little bit more militant, until it was in our heads to organize a demonstration that was entirely street fighting, which we did, in which affinity groups played a very important role."²⁷

All the participants in the Days of Rage were organized into affinity groups, which Weatherman treated less like egalitarian collectives and more like military platoons. "There was a pretense made of contributions from everyone, but there was really a final yes or no from the top leadership. There would be a representative of the leadership in each affinity group," recalls Judith Karpova of her time in Weatherman. As Shin'ya Ono described the group's preparations on a Weatherman bus heading to Chicago for the Days of Rage, "In order to get to know each other and learn to move as a group, we divided ourselves into several affinity groups of six or seven persons each and did a couple of tasks together," he wrote. "We discussed the functions of the affinity group, what running and fighting together meant, what leadership meant, and why leadership was absolutely necessary in a military situation." Another account of Weather-style affinity-group organizing during that period similarly emphasized a paramilitary command structure: "The tactical leadership explains the plans using maps which they have drawn up, and our forces are divided into affinity groups. Each group sticks together, protects each of its members, acts as a fighting unit in case of confrontation, and functions as a work team."²⁸

The Days of Rage were widely viewed as a disaster. The turnout was a fraction of what the Weather organizers had expected; the street fighting left most participants injured or jailed or both, with little or nothing to show for their bravado. Some months later, one anonymous Weather sympathizer calling herself "a daughter of the Amerikan Revolution" published an essay on affinity groups in the spring 1970 issue of the radical Berkeley Tribe, endorsing their use for armed struggle. "The term 'affinity group' means different things to different people," she explained, "anything from a group of people that run together in a riot to a basic armed unit for the revolution, which is my conception of it." But already by 1970, even some of those who had flirted with violence were concluding that rioting and armed struggle were dead ends for the movement. Affinity groups had proven too useful in practical terms to be abandoned—"they are to many people's minds both safer and more politically acceptable than the marshal system for organizing participants at a demonstration," an organizing manual of the period explained—but their significance and function began to change.²⁹

"The reason it changed, and went from a violent to more of a nonviolent kind of thing," says Jeff Jones, "is because violent street fighting played itself out kind of quickly. We took it to the max at the Days of Rage, and the price was too high, and everybody knew it." By the time the Mayday Tribe put out its call to protest, the concept of affinity groups had begun to blend with the other small-group forms that were rapidly growing in countercultural popularity: collectives, communes, cooperatives, consciousness-raising groups. Perhaps there was still a slight frisson of clandestinity attached to the use of affinity groups, given the sense among many that "Mayday was sort of the above-ground Weatherpeople," in the words of John Scagliotti, who worked in the office for the action. But on the whole, affinity groups were coming to be seen as more expedient and sociable than paramilitary or insurrectionary. "Affinity groups at Mayday," recalls John Froines, another Chicago 7 defendant centrally involved in the action, "were both a tactical approach in terms of the street and also something more, connected to people's linkages to one another."³⁰

That said, there was a haphazard quality to the Mayday organizing; a lot of the action was put together on the fly. "We had no organization, so we made a virtue out of our weakness, which was what guerrillas had always done," remembers Jerry Coffin. "If you've got no organization, what do you do? You create something where no organization is a virtue, and that was the whole affinity group thing we'd been promoting." Much of the initial outreach was done in conjunction with the speaking tours of Rennie Davis and John Froines to campuses throughout the United States. Much of the rest was done by mail, thanks to a pot-smoking hippie who had figured out a do-it-yourself way to reset postage meters. "There was the notion," Froines recalls, "that people from University of Wisconsin or Florida State or Smith College or wherever would come, and they would have encampments of their own, and they would develop tactical approaches to what they were doing."³¹

This decentralized structure, organizers hoped, would also help them avoid the legal entanglements they had faced after the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention protests. At first glance, Mayday might look "like an engraved invitation to a conspiracy trial," as one activist told *Time*, but it would be virtually impossible for the government to pin responsibility on one or more individual organizers. Everyone was responsible. As one participant from Richmond College in Staten Island explained afterwards, "As affinity groups you have to make your own decisions and be fully responsible. You're not simply following a leadership up at the head of a march.... Rather than one conspiracy, it was thousands of conspiracies."³²

The lack of formal organization, however, tended to undermine the ideal of decentralization, as a result of what one radical feminist famously called "the tyranny of structurelessness."³³ Local affinity groups might choose their own targets and tactics, but a small group around Rennie Davis wrote the organizing materials, controlled the finances, called the press conferences, did the big-picture planning, and spoke for the action as a whole. Scagliotti remarks, "While Rennie and all these guys were the leaders, most of the people in the affinity groups didn't know that, they didn't know who the leaders were. They were just being organized in their local whatever to come to this thing." The looseness of the overall structure gave considerable autonomy to local groups, but it also meant there was no transparency or accountability, no way for affinity groups to have input into the overall decision-making or to dispute what the informal leadership was doing.

