

Lara Campbell:

This presentation focuses on the gender politics of Vietnam draft resistance in Canada, and is part of a larger study that looks at how antiwar activism in Canada was a gendered social movement. In particular, I will look at how both men's and women's bodies were at the centre of antiwar activism and the politics of draft resistance. Women's bodies and women's sexuality were understood as "rewards" of activism for male radicals. Whether it was the duty of women to "screw" their male counterparts, as some women complained, or whether the bodies of heterosexual women were expected to assume a supportive position by marrying dodgers or deserters as an act of loyalty to progressive politics, if they refused such obligations, they risked being labeled 'prudish feminists.' The bodies of men were also at the centre of antiwar activism, for the category of masculinity itself was called into question by draft evasion. The body of the draft dodger occupied a liminal space, a position of both masculinity and cowardice, which created a seemingly unsolvable paradox for antiwar activists. Could a real man retain his masculinity by fleeing the country? Or was immigration a heroic sacrifice of home, family, and nation for a larger cause? Conservative rhetoric marked draft dodging as passive and apathetic, and the men who engaged in it as emasculated.