


readiness of those young people to go to the streets, night after night in July 1964, and push back. Theirs was a message sent from and in pain, and the reply came from white New Yorkers, many of them the working- and middle-class people who had started to organize themselves against school desegregation a few years earlier wearing the mantle of “safety” and “neighborhood schools.” White New Yorkers were the beneficiaries of the city’s unjust and racist distribution of state power, and they would defend that privilege vigorously.

Christopher Hayes has offered a highly readable and evocative rendering of the Harlem uprising of 1964, its causes, and its immediate policy aftermath. As the first of the wave of 1960s summers of unrest—including Watts in 1965 and Washington, DC, and Detroit in 1968, among many others—the Harlem uprising is important as a force in the making of the US city. But Hayes shows us that the uprising provides a distinct window into how education and policing, alongside housing and labor markets, were constraining the lives of Black and Puerto Rican New Yorkers. And how the city’s white majority marshaled new tactics to keep it just that way.

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Seth Kershner, Scott Harding, and Charles Howlett. Breaking the War Habit: The Debate over Militarism in American Education

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Breaking the War Habit explains the development of a complex relationship between the US military and high school students by chronicling the twentieth-century peace activists who tried to prevent its formation and then, failing that, to sever the connection. These activists had limited success, argue the authors, but they were important because they “understood and enacted different visions of education” than the current one, which tightly binds public schools to militarist ideals (p. 11).

This book covers a lot of ground in a short 139 pages of text. Across an introduction and six chapters, the authors move from the origins of peace activism in schools in the 1830s up to the present day. The bulk of work, however, focuses on the two decades following World War I and the three decades following the Vietnam War, when reformers’ messages gained the most traction. In short, opponents of what the authors call “school militarism” argued that military values, such as obedience, regimentation, and violence, were antithetical to the “independent thinking, tolerance, and cooperation” necessary for a thriving democracy (pp. 2, 10). The military—whether via military

drill practice, Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) programs, recruiting activities, or the administration of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)—had no place in public schools.

Chapter 1 outlines the long history of opposition to military drill in schools, especially against the federally funded ROTC and JROTC programs that emerged in 1916. After World War I, peace organizations like the War Resisters League and the Fellowship for Reconciliation enjoyed renewed popularity, while student groups on college campuses began to protest their schools' compulsory ROTC programs. By the mid-1920s, activists, educators, and clergy had come together to form the Committee on Militarism in Education (CME), the subject of chapters 2 and 3. CME members believed that war and violence could be ended through peace education. They set idealistic goals—the elimination of required ROTC on college campuses and the demise of all military drill in secondary schools.

Over its fifteen-year existence, the CME cycled through several strategies. It produced a prodigious amount of anti-militarist literature, which it disseminated to students and other local activists fighting compulsory military training. It also lent financial support to court challenges. Despite promising decisions in lower courts, however, the Supreme Court repeatedly upheld states' right to require ROTC training at state-funded universities. Organizers also liaised with peace-minded members of Congress to sponsor legislation to end ROTC, only to be rebuffed as Congress repeatedly cited education as the states' responsibility. Members then sponsored a ballot initiative in Oregon, which failed in 1936. Finally, the dwindling CME turned its remaining resources to local campaigns against JROTC, winning victories in New York City and Carbondale, Illinois, for example. But as the specter of World War II loomed, the CME lost what little funding remained, dissolving in 1940. Nevertheless, argue the authors, the CME brought the issue of school militarism into public consciousness and wrote the playbook for those who would follow.

Breaking the War Habit locates the beginning of the next wave of activism in the Vietnam War, but its crest in the decades after the armistice. Chapter 4 traces peace activists' transition from anti-Vietnam War activity to anti-school militarism work in the years that followed. Once the draft ended and the military shifted to an all-volunteer system, high school graduates became that much more important to recruiters. Representatives of the military demanded ever greater access to high schools and students. The number of JROTC units expanded rapidly, while schools across the nation began administering the ASVAB to students, ostensibly as a career aptitude test. Most students did not realize that their scores were sent to local recruiters.

Members of the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), and others began to strategize about how to limit contact between high school students and recruiters, especially when that contact was compulsory or less than transparent, as in the case of the ASVAB. Collectively, their actions fell under the umbrella of counter-recruitment. Chapter 5 discusses the evolution of local activism in diverse cities and towns, including Chicago; Madison, Wisconsin; western Massachusetts; Lacey, Washington; and especially Baltimore. Local organizers deployed multiple lines of reasoning in their fight, advocating CME-like peace education; highlighting the disparities of JROTC, which disproportionately enrolled Black and Brown students; and appealing to parents' desires for local control.

Over time, activists in local communities connected with one another. Organizers in the mid-Atlantic region, for example, formed the Task Force on Recruitment and Militarism, a regional coalition that focused on outreach to school counselors and other counter-recruiting initiatives. But it wasn't until 1990, with the formation of the National Campaign to Demilitarize Our Schools (NCDOS), the subject of chapter 6, that the network became national in scope. The outbreak of the Gulf War shortly thereafter ratcheted up the volume, both bringing new constituents into the anti-school militarism movement and increasing the opposition to peace work. Ultimately, military access triumphed. The 2002 No Child Left Behind Act required schools that accepted federal dollars to admit recruiters. Nevertheless, counter-recruiters continued their work up to the present, as the book's conclusion shows.

Breaking the War Habit is important. In taking on the question of militarism in high schools, it provides a first draft of peace work undertaken since the Vietnam War. The authors effectively use oral history, news coverage, and organizational literature to chronicle a movement few know about. And the movement is important. While it must be acknowledged that activists failed more often than they succeeded, they did succeed. Campaigns to make enlistment contracts more transparent or shift resources from JROTC to different educational programs altered the life paths of students in dozens of districts across the country.

The book is not perfect. It could have been longer. At times, important contextual details elude the authors. While discussing why Jewish high school students opposed military training in early twentieth-century New York, for example, the authors miss the connection to Russian conscription policies from which many Jewish immigrants had fled. Although a small omission, it is only one of many, including the reason why compulsory ROTC ended on most campuses before the Vietnam War, which had much more to do Defense Department funding and faculty suspicion of the program than with peace activists.¹ More importantly, there is space for a stronger through line highlighting activists' successes, which, in the end, feels underdeveloped. I have no doubt that the CME, for example, encouraged "dozens of colleges and universities to abolish military instruction" and "largely restrained" the growth of JROTC, but the chapter covering this achievement does not quite produce enough evidence to prove the assertion (p. 72). Similarly, the NCDOS and AFSC did "force ... changes in the JROTC curriculum," but readers are not told what they were (p. 119). Just a few more pages of analysis would help this book immensely.

Writing peace history is hard, as it is often a chronicle of what did not happen—something hard to prove. Writing a national history of public education is similarly hard, as so much occurs at a hyperlocal level. Combining the two is ambitious indeed. While *Breaking the War Habit* is not perfect, it is nonetheless a necessary work.

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¹See Michael S. Neiberg, *Making Citizen-Soldiers: ROTC and the Ideology of American Military Service* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).