The D.C. office for the actions was largely staffed by a group of radicals who called themselves the Gay Mayday Tribe. "Once the Mayday thing started happening, I joined the Mayday collective and lived in the Mayday commune," remembers Scagliotti, now a filmmaker and director of the acclaimed *Before Stonewall and After Stonewall*

documentaries. "There were about five of us who were gay, and we sort of ran the office. We immediately became very close and out of that was Gay Mayday."

Gay Mayday was an intriguing political experiment in fusing the new gay radicalism with the radicalism of the antiwar movement. (It was also very much a sex-and-drugs party scene.) Since the Stonewall rebellion of June 1969-when patrons of a Greenwich Village gay and transvestite bar fought back against police during an attempted raid, an act of proud defiance that sparked the gay liberation movement-gay radicals had worked to play a visible role in the movement against the Vietnam War. "Through a lot of 1970, I remember I must have gone to at least six different antiwar marches where we [gay people] were all joining hands and marching up Fifth Avenue or marching in the park," notes Perry Brass, a Gay Mayday participant who was part of the collective that produced *Come Out!*, one of the few gay newspapers in existence at that time.³⁴

There were two major gay liberation groups in 1971, the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), created shortly after Stonewall, and the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA), a more moderate group that broke away just a few months later. Brass and most of the hundred or so other Gay Mayday radicals gravitated to the GLF, whose name intentionally echoed the Vietnamese National Liberation Front. GLFers very much viewed themselves as part of the broader radical landscape of the time. "GLF differs from other gay groups because we realize that homosexual oppression is part of all oppression," explained a leaflet circulated by the group in New York. "The current system denies us our basic humanity in much the same way as it is denied to blacks, women and other oppressed minorities; and the grounds are just as irrational. Therefore, our liberation is tied to the liberation of all peoples." Two of their chants made light of these linkages: "Ho, ho, homosexual, the ruling class is ineffectual!" and the memorable "Up the ass of the ruling class!" But the more emblematic GLF slogan was, "No revolution without us!"-expressing the desire to be part of the often homophobic New Left, a desire that partly motivated Gay Mayday. Brass recalls, "A lot of the people in that contingent were very happy to be included in something like [Mayday]. We felt, well, this is our sign that we've been accepted as radicals....We've just got to prove that we are willing to go in there, get our heads clobbered and arrested and beaten up, prove that we can do this."³⁵

The GLF-like the GAA, a primarily gay male organization, with few lesbian members-also saw itself as both inspired and shaped by radical feminism. The women's liberation analysis of the linkages between personal and political concerns resonated with the experiences of the gay radicals, many if not most of whom were newly out of the closet. "A lot of [GLF activism] was sensitivity groups, tea groups: meeting in church basements and storefronts and people's homes to look at the ways we had been injured in a homophobic, racist, heterosexist, classist society," remembers Warren J. Blumenfeld, who was part of the Washington D.C. Gay Liberation Front and helped organize the Mayday action. The radical feminist influence was also felt in the GLF's "structureless" organizational form, comprised of decentralized collectives (called, in this case, "cells") with no formal decision-making process, membership requirements, or bylaws. "GLFers chose the rocky road of fluid cellular organization," explained activist Lois Hart, "rather than perpetuate older, oppressive structures of Follow the Leader and passive participation by voting."³⁶

The Gay Activists Alliance was far more conventional in its organization and politics. The group adopted a constitution, elected officers, and operated according to Robert's rules of order. It defined itself as a "one-issue organization," "exclusively devoted to the liberation of homosexuals," objecting to the GLF's activism on behalf of other radical causes. Elected officials were major targets of the GAA, which sought to influence policy and legislation by mobilizing gays as a political constituency whose interests could not be ignored. This approach seemed hopelessly establishment and uninspiring to radicals of the time. But

radicals of later years, especially in ACT UP and WHAM! (Women's Health Action and Mobilization), would be inspired by the innovative tactics and techniques that GAA developed to pursue its goals. These were called "zaps,"³⁷ and entailed boisterous and disruptive direct action of many kinds: sneaking into political events and interrupting them with well-timed harangues; occupying the office of a magazine (Harper's) to protest homophobic content; throwing an "engagement party" in the office of the New York city clerk after he bad-mouthed unofficial marriage services being performed in a gay church. The speed, flamboyance, and wit of zap activism would become hallmarks of highly effective direct action movements to come.

