

# Housewives With A Mission: The Fight of 1950s Women Against Communism and the Rise of Conservatism

**By Lori May**



**Photo of the Cleaver family from the television program Leave it to Beaver. From left: Hugh Beaumont (Ward), Tony Dow (Wally), Barbara Billingsley (June), Jerry Mathers (Theodore AKA "Beaver"). 8 January 1960. ABC Television.**

Television shows such as, *Leave it to Beaver*, *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* and *Father Knows Best*, filled the airwaves, and magazines such as *McCalls* and *Good Housekeeping* lined the news stands with pictures of the American way of life in the 1950s. A suburban, middle class life where families lived in a furnished and newly equipped modern home, complete with car, two children and a dog. Where father went to work and mother stayed at home baking and taking care of the family and left the cares of the world to her husband.[1] However, alongside this picture of an ideal America, the media presented the Red Scare, and the threat of communist infiltration that would destroy this American way of life. A considerable portion of white, educated, middle-class housewives and mothers content in their role as wives and mothers embraced the prevailing Red Scare and its rhetoric of anti-Communism and the cult of motherhood, which promoted mothers as defenders of morality and the American way of life against the threat of communism. As a result they established grassroots activities within their children's schools, and communities and exercised a conservative political voice that would ultimately shift the Republican Party from a democratic moderate party to a more fundamentally conservative right wing party that nominated Barry Goldwater for president in 1964 and placed Ronald Reagan as governor of California in 1966, thus making conservatism mainstream.[2]

The activism of middle class, suburban housewives after WWII in their role as mothers was not a new phenomenon. According to Mary C. Brennan American women had a long tradition of political participation when home, family and community were threatened. This was evident in the activities of women in the Revolutionary War, when as managers of the household they upheld boycotts of English goods and were responsible for the education and moral guidance of their children.[3] This idea of "Republican Motherhood," in which the mother was responsible for raising informed citizens for a time expanded the role of wife and mother, as necessity required they became soldiers, businesswomen, and even spies, all without threatening the traditional roles of men and women.[4] Similarly, with industrialization in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the growth of urban centers women, although restricted by the notion of "the cult of true womanhood" or "domesticity" in which the woman was seen as pure, domestic and therefore the creator of a safe haven for her husband and children, still exercised considerable influence. At first, women simply joined church missionary societies, or established clubs to give aid to women and children in need. But eventually women created a socially accepted arena in which women embraced and used the socially accepted idea that women had natural maternal instincts, and a moral superiority over men to advocate for social reforms. This allowed women to experience the greatest expansion of their activism and power at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.[5]

During the Progressive era women continued their membership of church and secular clubs, spoke out against alcohol and child labor practices, but now expanded their activities and created a new arena in which to work; social work. Hull House, established by Jane Addams Ellen Gates Starr to integrate new immigrants into American culture, was justified by the argument that they were fulfilling a basic female instinct to nurture and that they, being morally superior, were merely “cleaning up the mess left by male politicians and businessmen who welcomed the immigrant’s labor but ignored their troubles.”[6] This notion became known as “municipal housekeeping,” and was used to justify women’s participation in the political arena, but always with the understanding that involvement was temporary and that they would gladly return to home and children when their work was complete. [7]

The cult of motherhood and domesticity lost much of its impetus during the period of 1920-40 as women gained the vote with the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, and the prosperity and consumerism of the 20s allowed many women to reject Victorian notions of womanhood. However, conservative ideals remained alive as women formed patriotic groups after WWI, in response to the first red scare of the century and spoke out against those groups and institutions they perceived as communist; progressive reformers and welfare legislation. Also, according to Temma Kaplan, WWI and the Great Depression served to create a “female consciousness,” in which women accepted a “maternal duty to preserve life.”[8] With the end of WWII, and the economic and baby boom, both the cult of motherhood and the Republican mother was revived, as the nation desired a return to the “good old days” after the trauma of depression and world war. [9] Now came the iconic image of the typical middle class wife and mother as portrayed by the characters of June Cleaver, Margaret Anderson and Harriet Nelson, in the television shows *Leave it to Beaver*, *Father Knows Best* and *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*.” She was endowed with every possible modern household convenience and created a safe haven for husband and children to come home to and it was essential that she preserve this haven of Americanism from all possible threats, and in the 50s that meant communism.[10] This paper will show how 1950s white, middle class suburban women embraced their role as wives, mothers, and protectors of the family and the traditional American way of life and utilized the Red Scare and anticommunism to exert a political voice within their communities. A voice that claimed to imbue true republican values of patriotism, and morality and sought to instill those values in their community. The work of these women laid the foundation through their grassroots activities for a true conservative movement that evolved in the late 60s and early 70s. It also succeeded in acquiring the nomination of Barry Goldwater as the Republican presidential nominee in 1964.

