

# Bernardine Dohrn

Left-wing radical terrorist – wife of William Ayers



Bernardine Rae Dohrn (Bernardine Dohrn) born January 12, 1942) is a former leader of the 1969-1980 radical leftist organization Weather Underground. Dohrn became one of the leaders of the Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM), a radical wing of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), in the late 1960s. The ninth annual national SDS conference was held in Chicago in June 18-22, 1969, and the SDS collapsed in an RYM-led upheaval. In July 1969, Dohrn, Eleanor Raskin, Dianne Donghi, Peter Clapp, David Millstone and Diana Oughton, all representing "Weatherman", as Dohrn's faction was now called, traveled to Cuba and met with representatives of the North Vietnamese and Cuban governments.

Dohrn has been criticized for a comment she made about the recent Charles Manson led Tate-LaBianca murders in a speech

during the December 1969 “War Council” meeting organized by the Weathermen and attended by about 400 people in Flint, Michigan: “Dig it! First they killed those pigs and then they put a fork in their bellies. Wild!” Dohrn also charged that her fellow left-wingers showed themselves to be scared “honkies” for not burning down Chicago when Black Panther leader Fred Hampton was killed, and urged her audience to arm themselves and be “a fighting force alongside the blacks.” At this point, two months after the Days of Rage, the new Weatherman organization had not used guns or bombs. Dohrn’s husband, Bill Ayers has written that Dohrn was being ironic when she made the statement:

*I didn't hear that exactly, but words that were close enough I guess. Her speech was focused on the murder just days earlier of our friend Fred Hampton, the Black Panther leader. She linked Fred's murder to the murders of other Panthers around the country, to the assassinations of Malcolm X and Patrice Lumumba, the CIA attempts on Fidel's life, and then to the ongoing terror in Viet Nam. "This is the state of the world," she cried. "This is what screams out for our attention and our response. And what do we find in our newspapers? A sick fascination with a story that has it all: a racist psycho, a killer cult, and a chorus line of Hollywood bodies. Dig it!*

## **Later radical history**

The Weathermen, as they were known colloquially, conducted a series of bombings against the US government throughout the early 1970s, bombing several federal buildings. Dohrn is a principal signatory on the group’s “Declaration of a State of War” (1970) that formally declared war on the U.S. Government, and completed the group’s transformation from political advocacy to violent action. Dohrn also co-wrote and published the subversive manifesto *Prairie Fire* (1974), and participated in the covertly-filmed *Underground* (1976).

After the Greenwich Village townhouse explosion, the accidental detonation of a bomb being made that killed three of the members, all members of Weatherman went underground and the group took on its last and most famous title, the Weather Underground. The Weathermen and Weather Underground were suspected in various bombings – police cars, the National Guard Association building, the U.S. Capitol and the Pentagon. Dohrn allegedly participated in many of the group's revolutionary activities.

In late 1975, the Weather Underground put out an issue of a magazine, *Osawatamie*, which carried an article by Dohrn, "Our Class Struggle", described as a speech given to the organization's cadres on September 2 of that year. In the article, Dohrn clearly stated support for Communist ideology:

We are building a communist organization to be part of the forces which build a revolutionary communist party to lead the working class to seize power and build socialism. We must further the study of Marxism-Leninism within the WUO [Weather Underground Organization]. The struggle for Marxism-Leninism is the most significant development in our recent history. We discovered thru [sic] our own experiences what revolutionaries all over the world have found – that Marxism-Leninism is the science of revolution, the revolutionary ideology of the working class, our guide to the struggle.

According to a 1974 FBI study of the group, Dohrn's article signaled a developing commitment to Marxism-Leninism that had not been clear in the groups previous statements, despite trips to Cuba by some members of the group before and after Weather Underground was formed, and contact with Vietnamese communists there.

While on the run from police, Dohrn married another Weatherman leader Bill Ayers, with whom she has two children. During the last years of their underground life, Dohrn and Ayers resided in the Logan Square neighborhood of Chicago, where they used

the aliases Christine Louise Douglas and Anthony J. Lee.

In the late 1970s, the Weatherman group split into two factions – the “May 19 Coalition” and the “Prairie Fire Collective” – with Dohrn and Ayers in the latter. The Prairie Fire Collective favored coming out of hiding, with members facing the criminal charges against them, while the May 19 Coalition continued in hiding. A decisive factor in Dohrn’s coming out of hiding were her concerns about her children.

The couple turned themselves in to authorities in 1980. While some charges relating to their activities with the Weathermen were dropped due to governmental misconduct, Dohrn pled guilty to charges of aggravated battery and bail jumping, receiving probation. She later served less than a year of jail time, after refusing to testify against ex-Weatherman Susan Rosenberg in an armed robbery case. Shortly after turning themselves in, Dohrn and Ayers became legal guardians of the son of former members of the Weather Underground, Kathy Boudin and David Gilbert, after they were convicted of murder for their roles in a 1981 armored car robbery.

Note: During the armored car robbery the First black police officer on the force was killed.

Waverly L. Brown(1935-1981) was an Nyack, New York police officer who was killed in the line of duty during an infamous 1981 armed robbery of a Brinks Armored Car, along with fellow Nyack officer Edward O’Grady and Brinks security guard Peter Paige. The event garnered national headlines and led the arrest and imprisonment of several people involved, many of whom were members of the Weather Underground and Black Liberation Army.

Prior to his law enforcement career, Brown served in the United States Air Force and participated in the Korean War. In 1966, he became the first African American member of Nyack’s police department. By 1981, he had served with the department

for 15 years. Nicknamed "Chipper", he was well liked by his fellow officers, and often cooked meals for them during his shift.

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