The Gay Mayday Tribe viewed its participation in the 1971 antiwar action as more than just a matter of mobilizing gays as a constituency or contingent, along the lines of "schoolteachers against the war" or "physicians for peace." Instead, it sought to draw connections between militarism and social constructions of gender. One Gay Mayday leaflet called the Vietnam War "a straight man's game," created by "men who need to gain their masculine identity through the killing of women, children, and their own brothers." A call to participation elaborated, "We know that the men running the country are very deeply sexist-they relate to each other and to situations in an uptight straight male way. These men make decisions in order to satisfy their male egos and their needs for competition with other men." The Gay Mayday Tribe offered up an expansive radical vision, in which gay liberation could not only transform laws or lifestyles, but also undermine the very foundations of war. For, they promised, "an army of lovers would not fight."³⁸

As it happened, the central role of Gay Mayday in logistics and planning for the action brought an unexpected practical benefit. At a time when government surveillance and disruption of radical movements was both routine and highly damaging, the exuberant eroticism of the Gay Mayday Tribe doubled as a form of protection. "They couldn't infiltrate it, because we were all sleeping with each other," recalls John Scagliotti, "And we were doing a tremendous amount of illegal things, that they could have gotten us all for." At one point in spring 1971, after the Weather Underground set off a bomb in the U.S. Capitol, the Mayday Collective was raided. Says Scagliotti, "I remember being woken up by the FBI one morning and the guy saying, 'And what's her name?'-and it was just a hippie guy with long hair. They were very freaked out by that experience and left us alone." And indeed, after the protest, Newsweek reported that "[t]he government's most serious problem was faulty intelligence."³⁹

In the days before the action, the Mayday Collective set up "movement centers" throughout the city where newly arriving protesters could hook up with others from their region, get information about nonviolence trainings, and obtain medical advice about possible exposure to tear gas or Mace. The organizers had also obtained a permit for an encampment in West Potomac Park from the time of the mass 24 April march and rally through 3 May, the Monday morning when the shutdown was to take place. Perry Brass remembers the scene as one of "high hippieism": "People were dropping acid all over the place, smoking marijuana all over the place, just having a wonderful time with a political context to it." John Scagliotti recalls, "It was so romantic: Everybody around campfires, all these revolutionaries in their affinity groups, talking and planning their last-minute strategies."⁴⁰

As the action date approached, however, the atmosphere grew more alienating for some activists, especially women, who found little structure or opportunity for participation. "My first night at the camp, I attended an open meeting of almost the entire camp," one woman wrote afterwards. "People from the crowd got up to the microphone and said what was on their minds-sexism seemed to be on the minds of both women and gay men. As the camp grew, however, the open meetings ceased, and were replaced by announcements made over

the loud-speaker system by a male voice." The women had hoped for something quite different, something more in the small-group spirit of participatory democracy. "What the women's movement has done as I've seen it in the past year or two," explained one feminist to a camera crew from the radical Videofreex film collective, "it has brought a whole new understanding about leadership and about people relating to each other, that is now going into the whole movement in this country.... It's about people being people; it's getting rid of the old heavy rhetoric kind of politics."⁴¹

That Saturday, the Mayday Collective threw a rock concert and festival (featuring "Free music! Free dope! Free food!"), which swelled the encampment to something like 45,000 people. Fed up by the rowdy atmosphere and the constant sexual advances by stoned hippie men, a group of women, mainly lesbians, stormed the stage along with a handful of gay male allies and tried to turn the concert into a consciousness-raising session. "There's a lot of men and straight women around here who really come down on the gay women when they realize that we're gay," one lesbian activist declared, in footage of the event captured by the Videofreex. "The straight women automatically assume that we're going to rape them all-that's bullshit. And the straight men automatically assume that they're going to cure us-which is bullshit. And I would appreciate it if people would speak to me as a human being and not a freak object."⁴²