The 1950s American dream of owning a home in the newly developed suburbs, car, having children, a family dog and going on family vacations had been achieved by many returning veterans of WWII. Suddenly, New Deal policies and legislation such as the Serviceman's Act of October 1944 and the 1946 Employment Act enabled these men were able to attend college and trade schools, and acquire jobs. [11] A burgeoning defense industry, financed by federal government tax subsidies, created jobs along the sunbelt region that stretched from South Carolina to Southern California. This caused a demographic shift as millions migrated to the middle class suburbs that had been built to house those employed by the defense industry. Returning G.I.'s benefited from loans via the Veteran's Administration and Federal Housing Authority and low interest mortgages and took up residency in these growing affluent communities.[12] However, the growth of suburbia, especially Los Angeles depended on a growing defense industry, the result of a deepening Cold War between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. in which a nuclear altercation seemed imminent. [13]The defense industry and foreign policy were a defense against Soviet invasion, and was the realm of men, suburban housewives were called upon to protect domestic borders and ferret out subversives within the community "to save their homes and families from communists." [14]

The red scare and the era of McCarthyism were launched on February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1950 before the Women's Republican Club, in Wheeling, West Virginia. Senator Joseph McCarthy, an unknown backbencher of the minority Republican Party in the U.S. Senate, was in Wheeling to give a speech on Abraham Lincoln and the GOP; what he gave was a call to action to root out Communists hidden within in the State Department who were making policy. There is debate as to the number of employees McCarthy claimed were card carrying Communist Party members, they range from his original claim of 205 to his later revised number of 57. Regardless of the number of infiltrators, the notion was put into the minds of Americans, and in particular, women, that Communists had infiltrated the government.[15] A believable notion as these claims came after the trials and convictions of Alger Hiss of the State Department for perjury and the Rosenberg's for espionage.[16] The fact that he had made the announcement before an audience of women gave credence to the idea that women and in particular housewives were an integral part of flushing out communism. A sentiment echoed by J. Edgar Hoover, who addressed an annual convention of the National Council of Women and stated that, "women constituted 'the basic source for pressures for peace and security... [and] make their contribution by raising their voices to preserve the American way of life.'" [17] One such housewife who raised her voice and turned the tables on communism was Marion Miller.

The case of Marion Miller, a suburban housewife from West Los Angeles serves as testimony of a unique and spectacular manner in which the cause of anticommunism was undertaken in order to protect family and the American way of life. Whereas most women were to become active in moderate, less hazardous grassroots groups such as the Network of Patriotic Letter Writers, or attended study groups that apprised them of potentially socialist legislation, Miller became a spy for the FBI. Although not politically active herself, her husband Paul had worked espionage for the FBI and was a rabid anti-communist and it was he who alerted her to the danger of an invitation she received to attend a seminar in Los Angeles hosted by the Los Angeles Committee for the Protection of Foreign Born.[18] This organization according to Jeffree Garcilazo, sought to uphold individual rights guaranteed by the Constitution and Bill of Rights, and protect aliens, or foreign-born citizens who faced deportation because of political beliefs or organization affiliations. The organization also had the long-term goal to overturn the 1950 McCarran International Security Act and the 1952 McCarran-Walters Acts, which had been passed despite Truman's presidential veto. These bills appeared to target immigrants because many belonged to labor unions, which were strongly suspected of Communist ties. The McCarran Act required that all Communist and Communist front organizations register with the Attorney General's office and Communists were forbidden to work in the defense industry.[19] The later McCarran-Walters Act strengthened the attack against communism as it excluded Communists and other "undesirables" from entering the country.[20] Although the LACPFB had a large number of members who were Communist Party members, the organization did not fall under the categories mentioned under the McCarran Act because they did not charge dues and were therefore not a membership organization. However, the large numbers of Communist Party members within the LACPFB and the rhetoric that the organization engaged in alienated many people within the community whose support it sought.[21]

