ABSTRACT

On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped the first ever atomic bomb on another country and with it forever changed not only the face of war, but also the very nature of society. As civil defense programs pushed into American culture during the 1950s, many Americans, especially young ones, pushed back against its tactics and message. In this thesis, I will show how school civil defense programs throughout the 1950s and early 1960s deceived young people by presenting them with a false reality of the dangers of nuclear war. This deception was recognized by both teachers and students, and severed a divide between the educational community and the United States Government. Ultimately, this mistrust caused many young people to lose faith in their government, and played a significant role in creating the rebellious, anti-government youth culture that has come to characterize the 1960s and 1970s.
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INTRODUCTION:  
THE WEAPON THAT REDEFINED WAR

On the morning of August 6th, 1945, the American Enola Gay aircraft dropped a bomb that would forever change the culture of warfare. The plane unleashed a weapon so deadly and destructive that it not only annihilated the entire city of Hiroshima, Japan, but also sent shockwaves of terrified fascination into the homes of people in the very country that had produced it. The bomb was seemingly incomprehensible—more powerful than 20,000 tons of T.N.T. and 2,000 times stronger than the largest bomb ever previously used in human history1—and yet it started a rampage of thoughts and fantasies in the American mind. As images of the devastation in Hiroshima came stateside, Americans were hit with the terrifying picture of what their world could easily become. As John Hayne Holmes, minister of the Community Church of New York City said, we knew that “what that atomic bomb had done to Japan, it could do to us.”2

Three days later, the Air Force dropped a second atomic bomb, this time on Nagasaki. This second bomb did damage similar to the first, as they combined to claim over 200,000 thousand lives.3 Although these bombings had put the exclamation point on WWII, the true impact of the atomic bomb was just beginning.

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The American victory in World War II did not promise a generation of peace and prosperity. On the contrary, it marked the beginning of the most dangerous period in American history. The world had entered a "perilous atomic era." Those who rested their hopes for a better world on an early end to the Cold War labored under an illusion. The Cold War was only beginning.  

The day after the first bomb hit, President Harry S. Truman boasted of how the government had "spent two billion dollars on the greatest scientific gamble in history—and won." What exactly the United States "won," however, was up for debate. It had won the war, but Americans came out with a greater uncertainty about their future than even during wartime. It had won the race to develop the first nuclear bomb, but the Soviet Union would have one too before the end of the decade. The reality of the situation was that the United States had gotten out of World War II, and been bounced straight into the fearful possibility of World War III. As the Washington Post put it on August 26th, the life expectancy of the human species had "dwindled immeasurably in the course of two brief weeks." Americans now were faced with an age like none other; an age in which war was unthinkable and "the age of defenses was probably also finished."

Even the scientists who had developed the bomb were terrified of what it might do to the nation. By the end of 1945, many of the former scientists from the Manhattan Project, the operation that led the development of the bomb, had joined together and formed the Federation of Atomic Scientists, which was also known as the "League of Frightened Men." Fearful of the monster they had created, the federation advocated the creation of an international commission

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that would control the development and use of nuclear energy. However, these efforts were met with very little support, so many of the scientists attempted to make appeals directly to the American public. One federation member, Harold Urey, published an open letter to U.S. citizens on January 5th, 1946, in which he expressed the extreme dangers of a possible nuclear war and declared his own deep fears about the power of the bomb: "I write to frighten you. I'm a frightened man myself. All the scientists I know are frightened—frightened for their lives—and frightened for your life (emphasis in original)."8

The nation needed stability and the government produced an answer—civil defense. Though variations of national civil defense programs had existed as early as World War I, it was not until this post-World War II era that civil defense became prominent in the American landscape. Despite the fact that many believed that true defense in the face of atomic war was impossible,9 the United States Government founded the Federal Civil Defense Administration in 1951 and began a long campaign to spread and expand systems of civil defense throughout the country. Civil defense was designed "as a way of saving lives and property" and "protecting you and your family in case of war."10 It was framed as something that citizens must do for themselves and that in order to be equipped to protect themselves, an emphasis must be placed on "public education, training, and organization" around the issues.11 FCDA soon began producing films, hanging posters, and conducting air-raid drills both in public areas and in schools as a means to try and prepare Americans for the possibility of attack. However, in the process of all this "education" about civil defense, the government began to embark on a campaign of massive deception and illusion. As a means to gain support for their war efforts, the

8 Oakes, pp. 44.
10 Federal Civil Defense Administration. This Is Civil Defense. In Scheibach (2009), pp. 7.
11 Ibid, pp. 9.
government attempted to make the most horrific and destructive weapon in human history seem like just another bomb.

