**Weather Underground**

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*This article is about the United States political organization. For other uses, see* [*Weather Underground (disambiguation)*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_Underground_(disambiguation))*.*

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| **Weather Underground** | |
| Participant in the [Anti-Vietnam War movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opposition_to_United_States_involvement_in_the_Vietnam_War) and the [Black Power movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Power_movement) | |
| *"Our signature was...letters of explanation.... Each letter had a logo hand-drawn across the page...."* — BILL AYERS | |
| **Active** | 1969-1977 |
| **Ideology** | [Marxism–Leninism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marxism%E2%80%93Leninism), [Communism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communism), [Anti-imperialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-imperialism), [New Left](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Left) |
| **Groups** | [Seattle Weather Collective](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seattle_Weather_Collective) [Women's Brigade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_Brigade_of_Weather_Underground) |
| **Leaders** | [Bill Ayers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Ayers) and others |
| **Area of operations** | [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) |
| **Part of** | [Students for a Democratic Society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Students_for_a_Democratic_Society) |
| **Became** | [May 19th Communist Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_19th_Communist_Organization) |
| **Allies** | [Black Liberation Army](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Liberation_Army) [Black Panther Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Panther_Party) |
| **Opponents** | [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) |
| **Battles and wars** | [Brink's robbery (1981)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brink%27s_robbery_(1981)) [Days of Rage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Days_of_Rage) [Greenwich bombing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenwich_Village_townhouse_explosion) [Weather High School Jailbreaks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_High_School_Jailbreaks) |

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| Part of [a series](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Socialism) on |
| [**Socialism in the United States**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_socialist_movement_in_the_United_States) |
|  |
| History  [**Utopian socialism**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopian_socialism)   * [New Harmony](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Harmony,_Indiana) * [Brook Farm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brook_Farm) * [Oneida Community](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oneida_Community) * [Icarians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icarians) * [Bishop Hill Commune](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop_Hill,_Illinois#History) * [*Looking Backward*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Looking_Backward)   [**Progressive Era**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressive_Era)   * [St. Louis Commune](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1877_St._Louis_general_strike) * [1912 Lawrence Textile Strike](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1912_Lawrence_Textile_Strike) * [Labor unionisation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labor_history_of_the_United_States) * [Women's suffrage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage_in_the_United_States) * [Haymarket affair](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haymarket_affair) * [May Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Workers%27_Day)   [**Repression and persecution**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Scare)   * [Espionage Act of 1917](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Espionage_Act_of_1917) * [First Red Scare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Red_Scare) * [American Defense Society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Defense_Society) * [American Protective League](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Protective_League) * [Seattle General Strike](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seattle_General_Strike) * [The Communist Party USA and African Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Communist_Party_USA_and_African_Americans) * [Communists in the United States Labor Movement (1919–37)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communists_in_the_United_States_Labor_Movement_(1919%E2%80%9337)) * [Communists in the United States Labor Movement (1937–50)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communists_in_the_United_States_Labor_Movement_(1937%E2%80%9350)) * [McCarthyism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McCarthyism) * [Smith Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smith_Act) / [Smith Act trials](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smith_Act_trials_of_Communist_Party_leaders) * [John Birch Society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Birch_Society)   [**Civil Rights**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American_Civil_Rights_Movement_(1954%E2%80%9368)) **/** [**Anti-imperialism**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opposition_to_United_States_involvement_in_the_Vietnam_War)   * [New Left](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Left) * [Poor People's Campaign](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poor_People%27s_Campaign) * [COINTELPRO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COINTELPRO) |
| **Parties and organizations** |
| *Active*   * [Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Committees_of_Correspondence_for_Democracy_and_Socialism) * [Communist Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Party_USA) * [Democratic Socialists of America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Socialists_of_America) * [Freedom Road Socialist Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_Road_Socialist_Organization) * [Freedom Socialist Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_Socialist_Party) * [Industrial Workers of the World](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrial_Workers_of_the_World) * [International Socialist Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Socialist_Organization) * [Party for Socialism and Liberation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Party_for_Socialism_and_Liberation) * [Peace and Freedom Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_and_Freedom_Party) * [Progressive Labor Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressive_Labor_Party_(United_States)) * [Revolutionary Communist Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolutionary_Communist_Party,_USA) * [Socialist Action](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_Action_(United_States)) * [Socialist Alternative](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_Alternative_(United_States)) * [Socialist Equality Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_Equality_Party_(United_States)) * [Socialist Organizer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_Organizer) * [Socialist Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_Party_USA) * [Socialist Workers Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_Workers_Party_(United_States)) * [Spartacist League](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spartacist_League_(US)) * [Students for a Democratic Society (2006 organization)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Students_for_a_Democratic_Society_(2006_organization)) * [Workers World Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workers_World_Party) * [World Socialist Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Socialist_Party_of_the_United_States) |
| *Former*   * [Social Democracy of America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Democracy_of_America) * [Socialist Labor Party of America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_Labor_Party_of_America) * [Social Democratic Party of America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Democratic_Party_of_America) * [Socialist Party of America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_Party_of_America) * [Social Democratic Federation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Democratic_Federation_(U.S.)) * [Democratic Socialist Federation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Socialist_Federation) * [Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Socialist_Organizing_Committee) * [Social Democrats, USA](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Democrats,_USA) * [Farmer–Labor Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farmer%E2%80%93Labor_Party_(United_States)) * [Proletarian Party of America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proletarian_Party_of_America) * [Communist League of America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_League_of_America) * [American Workers Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Workers_Party) * [Workers Party of the United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workers_Party_of_the_United_States) * [American Labor Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Labor_Party) * [Puerto Rican Socialist Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puerto_Rican_Socialist_Party) * [Black Panther Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Panther_Party) * [White Panther Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Panther_Party) * [Youth International Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Youth_International_Party) * **Weather Underground** * [Communist Workers' Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_Workers%27_Party_(United_States)) * [Maoist Internationalist Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maoist_Internationalist_Movement) * [New American Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_American_Movement) * [Students for a Democratic Society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Students_for_a_Democratic_Society) * [I Wor Kuen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Wor_Kuen) * [Brown Berets](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_Berets) * [Young Lords Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young_Lords_Organization) * [Young Lords Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young_Lords_Party) |
| Literature[[show]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_Underground##)   * [*The Jungle*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Jungle) * [*Appeal to Reason*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appeal_to_Reason_(newspaper)) * [*International Socialist Review*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Socialist_Review_(1900)) * [*Looking Backward*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Looking_Backward) * [*The Other America*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Other_America) * [*Daily Worker*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daily_Worker) * [*Monthly Review*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monthly_Review) * [*Why Socialism?*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Why_Socialism%3F) * [*Voluntary Socialism*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voluntary_Socialism) * [*Monopoly Capital*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monopoly_Capital) |
| Related topics[[show]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_Underground##)   * [American Left](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Left) * [Anarchism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anarchism) * [Anarchism in the United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anarchism_in_the_United_States) * [Socialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialism) * [Utopian socialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopian_socialism) * [Scientific socialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific_socialism) * [Marxism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marxism) * [Marxism–Leninism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marxism%E2%80%93Leninism) * [Labor history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labor_history_of_the_United_States) * [Labor unions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labor_unions_in_the_United_States) * [Libertarian socialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libertarian_socialism) * [Labor laws](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_labor_law) * [Minimum wage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minimum_wage_in_the_United_States) |
| * [**Socialism portal**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:Socialism)  * [**Politics portal**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:Politics) |
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The **Weather Underground Organization** (**WUO**), commonly known as the **Weather Underground**, was an [American](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) [radical left-wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Far_left) organization founded on the [Ann Arbor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ann_Arbor,_Michigan) campus of the [University of Michigan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Michigan). Originally called **Weatherman**, the group became known colloquially as **the Weathermen**. Weatherman organized in 1969 as a [faction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_faction) of [Students for a Democratic Society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Students_for_a_Democratic_Society_(1960_organization)) (SDS) composed for the most part of the national office leadership of SDS and their supporters. Their goal was to create a clandestine revolutionary party for the overthrow of the [U.S. government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._government).

With revolutionary positions characterized by [black power](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Power) and opposition to the [Vietnam War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam_War), the group conducted a campaign of bombings through the mid-1970s and took part in actions such as the [jailbreak](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prison_escape) of Dr. [Timothy Leary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timothy_Leary). The "[Days of Rage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Days_of_Rage)", their first public demonstration on October 8, 1969, was a riot in Chicago timed to coincide with the trial of the [Chicago Seven](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago_Seven). In 1970 the group issued a "Declaration of a State of War" against the United States government, under the name "Weather Underground Organization".