In her memoir *I Was a Spy*, Marion recalled how the language of the invitation, which she referred to as a "summons," was clearly communist, not merely socialistic as seen by its opening statement:

*Who but fascist-minded demagogues would deny the right of foreign-born citizens and residents of the United States to think and act like free-born men and women?...We therefore invite all organizations and individuals to join us in the discussion of the current attack on the rights of foreign-born citizens and non-citizens, and the planning of action. [22]*

However, she admitted that it was her husband Paul who recognized the language and encouraged her to contact the FBI even though she herself did not believe the Communists were that numerous and even if they were, were “no more a menace to the American way of life than bisons.”[23] The five years that she worked undercover for the FBI in the Los Angeles Committee for the Protection of Foreign Born and the Communist Party U.S.A. forever changed her opinion on the danger posed by communist infiltration as she discovered that the committee was used as a front for communist activity.[24]

The Los Angeles Committee for the Protection of Foreign Born had according to Miller obtained her name from her membership in Pioneer Women of America and possibly hoped to use her respectability and membership in other conservative clubs to infiltrate them and use them as a further cover for subversion. Instead she became the secretary of the LACFPB and made copies of all the minutes she took and passed them to the FBI.[25] The memoir does not contain these minutes, which might be more objective, than the myriad of episodes detailed via the use of dialogue between the participants, which allows for tremendous amount of stereotyping and red-baiting, a la McCarthy. However, a picture is given of the workings of the Communist Party and its use of communist fronts such as the LACFPB to operate. According to Miller, Moscow funded approximately half of the Party’s expenses so consequently the party had to fundraise. A rather humorous account is given of a fundraising activity under the guise of a birthday. All party members, “fellow travelers” or “progressives” as they were more commonly called, were familiar with this activity. An invitation to a birthday party was given, attendance was mandatory, and a cover charge was often imposed. Once inside a money-tree complete with a \$10 bill affixed a top took center stage as the birthday recipient had deferred birthday gifts in lieu of contributions to the party. One such get-together boasted an “impromptu” striptease in which a female comrade raised \$144 before stopping at undergarments bearing a hammer and sickle![26]

Not all of the incidents revealed by Miller were as humorous as the striptease, indeed the overriding theme of the memoir was the over whelming dedication of members to the party. Accounts are given in which Communist Party members had to relinquish relationships because they were perceived as harmful to the cause. Ideologically the Party believed that the family was the greatest obstacle to the party’s success; a sick child was no excuse for missing a day at the office or a Party meeting. It was this communist threat upon the American family that Miller believed she was fighting against.[27]

Marion personally experienced communist reaction to a family emergency conflicting with a meeting when her father died in 1953. The day following her father's death friends and family were dropping by the family home to offer condolences as funeral arrangements were being made. "Annette" arrived from the Party, and initially Marion was warmed by the gesture as no-one from the Party had called or appeared. This illusion was quickly dashed as Annette proceeded to give instruction from the Party regarding an important meeting scheduled for the following evening; her attendance was required. When Marion voiced the fact that her father had just died and she was in no state to attend, Annette responded in anger:

*Your father, your father, your father! What in the world kind of Progressive [Communist] are you? Don't you know there's nothing in the world less important at this time than your father's death? Don't you know only fools let death stand in the way of the living?[28]*

Marion's stunned look shamed the comrade enough to stop the tirade, but not enough to rescind the order to attend the meeting. The following evening Marion attended the meeting.[29] It could be argued that Marion Miller was just as dedicated to her cause of thwarting the communist threat to the American way of life by maintaining her cover, as the communists were their cause. However, she unlike her communist comrades knew her affiliation was for a season, not a way of life. Initially, Miller had doubts about spying for the FBI, as she was afraid of the adverse affect her work would have on her husband and family and even herself. Ultimately what she saw happening within the Los Angeles Committee for the Protection of Foreign-Born and the Communist Party convinced her that she was duty bound to continue working for the FBI. [30]

