

**Saturday, 11 November 2023**

**9.00am-5.30pm, Worcester Room,  
Conference Centre (CC 004)**

University of Worcester, St. John's Campus,  
Henwick Grove, Worcester, WR2 6AJ, UK

## Pro- and Anti-War Voices



**Young Americans for Freedom** pro-Vietnam War Demonstration, Boston Common, December 7, 1969. Jeff Alberston Photograph Collection (PH 57). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

<https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/zoom/muph057-b002-sl269-i008>



**Navy Nurse Susan Schnall [GI Movement]** leads an anti-war march for peace in San Francisco on October 12, 1968. Harvey Richards Media Archive, copyright Paul Richards.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/19/waging-peace-vietnam-anti-war-exhibition-gi-viet-cong>

The Conference is organised in collaboration with  
the British Association for American Studies



## **Pro- and Anti-War Voices**

### **Conference Programme**

**09.00am** Registration and Coffee

#### **Keynote address:**

**10.00am** “‘The Most Savage National Debate’”: American Pro- and Anti-War Voices in Response to the Outbreak of War in 1939’ - Dr Andrew Johnstone, University of Leicester

**11.00am** Comfort Break

#### **Morning sessions:**

**11.20am** ‘Rethinking the “*Rage Militaire*”’: Popular Enthusiasm and the Patriotic Press in Britain and North America, 1774-1776’ – Dr Jon Chandler, University College London

**11.50am** “‘One is not conscripted into the Kingdom of God’”: Pacifist Activism in Civilian Public Service Periodicals’ – Caleb Woodall, PhD candidate, University of Cambridge

**12.20pm** “‘Born Across the Water and Reared Under the Flag’”: Welsh Americans and the Pro-War Voices of the American Civil War’ – Aled Jones, PhD candidate, Swansea University

**1.00–1.50 *Sandwich Lunch***

**Afternoon sessions:**

- 1.50pm** ‘For the Bomb, Against the Bomb: Analysis of the Letters to Truman regarding the Use of Atomic Bomb in Korea’ - Dr Jiri Pondelicek, Charles University, Prague
- 2.20pm** “‘Bring The Boys Home!’: We, the Mothers, Mobilize for America’s *Women’s Voice* Dissents Against World War II and the Korean War’ - Dr Wendy Toon, University of Worcester
- 2.50pm** ‘Servants of War: GI Opposition to the Vietnam War in the Pacific Northwest, 1970-1973’ – Joseph Rix, PhD candidate, University of Worcester
- 3.20pm** **Comfort Break**
- 3.45pm** ‘It’s my flag too, the Red, White and Blue’: Reflections on American Entry into World War II in Japanese American Assembly Center Newspapers’ – Maddie Hale, PhD candidate, University of Worcester
- 4.15pm** ‘The Affinity Group: A Story of Ideas and Dissent in Wartime’ – Dr Nick Witham, University College London
- 4.45pm** ‘Planter Women and the American Civil War’ – Dr Kristen Brill, Keele University
- 5.15pm** **Thanks/Close**

## Pro- and Anti-War Voices

**10.00am “The Most Savage National Debate”: American Pro- and Anti-War Voices in Response to the Outbreak of War in 1939’ - Dr Andrew Johnstone, University of Leicester**

Historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. called the debate over American entry into World War II the “most savage national debate of my lifetime.” After a decade of turning inwards to face the Great Depression and enacting Neutrality Acts that aimed to keep the United States out of future conflicts, Americans faced a dilemma when war broke out in Europe in September 1939. On the one hand, opinion polls revealed that Americans wanted to see Germany defeated and their sympathies clearly lay with Britain and France. Yet those same polls showed that the American people overwhelmingly wanted to remain out of the war and were unwilling to fight to achieve their preferred outcome. Over the next two years the American people engaged in a vigorous debate over how best to assist victims of fascist aggression in Europe without actually having to send troops overseas.

This talk examines that debate through the people involved and the arguments they made, the diverse political coalitions they represented, and the organisations they used to express their views. Rather than looking at the Roosevelt administration, it looks at the wide variety of citizens who engaged directly in the debate, and at the organizations that sought to both persuade and represent them. Those who wanted the nation to do more to help Britain supported citizens’ groups including the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies; for those who wanted war there was the Fight For Freedom Committee. The diverse coalition that wanted to keep out of war found homes in a variety of organisations, most notably the America First Committee. For twenty-seven months, the American people spoke out both for and against war in a debate only resolved by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

**11.20am ‘Rethinking the “*Rage Militaire*”: Popular Enthusiasm and the Patriotic Press in Britain and North America, 1774-1776’ – Dr Jon Chandler, University College London**