The place where this became most problematic was in the American school. Students were subjected to propaganda infused videos that scarcely showed them any of the true realities of the bomb. They were also subjected to air raid shelter drills, despite the fact that many schools did not even have real bomb shelters in them. Due to the blatant deception of these school civil defense measures, many teachers began revolting against them out of a feeling of moral duty to students. They felt that providing students with an illusion of safety was against one’s ethical duty as an educator.

In this thesis, I will show how school civil defense programs throughout the 1950s and early 1960s were deceptive and presented young people with a false reality of the dangers of nuclear war. This deception was recognized by both teachers and students and began to create a divide and mistrust between the educational community and the United States Government. Ultimately, this mistrust and deception caused many young people to lose faith in their government, and played a significant role in creating the rebellious, anti-government youth culture that has come to characterize the 1960s and the 1970s.

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13 “Council Tells TU Meeting Reasons for Refusal to Take Part in Shelter Drills.” Newspaper clipping, New York circa March 1963 (no date, no publication). SCPC Archives, Citizens Committee to Abolish School Shelter Drills Papers, Box 1, Folder 2.
SECTION I:
THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF CIVIL DEFENSE IN THE UNITED STATES

In the years immediately following the United States’ dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August of 1945, a nationwide tension arose out of citizens’ recognition of their uncertain future in the new age of nuclear power. As CBS radio commentator Edward R. Murrow said a few days after the bombings, “Seldom, if ever, has a war ended leaving the victors with such a sense of uncertainty and fear, with such a realization that the future is obscure and that survival is not assured.” Americans became fearful of everyday life, knowing that with one hot flash their world could be irrevocably changed. The bombings in Japan stood imprinted on the consciousness of Americans as symbols of what may lay ahead for their country. As one Washington correspondent wrote in the New York Times, “In that terrible flash 10,000 miles away, men and women in the capital had glimpsed the future of America.”

The government was now faced with the challenge of trying to hold onto the order of American society in the face of this terrifying reality. It was out of this need for order and control that atomic civil defense blasted onto the scene. Aimed at easing the minds and hearts of citizens, civil defense presented Americans with the idea that while utter destruction was looming and possible at any moment, if they listened to the instructions of their government officials they could protect themselves.

This was not, however, the first existence of a civil defense program. The earliest semblance of national civil defense in the United States came during World War I with the

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creation of the Council of National Defense. This Council was established on August 29, 1916, through the direction of President Woodrow Wilson, who pushed for its formation under Congress’ belief “that the country is best prepared for war when thoroughly prepared for peace.”\textsuperscript{16} The focuses of the Council included coordination and development of transportation to meet the military, industrial and commercial needs of the country, to inform American manufactures of their duties and responsibility in a time of emergency, and most importantly to create “relations which will render possible in time of need the immediate concentration and utilization of the resources of the nation.”\textsuperscript{17}

The Council was overseen by a collective consisting of the secretaries of War, Navy, Commerce, Agriculture, Labor, and the Interior, who were to appoint a group of no more then seven civilians who each brought knowledge and expertise about important facets of American life.\textsuperscript{18} By the end of the war, there were 120,000 local councils in cities and towns all across the country, each with its own slight differences that allowed it to better adapt to the community it served.\textsuperscript{19} Despite existing only for the duration of the war and never gaining great notoriety or prestige, the Council did accomplish many of its goals. It was able to unify much of the country behind the government’s engagement in the World War I and also served as a catalyst for social mobilization by uniting people across the industrial spectrum.\textsuperscript{20} Though the Council of National Defense was not perfectly aligned with later of notion civil defense, it was a useful starting point in the history of organized social unification in the interest of national defense.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Breen, pp. ix-x.
Civil defense again rose to the national scene during the early years of World War II. In early 1941, the United States began the process of developing a civil defense plan to mimic the one that had been instituted in Britain two years prior. A group of defense experts were sent to London on February 1, 1941, to observe and learn from the British system of civil defense in an effort to help create a plan for America.\(^1\) One of the great motivations behind this call for a nationwide civil defense plan came as a result of the pushing of New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, who, working off the information of a recent investigative report into the practices of British cities, was urging President Roosevelt to take up a plan of "Passive Defense" as a protective measure against the possibility of an unexpected air raid. "Passive Defense" was defined as a precautionary practice that was to uphold and protect the social and industrial sectors of the city as they were. This is in contrast to the idea of "Active Defense," which could only be operated under a military jurisdiction and was therefore not necessarily the best action towards building peace.\(^2\)