It's not clear that this action had any measurable impact on the concertgoers or the protests, but the women and gay men's disaffection highlighted the extent to which Mayday, for all its innovations, remained rooted in the male-dominated, old-school movement culture of the 1960s. The decentralized, affinity-group-based direct action techniques championed by the Mayday Collective would only begin to reach their democratic potential after they were more fully fused with feminist principles-and after women, especially lesbians, became key actors in direct-action organizing. Lesbian activists may have had to take over the stage at Mayday to say their piece, but they would become primary transmitters of the direct-action tradition in the decades to come. Time and again from the late 1970s until the present day, lesbian radicals would form bridges linking one direct-action movement to the next: from antinuclear activism to Central American solidarity work, and from there to reproductive rights and AIDS organizing, and ultimately to the anticorporate globalization movement of today.

Before dawn on Sunday, the morning after the rock concert, the government made its first move. Police descended on West Potomac Park and shut down the encampment, evicting the groggy radicals en masse and arresting those who refused to leave. Additional officers were stationed at other parks throughout the city to prevent protesters from regrouping. Many affinity groups were able to reassemble at the movement centers, but the government's action had the intended effect: Thousands of people-notably those who had been drawn more by the rock concert than the radicalism-decided just to go home, cutting the protesters' ranks by a half or more.⁴³

Early on Monday morning, the 25,000 or so remaining members of the Mayday Tribe began moving into Washington to block their designated targets. The government was ready, having mobilized a combined force of 10,000 police, National Guard, and federal troops, with at least 4,000 more troops available on reserve. Their orders were to arrest every demonstrator on sight. (Attorney General John Mitchell explained to Nixon, during a White House meeting to plan the government's response to the protests, "I know they want to be arrested but, Mr. President, I don't think that's any reason for not arresting them.")⁴⁴

"Small battles raged all over the city as demonstrators would build crude barricades, disperse when the police came and then regroup to rebuild the dismantled obstructions," one underground paper reported. The protesters' nonviolence pledge did not preclude building

barricades; nobody felt "that because we will be nonviolent that we could not also be militant and creative." The barricades were indeed inventive: "We threw everything available into the streets," one participant wrote afterwards in the Berkeley Tribe, "garbage cans, parked cars, broken glass, nails, large rocks, and ourselves. To add to the confusion we lifted hoods of cars stopped for lights and let air out of tires." Some of these obstacles-like the one in Georgetown that was constructed by overturning a tractor trailer-were even effective in temporarily stopping traffic.⁴⁵

But ultimately, the government had the upper hand on the streets, thanks to a military operation that, in Newsweek's words, "seemed more appropriate to Saigon in wartime than Washington in the spring." Waves of helicopters landed alongside the Washington Monument, ferrying Marines into the city. Federal troops lined the Key Bridge, and a Marine battalion was stationed at Dupont Circle, "with tanks around the rim pointing out toward the street with their big guns." The city was effectively under military occupation. "The scene was midway between that of a sham battle and a war of death," one protester wrote afterwards. "Police vans careened around corners, frantic to discharge their human load and return for another. Helicopters chopping overhead made us aware that the ground troops had surveillance of all of our movements."⁴⁶

Perry Brass recalls, "There were people just running through the streets, there were cops running after them. Any time you stood still you'd be arrested, so you had to keep moving." There was more order to the protest chaos than there seemed to be, thanks to the affinity groups and a sophisticated communications system. "We had all these very expensive radios," says Jerry Coffin, "thousands and thousands of dollars worth of radios. And every major group that had a target had a radio and was in communication with our base."⁴⁷

But all the planning and organization counted for little in the face of the government's sweep arrests. More than 7,000 people were caught in the dragnet that first day. Never before or since have there been that many arrests in the United States on a single day. (Another 6,000 were arrested over three more days, most of them for blockading the Justice Department and the U.S. Capitol.) Many of the arrestees were ordinary people with no connection to the protest; they just happened to be where sweeps were taking place. Others were demonstrators who were arrested preemptively, without having committed any illegal acts. To transport the mass of prisoners, the police had to commandeer city buses; when even that wasn't enough, they hired Hertz and Avis rent-a-trucks.⁴⁸

The city jail quickly filled, even though the police crammed as many as twenty people into two-person cells. Another 1500 were packed into the jail's recreation yard. That still left thousands of prisoners, whom the police herded into an outdoor practice field next to RFK Stadium. Conditions were awful, with next to no sanitary facilities, blankets, or food. One anarchist wag made a sign proclaiming the football field, without much overstatement, "Smash the State Concentration Camp #1." The government had made a major misstep, which cost it public sympathy. People who had strongly disapproved of the Mayday Tribe's shutdown plan were appalled by the flagrant violation of civil liberties, and upset to see the nation's capital turned into an overt police state.