The bombing campaign mostly targeted government buildings, along with several banks. Most were preceded by evacuation warnings, along with communiqués identifying the particular matter that the attack was intended to protest. No people were killed in any of their acts of property destruction, although three members of the group were killed in the [Greenwich Village townhouse explosion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenwich_Village_townhouse_explosion). Former members of the group robbed a [Brink's armored car in 1981](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brink%27s_robbery_(1981)), which resulted in the deaths of three people including Waverly Brown, the first black police officer on the [Nyack](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nyack,_New_York) police force.

For the bombing of the [United States Capitol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Capitol) on March 1, 1971, they issued a communiqué saying that it was "in protest of the U.S. invasion of [Laos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laos)". For the bombing of [the Pentagon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Pentagon) on May 19, 1972, they stated that it was "in retaliation for the U.S. bombing raid in [Hanoi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanoi)". For the January 29, 1975 bombing of the [United States Department of State](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_State) building, they stated that it was "in response to the escalation in [Vietnam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam_War)"

The Weathermen grew out of the [Revolutionary Youth Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolutionary_Youth_Movement) (RYM) faction of SDS. It took its name from [Bob Dylan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Dylan)'s lyric, "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows", from the song "[Subterranean Homesick Blues](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subterranean_Homesick_Blues)" (1965). "You Don't Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows" was the title of a [position paper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Position_paper) that they distributed at an SDS convention in Chicago on June 18, 1969. This founding document called for a "white fighting force" to be allied with the "Black Liberation Movement" and other radical movements[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_Underground#cite_note-Berger-6#cite_note-Berger-6) to achieve "the destruction of U.S. [imperialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperialism) and achieve a [classless](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classless) world: world [communism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communism)".

The Weathermen began to disintegrate after the United States reached a peace accord in Vietnam in 1973, after which the [New Left](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Left) declined in influence. By 1977, the organization was defunct.

**Background and formation**

The Weathermen emerged from the campus-based [opposition to the Vietnam War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opposition_to_the_Vietnam_War), and from the [Civil Rights Movements](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_Rights_Movement) of the late 1960s. During this time, [United States military](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_military) action in [Southeast Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southeast_Asia), especially in Vietnam, escalated. In the U.S., the anti-war sentiment was particularly pronounced during the [1968 U.S. presidential election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._presidential_election,_1968).

With a growing protest movement in the United States and the global struggle in which [anti-imperialist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-imperialist) forces were on the march in Vietnam, Algeria, and Angola, the Weathermen believed they were on the winning side of history . . . ."

*— Ron Briley,* [*History News Network*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_News_Network)[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_Underground#cite_note-9#cite_note-9)

The origins of the Weathermen can be traced to the collapse and fragmentation of the [Students for a Democratic Society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Students_for_a_Democratic_Society_(1960_organization)) following a split between office holders of SDS, or "National Office", and their supporters and the [Progressive Labor Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressive_Labor_Party_(United_States)) (PLP). During the factional struggle National Office leaders such as [Bernardine Dohrn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernardine_Dohrn) and [Mike Klonsky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mike_Klonsky) began announcing their emerging perspectives, and Klonsky published a document titled "Toward a [Revolutionary Youth Movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolutionary_Youth_Movement)" (RYM).

RYM promoted the philosophy that young workers possessed the potential to be a revolutionary force to overthrow capitalism, if not by themselves then by transmitting radical ideas to the working class. Klonsky's document reflected the philosophy of the National Office and was eventually adopted as official SDS doctrine. During the summer of 1969, the National Office began to split. A group led by Klonsky became known as RYM II, and the other side, RYM I, was led by Dohrn and endorsed more aggressive tactics such as [direct action](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_action), as some members felt that years of [non-violent resistance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-violent_resistance) had done little or nothing to stop the Vietnam War. The Weathermen strongly sympathized with the radical [Black Panthers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Panthers). The police killing of Panther [Fred Hampton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fred_Hampton) prompted the Weatherman to issue a declaration of war upon the United States government.

We petitioned, we demonstrated, we [sat in](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sit-in). I was willing to get hit over the head, I did; I was willing to go to prison, I did. To me, it was a question of what had to be done to stop the much greater violence that was going on.

*—*[*David Gilbert*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Gilbert_(activist))[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_Underground#cite_note-The_Weather_Underground-4#cite_note-The_Weather_Underground-4)

**SDS Convention, June 1969**

At an SDS convention in Chicago on June 18, 1969, the National Office attempted to persuade unaffiliated delegates not to endorse a takeover of SDS by Progressive Labor who had packed the convention with their supporters. At the beginning of the convention, two position papers were passed out by the National Office leadership, one a revised statement of Klonksy's RYM manifesto, the other called "You Don't Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows". The latter document outlined the position of the group that would become the Weathermen. It had been signed by [Karen Ashley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karen_Ashley), [Bill Ayers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Ayers), [Bernardine Dohrn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernardine_Dohrn), [John Jacobs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Jacobs_(student_leader)), [Jeff Jones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Jones_(activist)), Gerry Long, [Howie Machtinger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howard_Machtinger), Jim Mellen, [Terry Robbins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terry_Robbins), [Mark Rudd](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Rudd), and Steve Tappis. The document called for creating a clandestine revolutionary party.

The most important task for us toward making the revolution, and the work our collectives should engage in, is the creation of a mass revolutionary movement, without which a clandestine revolutionary party will be impossible. A revolutionary mass movement is different from the traditional revisionist mass base of "sympathizers". Rather it is akin to the Red Guard in China, based on the full participation and involvement of masses of people in the practice of making revolution; a movement with a full willingness to participate in the violent and illegal struggle.

At this convention the Weatherman faction of the Students for a Democratic Society, planned for October 8–11, as a "National Action" built around [John Jacobs'](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Jacobs_(student_leader)) slogan, "bring the war home".The National Action grew out of a resolution drafted by Jacobs and introduced at the October 1968 SDS National Council meeting in [Boulder, Colorado](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boulder,_Colorado). The resolution, titled "The Elections Don't Mean Shit—Vote Where the Power Is—Our Power Is In The Street" and adopted by the council, was prompted by the success of the [Democratic National Convention protests](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1968_Democratic_National_Convention_protest_activity) in August 1968 and reflected Jacobs' strong advocacy of [direct action](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_action).

As part of the "National Action Staff", Jacobs was an integral part of the planning for what quickly came to be called "Four Days of Rage". For Jacobs, the goal of the "[Days of Rage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Days_of_Rage)" was clear:

Weatherman would shove the war down their dumb, fascist throats and show them, while we were at it, how much better we were than them, both tactically and strategically, as a people. In an all-out civil war over Vietnam and other fascist U.S. imperialism, we were going to bring the war home. 'Turn the imperialists' war into a civil war', in Lenin's words. And we were going to kick ass.

In July 1969, 30 members of Weatherman leadership traveled to [Cuba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuba) and met with North Vietnamese representatives to gain from their revolutionary experience. The [North Vietnamese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Vietnam) requested armed political action in order to stop the U.S. government's war in Vietnam. Subsequently, they accepted funding, training, recommendations on tactics and slogans from Cuba, and perhaps explosives as well.

**SDS Convention, December 1969**

After the Days of Rage riots the Weatherman held the last of its National Council meetings from December 26 to December 31, 1969 in [Flint, Michigan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flint,_Michigan). The meeting, dubbed the ["War Council"](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flint_war_council) by the 300 people who attended, adopted Jacobs' call for violent revolution. Dohrn opened the conference by telling the delegates they needed to stop being afraid and begin the "armed struggle." Over the next five days, the participants met in informal groups to discuss what "going underground" meant, how best to organize collectives, and justifications for violence. In the evening, the groups reconvened for a mass "wargasm"—practicing [karate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karate), engaging in physical exercise, singing songs, and listening to speeches.

The War Council ended with a major speech by John Jacobs. Jacobs condemned the "pacifism" of white middle-class American youth, a belief which he claimed they held because they were insulated from the violence which afflicted blacks and the poor. He predicted a successful revolution, and declared that youth were moving away from passivity and apathy and toward a new high-energy culture of "repersonalization" brought about by drugs, sex, and armed revolution. "We're against everything that's 'good and decent' in honky America," Jacobs said in his most commonly quoted statement. "We will burn and loot and destroy. We are the incubation of your mother's nightmare."