This emphasis on "passive defense" and focusing on civil defense as a peace-preserving mechanism parallels the goals of the Council on National Defense. Both ideas were to focus more on the wellbeing and safety of citizens by protecting them at home, as opposed to using military force to decrease the attacking threat. In May of 1941, President Roosevelt enacted these "passive defense" principals with the formation of the Office of Civilian Defense (OCD), which would be charged with assisting local civil defense agencies with information and training on shelters, air raid sirens, and firefighting. Mayor La Guardia was put in charge of this agency, with its focus on serving the "human needs" of the American population.\(^3\)

\(^3\) Krugler, pp. 13.
Very quickly the OCD began attracting volunteers, in large part because La Guardia aimed at having roughly 80 percent of the civil workers be volunteers.24 These volunteers quickly got to work, and by May of the next year, 55 warning sirens and horns had been installed throughout Washington. The OCD worked hard to improve civil defense in the nation’s capital, and in many ways it succeeded. However, it began to draw towards a close when many Americans lost interest in civil defense because it seemed like something that would be unnecessary after the war was over. In May of 1945, new President Truman announced that the OCD would be abandoned on June 30 of that year. Immediately following this announcement, the government ordered the removal of all shelter signs and an end to all air raid signals.25

By the time August 6, 1945 came around, many Americans had put civil defense out of their minds. It was a thing of the past, a wartime necessity to keep people united and feeling safe. However, Americans had only experienced the very beginning stages when it came to civil defense. When that first bomb fell into the foggy morning air over Hiroshima, it introduced to the world a power unconceivable to most Americans—the kind of remarkable force that would forever change the landscape of the world, both literally and figuratively. With the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, “the whole conception of modern warfare, the nature of international relations, the question of world order, the function of weaponry, had to be thought through again.”26

Just when Americans thought that civil defense was over and done with, the government unleashed a weapon that out-powered all other warfare by such a long stretch that attempting to comprehend its magnitude was a fearful encounter in itself. The blast of the bomb over

25 Krugler, pp. 14-16.
26 Kaplan, pp. 10.
Hiroshima engulfed 4.4 square miles in flames, with temperatures surpassing 5,000 degrees Fahrenheit and instantly charring anything in reach. An estimated 80,000 people died that day, with the total reaching around 130,000 by the year’s end as people continued to die from the gruesome burns they received. When combined with the blast three days later in Nagasaki, upwards of 200,000 Japanese citizens had lost their lives by November.27

The United States had unleashed a monster capable of swallowing a nation without a single hitch. A Gallup poll conducted three weeks after the attacks showed that an overwhelming number (85 percent) of Americans supported the bombings, and a poll later in the fall even showed that 22.7 percent of respondents wished that the U.S. had dropped “many more” bombs on Japan before they surrendered.28 Some citizens, however, found themselves very fearful of becoming caught on the other side of the violence.

In war—particularly this war—it is almost useless to talk of the ‘rules of war.’ And quite clearly our development of an atomic explosive was in the nature of a race for survival. Its use will probably save American lives, may shorten the war materially, may even compel Japan to surrender. Yet when this is said, we have sowed the whirlwind...And now we have been first to introduce a new weapon of unknowable effects which may bring us victory quickly but which will sow the seeds of hate more widely than ever. We may yet reap the whirlwind.29

Though this fear existed, it took some time before the population really latched on to the need to reestablish a civil defense program. In early 1947, President Truman did not believe that war with the Soviet Union was imminent, and therefore took little interest in civil defense. He

27 Walker, pp. 76-80.
28 Ibid, pp. 98.
believed that at that time an aggressive civil defense campaign would only alarm and upset citizens.\textsuperscript{30} Soon, however, the international arms race began to heat up and the level of fear and uncertainty began to rise among American families. As historian Margot Henriksen wrote, anxiety rose throughout the Atomic Age because “each publicized test of an atomic or hydrogen bomb and each cold war showdown informed Americans of their danger in a world on the brink.”\textsuperscript{31} With nowhere else to go with their fears, citizens turned to their government for help.