Miller's 5 years undercover resulted in her testifying on October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1959 before the Western Section of the United States House of Representatives Subcommittee of the Committee on the Un-American Activities, (HUAC). This committee had been formed in 1938 to investigate German Americans connections to the Nazi regime in Germany, but had subsequently under J. B. Matthews and Martin Dies changed its emphasis after WWII to communism.[31] In the testimony given before HUAC Miller reiterated the claims made in her memoirs of those people within the Communist Party, Morris Goodman, Phyllis Lebow, Delphine Smith, and Liz Erger who had infiltrated the Los Angeles Committee for Protection of the Foreign-Born as well as other organizations such as the National Council of Jewish Women and B'nai B'rith, but without the rhetoric and red-baiting terminology of her memoir.[32] In his article, "McCarthyism, Mexican Americans, and the Los



Angeles Committee of the Foreign Born 1950-54,” Garcilazo argues convincingly that the LACPFB’s only mission was to protect naturalized citizens from deportation under the McCarran-Walters Act, and to protect an individual’s rights under the Constitution for free political thought and action. Although the LACOFB had Communist Party members it was never a front for the Communist Party.[33] However, in the climate of the 1950s, membership of the Communist Party meant a threat of a government overthrow, not a legitimate political expression as evidenced by the loaded question asked Miller by Mr. Jackson of HUAC:

*Jackson: Is it a fair statement to make in your opinion, that the LACPFB and the parent organization, the American Committee for Protection of Foreign-Born are cogs in a well organized machine, the ultimate goal of which is the destruction of this form of government as we know it?*

*Miller: That is absolutely correct.[34]*

Marion Miller was later accused by a person in attendance of one of her lecture seminars, that she had not achieved much of worth. She had not blown up the Kremlin, freed Hungary or uncovered a Klaus Fuchs or Whittaker Chambers, all she had done was expose a single chapter of one organization as a Communist front, so why had her life become worthy of an episode of *This is Your Life*, a memoir and a series of lecture seminars? These were questions she asked of herself, but when months later she saw the results of a state primary, and had the pleasure of taking her family to Disneyland, she had her answer; in her thinking, her small effort combined with the small efforts of others enabled democracy, freedom and the American way of life to continue.[35]

Whereas Miller’s activism was shrouded in cloak and dagger, most women’s activism was done in plain view at the local community level. These local women of Los Angeles County were interested in addressing a national issue (anti-Communism) at a personal, community level, as behooved a concerned wife and mother, rather than working at a national level as Progressive women had done in the past. As historian Michelle Nickerson states in *Mothers of Conservatism*, “conservative women came to see their community as a local setting in the global struggle against communism.”[36]

Women’s local struggle against communism first received public attention in the quiet hamlet of Pasadena in 1950, in an incident involving education that became known as the Pasadena Affair. At the center of the affair was the highly renowned progressive superintendent Willard Goslin, who had been

hired by the Pasadena School Board in 1948 to revitalize the district. According to the investigative journalist at the time, David Hulburd, who wrote the expose, *It Happened in Pasadena*, superintendent Goslin was direct and forthright regarding his ideas on education, the role of the board and his role as superintendent, which he saw as “a leader not only of schools, but of the community as a whole.”[37] However, although the board wholeheartedly supported the changes he made, such as “vertical groups” to aid in communication, summer workshops for teachers, the hiring of a number of new staff members and the introduction of the “core system” in which a high school student was placed under the tutorship of one teacher for at least two (preferably 3) hours a day to cover several subjects, it would buckle to pressure from conservative women in the fall of 1950.[38]

In the view of concerned mothers Willard Goslin epitomized everything that they fought against as conservatives. These women were traditionalists and felt that eastern elitist educators (of which Goslin was one) were trying to usurp parental authority, and brainwash them via state sponsored summer camps and the use of “experience curriculum,” “common learning,” and “core” tutorship instead of the traditional 3 Rs. To these mothers, progressive education was an effort to dumb down the children and fill them with socialist, communist ideology. [39] The result was the formation of the School Development Council, which although chaired by men, was founded by Mrs. Walter Payne and whose daily operations were performed by housewives.[40] This council was strongly influenced by two women, Louise Hawkes Padelford and Mrs. Frances Bartlett, both of Pro-America, a conservative group that had its origins as a garden club and evolved into a group espousing patriotism and Americanism. Their impact was so significant that at times it was difficult to discern between the SDC and Pro-America.[41] Within a year these women and the SDC decided that Goslin and his “Modern Pragmatic Education” had to go.[42]