War enthusiasm and war weariness are usually assumed to play a principal part in determining how any state will respond to conflict. Recent scholarship has begun to establish that the conflicts of the twentieth century were conducted with public

sentiments very much in mind. In particular, historians of the First World War have begun to question the depth of the unstoppable popular passion for war that appeared to take hold of Europe at the beginning of the conflict. The global wars of the eighteenth century, however, are normally assumed to have been conducted by elite actors largely shielded from the pressures of popular opinion. This paper will challenge this enduring interpretation by uncovering the capability of ordinary people in the early modern period to influence decisions to go to war and make peace. The eighteenth-century was a period in which Britain fluctuated between war and peace, victory and defeat, success and catastrophe. These oscillations had vastly different effects on different types of people in different regions. It was also a period of substantial social and economic advancements, accompanied by increased awareness of emotion in both private and public spheres. In other words, this was a period when people were becoming more understanding of emotional expression, and more conscious of their ability to affect political change. Through an examination of popular responses to declarations of war and peace, this paper will argue that the emotional responses to the American War of Independence that were circulated in newspapers and correspondence, or publicly expressed on the streets, were conspicuously, even if unintentionally, political. Correspondents, editors and ordinary people were assuming that their display of emotion would deliver some response, while from their often unsuccessful efforts to manipulate war enthusiasm it would seem that policy-makers were more concerned by public opinion than has been previously thought.

**11.50am “One is not conscripted into the Kingdom of God”:  
Pacifist Activism in Civilian Public Service  
Periodicals’ – Caleb Woodall, PhD candidate, University  
of Cambridge**

During World War II, the Selective Service System assigned 11,996 conscientious objectors to the Civilian Public Service as an alternative to participation in the military. In the CPS, these men went on to complete “work of national importance under civilian direction”: they fought forest fires, gave their bodies over to scientific experiments, and staffed the nation’s mental hospitals. In short, within CPS, many COs demonstrated through their labor their loyalty to the United States even as they rejected the war on which that nation’s future depended.

Alongside their “work of national importance”, however, these conscientious objectors consumed the literature of pacifist groups such as the War Resistance League, while producing a voluminous anti-war literature of their own from within the CPS camps. The pacifist activism of the conscientious objector has often been overlooked in the United States’ national remembrance of the “good war”. In this paper, then, I propose to examine the pacifist voices of men “on the ground” in CPS by interrogating an array of CPS camp periodicals produced from 1941 to 1945. The paper thus promises to add a bottom-up dimension to the history of conscientious objection during World War II by shifting our focus from national pacifist organisations—like the War Resistance League and the Historic Peace Churches—to the activities and pronouncements of the men who gave up their freedom to maintain their commitment to peace.

**12.20pm “Born Across the Water and Reared Under the Flag”:  
Welsh Americans and the Pro-War Voices of the  
American Civil War’ – Aled Jones, PhD candidate,  
Swansea University**

This paper will demonstrate that Welsh Americans as an ethno-cultural minority were fervent in their outspoken support of the American Civil War as a method of asserting their legitimacy as American citizens. The role of the community and voices of ordinary Welsh Americans was critical in this regard, as any outspoken opposition to the war resulted in derision and social ostracization. Welsh-language newspapers from Pennsylvania and New York, namely the *Cenhadwr Americanaidd*, *Drych*, *Seren Orllewinol* and *Cyfaill o'r Hen Wlad* provide us with an excellent repository of authentic letters from Welsh Americans civilians and soldiers in the Union army who were vehement in their support for the war effort.

Surprisingly, these pro-war voices have been largely ignored, with only a handful of scholarly studies on Welsh Americans during the Civil War being published in the last 70 years. Consequently, this paper can contribute to wider Civil War scholarship as well as Welsh Trans-Atlantic history. This paper's analysis will be framed in three parts. Firstly, I will demonstrate how community leaders influenced pro-war feeling among the Welsh American populace, using a mixed narrative of abolitionism, nationalism and religiosity. Secondly, I will examine the written correspondence of Welsh American volunteers in the Union army, who eagerly maintained the perception that they were fighting for the Union or else risk social ostracization. Thirdly, I will explore the scant evidence of Welsh anti-war sentiment and how it made its way past the informal censorship of the pro-war, ultra-nationalist Welsh language press of North America.

**1.50pm ‘For the Bomb, Against the Bomb: Analysis of the  
Letters to Truman regarding the Use of Atomic Bomb  
in Korea’ - Dr Jiri Pondelicek, Charles University, Prague**

For better or worse, nuclear weapons have been a part of our everyday reality ever since they were devised and used in 1945. Both popular and professional movements have emerged calling for nuclear disarmament. As Nina Tannenwald theorized, a sort of taboo against their use was established during the 1950s and 1960s. The exponential growth in their destructive power has led to an understanding that they are practically useless as anything but a weapon of the last resort. This is also evidenced in the current Russian aggression against Ukraine, where despite nuclear threats made publicly on the Russian state TVs by different hosts and hostesses, we can observe restraint on the part of the leaders and no clamour for them to be used by the majority of the population.