In the spring of 1948, the Defense Department urged each city to begin planning its own defense strategy in case an attack might occur. The department highlighted that civil defense was at a higher level of importance than ever before.\textsuperscript{32} With this societal mindset taking hold, it is no surprise that within the year a plan for a national defense agency was in the works. Under the guidance of Secretary of Defense James Forrestal, the plan was designed to mobilize 15,000,000 civilian workers, who would be “prepared and equipped to meet the problems of enemy attack.”\textsuperscript{33}

President Truman initially rejected the idea of an independent federal civil defense agency,\textsuperscript{34} but as the need and demand became greater and more obvious as the arms race with the Soviet Union increased, Congress eventually passed a civil defense bill. The Civilian Defense Bill was signed by the President on January 12, 1951 and was promised $3,100,000,000 worth of funds. Within this bill was the Federal Civil Defense Act, through which the Federal Civil

\textsuperscript{30} Krugler, pp. 23.
\textsuperscript{34} Krugler, pp. 46.
Defense Administration (FCDA) was created “to protect life and property in the United States in case of enemy assault.”

One of the first publications put out by this newly created administration was a booklet entitled *This Is Civil Defense*, which was written to give citizens “the straight facts on why civil defense is needed, how it works, and what part you (citizens) must play to make it a success.”

The booklet launches into a section defining what civil defense is and why it is necessary. The FCDA booklet explains the broad purpose of civil defense to protect American lives and property from an attack, but also talks about its mission to keep the country’s workforce mobilized.

One of the chief aims of civil defense is to help you stay at work no matter what may come. Unless all of us kept at our jobs in the face of attack, the enemy would win the war. His aim would be to make you and others quit—desert your cities so that our defense plants would shut down. *Your* aim would be to keep working and to give our armed forces the things they need to beat the enemy.

This notion that by continuing production in the workplace the United States would avoid defeat is interesting to look at on several levels. In some ways, it would seem that this push to continue working is in an effort to maintain the normalcy of life and avoid a complete meltdown of society when faced with a nuclear attack. On the other hand, however, it reads as a means to motivate Americans to support the military efforts at all costs and to essentially say that if they do this, the government will adequately protect them from total destruction. The FCDA continues this argument later by saying that because Japan had no civil defense strategy, even the factories that were left standing could not operate and therefore the cities of Hiroshima and

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36 FCDA, *This Is Civil Defense*. In Scheibach (2009), pp. 7.
37 FCDA, *This Is Civil Defense*. In Scheibach (2009), pp. 7.
Nagasaki were left completely useless to enemy. The booklet states that "without civil defense a nation is helpless. With it, cities can get up off the floor and fight back after an attack. Casualties can be cut in half."

The first part of this statement that must be questioned is this idea that a city that was just flattened for a 4.4 square mile radius might "get up off the floor and fight back." Fallout shelters, air raid drills, and alert sirens could do nothing to prevent the utter destruction of a landscape. Furthermore, the notion that these things might have saved half of the Japanese lives is simply impossible. For, as atomic scientist Harold Urey wrote in an open letter to the American public, a nuclear attack was not something that could be easily survived.

In an [atomic] explosion, thousands die within a fraction of a second. In the immediate area, there is nothing left standing. There are no walls. They are vanished into dust and smoke. There are no wounded. There are not even bodies. At the center, a fire many times hotter than any fire we have known has pulverized buildings and human beings into nothingness.