Two major decisions came out of the War Council. The first was to go underground, and to begin a violent, armed struggle against the state without attempting to organize or mobilize a broad swath of the public. The Weather Underground hoped to create underground collectives in major cities throughout the country. In fact, the Weathermen eventually created only three significant, active collectives; one in California, one in the Midwest, and one in New York City. The New York City collective was led by Jacobs and Terry Robbins, and included [Ted Gold](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ted_Gold), [Kathy Boudin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kathy_Boudin), [Cathy Wilkerson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cathy_Wilkerson) (Robbins' girlfriend), and [Diana Oughton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diana_Oughton). Jacobs was one of Robbins' biggest supporters, and pushed Weatherman to let Robbins be as violent as he wanted to be. The Weatherman national leadership agreed, as did the New York City collective.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_Underground#cite_note-21#cite_note-21) The collective's first target was Judge John Murtagh, who was overseeing the trial of the "Panther 21".

The second major decision was the dissolution of SDS. After the summer of 1969 fragmentation of SDS, Weatherman's adherents explicitly claimed themselves the *real leaders* of SDS and retained control of the SDS National Office. Thereafter, any leaflet, label, or logo bearing the name "Students for a Democratic Society" (SDS) was in fact the views and politics of Weatherman, not of the slate elected by Progressive Labor. Weatherman contained the vast majority of former SDS National Committee members, including [Mark Rudd](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Rudd), [David Gilbert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Gilbert_(activist)) and Bernardine Dohrn. The group, while small, was able to commandeer the mantle of SDS and all of its membership lists, but with Weatherman in charge there was little or no support from local branches or members of the organization, and local chapters soon disbanded. At the War Council, the Weathermen had decided to close the SDS National Office, ending the major campus-based organization of the 1960s which at its peak was a mass organization with 100,000 members.

**Ideology**

The thesis of Weatherman theory, as expounded in its founding document, *You Don't Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows*, was that "the main struggle going on in the world today is between U.S. imperialism and the national liberation struggles against it",[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_Underground#cite_note-25#cite_note-25) based on [Lenin's theory of imperialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leninism#Imperialism), first expounded in 1916 in [*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperialism,_the_Highest_Stage_of_Capitalism). In Weatherman theory "oppressed peoples" are the creators of the wealth of empire, "and it is to them that it belongs." "The goal of revolutionary struggle must be the control and use of this wealth in the interest of the oppressed peoples of the world." "The goal is the destruction of US imperialism and the achievement of a classless world: world communism"

The Vietnamese and other third world countries, as well as third world people within the United States play a vanguard role. They "set the terms for class struggle in America...." The role of the "Revolutionary Youth Movement" is to build a centralized organization of revolutionaries, a "Marxist-Leninist Party" supported by a mass revolutionary movement to support international liberation movements and "open another battlefield of the revolution."

The theoretical basis of the Revolutionary Youth Movement was an insight that most of the American population, including both students and the supposed "middle class," comprised, due to their relationship to the instruments of production, the [working class](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Working_class), thus the organizational basis of the SDS, which had begun in the elite colleges and had been extended to public institutions as the organization grew could be extended to youth as a whole including students, those serving in the military, and the unemployed. Students could be viewed as workers gaining skills prior to employment. This contrasted to the Progressive Labor view which viewed students and workers as being in separate categories which could ally, but should not jointly organize.

FBI analysis of the travel history of the founders and initial followers of the organization emphasized contacts with foreign governments, particularly the Cuban and North Vietnamese and their influence on the ideology of the organization. Participation in the [Venceremos Brigade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venceremos_Brigade), a program which involved US students volunteering to work in the sugar harvest in Cuba, is highlighted as a common factor in the background of the founders of the Weather Underground, with China a secondary influence. This experience was cited by both Kathy Boudin and Bernardine Dohrn as a major influence on their political development.

Terry Robbins took the organization's name from the lyrics of the [Bob Dylan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Dylan) song, “[Subterranean Homesick Blues](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subterranean_Homesick_Blues),” which featured the lyrics “You don’t need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows.” The lyrics had been quoted at the bottom of an influential essay in the SDS newspaper, *New Left Notes*. By using this title the Weathermen meant, partially, to appeal to the segment of US youth inspired to action for [social justice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_justice) by Dylan’s songs.

The Weatherman group had long held that [militancy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Militant_(word)) was becoming more important than [nonviolent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonviolence) forms of [anti-war](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-war) action, and that university-campus-based demonstrations needed to be punctuated with more dramatic actions, which had the potential to interfere with the US military and [internal security apparatus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_intelligence_agencies#United_States). The belief was that these types of [urban guerrilla](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_guerrilla) actions would act as a catalyst for the coming revolution. Many international events indeed seemed to support the Weathermen’s overall assertion that [worldwide revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_revolution) was imminent, such as the tumultuous [Cultural Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_Revolution) in China; the [1968 student revolts in France](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_1968_in_France), [Mexico City](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tlatelolco_massacre) and elsewhere; the [Prague Spring](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prague_Spring); the [Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Ireland_Civil_Rights_Association); the emergence of the [Tupamaros](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tupamaros) organization in [Uruguay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uruguay); the emergence of the [Guinea-Bissauan Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guinea-Bissauan_Revolution) and similar [Marxist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marxist)-led independence movements throughout Africa; and within the United States, the prominence of the [Black Panther Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Panther_Party) together with a series of “ghetto rebellions” throughout poor [black](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American) neighborhoods across the country.

We felt that doing nothing in a period of repressive violence is itself a form of violence. That's really the part that I think is the hardest for people to understand. If you sit in your house, live your white life and go to your white job, and allow the country that you live in to murder people and to commit [genocide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genocide), and you sit there and you don't do anything about it, that's violence.

*—*[*Naomi Jaffe*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naomi_Jaffe)[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_Underground#cite_note-The_Weather_Underground-4#cite_note-The_Weather_Underground-4)

The Weathermen were outspoken advocates of the critical concepts that later came to be known as “[white privilege](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_privilege)” (described as white-skin privilege) and [identity politics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Identity_politics). As the [unrest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_unrest) in poor black neighborhoods intensified in the early 1970s, Bernardine Dohrn said, “White youth must choose sides *now.* They must either fight on the side of the oppressed, or be on the side of the oppressor.”

**Anti-imperialism, anti-racism, and white-privilege**

Weather maintained that their stance differed from the rest of the movement at the time in the sense that they predicated their critiques on the notion that they were engaged in "an anti-imperialist, anti-racist struggle". Weather put the *international* proletariat at the center of their political theory. Weather warned that other political theories, including those organizing around class interests or youth interests, were "bound to lead in a racist and chauvinist direction". Weather denounced other political theories of the time as "objectively racist" if they did not side with the international proletariat; such political theories, they argued, needed to be "smashed".

Members of Weather further contended that efforts at "organizing whites against their own perceived oppression" were "attempts by whites to carve out even more privilege than they already derive from the imperialist nexus". Weather's political theory sought to make every struggle an anti-imperialist, anti-racist struggle; out of this premise came their interrogation of critical concepts that would later be known as "[white privilege](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_privilege)". As historian Dan Berger writes, Weather raised the question "what does it means to be a white person opposing racism and imperialism?"

**Practice**

Shortly after its formation as an independent group, Weatherman created a central committee, the Weather Bureau, which assigned its [cadres](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professional_revolutionaries) to a series of [collectives](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Weather_Collectives) in major cities. These cities included New York, Boston, [Seattle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seattle_Weather_Collective), Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Buffalo, and Chicago, the home of the SDS' head office. The collectives set up under the Weather Bureau drew their design from [Che Guevara](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Che_Guevara)'s [*foco*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foco) theory, which focused on the building of small, semi-autonomous cells guided by a central leadership.

Members of collectives engaged in intensive criticism sessions which attempted to reconcile their prior and current activities and political positions to Weatherman doctrine. Monogamy and other exclusive sexual relationships came under attack, bisexuality was encouraged. Martial arts were practiced and occasional [direct actions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direct_action) were engaged in. This formation continued during 1969 and 1970 until the group went underground and a more relaxed lifestyle was adopted as the group blended into the [counterculture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counterculture_of_the_1960s).