Local residents, especially African-Americans, almost immediately began supporting the imprisoned protesters by bringing food, blankets, and notes of encouragement to the football field and throwing them over the fence. Within a day, leaders of the district's African-American community, predominantly from the civil rights generation of the 1950s and early 1960s, organized a large-scale food drive for the crowd of arrestees, delivering the supplies in a twelve-car caravan. "We were the wave of the 60s, and these kids seem to us to be the wave of the 70s," veteran civil rights activist Mary Treadwell said to the press. "[We're] not going

to put our bodies on the line, we're not going to get our heads beaten, but we can at least support these people," she explained. "We gave them food so they could put their bodies on the line and disrupt the government. Anything that does that can help our people."⁴⁹

In retrospect, the moment seems rich in symbolism, almost like a passing of the direct-action torch. The black civil rights movement of Treadwell's generation had pioneered the use of nonviolent direct action in the United States, from the Montgomery bus boycott to the Southern lunch counter sit-ins to the abortive "stall-in" plan. By 1971, though, direct action had become an almost exclusively white affair. From the emergence of Black Power in 1966, black radicals had rejected even militant nonviolence in favor of what they called self-defense. The Black Panther Party and other black nationalist groups, recalls Kai Lumumba Barrow, a black radical organizer for nearly three decades, maintained that "as the heirs of Malcolm X, we are not going to just stand by idly. We're going to utilize self-defense to get our movement forward." She elaborates, "We took the position that nonviolent direct action placed us in a very passive position," and came to view it as a tactic for the privileged. From the early 1970s until the very end of the 1990s, when there was a major resurgence of direct action by movements of color, the movements that would build on the innovations of Mayday to create a new direct action tradition were overwhelmingly white.⁵⁰

Mayday was an ending as well as a beginning. It wasn't the last antiwar protest by a long shot, but it was the last big national one, and the last major one with ties to the fading New Left. "The white 'New Left' movement of the 1960s is dead and gone," one radical wrote in *Space City!*, a Houston underground paper. "Although government repression had something to do with its demise, the main cause of its death was its failure to confront honestly [the] problems of sexism, racism and ego-tripping in general." For all the efforts to create a decentralized action without "movement generals," Mayday was criticized as too centralized and dominated by Davis and his circle. It was, one activist observed, "hate-the-heavies time," and the complaints about Mayday revealed how dramatically the radical landscape was shifting. Another participant declared, "There were a lot of things about Mayday that were totally wrong. It was a mass mobilization, a national mobilization. It was elitistly organized, mostly by males. It was going to Washington." As Scagliotti puts it, "[Mayday was] the end of that sort of male radical leadership, the Rennie Davises, the Chicago 7, all those guys, the whole world of the counterculture mixed with radical street politics."⁵¹

An acrimonious follow-up conference in August revealed the fissures within the Mayday Tribe. There were separate gay and women's gatherings beforehand, which set a consciousness-raising and identity-focused tone for the conference as a whole. Activists from these groups challenged the rest of the Tribe to examine and overcome their own internal chauvinisms; many participants were left feeling defensive and attacked. "No one seemed to think the conference was functioning to resolve any political problems or effectively to plan any future actions," one attendee reported. "Yet most stayed to engage in the personal struggle with the questions of sexism and elitism in the Movement in general, in Mayday, and in themselves." The heavies didn't show, infuriating everyone else and underscoring in many people's minds the problem of "macho tripping within the movement." Straight white men, including more traditional leftists, just found the whole situation mystifying and uncomfortable. ("Gays dominate Mayday meeting in Atlanta," the left-wing paper *The Guardian* disapprovingly headlined its postconference report.)⁵²

A number of the women and gay participants, however, were energized by the gathering. Or rather -in a sign of the separatism, personalism, and inward focus that would characterize identity politics for much of the Seventies-they were energized by the time they spent among themselves. "For a number of us, gay and straight, the women's part of the conference was getting to know one another through dancing, swimming, making music together, singing,

rapping in small groups, in twos and threes, digging on each other," one woman wrote in Atlanta's underground paper. "We blew each other's minds by our beauty, our strength. We grew by loving each other." A gay man similarly described the gay caucuses as "really a high for me....I'd forgotten about the atmosphere of total personal openness, openness about one's deepest confusions, that is so lacking in straight-dominated meetings."⁵³