The School Development Council (SDC) began a series of attacks against Goslin in 1949. The first attack began in the spring of 1949 when they sponsored a candidate for the Board of Education, because they “knew” that two of the candidates were “Socialists.” Their candidate was defeated, but they were successful with their second attack, Goslin’s proposed 1949-50 budget, in which \$100,000 was allotted to bring all teachers back a week early for a teacher training session. The SDC wrote an emphatic letter to the board, which stated their objections and the board cut the budget to \$30,000. The proposed increased 1950-51 budget signaled the beginning of the end of Goslin’s tenure as superintendent of the Pasadena School District. The budget necessitated a tax hike and this was effectively used by the SDC to spur voters

to reject the budget. However, the tax was not the core issue as evident from one of the slogan's used; "Progressive Education Means Progressive Taxation." It was Goslin's progressive policies that struck fear.[43]

Willard Goslin's progressive education policies were not limited to the classroom. As superintendent he oversaw the public schools of the whole district of Pasadena and as part of his progressivism he strongly advocated desegregation, which resulted in a policy of abolition of neutral zones. Neutral zones had been in effect for some time and were areas in which children were exempted from attending the school in their neighborhood. In effect this meant that white students underrepresented racially in West Pasadena could be bused at the expense of the taxpayer to schools in La Canada. The abolition of these neutral zones were seen as an attack on parental control of their children's education and an attempt by the state to mandate desegregation, an idea that was opposed by many conservatives.[44]

The School Development Council under the chairmanship of Frank Wells instigated a vigorous newspaper campaign in the *Star News*, and held numerous public meetings to alert the public about the increased taxation that was necessary for Goslin's proposed budget and the proliferation of socialist and communist ideology that proliferated local schools. The campaign was a success voter turnout for the June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1950 election reached an all time high of 38%, twice the amount of any school board election, because housewives and mothers canvassed. The budget was defeated by 22,210 votes of NO to 10,032, for YES; the conservative mothers voice has spoken loud and clear. On November 9<sup>th</sup>, the Pasadena School Board requested Goslin's resignation, citing that the board believed that he was the center of the controversy in Pasadena, and as such was unable to unify and create a harmonious environment, and therefore the effectiveness of the district was compromised. According to Hulbard, there was no evidence of a rift among the teachers, administrators, and parents. In fact Goslin received support from a group of moderate conservative men and women who rallied and formed the Citizens Action Committee, to compel the school board to rescind its request for Goslin's resignation. However, the more extreme conservative SDC prevailed and on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1950, Willard Goslin handed his resignation to the Pasadena School Board.[45]

The repercussions of the Pasadena Affair were multifarious, but the immediate result was the appointment of Frank Ralph Walkup, a self-professed middle of the roader, as acting superintendent. This appointment was soundly endorsed by, the women of the School Development Council. Mr. Walkup's first response was to reverse many of the policies enacted by Goslin,

namely the termination of the publication, *Clearing House*, which kept teachers informed about educational matters; the cancellation of teacher summer workshops and the firing of many of those hired by Goslin and the rehiring of those he had removed. The Pasadena School District reverted back to what it was before Willard Goslin's appointment, a bastion of conservatism.[46]

Another consequence of the Pasadena Affair according to Michelle Nickerson was that it highlighted how a few women, imbued with a sense of purpose to protect their family and community from communist infiltration, were able to use red scare tactics and "decimate prize school districts." [47] Indeed, although Pasadena was the first to remove a superintendent because of his progressive (socialist) policies, this grassroots movement had national repercussions as Louise Padleford and Francis Bartlett formerly of the SDC led the vanguard to oust Houston's deputy superintendent George Ebey, as the name "Goslin" became synonymous with the danger of progressive ideas and practices invading a districts educational system. A small grassroots movement gained the national spotlight.