**Recruitment**

Weather used various means by which to recruit new members and set into motion a nation-wide revolt against the government. Weather members aimed to mobilize people into action against the established leaders of the nation and the patterns of injustice which existed in America and abroad due to America's presence overseas. They also aimed to convince people to resist reliance upon their given privilege and to rebel and take arms if necessary. According to Weatherman, if people tolerated the unjust actions of the state, they became complicit in those actions. In the manifesto compiled by [Bill Ayers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Ayers), [Bernardine Dohrn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernardine_Dohrn), [Jeff Jones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Jones_(activist)), and Celia Sojourn, entitled "Prairie Fire: The Politics of Revolutionary Anti-Imperialism," Weatherman explained that their intention was to encourage the people and provoke leaps in confidence and consciousness in an attempt to stir the imagination, organize the masses, and join in the people's day-to-day struggles in every way possible.

In the year 1960, over a third of America’s population was under 18 years of age. The number of young citizens set the stage for a widespread revolt against perceived structures of racism, sexism, and classism, the violence of the Vietnam War and America’s interventions abroad. At college campuses throughout the country, anger against “the Establishment’s” practices prompted both peaceful and violent protest. The members of Weatherman targeted high school and college students, assuming they would be willing to rebel against the authoritative figures who had oppressed them, including cops, principals, and bosses. Weather aimed to develop roots within the class struggle, targeting white working-class youths. The younger members of the working class became the focus of the organizing effort because they felt the oppression strongly in regards to the military draft, low-wage jobs, and schooling

Schools became a common place of recruitment for the movement. In direct actions, dubbed [Jailbreaks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_High_School_Jailbreaks), Weather members invaded educational institutions as a means by which to recruit high school and college students. The motivation of these jailbreaks was the organization's belief that school was where the youth were oppressed by the system and where they learned to tolerate society’s faults instead of rise against them. According to “Prairie Fire”, young people are channeled, coerced, misled, miseducated, misused in the school setting. It is in schools that the youth of the nation become alienated from the authentic processes of learning about the world

Factions of the Weatherman organization began recruiting members by applying their own strategies. Women's groups such as The Motor City Nine and [Cell 16](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cell_16) took the lead in various recruitment efforts. [Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roxanne_Dunbar-Ortiz), a member of the radical women's liberation group, Cell 16, spoke about her personal recruitment agenda saying that she wanted their group to go out in every corner of the country and tell women the truth, recruit the local people, poor and working-class people, in order to build a new society

Berger explains the controversy surrounding recruitment strategies saying, “As an organizing strategy it was less than successful: white working class youths were more alienated than organized by Weather's spectacles, and even some of those interested in the group were turned off by its early hi-jinks” The methods of recruitment applied by the Weathermen met controversy as their call to arms became intensely radical and their organization's leadership increasingly exclusive.

**Armed propaganda**

In 2006 Dan Berger (writer, activist, and longtime anti-racism organizer)[[53]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_Underground#cite_note-53#cite_note-53) states that following their initial set of bombings, which resulted in the [Greenwich Village townhouse explosion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenwich_Village_townhouse_explosion), the organization adopted a new paradigm of direct action set forth in the communiqué [*New Morning, Changing Weather*](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=New_Morning,_Changing_Weather&action=edit&redlink=1), which abjured attacks on people. The shift in the organization's outlook was in good part due to the 1970 death of Weatherman [Terry Robbins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terry_Robbins), [Diana Oughton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diana_Oughton) and [Ted Gold](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ted_Gold), all graduate students, in the Greenwich Village townhouse explosion. Terry Robbins was renowned among the organization members for his radicalism and belief in violence as effective action.

According to Dan Berger a relatively sophisticated program of [armed propaganda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armed_propaganda) was adopted. This consisted of a series of bombings of government and corporate targets in retaliation for specific imperialist and oppressive acts. Small, well-constructed [time bombs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time_bomb) were used, generally in vents in restrooms, which exploded at times the spaces were empty. Timely warnings were made and communiqués issued explaining the reason for the actions.

**Major activities**

Main article: [List of Weatherman actions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Weatherman_actions)

**Haymarket Police Memorial bombing**



The [Haymarket Square](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haymarket_affair) police memorial, seen in 1889

Shortly before the [Days of Rage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Days_of_Rage) demonstrations on October 6, 1969,[[]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_Underground#cite_note-57#cite_note-57) the Weatherman planted a bomb that blew up a statue in Chicago built to commemorate police casualties incurred in the 1886 [Haymarket Riot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haymarket_Riot). The blast broke nearly 100 windows and scattered pieces of the statue onto the Kennedy Expressway below. The statue was rebuilt and unveiled on May 4, 1970 (coincidentally, the same day as the [Kent State massacre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kent_State_shootings)), only to be blown up by the Weathermen a second time on October 6, 1970. The statue was rebuilt once again and Mayor [Richard J. Daley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_J._Daley) posted a 24-hour police guard to protect it, however the statue was later destroyed again a third time. The monument was rebuilt and is located at Chicago Police Headquarters.

**"Days of Rage"**

Main article: [Days of Rage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Days_of_Rage)

One of the first acts of the Weathermen after splitting from SDS was to announce they would hold the "Days of Rage" that autumn. This was advertised to "Bring the war home!" Hoping to cause sufficient chaos to "wake" the American public out of what they saw as complacency toward the [role of the US in the Vietnam War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Role_of_United_States_in_the_Vietnam_War), the Weathermen meant it to be the largest protest of the decade. They had been told by their regional cadre to expect thousands to attend; however, when they arrived they found only a few hundred people.

According to [Bill Ayers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Ayers) in 2003, "The Days of Rage was an attempt to break from the norms of kind of acceptable theatre of 'here are the anti-war people: containable, marginal, predictable, and here's the little path they're going to march down, and here's where they can make their little statement.' We wanted to say, "No, what we're going to do is whatever we had to do to stop the violence in Vietnam.'" The protests did not meet Ayers' stated expectations.

Though the October 8, 1969 rally in Chicago had failed to draw as many as the Weathermen had anticipated, the two or three hundred who did attend shocked police by rioting through the affluent [Gold Coast neighborhood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold_Coast,_Chicago#Gold_Coast). They smashed the windows of a bank and those of many cars. The crowd ran four blocks before encountering police barricades. They charged the police but broke into small groups; more than 1,000 police counter-attacked. Many protesters were wearing motorcycle or football helmets, but the police were well trained and armed. Large amounts of [tear gas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tear_gas) were used, and at least twice police ran squad cars into the mob. The rioting lasted approximately half an hour, during which 28 policemen were injured. Six Weathermen were shot by the police and an unknown number injured; 68 rioters were arrested.

For the next two days, the Weathermen held no rallies or protests. Supporters of the RYM II movement, led by Klonsky and Noel Ignatin, held peaceful rallies in front of the federal courthouse, an International Harvester factory, and Cook County Hospital. The largest event of the Days of Rage took place on Friday, October 9, when RYM II led an interracial march of 2,000 people through a Spanish-speaking part of Chicago.

On October 10, the Weatherman attempted to regroup and resume their demonstrations. About 300 protesters marched through [The Loop](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago_Loop), Chicago's main business district, watched by a double-line of heavily armed police. The protesters suddenly broke through the police lines and rampaged through the Loop, smashing the windows of cars and stores. The police were prepared, and quickly isolated the rioters. Within 15 minutes, more than half the crowd had been arrested.

The Days of Rage cost Chicago and the state of Illinois approximately $183,000 ($100,000 for National Guard expenses, $35,000 in damages, and $20,000 for one injured citizen's medical expenses). Most of the Weathermen and SDS leaders were now in jail, and the Weathermen would have to pay over $243,000 for their [bail](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bail).

**Flint War Council**

Main article: [Flint War Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flint_War_Council)

The Flint War Council was a series of meetings of the Weather Underground Organization and associates in [Flint, Michigan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flint,_Michigan), that took place from 27–31 December 1969. During these meetings, the decisions were made for the Weather Underground Organization to go underground and to "engage in guerilla warfare against the U.S. government." This decision was made in response to increased pressure from law enforcement, and a belief that underground guerilla warfare was the best way to combat the U.S. government.

During a closed-door meeting of the Weather Underground's leadership, the decision was also taken to abolish Students for a Democratic Society. This decision reflected the splintering of SDS into hostile rival factions.