The Mayday Tribe ceased to exist soon afterwards. But in May 1972, when Nixon announced the mining of seven Vietnamese harbors, the legacy of Mayday was dramatically on display. Demonstrators all around the country quickly organized themselves and blocked highways, key intersections, and railroad tracks. The sites were mainly not notorious hotbeds of radicalism: They included Minneapolis, Albuquerque, Boulder, and Gainesville; Evanston, Illinois; East Lansing, Michigan; Oxford, Ohio. Protesters blocked the New York State Thruway and Chicago's Eisenhower Expressway; others shut down Santa Barbara's airport, by occupying its runways. In Davis, California, demonstrators sat down on Southern Pacific tracks; still more did the same on the Penn Central commuter line in New Brunswick, New Jersey. In Salt Lake City, antiwar protesters burned Nixon in effigy; in Columbus, Ohio, they threw rocks and potatoes at Vice President Agnew's limo.⁵⁴

It was nationwide mayhem, neither coordinated nor led by anyone. The Mayday Tribe might not have literally succeeded in its stated goal: "If the government won't stop the war, the people will stop the government." But its activist innovations influenced the shape of American protest movements for decades to come. As one participant observed in the protest's immediate aftermath, "Twenty thousand freaks carry the seeds now, and they've been blown to every corner of the land."⁵⁵

Notes

The author would like to thank the Institute for Anarchist Studies for its support.

1. Mayday Tactical Manual, author's collection, p. 3.
2. Mary McGrory is quoted in Noam Chomsky, "Mayday: The Case for Civil Disobedience," *The New York Review of Books* (17 June 1971); Carl Bernstein, "Rennie Davis: Make Clear...We Failed," *The Washington Post* (4 May 1971).
3. "Freaky people": Mark Goff, "Washington D.C. -Spring 1971," *The Bugle-American* (13-19 May 1971). The phrase "qualified martial law" was used by William H. Rehnquist, who was assistant attorney general at the time and later named to the Supreme Court. Quoted in an American Civil Liberties Union report, *Mayday 1971: Order without Law* (July 1972), p. 14. The government reported conflicting arrest totals, ranging from 13,245 to 14,164; a discussion of these figures is in the same report, pp. 64-65.
4. The quotations are from Tom Wells, *The War Within: America's Battle over Vietnam* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), p. 512. Also see George W. Hopkins, "'May Day' 1971: Civil Disobedience and the Vietnam Antiwar Movement," in *Give Peace a Chance: Exploring the Vietnam Antiwar Movement*, ed. Melvin Small and William D. Hoover (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992).
5. Clark Kerr, quoted in Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 636.
6. Undated Mayday Tribe publication, *May Flowers*, author's collection; David Dellinger, "Why Go to Washington?" *Spring Movement* (8 April 1971). This broadsheet is from the private collection of Ed Hedemann, who graciously shared this and other Mayday materials with me.
7. Fred Halstead, *Out Now! A Participant's Account of the American Movement against the Vietnam War* (New York: Monad Press, 1978). For a retrospective look at NPAC's approach

by a political sympathizer, see Carole Seligman, "Lessons of a Winning Antiwar Movement," *Socialist Action* June 1999).

8. Doug Jenness, "The May Day Tribe: Where It Goes Wrong," *The Militant* (May 14, 1971).

9. This undated broadsheet is also from the Hedemann collection. For PCPJ's perspective on the dispute, see David McReynolds, "Guerrilla War in the Movement," *WIN* (March 15, 1971).

10. The government initially prosecuted eight organizers, including Tom Hayden, Abbie Hoffman, and Jerry Rubin. But the Chicago 8 became the Chicago 7 after Judge Julius Hoffman ordered outspoken defendant Bobby Scale, a leader of the Black Panther Party, bound and gagged, charging him with contempt of court. All of the defendants were convicted of various charges, but the convictions were overturned on appeal-for everyone except Seale, who spent four years in jail for contempt.

11. Interview with Jerry Coffin, Troy N. Y., February 8, 2000.

12. Robert Alden, "CORE Maps Tie-Up on Roads to Fair," *The New York Times* (10 April 1964); Joseph Lelyveld, "CORE Suspends Chapter for Urging Tie-Up at Fair," *The New York Times* (11 April 1964); Joseph Lelyveld, "CORE Split Grows over Plan to Jam Traffic at Fair," *The New York Times* (12 April 1964); and Homer Bigart, "Fair Opens, Rights Stall in Fails; Protesters Drown Out Johnson; 300 Arrested in Demonstrations," *The New York Times* (23 April 1964).