Grassroots groups such as Tuesday Study Groups, the Freedom Club, the Network of Patriotic Letter Writers and Pro-America were primarily attended by, middle class women who used their education, their flexible schedules as stay at home mothers to fight against communism and its infiltration into their communities. Women such as Marjorie Jensen, Trudy Bale and Virginia Knowles of Los Angeles established or joined several of these organizations in the 1950s. These groups promoted the education of housewives as to the insidiousness of communist activity in their communities because men, and single women by virtue of their work schedule were unable to expend the time and energy that these women were able to do on educating themselves and their communities about the dangers of Communist and socialist thinking in local institutions.[48]

The Tuesday Morning Study group was started in the early 1950s by Carolyn Watts of Altadena. However, after the first meeting and a casual offer by Marjorie Jensen to host the next meeting, the group met in her home in Pasadena, one Tuesday a month for 7 years. The purpose of this group was to educate the women on the subtle and not so subtle manner that communist, and socialist ideology was permeating the field of education, a primary concern of these women who were predominately young mothers. According to Jensen, the monthly meetings, which had attendance between 35-150 women, followed a simple format. A few minutes were given at the beginning of each meeting for the recitation of the oath of allegiance, a salute to the flag

and a prayer. This was followed by a speaker, who enlightened the women on current legislation before congress and matters of interest to their community. An issue foremost in these women's minds was public school education.[49]

One such speaker was Los Angeles resident, Florence Flower Lyons who had studied and written pamphlets on an educational program in use in Los Angeles Schools.[50] The curriculum used by the Los Angeles School District was written and published by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization(UNESCO) and was implemented in 1948 by superintendent Alexander J. Stoddard. It promoted a more rounded and inclusive perspective of the world and included such as social studies, the study of world governments, and group discussions and problem solving.[51] Subjects and techniques that are common practice today, but in the climate of the red scare, were seen as too collective and socialist in its thinking. In studying the governments of other countries, the children, in the opinion of Florence Flower Lyons and the women who attended groups such as the Tuesday Morning Study Club, were exposed to un-American ideas and therefore patriotism and Americanism were threatened.[52] Florence Flowers Lyons led the charge against UNESCO and drew the support of other women who made the dismal state of American education a national issue.

The foremost concern regarding the UNESCO program was a series of pamphlets used to instruct teachers on the methods to use to promote "internationalism and combat nationalism in the classroom." This objective ran counter to those ideals held by conservative women who believed strongly in patriotism and Americanism. In 1951, Lyons spoke vehemently before the Southern California Republican Women's Club and warned those in attendance that "children are daily fed doses of Communism, Socialism, New Dealism and other isms," via UNESCO teaching materials.[53] This sentiment was bolstered by the publication of *School of Darkness*, a memoir of lawyer and educator Bella Dodd. Dodd joined the Communist Party in 1932, rose to a position of leadership, when after ten years she became disillusioned with the Party line and was expelled. Dodd became a spokesperson for the conservative Right in atonement for having helped the Communists to gain a hold on the American education system. The writings of women like, Dodd, Lyons and other national female figures were disseminated by organizations such as the Network of Patriotic Letter Writers.[54]

The Network of Patriotic Letter Writers originally founded by, Dorie Sulkie, but as with the Pasadena Tuesday Morning Study Club, Marjorie Jensen quickly took over the day-to-day running of the organization. The NPLW was not a club, but a newsletter that not only kept conservative women abreast on

issues of concern, but also sought to “shape trends through letter writing.”[55] This was the perfect vehicle through which to disseminate literature of national conservative activist women such as Lucille Cardin Crane, and Bella Dodd, and local authors Frances Bartlett and Louise Padelford. It also printed government reports, and proposed national and local legislation, so that communities were adequately informed.