**New York City arson attacks**

On February 21, 1970, at around 4:30 a.m., three gasoline-filled [Molotov cocktails](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molotov_cocktail) exploded in front of the home of [New York Supreme Court](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_Supreme_Court) Justice John M. Murtagh, who was presiding over the pretrial hearings of the so-called "Panther 21" members of the [Black Panther Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Panther_Party) over a plot to bomb New York landmarks and department stores. Justice Murtagh and his family were unharmed, but two panes of a front window were shattered, an overhanging wooden eave was scorched, and the paint on a car in the garage was charred. "Free the Panther 21" and "[Viet Cong](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viet_Cong) have won" were written in large red letters on the sidewalk in front of the judge's house at 529 W. 217th Street in the [Inwood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inwood,_Manhattan) neighborhood of Manhattan. The judge's house had been under hourly police surveillance and an unidentified woman called the police a few minutes before the explosions to report several prowlers there, which resulted in a police car being sent immediately to the scene.

In the preceding hours, Molotov cocktails had been thrown at the second floor of [Columbia University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbia_University)'s International Law Library at 434 W. 116th Street and at a police car parked across the street from the Charles Street police station in the [West Village](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Village) in Manhattan, and at Army and Navy recruiting booths on Nostrand Avenue on the eastern fringe of the [Brooklyn College](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brooklyn_College) campus in Brooklyn, causing no or minimal damage in incidents of unknown relation to that at Judge Murtagh's home.

According to the December 6, 1970 "New Morning—Changing Weather" Weather Underground communiqué signed by [Bernardine Dohrn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernardine_Dohrn), and [Cathy Wilkerson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cathlyn_Platt_Wilkerson)'s 2007 memoir, the fire-bombing of Judge Murtagh's home was carried out by four members of the New York cell that was decimated two weeks later by the March 6, 1970 townhouse explosion.

**Greenwich Village townhouse explosion**

Main article: [Greenwich Village townhouse explosion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenwich_Village_townhouse_explosion)

On March 6, 1970, during preparations for the bombing of a Non-Commissioned Officers’ (NCO) dance at the [Fort Dix](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Dix) U.S. Army base and for Butler Library at Columbia University,[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_Underground#cite_note-djwnyt82403-2#cite_note-djwnyt82403-2) there was an explosion in a [Greenwich Village](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenwich_Village) [safe house](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Safe_house) when the [nail bomb](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nail_bomb) being constructed prematurely detonated for unknown reasons. WUO members [Diana Oughton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diana_Oughton), [Ted Gold](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ted_Gold), and [Terry Robbins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terry_Robbins) died in the explosion. [Cathy Wilkerson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cathy_Wilkerson) and [Kathy Boudin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kathy_Boudin) escaped unharmed. The site of the Village explosion was the former residence of [Merrill Lynch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merrill_Lynch) brokerage firm co-founder [Charles Merrill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_E._Merrill) and the childhood home of his son, poet [James Merrill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Merrill); the younger Merrill subsequently memorialized the event in his poem *18 West 11th Street*, the title being the address of the brownstone townhouse. Another writer, [Matthew Landy Steen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_Landy_Steen), composed a widely reprinted poem *How Does It Feel To Be Inside An Explosion?*

An FBI report later stated that the group had possessed enough explosives to "level ... both sides of the street". [Dustin Hoffman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dustin_Hoffman) was seen wandering the street afterwards; he lived in the townhouse next door.

The bomb preparations have been pointed out by critics of the claim that the Weatherman group did not try to take lives with its bombings. [Harvey Klehr](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvey_Klehr), the Andrew W. Mellon professor of politics and history at [Emory University](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emory_University) in Atlanta, said in 2003, "The only reason they were not guilty of mass murder is mere incompetence. I don't know what sort of defense that is."

**Underground strategy change**

After the Greenwich Village townhouse explosion, per the December 1969 [Flint war council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flint_war_council) decisions the group was now well underground, and began to refer to themselves as the Weather Underground Organization. At this juncture, WUO shrank considerably, becoming even fewer than they had been when first formed. The group was devastated by the loss of their friends, and in late April 1970, members of the Weathermen met in California to discuss what had happened in New York and the future of the organization. The group decided to reevaluate their strategy, particularly regarding their initial belief in the acceptability of human casualties, and rejected such tactics as kidnapping and assassinations.

In 2003, Weather Underground members stated in interviews that they wanted to convince the American public that the United States was truly responsible for the calamity in [Vietnam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam). The group began striking at night, bombing empty offices, with warnings always issued in advance to ensure a safe evacuation. According to [David Gilbert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Gilbert_(activist)), who took part in the [1981 Brink's robbery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brink%27s_robbery_(1981)) that killed 2 police officers and a Brinks' guard, and was jailed for murder, "[their] goal was to not hurt any people, and a lot of work went into that. But we wanted to pick targets that showed to the public who was responsible for what was really going on."[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_Underground#cite_note-The_Weather_Underground-4#cite_note-The_Weather_Underground-4) After the Greenwich Village explosion, in a review of the documentary film [*The Weather Underground*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Weather_Underground_(film)) (2002), a [*Guardian*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Guardian) journalist restated the film's contention that no one was killed by WUO bombs.

We were very careful from the moment of the townhouse on to be sure we weren't going to hurt anybody, and we never did hurt anybody. Whenever we put a bomb in a public space, we had figured out all kinds of ways to put checks and balances on the thing and also to get people away from it, and we were remarkably successful.

*—*[*Bill Ayers*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Ayers)*, 2003*

**Declaration of war**

In response to the death of Black Panther members [Fred Hampton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fred_Hampton) and [Mark Clark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Clark_(Black_Panther)) in December 1969 during a police raid, on May 21, 1970, the Weather Underground issued a "[Declaration of War](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Weather_Underground_Declaration_of_a_State_of_War)" against the United States government, using for the first time its new name, the "Weather Underground Organization" (WUO), adopting fake identities, and pursuing [covert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Covert) activities only. These initially included preparations for a bombing of a U.S. military non-commissioned officers' dance at [Fort Dix](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Dix), New Jersey in what [Brian Flanagan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brian_Flanagan) said had been intended to be "the most horrific hit the United States government had ever suffered on its territory".

We've known that our job is to lead white kids into armed revolution. We never intended to spend the next five to twenty-five years of our lives in jail. Ever since SDS became revolutionary, we've been trying to show how it is possible to overcome frustration and impotence that comes from trying to reform this system. Kids know the lines are drawn: revolution is touching all of our lives. Tens of thousands have learned that protest and marches don't do it. Revolutionary violence is the only way.

*—*[*Bernardine Dohrn*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernardine_Dohrn)

Bernardine Dohrn subsequently stated that it was Fred Hampton's death that prompted the Weather Underground to declare war on the US government.

We felt that the murder of Fred required us to be more grave, more serious, more determined to raise the stakes and not just be the white people who wrung their hands when black people were being murdered.

*— Bernardine Dohrn*

In December 1969, the Chicago Police Department, in conjunction with the FBI, conducted a raid on the home of [Black Panther](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Panther_Party) Fred Hampton, in which he and [Mark Clark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Clark_(Black_Panther)) were killed, with four of the seven other people in the apartment wounded. The survivors of the raid were all charged with assault and attempted murder. The police claimed they shot in self-defense, although a controversy arose when the Panthers, other activists and a Chicago newspaper reporter presented visual evidence, as well as the testimony of an FBI ballistics expert, showing that the sleeping Panthers were not [resisting arrest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resisting_arrest) and only fired one shot, as opposed to the more than one hundred the police fired into the apartment. The charges were later dropped, and the families of the dead won a $1.8 million settlement from the government. It was discovered in 1971 that Hampton had been targeted by the FBI's [COINTELPRO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COINTELPRO). True to Dohrn's words, this single event, in the continuing string of public killings of black leaders of any political stripe, was the trigger that pushed a large number of Weatherman and other students who had just attended the last SDS national convention months earlier to go underground and develop its logistical support network nationally.

On May 21, 1970, a communiqué from the Weather Underground was issued promising to attack a "symbol or institution of American injustice" within two weeks. The communiqué included taunts towards the FBI, daring them to try and find the group, whose members were spread throughout the United States. Many leftist organizations showed curiosity in the communiqué, and waited to see if the act would in fact occur. However, two weeks would pass without any occurrence. Then on June 9, 1970, their first publicly acknowledged bombing occurred at a [New York City](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City) police station, saying it was "in outraged response to the assassination of the [Soledad Brother](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soledad_Brothers) [George Jackson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Jackson_(Black_Panther))," who had recently been killed by prison guards in an escape attempt. The FBI placed the Weather Underground organization on the ten most-wanted list by the end of 1970.