13. The question of movement marshals was particularly contentious at that time, because of what had happened during the national demonstration that was hastily organized in May 1970 to respond to the Cambodia invasion. The planning was marred by bitter fighting between the factions that would eventually become NPAC and PCPJ-the Trotskyists and the pacifists-over whether there would be civil disobedience at this protest. Perhaps as many as 20,000 of the protesters were willing to risk arrest, including some members of Congress. But the Socialist Workers Party had supplied most of the marshals, who infuriated the direct action camp by maneuvering on the ground to prevent civil disobedience from happening.

14. Hal Straus, "The War of Numbers vs. the War in the Streets," *Berkeley Barb* (May 7-13, 1971); Mayday Tribe, "Getting it Together," undated leaflet, Hedemann collection; "April 24th Anti-War Rally: 250,000 People Come to D.C. So What?" *Quicksilver Times* (30 April-13 May 1971).

15. Mayday Tactical Manual, p. 3; Gandhi is quoted in Harris Wofford Jr., "Non-Violence and the Law: The Law Needs Help," in *Civil Disobedience: Theory and Practice*, ed. Hugo Adam Bedau (New York: Pegasus, 1969).

16. Coffin interview; telephone interview with S.J. Avery, 5 November 2000.

17. Maris Cakars, "Meaning of Mayday," *WIN* (June 1971); Mayday Tactical Manual, p. 4; "Mayday! Washington," undated leaflet, Hedemann collection; also see Robin Reisig, "Gandhi with a Raised Fist," *The Village Voice* (13 May 1971).

18. Mayday Tactical Manual, p. 3.

19. "In this Issue," *Liberation* (February 1972); interview with Ed Hedemann, New York, N.Y., November 10, 1999.

20. *Anti-Mass: Methods of Organization for Collectives* (Columbus, Ohio: Anok and Peace Press, n.d.). I am grateful to Steve Duncombe for sharing his copy of this pamphlet with me. As one example of its dissemination in this period, see the lengthy excerpts in the 30 July-13

August 1971 issue of Quicksilver Times, a D.C.-based underground newspaper that wholeheartedly supported the Mayday actions.

21. These identity-based movements were also, of course, concerned with representations—that is to say, portrayals—in the media, popular culture, school textbooks and curricula, and so on. For the most part, it was these sorts of activist initiatives that were labeled "political correctness" in the nineties.

22. Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 37. As samples of the rhetoric and activism of the other "power" and "liberation" movements, see the following: PUERTO RICAN POWER MOVEMENT: Frank Browning, "From Rumble to Revolution: The Young Lords," *Ramparts* (October 1970), and *The Young Lords Party* and Michael Abramson, *Palante: Young Lords Party* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1971). CHICANO POWER MOVEMENT: Carlos Munoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicana Movement* (London and New York: Verso, 1989). YELLOW POWER MOVEMENT: Amy Uyematsu, "The Emergence of Yellow Power in America," *Gidra* (October 1969), and William Wei, *The Asian American Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993). RED POWER MOVEMENT: Alvin M. Josephy Jr., *Red Power: The American Indians' Fight for Freedom* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), and Adam Fortunate Eagle, *Alcatraz! Alcatraz! The Indian Occupation of 1969-1971* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1992). WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT: Robin Morgan, ed., *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970). GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT: Karla Jay and Alien Young, *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation* (New York: Douglas Book Corporation, 1972).

23. "Sources of private troubles" is a quote from SDS's founding document, the Port Huron Statement, which is reprinted in numerous Sixties anthologies and in James Miller, *"Democracy Is in the Streets": From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), pp. 329-74. The description of small feminist groups is from Jo Freeman, *The Politics of Women's Liberation* (New York: David McKay Company, 1975), p. 103. My emphasis on the continuity between the New Left and women's liberation owes much to Alice Echols, "We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Notes Toward a Remapping of the Sixties," *Socialist Review* 92/2 (April-June 1992).

On feminist influences upon Mayday, see "Women Build for Mayday," *Quicksilver Times* (30 April-13 May 1971); Mariette, "Here We Are, We've Been Detained; Not One of Us Has Been Arraigned," *off our backs* (27 May 1971); and "Sexism in Peace City," *The Fifth Estate* (20-26 May 1971).