Aside from the newsletter, the NPLW, under the auspices of Trudy Bale, also organized letter-writing campaigns to local and national elected government leaders in order to influence the vote of those representatives. This endeavor was a costly business and the NPLW did not have a paid membership consequently expenses incurred by the organization were paid by Jensen and Bale. At one point Trudy Bale was using her social security check to pay for costs. This was unacceptable so in the following newsletter recipients were asked to donate a \$1. This worked, but then members began to make demands regarding the mailing schedule, which made the women’s lives hectic. Eventually a casual conversation at the beauty salon between Jensen and a very wealthy patron at the salon regarding the NPLW resulted in the woman donating \$7,000 to its operations. This donation coupled with a charged of 3c per page for copies made of any requested literature allowed the NPLW to stay operational, by a shoestring for 22 years.[56]

The efforts of NPLW, the Tuesday Morning Study Club, and women such as Florence Flowers Lyons, Lucille Cardin Crane, and many others aroused the interest of HUAC and some of these women testified before the committee. This testimony was readily accepted by, HUAC and this along with supportive articles by conservative papers such as *The Los Angeles Examiner* and *The Los Angeles Herald-Examiner* resulted in the removal of the UNESCO project from Los Angeles schools in 1954.[57]

The 1950s was the golden age for the exploitation of anti-Communism as a means to promote the agenda of conservative women. By the sixties, the Red Scare, and McCarthyism, had largely been discredited as a sham and the ravings of extremists. Although anti-communism was non-longer as effective, conservative women were still concerned about communism, New Dealism and morality. They used the 1964 presidential election year to reinvigorate their cause. According to Phyllis Schlafly in *A Choice Not an Echo*, conservative women wanted a true republican not, a “me too” candidate who would continue New Deal policy despite being a republican. [58] Schlafly’s book promoted Barry Goldwater because he had the prerequisites needed to end communism and restore the Republican Party to its true ideals. The book helped to gain the support of conservative women, particularly in Los Angeles,

but Goldwater also tapped into the mentality of the conservative housewife by promoting a platform that promoted a secured safe environment for the American family. These efforts combined earned Goldwater the Republican presidential nomination in 1964.

According to Phyllis Sclafly in *A Choice Not an Echo*, the presidential elections of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had been orchestrated by a group of powerful eastern financiers, a group of kingmakers who wanted to maintain New Deal-New Frontier foreign policy because it benefitted their vested economic interests. It was her contention that since 1936 these kingmakers had taken control of the Republican Party by using their endless supply of money to manipulate the media, the Republican candidates and the public. Consequently, no Republican candidate before Barry Goldwater had actually addressed the issues of the day.[59] *A Choice Not an Echo*, was a propaganda piece to denigrate the Democratic Party and promote Barry Goldwater in his bid for the Republican nomination. It was released in May 1964, and over 500,000 copies were sold in conservative bookstores throughout the southland.[60] These bookstores were often part of the domain of women. One bookstore, Poor Richard's owned and operated by Florence Ranuzzi in Los Angeles, became the headquarters for the Goldwater campaign. Florence routinely led discussion groups about communism at the bookstore, and gave away books and pamphlets that educated people on communism, republicanism, and Goldwater's campaign.[61]

According to Margaret Jensen and Virginia Knowles, housewives were integral to Goldwater's campaign; not only did they educate themselves about his platform through the Tuesday Morning Study Club, the NPLW, and literature from conservative bookstores, but they also did the labor intensive canvassing essential to a political campaign. According to Knowles, because they were housewives they, unlike their husbands had the luxury of time and so they knocked on doors, registered voters, greeted the candidate upon his arrival to the area, and facilitated the daily operations of the campaign offices.[62] In fact when asked in an interview with Michelle Nickerson, about the role of women in the Republican Party and the emerging conservative movement, she stated, "I think they're the core of the conservative movement, the women are." Goldwater did win the Republican nomination, but his extreme conservatism, which earned him the support of Southern Californian women did not translate to the national level, which was more moderate and he lost the presidential election.[63]

With Goldwater's defeat, the conservatism of the 1950s housewife appeared to die. However, according to McGirr in *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the*

*New American Right*, conservatives after the defeat of Goldwater adapted, and managed to mesh core traditional republican ideals within a modern framework.[64] However, that thesis goes beyond the scope of this paper. In fact, the election of the extreme conservative, Ronald Reagan as governor of California in 1966 was testimony that the Republican right did survive and became mainstream. Indeed it is evident in this election year that the more extreme form of republicanism is still a viable option as Trump campaigns to acquire the Republican Party presidential nomination and shift the party further right. I personally experienced how extreme conservatism resonates to the average person while at work in Trader Joe's. One day a customer engaged me in pleasant conversation, she appeared very average, but as she turned around I noticed the back of her t-shirt, which had a list of pejoratives relating to President Barak Obama, one of which stated, "Barak, the first anti-American President." I later found out that this was a comment made by Dick Morris in 2010.[65] I do not profess to be an Obama advocate, or even a Democrat, but statements like this are absurd and distract from the real issues just as anticommunism did in the 1950s. The comments of Morris and the Trump campaign indicate that the Republican Party has once again shifted from a moderate to more extreme form of conservatism as it did in the 50s. This serves to prove that the conservative housewives of the 1950s succeeded in laying a more extreme right foundation within the Republican Party with their grassroots movements that continues to reverberate to today.