**Activity in 1970**

On June 9, 1970, a bomb made with ten sticks of dynamite exploded in the [240 Centre Street](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/240_Centre_Street), the headquarters of the New York City Police Department. The explosion was preceded by a warning about six minutes prior to the detonation and subsequently by a WUO claim of responsibility.

On July 23, 1970, a Detroit federal grand jury indicted 13 Weathermen members in a national bombing conspiracy, along with several unnamed co-conspirators. Ten of the thirteen already had outstanding federal warrants.

In September 1970, the group accepted a $20,000 payment from the largest international [psychedelics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychedelics) distribution organization, called [The Brotherhood of Eternal Love](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Brotherhood_of_Eternal_Love), to break [LSD](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LSD) advocate [Timothy Leary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timothy_Leary) out of a California prison in [San Luis Obispo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Luis_Obispo), north of [Santa Barbara, California](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Barbara,_California),[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_Underground#cite_note-The_Weather_Underground-4#cite_note-The_Weather_Underground-4) and transport him and his wife to [Algeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algeria), where Leary joined [Eldridge Cleaver](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eldridge_Cleaver). Rumors also circulated that the funds were donated by an internationally known female folk singer in [Los Angeles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Los_Angeles) or by [Elephant's Memory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant%27s_Memory), which was [John Lennon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Lennon)'s backup band in New York City and was a factor with the attempted deportation of Lennon, who had donated bail money for radical groups.

In October 1970, [Bernardine Dohrn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernardine_Dohrn) was put on the [FBI's Ten Most Wanted List](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FBI_Ten_Most_Wanted_Fugitives,_1970s).

**Pentagon bombing**



Investigators search for clues after the May 19, 1972 Weatherman bombing of [the Pentagon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Pentagon).

On May 19, 1972, [Ho Chi Minh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ho_Chi_Minh)’s birthday, the Weather Underground placed a bomb in the women’s bathroom in the Air Force wing of [the Pentagon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Pentagon). The damage caused flooding that destroyed computer tapes holding classified information. Other radical groups worldwide applauded the bombing, illustrated by German youths protesting against American military systems in [Frankfurt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frankfurt). This was "in retaliation for the U.S. bombing raid in [Hanoi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanoi)."

**Withdrawal of charges**

In 1973, the government requested dropping charges against most of the WUO members. The requests cited a recent decision by the [Supreme Court of the United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_the_United_States) that barred electronic surveillance without a court order. This Supreme Court decision would hamper any prosecution of the WUO cases. In addition, the government did not want to reveal foreign intelligence secrets that a trial would require. [Bernardine Dohrn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernardine_Dohrn) was removed from the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List on 7 December 73. The initial federal district court cases, and federal appellate decisions, upholding the decisions of the lower courts, originated in federal grand jury proceedings in Seattle and Portland investigating [Matthew Steen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_Steen), who had been arrested on federal bank robbery and conspiracy charges in Seattle in 1971. As with the earlier federal grand juries that subpoenaed Leslie Bacon and [Stew Albert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stew_Albert) in the U.S. Capitol bombing case, these investigations were known as "fishing expeditions", with the evidence gathered through ["black bag"](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_bag_operation) jobs including illegal mail openings that involved the FBI and [U.S. Postal Service](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Postal_Service), burglaries by FBI field offices, and electronic surveillance by the [Central Intelligence Agency](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Intelligence_Agency) against the support network, friends, and family members of the Weather Underground as part of Nixon's [COINTELPRO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COINTELPRO) apparatus. In the case of Steen, a special federal grand jury was convened and directed by Guy Goodwin and [Robert Mardian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Mardian), Nixon-appointed heads of the Internal Security Division of the Justice Department. Mardian was later convicted in the COINTELPRO scandal but had his conviction reversed. During the time Steen was in a federal prison, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence [Church Committee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_Committee) convened to investigate these domestic spying abuses while the Weather Underground remained fugitives.

These grand juries caused Sylvia Jane Brown, Robert Gelbhard, and future members of the [Seattle Weather Collective](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seattle_Weather_Collective) to be subpoenaed in Seattle and Portland for the investigation of one of the first (and last) captured WUO members. Steen was also suspected in the U.S. Capitol bombing, several attempted embassy bombings in Washington, D.C. in 1971, and participation in the break-in at the FBI office in Media, PA, that resulted in the release of numerous secret FBI files to the print media and which outlined the broad array of illegal domestic spying activities conducted by numerous federal agencies under the rubric of Cointelpro. Refusing to testify, all were incarcerated for the 18 month life of the special tribunal and later freed on appeal due to suspected wiretappings and mail openings. Four months afterwards the cases were dismissed The decisions in these cases led directly to the subsequent resignation of FBI Director, [L. Patrick Gray](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L._Patrick_Gray), and the federal indictments of [W. Mark Felt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W._Mark_Felt) or "Deep Throat" and Edwin Miller and which, earlier, was the factor leading to the dismissal of federal "most-wanted" charges against members of the Weather Underground leadership in 1973. Steen was sentenced to two consecutive five-year terms in federal prison, his conviction later commuted by President Jimmy Carter under his amnesty program

***Prairie Fire***

With the help from [Clayton Van Lydegraf](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clayton_Van_Lydegraf), the Weather Underground sought a more [Marxist-Leninist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marxist-Leninist) ideological approach to the post-Vietnam reality. The leading members of the Weather Underground (Bill Ayers, Bernardine Dohrn, Jeff Jones, and Celia Sojourn) collaborated on ideas and published their manifesto: *Prairie Fire: The Politics of Revolutionary Anti-Imperialism.* The name came from a quote by [Mao Zedong](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mao_Zedong), "a single spark can set a prairie fire." By the summer of 1974, 5,000 copies had surfaced in coffee houses, bookstores and public libraries across America. Leftist newspapers praised the manifesto.

[Abbie Hoffman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbie_Hoffman) publicly praised *Prairie Fire* and believed every American should be given a copy. The manifesto’s influence initiated the formation of the [Prairie Fire Organizing Committee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prairie_Fire_Organizing_Committee) in several American cities. Hundreds of above-ground activists helped further the new political vision of the Weather Underground. Among other things, the manifesto called for the violent overthrow of the U.S. government and the establishment of a [Dictatorship of the Proletariat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dictatorship_of_the_Proletariat) as a means to achieving its social goals:

The only path to the final defeat of imperialism and the building of socialism is revolutionary war.... Socialism is the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the eradication of the social system based on profit.... Revolutionary war will be complicated and protracted.... It includes mass struggle and clandestine struggle, peaceful and violent, political and economic, cultural and military, where all forms are developed in harmony with the armed struggle. Without mass struggle there can be no revolution. Without armed struggle there can be no victory.

Essentially, after the 1969 failure of the Days of Rage to involve thousands of youth in massive street fighting, Weather renounced most of the Left and decided to operate as an isolated underground group. Prairie Fire urged people to never "dissociate mass struggle from revolutionary violence." To do so, claimed Weather, was to do the state's work. Just as in 1969-70, Weather still refused to renounce revolutionary violence for "to leave people unprepared to fight the state is to seriously mislead them about the inevitable nature of what lies ahead." However, the decision to build only an underground group caused the Weather Underground to lose sight of its commitment to mass struggle and made future alliances with the mass movement difficult and tenuous.

By 1974, Weather had recognized this shortcoming and in *Prairie Fire* detailed a different strategy for the 1970s which demanded both mass and clandestine organizations. The role of the clandestine organization would be to build the "consciousness of action" and prepare the way for the development of a people's militia. Concurrently, the role of the mass movement (i.e., above ground Prairie Fire collective) would include support for, and encouragement of, armed action. Such an alliance would, according to Weather, "help create the 'sea' for the guerrillas to swim in."

According to Bill Ayers in the late 1970s, the Weatherman group further split into two factions — the [May 19th Communist Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_19th_Communist_Organization) and the "Prairie Fire Collective" — with Bernardine Dohrn and Bill Ayers in the latter. The Prairie Fire Collective favored coming out of hiding and establishing an above ground revolutionary mass movement. With most WUO members facing the limited criminal charges (most charges had been dropped by the government in 1973) against them creating an above ground organization was more feasible. The May 19 Communist Organization continued in hiding as the clandestine organization. A decisive factor in Dohrn's coming out of hiding were her concerns about her children (Bill Ayers, *Fugitive Days: Memoirs of an Antiwar Activist*, Beacon Press, 2001, 978-0-8070-3277-0). The Prairie Fire Collective faction started to surrender to the authorities from the late 1970s to the early 1980s. The remaining Weather Underground members continued to attack US institutions.