24. On the Iberian Anarchist Federation and its grupos de afinidad, see George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1962), pp. 381-93; telephone interview with Murray Bookchin, 6 November 2000.

25. See Sale, *SDS*, pp. 375-79; Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), pp. 247-60; Wells, *Ue War Within*, pp. 172-203, 212-19; and Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties: Protest in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 177-82. The phrase "disruptive confrontation" is from a November 1967 article by Marty Jezer, reprinted in *The Movement toward a New America: The Beginnings of Long Revolution*, ed. Mitchell Goodman (Philadelphia and New York: Pilgrim Press and Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), p. 470.

26. Ron Hahne, *Black Mask & Up Against the Wall Motherfucker: The Incomplete Works of Ron Hahne, Ben Morea, and the Black Mask Group* (London: Unpopular Books and Sabotage Editions, 1993), p. 119; telephone interview with Ben Morea, 4 July 2000;

- Bookchin interview. On Mother-fucker actions, see Osha Neumann, "Mother-fuckers Then and Now: My Sixties Problem," in *Cultural Politics and Social Movements*, ed. Marcy Darnovsky, Barbara Epstein, and Richard Flacks (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), pp. 55-73; and Gitlin, *The Sixties*, pp. 237-41.
27. Telephone interview with Jeff Jones, 20 June 2000.
 28. Interview with Judith Karpova, Philadelphia, Pa., July 30, 2000; Shin'ya Ono, "You Do Need a Weatherman," in *The Sixties Papers: Documents of a Rebellious Decade*, ed. Judith Clavir Albert and Stewart Edward Albert (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984), p. 258; Motor City SDS, "Break on Through to the Other Side," in *Weatherman*, ed. Harold Jacobs (Ramparts Press, 1970), p. 158. For more on the Weather organization, see Ron Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew: A History of the Weather Underground* (London and New York: Verso, 1997); and Gitlin, *The Sixties*, pp. 384-401.
 29. "Affinity Groups," *Berkeley Tribe* (29 May 1970); *The O.M. Collective, The Organizer's Manual* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), pp. 115-16. Although this manual wasn't published until 1971, it was largely written in the summer of 1970.
 30. Jones interview; Scagliotti interview; telephone interview with John Froines, 23 June 2000.
 31. Coffin interview; Froines interview.
 32. "The Chess of Ending a War," *Time* (10 May 1971); "Mayday: A Thousand Conspiracies," *Liberated Guardian* (20 May 1971).
 33. Joreen, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," in *Radical Feminism*, ed. Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anita Rapone (New York: New York Times Books, 1973), pp. 285-99.
 34. Interview with Perry Brass, New York City, 4 February 2000.
 35. "What Is Gay Liberation Front?" undated leaflet, International Gay Information Center Archives, Ephemera Collection, New York Public Library; Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants* (New York: Stein and Day, 1971), p. 55; Edward Sagarin, "Behind the Gay Liberation Front," *The Realist* (6 May 1970); Brass interview.
 36. Telephone interview with Warren J. Blumenfeld, 19 June 2000; Toby Marotta, *The Politics of Homosexuality* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981), p. 92.
 37. The GAA did not invent the zap; it was created by the pranksters of the Youth International Party, or Yippies, the late Sixties band of politicized hippies led by Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin. The Yippies, however, were more interested in gestures for their own sake-like throwing dollar bills onto the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, as an arch commentary on capitalist greed than in targeted actions with concrete goals.
 38. *Gay Mayday Tribe, Off the Butch in S.E. Asia*, undated leaflet, author's collection; "Mayday Is Gayday," *May Flowers*.
 39. Scagliotti interview; "The Biggest Bust," *Newsweek* (17 May 1971).
 40. Brass interview; Scagliotti interview.
 41. "Sexism in Peace City," *The Fifth Estate* (20-26 May 1971); Videofreex Mayday footage. I am deeply grateful to Eileen Clancy for tracking down some of the surviving video footage from Mayday, and to Parry D. Teasdale for allowing me to view it. For an account of how it was shot, see his book, *Videofreex: America's First Pirate TV Station and the Catskills Collective That Turned It On* (Hensonville, N.Y.: Black Dome Press, 1999).

42. "Everything You Need to Know," Quicksilver Times (30 April-13 May 1971); Videofreex Mayday footage. For more on the takeover of the concert stage, see "May Day (1)," off our backs (27 May 1971).
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