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[4] Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*, XIV.

[5] Brennan, *Wives, Mothers and the Red Menace*, 7.

[6] *Ibid.* 7.

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[8] Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*, XVI.

[9] Brennan, *Wives, Mothers and the Red Scare*, 8.

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[12] George Donelson Moss & Evan A. Thomas, *Moving On The American People Since 1945* (Boston: Pearson, 2013): 1, 17.

[13] Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*(New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001): 26.

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[15] M. Stanton Evans, *Blacklisted by History: The Untold Story of Senator Joe McCarthy and His Fight Against America's Enemies* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007): 179-81.

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[18] Marion Miller, *I Was A Spy: The Story of a Housewife* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc., 1960): 53.

[19] Jeffrey M. Garcilazo, "McCarthyism, Mexican Americans, and the Los Angeles Committee of the Foreign-Born 1950-54." *Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol 32, No. 3 (Autumn 2001): 275.

[20] Moss & Evans, *Moving On*, 56.

[21] Garcilazo, "McCarthyism, Mexican Americans," 275.

[22] Miller, *I Was a Spy*, 53-55.

[23] *Ibid.*, 55.

[24] *Ibid.*, 67.

[25] *Ibid.*, 56-62.

[26] *Ibid.*, 117-121.

[27] *Ibid.*, 84.

[28] *Ibid.*, 125-27.

[29] *Ibid.*, 128.

[30] Miller, 194.

[31] Brennan, *Wives, Mothers and the Red Menace*, 19-20.

[32] House Committee on Un-American Activities 86<sup>th</sup> Congress. *Full Text of The Western Section of the Southern California District of the Communist Party Hearings*, (Washington D.C.:GPO, 1960), 1195-96, 1198.

[33] Garcilazo, "McCarthyism, Mexican Americans," 280.

[34] House Committee on Un-American Activities 86<sup>th</sup> Congress, *Western Section*, 1203.

[35] Miller, *I Was a Spy*, 222-23.

[36] Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*, 70.

- [37] Hulburd, *This Happened In Pasadena* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951): 5-6, 19.
- [38] *Ibid.*, 35, 37, 48 & 51.
- [39] Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*, 74.
- [40] Hulburd, *This Happened in Pasadena*, 55.
- [41] Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*, 15 & 76.
- [42] *Ibid.*, 58.
- [43] Hulburd, *This Happened in Pasadena*, 95.
- [44] Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*, 74-75.
- [45] Hulburd, *This Happened in Pasadena*, 133-151.
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- [47] Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*, 79.
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- [52] June Melby Benowitz, "Right-Wing Women and Education in the Post-war Years," *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (2009): 93, 104.
- [53] Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism*, 91.
- [54] Benowitz, "Right-Wing Women and Education," 107-08.
- [55] Nickerson, *Conservative Mothers*, 142.

[56] Jensen, interview O.H.3937, 10-11, 15-16.

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[58] Phyllis Sclafly, *A Choice Not an Echo*, (New Jersey: Regnery, 1964, 2014 ed.): 27.

[59] Sclafly, *A Choice Not an Echo*, 26, 31, 92.

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[63] Donelson and Thomas, *Moving On*, 124-25.

[64] McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 18.

[65] Dick Morris, “2010. Take Back America.”

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## Photograph

Photo of the Cleaver family from the television program *Leave it to Beaver*. From left: Hugh Beaumont (Ward), Tony Dow (Wally), Barbara Billingsley (June), Jerry Mathers (Theodore AKA “Beaver”). 8 January 1960. ABC Television. *This work is in the [public domain](#) because it was [published](#) in the United States between 1923 and 1977 and **without a copyright notice.***