One of the early civil strategies used by the FCDA was called *Project East River*. With American fear on the rise after the Soviet Union’s atomic test in 1949, the federal government conducted a secret study that began in 1951 that produced a set of two goals that civil defense should look to achieve. The two objectives of *Project East River* were to mold all propaganda to convince the American public that nuclear bombs were no worse than conventional weapons and to train citizens to think of themselves as militarized and able protect themselves and survive an atomic attack. The propose of the propaganda was to create a program of emotional management that would allow for the government and the FCDA in particular to better

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38 FCDA, *This Is Civil Defense*. In Scheibach (2009), pp. 9.
39 Oakes, pp. 41.
understand Americans’ thought and behaviors to allow the FCDA to bring in better support for governmental causes and agendas.41

This kind of deception is one of the focal points of Andrew Grossman’s book *Neither Dead Nor Red*, in which he makes the argument that not only were these objectives deceptive, they were also harmful in nature because they relied on using the natural fears of people to turn them to support the government’s operations. Grossman also comments on the government’s involvement with universities who helped in researching these strategies, writing, “Under the cloak of the academy and the legitimacy it lent to postwar social science, the U.S. population was subjected to a massive campaign of state-sponsored dissimulation.”42

These nuclear fears were intentionally deepened by the U.S. Government, who used tactics of “preaching of doom” to manipulate the public’s concerns about the possibility of nuclear war to invoke the support of the American public for military and defense operations. The thinking behind these scare tactics was that exposing people to the possibility that their world could be annihilated at any moment was the only way to inspire Americans to change the culture of fear that had followed WWII and to instead come together into a unified body.43 As Paul Boyer notes, it was all about playing to the emotion of fear:

“Once the instinct for survival is stimulated, the basic condition for change can be met. That is why the quintessence of destruction... must be dramatized and kept in the forefront of public opinion.”44

In this way, the United States government began psychologically manipulating its citizens and treating them as though they were unable to think for themselves or decipher the

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43 Boyer (1994), pp. 70.
44 Boyer, pp. 70.
dangers that were around them. In doing this, the government was toeing the line of how civil defense should go to protect American lives. Many officials believed that these doom-preaching propaganda operations were very effective in building national unity. In that same vein, if the goal of civil defense was to protect American lives and property and fear mongering was the most effective way to accomplish this, then it must be the right thing to do.

What this did not take into account, however, was the expectation of the relationship between civilians and government. While citizens do expect their government to provide the utmost protection it can, they also expect a certain level of respect and transparency to be shown to them. It confused citizens that while their leaders preached the dire need for international peace the nation’s nuclear weapons total skyrocketed up from 13 bombs in 1947, to nearly 300 by 1950. The government spoke of the need to abolish war all together, and yet new weapons testing was happening all the time. As Raymond Gram Swing, a prominent journalist of the time, said on the eve of a 1946 weapons test, “So we strive to save civilization, and we learn how to wreck it, all in the same weekend.”

Government popularity and the public support of civil defense fell throughout the 1950’s. One arena in which this governmental disapproval can be seen is in examples of citizens beginning to revolt against civil defense, often by refusing to take part in air raid drills. Air raid drills were performed as a measure to teach the general public what to do should an atomic attack from the air happen.

One example of such a protest came in New York City in 1956, when a group of 19 citizens refused to take cover during an air raid drill. The incident happened on July 20, in Washington Square Park, where a citywide air raid drill was to be in effect. The protesters

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46 Boyer (1994), pp. 82.
arrived in the park shortly before the drill was intended to begin, and simply sat silently on
benches. When the sirens began to sound, they remained seated. They were ordered by officers
to leave the park and take cover, but refused, and were therefore arrested and charged with
violating section 101(2-b) of the New York State Defense Emergency Act, which mandated that
citizens take cover and obey the orders of officers and civil defense workers in the event of an
emergency or drill.\textsuperscript{47}

A statement in the court case proceedings proclaims, “The appellants were motivated by
a desire to test the laws and regulations. They saw these laws as unconstitutional.”\textsuperscript{48} This
motivation alone displays the dissatisfaction that the many civilians had with the government. They felt that the civil defense drills that they were being subjected to were unhelpful and
unproductive in establishing peace. This is evident in the signs that the protesters in Washington
Square Park brought with them. They were all in support of the need to promote peace as
opposed to the threat of violence, with messages like “End war, the only defense against atomic
weapons,” and “End war, the only real civil defense.”\textsuperscript{49}

As much as one could argue the point that the government was doing whatever it felt was
best and most beneficial to American citizens, whenever there are policies that invoke people to
rise against and refuse participation, the laws need to be addressed. Civil defense’s long history
of deception left a sour taste in the mouths of many Americans, who had looked at the
government as their guiding light in this time of fear and darkness.