It was not always so. During the Korean War the Americans were much more open to using the bomb. It is true that according to a Gallup Poll from August 1950, only 28% favoured its use and 60% opposed it. Nevertheless, when asked whether they would support it in case an open war with China would start, 45%, a plurality, said yes. These figures, however, do not provide an insight into the reasoning of those people. There is a source, though, which allows us to examine their attitudes in more detail. Letters and telegrams that ordinary people wrote to the president Truman survive in the archives in his Presidential Library.

Virtually all of them are written by regular citizens. A great many of them are handwritten. There is no concerted campaign as among the telegrams Truman received after the first Soviet Atomic test. In 1949 the president received many telegrams with the same message repeated almost verbatim by different people. In 1950, the letters and occasional telegrams are much more personal, thus they do not fall into neat categories. There is letter by a man opposing the intervention in Korea, but supporting the use of the bomb, because he believed that it would end the war quickly. One woman realizes it would mean war with the USSR and acknowledges it would be a very devastating conflict, but prefers it anyway. Many on the side arguing against use religious language and there are many from Christian and women's organizations. It is all the more interesting to note which ones the president's staffers decided to show him and keep. I believe that the analysis of this correspondence provides important insight, which is all the more relevant given the current state of affairs.

## **2.20pm “Bring The Boys Home!”: We, the Mothers, Mobilize for America's Women's Voice Dissents Against World War II and the Korean War’ - Dr Wendy Toon, University of Worcester**

One of the most significant ways in which American women responded to World War II was the “Mothers’ Movement”. They made arguments based on maternalism, the primacy of a woman's role as mother, and claimed that women, as a group, should be the moral conscience of the nation. From February 1941 Chicago's We, the Mothers, Mobilize for America Inc. (WMMA) protested against war preparedness, the peacetime draft and the Lend-Lease Bill. However, unlike most antiwar groups that collapsed after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, these mothers continued their violent rhetorical attacks on President Franklin Roosevelt, his administration, and the war itself throughout the entirety of the conflict and long into the postwar period. Women's Voice, the group's monthly newsletter, published from August 1942 to 1961, represented women's antiwar voices in two ways. First, its title claims to be speaking for all women. (When pushed, a mothers' representative clarified that they represented approximately 80% of women!) Second, through the “Correspondence” section, the voices of women who were persuaded by WMMA's viewpoint on the war and those who should be held accountable for the imperilling/loss of their “boys” can be heard.

As this paper will attest although presenting themselves as righteous Christian patriots, their detractors viewed them variously as pro-fascist, anti-British, anti-Semitic, dangerous “propagandists”, the “Mom Menace”, seditionists and therefore “traitors”. During World War II their calls for a negotiated peace with the Nazis and Japan and the impeachment of Roosevelt were particularly contentious, resulting in both WMMA and their president, Lyril Clark Van Hyning, being indicted by a Grand Jury. Whilst these “mothers” could be dismissed as outliers or “lunatics” (as FDR was inclined to characterize them), they represent an important facet of right-wing responses to both World War II and the Korean War. van Hyning remained a significant figure in the postwar “Mothers’ Movement” taking a stand against world cooperation, especially the United Nations Organization, and, perhaps surprisingly given their anti-Communist origins, Truman, Eisenhower, and their Administrations. These (ultra-)conservative calls for peace reveal an important episode in the long history of women’s involvement in antiwar movements.

**2.50pm ‘Servants of War: GI Opposition to the Vietnam War in the Pacific Northwest, 1970-1973’ – Joseph Rix, PhD candidate, University of Worcester**

In the 1962 Port Huron Statement, Tom Hayden declared ‘we are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit’. In the early 1960s, this sentiment perfectly encapsulated the youthful endeavour of students at elite universities to argue for a more democratic form of mainstream politics, directly confront racism in America, and fight for nuclear disarmament and the end of the Cold War. However, by 1968, the situation had transformed, and it was no longer just students who were advocating the vision of a better America expounded by Hayden. One of the most important, yet overlooked, vanguards of this movement and the movement to end the war in Vietnam came, not from students, but from those bred in a larger degree of discomfort, housed in military barracks across the United States, and looking uncomfortably to a world in which they potentially have no part.