**Cointelpro**

Main article: [Cointelpro](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cointelpro)

**Event**

In April 1971, the "[Citizens' Commission to Investigate the FBI](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizens%27_Commission_to_Investigate_the_FBI)" broke into an FBI office in [Media, Pennsylvania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media,_Pennsylvania). The group stole files with several hundred pages. The files detailed the targeting of civil rights leaders, labor rights organizations, and left wing groups in general, and included documentation of acts of intimidation and disinformation by the FBI, and attempts to erode public support for those popular movements. By the end of April, the FBI offices were to terminate all files dealing with leftist groups. The files were a part of an FBI program called Cointelpro.

After Cointelpro was dissolved in 1971 by J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI continued its counterintelligence on groups like the Weather Underground. In 1973, the FBI established the "Special Target Information Development" program, where agents were sent undercover to penetrate the Weather Underground. Due to the illegal tactics of FBI agents involved with the program, government attorneys requested all weapons- and bomb-related charges be dropped against the Weather Underground. The most well-publicized of these tactics were the "black-bag jobs," referring to searches conducted in the homes of relatives and acquaintances of Weatherman. The Weather Underground was no longer a fugitive organization and could turn themselves in with minimal charges against them. Additionally, the illegal domestic spying conducted by the CIA in collaboration with the FBI also lessened the legal repercussions for Weatherman turning themselves in.

**Investigation and trial**

After the [Church Committee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_Committee) revealed the FBI's illegal activities, many agents were investigated. In 1976, former FBI Associate Director [W. Mark Felt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W._Mark_Felt) publicly stated he had ordered break-ins and that individual agents were merely obeying orders and should not be punished for it. Felt also stated that acting Director [L. Patrick Gray](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L._Patrick_Gray) had also authorized the break-ins, but Gray denied this. Felt said on the CBS television program *Face the Nation* that he would probably be a "[scapegoat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scapegoat)" for the Bureau's work. "I think this is justified and I'd do it again tomorrow," he said on the program. While admitting the break-ins were "extralegal," he justified it as protecting the "greater good." Felt said, "To not take action against these people and know of a bombing in advance would simply be to stick your fingers in your ears and protect your eardrums when the explosion went off and then start the investigation."

The Attorney General in the new [Carter administration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carter_administration), [Griffin B. Bell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Griffin_B._Bell), investigated, and on April 10, 1978, a federal grand jury charged Felt, [Edward S. Miller](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_S._Miller), and Gray with conspiracy to violate the constitutional rights of American citizens by searching their homes without warrants. The case did not go to trial and was dropped by the government for lack of evidence on December 11, 1980.

The indictment charged violations of Title 18, Section 241 of the [United States Code](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Code). The indictment charged Felt and the others "did unlawfully, willfully, and knowingly combine, conspire, confederate, and agree together and with each other to injure and oppress citizens of the United States who were relatives and acquaintances of the Weatherman fugitives, in the free exercise and enjoyments of certain rights and privileges secured to them by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America.?

Felt and Miller attempted to plea bargain with the government, willing to agree to a misdemeanor guilty plea to conducting searches without warrants—a violation of 18 U.S.C. sec. 2236—but the government rejected the offer in 1979. After eight postponements, the case against Felt and Miller went to trial in the [United States District Court for the District of Columbia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_District_Court_for_the_District_of_Columbia) on September 18, 1980. On October 29, former President [Richard Nixon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Nixon) appeared as a rebuttal witness for the defense, and testified that presidents since [Franklin D. Roosevelt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_D._Roosevelt) had authorized the bureau to engage in break-ins while conducting foreign intelligence and counterespionage investigations.

It was Nixon's first courtroom appearance since his resignation in 1974. Nixon also contributed money to Felt's legal defense fund, with Felt's legal expenses running over $600,000. Also testifying were former Attorneys General [Herbert Brownell, Jr.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Brownell,_Jr.), [Nicholas Katzenbach](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_Katzenbach), [Ramsey Clark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramsey_Clark), [John N. Mitchell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_N._Mitchell), and [Richard G. Kleindienst](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_G._Kleindienst), all of whom said warrantless searches in national security matters were commonplace and not understood to be illegal, but Mitchell and Kleindienst denied they had authorized any of the break-ins at issue in the trial.

The jury returned guilty verdicts on November 6, 1980. Although the charge carried a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison, Felt was fined $5,000. (Miller was fined $3,500). Writing in [*The New York Times*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_New_York_Times) a week after the conviction, [Roy Cohn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roy_Cohn) claimed that Felt and Miller were being used as scapegoats by the Carter administration and that it was an unfair prosecution. Cohn wrote it was the "final dirty trick" and that there had been no "personal motive" to their actions.

*The Times* saluted the convictions, saying that it showed "the case has established that zeal is no excuse for violating the Constitution". Felt and Miller appealed the verdict, and they were later pardoned by [Ronald Reagan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ronald_Reagan).

**Dissolution**

Despite the change in their legal status, the Weather Underground remained underground for a few more years. However, by 1976 the organization was disintegrating. The Weather Underground held a conference in Chicago called Hard Times. The idea was to create an umbrella organization for all radical groups. However, the event turned sour when Hispanic and Black groups accused the Weather Underground and the Prairie Fire Committee of limiting their roles in racial issues. The Weather Underground faced accusations of abandonment of the revolution by reversing their original ideology.

The conference increased divisions within the Weather Underground. East coast members favored a commitment to violence and challenged commitments of old leaders, [Bernardine Dohrn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernardine_Dohrn), [Bill Ayers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Ayers), and [Jeff Jones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Jones_(activist)). These older members found they were no longer liable for federal prosecution because of illegal wire taps and the government's unwillingness to reveal sources and methods favored a strategy of inversion where they would be above ground "revolutionary leaders". Jeremy Varon argues that by 1977 the WUO had disbanded.

[Matthew Steen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_Steen) appeared on the lead segment of CBS' *60 Minutes* in 1976 and was interviewed by [Mike Wallace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mike_Wallace) about the ease of creating fake identification, the first ex-Weatherman interview on national television. (The House document has the date wrong, it aired February 1, 1976 and the title was Fake ID)

The federal government estimated that only 38 Weathermen had gone underground in 1970, though the estimates varied widely, according to a variety of official and unofficial sources, as between 50 to 600 members. Most modern sources lean towards a much larger number than the FBI reference. An FBI estimate in 1976, or slightly later, of then current membership was down to 30 or fewer.

**Plot to bomb office of California Senator**

In November 1977 five WUO members were arrested on conspiracy to bomb the office of California State Senator [John Briggs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Briggs_(politician)). It was later revealed that the Revolutionary Committee and PFOC had been infiltrated by the FBI for almost six years. FBI agents Richard J. Gianotti and William D. Reagan lost their cover in November when federal judges needed their testimony to issue warrants for the arrest of [Clayton Van Lydegraf](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clayton_Van_Lydegraf) and four Weather people. The arrests were the results of the infiltration. WUO members Judith Bissell, Thomas Justesen, Leslie Mullin, and Marc Curtis pled guilty while [Clayton Van Lydegraf](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clayton_Van_Lydegraf), who helped write the 1974 Prairie Fire Manifesto, went to trial.

Within two years, many members turned themselves in after taking advantage of President [Jimmy Carter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jimmy_Carter)'s amnesty for draft dodgers. Mark Rudd turned himself in to authorities on January 20, 1978. Rudd was fined $4,000 and received two years’ probation. Bernardine Dohrn and Bill Ayers turned themselves in on December 3, 1980, in New York, with substantial media coverage. Charges were dropped for Ayers. Dohrn received three years’ probation and a $15,000 fine.

**Brinks robbery**

Main article: [Brink's robbery (1981)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brink%27s_robbery_(1981))

Some members remained underground and joined splinter radical groups. The US government states that three members of the Weather Underground, [Kathy Boudin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kathy_Boudin), [Judith Alice Clark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judith_Alice_Clark), and [David Gilbert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Gilbert_(activist)), joined the May 19 Communist Organization. On October 20, 1981 in [Nanuet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nanuet), New York, the group [robbed a Brinks armored truck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brinks_robbery_(1981)) containing $1.6 million. The robbery was violent, resulting in the murders of two police officers and a security guard.

