

GRADE 12 HISTORY**WOMEN'S MOVEMENT****IF. WOMEN'S STRIKE FOR PEACE (WSP)**

Women Strike for Peace was founded by Bella Abzug and Dagmar Wilson in 1961 and was initially part of the movement for a ban on nuclear testing and to end the Vietnam War, first demanding a negotiated settlement, and later total United States withdrawal from Southeast Asia. They used many tactics that were different forms of legal pressure that include petitions, demonstrations, letter writing, mass lobbies, lawsuits and they lobbied individual Congressmen with a proxy request from the Congressman's constituent. They also had a few forms of illegal, nonviolent direct action activities that included sit-ins in congressional offices, and statements of complicity with draft resisters aimed at tying up the courts.

On November 1, 1961, at the height of the Cold War, about 50,000 women brought together by Women Strike for Peace marched in 60 cities in the United States to demonstrate against nuclear weapons. It was the largest national women's peace protest of the 20th century. About 1,500 women led by Dagmar Wilson gathered at the foot of the Washington Monument and President John F. Kennedy watched from a window at the White House. The protest helped "push the United States and the Soviet Union into signing a nuclear test-ban treaty two years later".

WSP is significant among peace organizations for its lack of official hierarchy and exclusive dependence on the volunteerism of women across the United States. Composed of mostly white, educated, middle-class women, the WSP utilized the post-World War II female domestic roles of mother and wife to call women to advocate for peace for the sake of their children. Because of this core conviction of familial protection, WSP leaders believed they could convince the "average woman" to work for peace. In doing so, WSP women challenged Cold War era notions of militarism and gendered roles.

The 1963 Test-Ban Treaty agreement between the Soviet Union and United States prohibited above ground nuclear testing. This was counted as an important success for WSP. By 1964, WSP members focused their energies on protesting the Vietnam War. Among their activities during the war, WSP women organized countless public demonstrations and rallies across the United States, met with women from North and South Vietnam, organized boycotts, met with United Nations and political figures, and counseled draft resisters. The group maintained a strong and concerted opposition until the war's end in 1975.



Event: Bella Abzug's Inauguration, Washington, DC. January 21, 1971

Censure Nixon Rally, Women Strike for Peace Washington, D.C. January 18, 1972



**Elizabeth Moos (holding sign)
Event: Women Strike for Peace
Anti-War Demonstration
Capital, Washington, D.C.
March 22, 1973**