Political rhetoric, popular culture, and even histories have stereotyped the participants of the anti-war movement as the privileged, white, middle-class students to whom Hayden referred. However, this talk will focus on the anti-war critiques of those being forced to participate in the Vietnam War; those Americans whose lives the war affected the most. Specifically, this paper will analyse the voices of those GIs engaged in creating, writing, and distributing the underground anti-war newspaper, the *Lewis-McChord Free Press*. Located on Fort Lewis, McChord Air Force Base, and Bremerton Naval Yard, in the early 1970s, these GIs used this newspaper to express their discontent with the war they were being forced to fight and the institution of the military itself. Utilising both the newspaper and oral testimony, this paper will demonstrate that GI protests went beyond pragmatic concerns and encompassed broader criticisms of US politics and society. GIs linked the Vietnam War to domestic concerns regarding racism, oppression of migrant workers, subjugation of the working-classes, and sexism and misogyny through criticisms of capitalism and a perceived US imperialism. In this way, GIs used their voices to espouse a structural view in which the causes of foreign policy problems and domestic issues were one and the same.



**3.45pm ‘It’s my flag too, the Red, White and Blue’: Reflections on American Entry into World War II in Japanese American Assembly Center Newspapers’ – Maddie Hale, PhD candidate, University of Worcester**

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which provided the basis for the forced relocation and incarceration of over 100,000 Japanese Americans on the West Coast. They were moved first to temporary ‘Assembly Centers,’ before being transferred to more permanent ‘Relocation Centers,’ where they were to spend the duration of the war. No distinction was made between *issei*, who were Japanese-born, and *nisei*, who were American-born. ‘A viper is nonetheless a viper wherever the egg is hatched,’ suggested the *Los Angeles Times* on February 2, 1942, in an article advocating for the incarceration. Despite there being no evidence of Japanese American subversion, they were seen as fundamentally ‘Japanese,’ and therefore disloyal, because of their race. Similar large-scale incarceration of German- and Italian Americans, though considered, was never implemented.

Newspapers were very quickly instated at the camps by the incarcerated, under army censorship, as a solution to administrative chaos, and as a vehicle for boosting morale. This paper will focus specifically on the newspapers of the ‘Assembly Centers,’ the sixteen makeshift camps in which Japanese Americans spent the early months of their incarceration, which have been largely excluded from the historiography of this episode. The tone of the newspapers is optimistic and overwhelmingly positive, and encouragement is given to Japanese Americans to shelve their grievances, and to do their part for the war effort. Primarily the war is seen as an opportunity for them to prove themselves as loyal Americans. The newspapers present a very positive view of the war, and of the United States’ role in it. Editorials express pride in being American, and satisfaction in fighting for democracy and against racism. This may be surprising as these pro-war voices claimed to be fighting for American principles that were incongruous with the incarceration of tens of thousands of Japanese Americans.

**4.15pm ‘The Affinity Group: A Story of Ideas and Dissent in Wartime’ – Dr Nick Witham, University College London**

This paper starts with a pair of photographs. They were taken in Lafayette Square, Washington DC, on 1 May 1971, two days before a massive protest against the Vietnam War brought the city to a standstill and led to the largest mass arrest in American history. The photographs depict an “affinity group” made up of three women and six men. Among them are the prominent public intellectuals and anti-war activists Noam Chomsky, Daniel Ellsberg, Marilyn Young, and Howard Zinn.

I use the photographs to explore the methodological and historiographical issues raised by my current book project, which is a collective biography of the affinity group, with a specific focus on Chomsky, Ellsberg, Young, and Zinn. Extending both backward and forward in time from the Vietnam era, I use the group's life stories and friendships to chart the global significance of anti-war ideas and dissent from World War II to the War on Terror. This was a period of transformation in American military power that the historian Mary Dudziak labels "wartime," during which near-constant American involvement in armed conflict blurred the chronological boundaries usually imagined between periods of "conflict" and periods of "peace."

In outlining the contours of the project, I hope to show how and why the anti-war voices of the affinity group became so prominent, both in the US and around the world. I will also reflect on their influence on everyday understandings of war and the most effective strategies for opposing it. In doing so, I am excited to join a genuinely global conversation about the significance of anti-war activism, and to seek feedback on my project from a range of scholarly voices that both incorporate and transcend my usual communities of discourse in American Studies and United States history.

#### **4.45pm 'Planter Women and the American Civil War' – Dr Kristen Brill, Keele University**

This paper will examine the ways in which white planter women became symbols of the Confederate cause in the American Civil War (1861-65). The war offered new opportunities for planter women to voice and showcase their contributions to southern society, such as writing pro-Confederate polemics for periodicals like the *Southern Literary Messenger*. Still, one of the most decisive impacts planter women had on the Confederate cause was as nationalist symbols, projected by Confederate elites to strengthen Confederate nationalism on the home front and front lines. The portrayal of Confederate nurses laboring in homes and hospitals, the fundraising and political campaigns of Ladies' Gunboat Associations and the statesmanship of women like Rose Greenhow, created a potent gendered narrative of the young Confederate republic. Planter women held agency in this process; they played active roles in shaping their symbolism and garnering support for the war effort. Working together, the Confederate state and planter women recognized the emotive power of this gendered representation of nationalism and used it to advance their shared agenda of Confederate victory in the American Civil War.