Boudin, Clark, and Gilbert were found guilty and sentenced to lengthy terms in prison. Media reports listed them as former Weatherman Underground members considered the “last gasps” of the Weather Underground. The documentary *The Weather Underground* described the [Brinks Robbery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brinks_robbery_(1981)) as the "unofficial end" of the Weather Underground.

**May 19th Communist Organization**

Main article: [May 19th Communist Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_19th_Communist_Organization)

The Weather Underground members involved in the [May 19th Communist Organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_19th_Communist_Organization) alliance with the Black Liberation Army continued in a series of jail breaks, armed robberies and bombings until most members were finally arrested in 1985 and sentenced as part of the Brinks robbery and the [Resistance Conspiracy case](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Resistance_Conspiracy_case).

**Coalitions with non-WUO members**

Main articles: [Mother Right and the WUO](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mother_Right_and_the_WUO) and [Jane Alpert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Alpert)

Throughout the underground years, the Weather Underground members worked closely with their counterparts in other organizations, including Jane Alpert, to bring attention their further actions to the press. She helped Weatherman pursue their main goal of overthrowing the U.S. government through her writings. However, there were tensions within the organization, brought about by her famous manifesto, "Mother Right", that specifically called on the Weatherwomen to focus on their own cause other than anti-imperialism. Weather members then wrote in response to her manifesto.

**Legacy**

Widely known members of the Weather Underground include [Kathy Boudin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kathy_Boudin), [Linda Sue Evans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linda_Sue_Evans), [Brian Flanagan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brian_Flanagan), [David Gilbert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Gilbert_(activist)), [Ted Gold](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ted_Gold), [Naomi Jaffe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naomi_Jaffe), [Jeff Jones](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Jones_(activist)), Joe Kelly, [Diana Oughton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diana_Oughton), [Eleanor Raskin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eleanor_Raskin), [Terry Robbins](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terry_Robbins), [Mark Rudd](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Rudd), [Matthew Steen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_Steen), [Susan Stern](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susan_Stern), [Laura Whitehorn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Whitehorn), [Cathy Wilkerson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cathy_Wilkerson), and the still-married couple [Bernardine Dohrn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernardine_Dohrn) and [Bill Ayers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Ayers). Most former Weathermen have successfully re-integrated into mainstream society, without necessarily repudiating their original intent.

The Weather Underground was referred to in its own time and afterwards as a terrorist group by articles in the [*New York Times*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_Times), [United Press International](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Press_International), and [*Time*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time_(magazine)). The group also fell under the auspices of the FBI-New York City Police Anti-Terrorist Task Force, a forerunner of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces. The FBI, in a 2004 news story titled "Byte out of History" published on its website, describes the organization as having been a "domestic terrorist group" that is no longer an active concern. Others have disputed the "terrorist" categorization, and justify the group's actions as an appropriate response to what it described as the "terrorist activities" of the war against Vietnam, domestic racism and the assassinations of black leaders.

In his 2001 book about his Weatherman experiences, Bill Ayers stated his objection to describing the WUO as terrorist. Ayers wrote: "Terrorists terrorize, they kill innocent civilians, while we organized and agitated. Terrorists destroy randomly, while our actions bore, we hoped, the precise stamp of a cut diamond. Terrorists intimidate, while we aimed only to educate. No, we're not terrorists." Dan Berger, in his book about the Weatherman, *Outlaws in America*, asserts that the group "purposefully and successfully avoided injuring anyone... Its war against property by definition means that the WUO was not a terrorist organization."

The late 1960s and early 1970s were tumultuous times, with the FBI attributing 1500 bombings in just 1972 to "civil unrest" by radical groups. The Weather Underground would claim responsibility for a total of about two dozen bombings. The observation that Weather Underground never attacked or harmed people, and only targeted property, is criticized by some who point to the bombs which caused the [Greenwich Village townhouse explosion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenwich_Village_townhouse_explosion), which could have been used to harm people if they hadn't exploded prematurely. Former Weather Underground member [Mark Rudd](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Rudd), reminiscing in 2005 about that explosion, said: "On the morning of March 6, 1970, three of my comrades were building pipe bombs packed with dynamite and nails, destined for a dance of non-commissioned officers and their dates at Fort Dix, N.J., that night. Still trying to 'bring the war home', their bombs were crude mirrors of the anti-personnel weapons the U.S. was raining down on Indochina. [...] We talk about non-violence as the only possible winning strategy. But our goal is a majority movement to end war and global injustice. I believe such a thing is possible in this country.

From my own experience I know that the American people see no distinction between violence against property and violence against human beings. Political violence is a category which does not exist: it is just violence, defined as either criminal or insane or both. That’s a very bad position to put yourself into. It’s guaranteed failure. After the Townhouse, when the Weather Underground turned to bombing symbolic targets like empty corporate offices, it made us no less isolated. As self-expression violence can make perfect sense; as political activity to build a movement, none at all. Besides, the U.S. government will always win a test of who can do the most violence." Prompted in part by claims made by informants working for the FBI within the Weather Underground, grand juries were convened in 2001 and 2009 to investigate if Weather Underground was responsible for the [San Francisco Police Department Park Station bombing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco_Police_Department_Park_Station_bombing). Ultimately, it was concluded that members of the Black Liberation Army, whom WUO members affiliated with while underground, were responsible for not only this action but also the bombing of another police precinct in San Francisco as well as bombing the Catholic Church funeral services of the police officer killed in the Park Precinct bombing in the early summer of 1970.

In 2001 Bill Ayers was quoted in an *New York Times* interview saying "I don't regret setting bombs" but has since claimed he was misquoted. During the [presidential election campaign of 2008](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election,_2008), several candidates questioned Barack Obama's [contacts with Ayers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Ayers_presidential_election_controversy), including [Hillary Clinton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillary_Clinton),[[141]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_Underground#cite_note-141#cite_note-141) [John McCain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_McCain) and [Sarah Palin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah_Palin).[[142]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_Underground#cite_note-142#cite_note-142)[[143]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weather_Underground#cite_note-143#cite_note-143) Ayers responded in December 2008, after Obama's election victory, in an [op-ed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Op-ed) piece in [*The New York Times*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_New_York_Times):

We did carry out symbolic acts of extreme vandalism directed at monuments to war and racism, and the attacks on property, never on people, were meant to respect human life and convey outrage and determination to end the Vietnam war.... The responsibility for the risks we posed to others in some of our most extreme actions in those underground years never leaves my thoughts for long. The antiwar movement in all its commitment, all its sacrifice and determination, could not stop the violence unleashed against Vietnam. And therein lies cause for real regret.

[Brian Flanagan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brian_Flanagan) has expressed regret for his actions during the Weatherman years, and compared the group's activities to terrorism. Flanagan said: "When you feel that you have right on your side, you can do some pretty horrific things." Mark Rudd, now a teacher of mathematics at [Central New Mexico Community College](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_New_Mexico_Community_College), has said he has "mixed feelings" and feelings of "guilt and shame".

These are things I am not proud of, and I find it hard to speak publicly about them and to tease out what was right from what was wrong. I think that part of the Weatherman phenomenon that was right was our understanding of what the position of the United States is in the world. It was this knowledge that we just couldn't handle; it was too big. We didn't know what to do. In a way I still don't know what to do with this knowledge. I don't know what needs to be done now, and it's still eating away at me just as it did 30 years ago.

*—*[*Mark Rudd*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Rudd)

A faction of the Weather Underground continues today as the [Prairie Fire Organizing Committee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prairie_Fire_Organizing_Committee). Their official site reads:

We oppose oppression in all its forms including [racism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racism), [sexism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexism), [homophobia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homophobia), [classism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classism) and [imperialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperialism). We demand liberation and justice for all peoples. We recognize that we live in a capitalist system that favors a select few and oppresses the majority. This system cannot be reformed or voted out of office because reforms and elections do not challenge the fundamental causes of injustice.

The site further supports non-violent civil disobedience and direct action:

We also respect the right of people to take up armed struggle against colonialism for the liberation of oppressed peoples. This is in accordance with resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and the Geneva Convention, which recognize that the crime is colonialism, not the struggle for liberation.

* This page was last modified on 1 November 2015, at 20:36.