\textsuperscript{47} James Peck, Marcus Cohen, Ralph Di Gia et al v. New York. The Supreme Court of the United States,
October term 1959, pp. 1-16. SCPC Archive, Civil Defense Subject File Box 1, Folder 1.
\textsuperscript{49} Peck v. New York, pp. 12.
SECTION II: CIVIL DEFENSE MEDIA AND THE PRESERVATION OF NORMALCY

Civil defense programs deeply impacted the lives of Americans of all ages, and were experienced by them in many different ways. Radio programs were broadcasted into the homes of millions, while newspapers around the nation kept Americans up to date on the most recent Cold War developments. In schools, the most common and prolific civil defense tool was film. Film was a particularly powerful medium because the visual representation made civil defense all the more real to America’s young people. Short civil defense films were widely used as a means of teaching young citizens about the actions to take in case of an atomic attack. The effects of these videos on the children who watched them has been greatly debated, as some historians have argued that they eased tensions, while many others have crafted arguments that frame the videos as detrimental to students’ wellbeing because of their deceptive nature.

In this section I will first examine the messages that government civil defense was trying to push on to citizens through videos, pamphlets and posters. I will also look into the nationwide fallout shelter craze that took place in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and examine how it was viewed by American citizens and portrayed in popular culture. In the end, I will show how despite all of the government’s attempts to develop programs that would preserve the normalcy of everyday life, American society became infatuated with an imaginary catastrophe that no amount of civil defense could train citizens to deal with.

One of the most well-known and widespread tools of civil defense proliferation was the short film *Duck and Cover*, starring “Bert the Turtle.” This 10-minute video was made in 1951 through funding from the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA), and was aimed towards
educating children about how to properly protect themselves should a nuclear attack occur. Today the video has found a place in the tragic humor section of American culture. A lot of this is because of the absurd notion that students and teachers in the 1950’s might actually believe that “ducking and covering” would protect them from an atomic attack. The comical nature of the film is increased by the fact that it features a cartoon turtle named Bert, who sets the example for how to duck and cover. While the video itself has stood the test of time, the nationwide tension around atomic weapons has been lost in the 60 years since Bert’s stardom. This tension arose from the Cold War reality that the world could be obliterated at any moment, without any warning. This was a time when people were captivated by a fear of the unknown dangers of the world, and were willing to latch on to any hope that survival might be possible, no matter how unfeasible.

There was a turtle by the name of Bert
And Bert the Turtle was very alert
When danger threatened him he never got hurt
He knew just what to do—

He’d duck and cover, duck and cover
He’d hide his head and tail and four little feet
He’d duck and cover! 50

With this song, the famous Duck and Cover video begins. As it plays, the friendly cartoon Bert the Turtle is walking along and minding his own business, until a monkey in a tree dangles a stick of dynamite over his head. Upon seeing this, Bert jumps to the ground, tucks his head and limbs into his shell, and survives the blast with perfect health. The video is then taken over by a male narrator, who explains to viewers about how to duck and cover properly in any situation that a student might find themselves—in class, in the hallway, at home, riding a bike,

50 Rizzo, Anthony, (director), and Leo M. Langlois (producer). Duck and Cover. Archer Films, 1951, :00- :36. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KqXu-5jw60
and walking down the street. These are all talked about with footage of live students executing the maneuvers. At the end of the video, Bert comes back on to remind students that to stay safe in an attack they must "Duck and Cover!"  

The first thing that strikes the viewer is how unproductive many of the duck and cover moves seem to be. Students are told that if they’re in the classroom they are to duck under their desks, and if on the street they should tuck into a ball against the nearest building. The video leads children to believe that if they take simple measures like these, they can protect themselves from an attack; however, there is little feasibility to many of these survival methods. There is also a section where the narrator talks about how we must be ready for an atomic attack in the same way that we would prepare for any danger, such as a fire or car accident. A comparison is made between fire drill safety protocols, traffic laws, and duck and cover drills—all things which most people today could never imagine being equated on the same level as a nuclear blast. This all begs the question of whether there is even such a thing as atomic civil defense. As Val Peterson, President Eisenhower’s chief civil defense administrator bluntly stated: “The best way to be alive when an atomic bomb goes off in your neighborhood is not to be there,” furthering the sentiments that there was little that could be done by way of true protection.

*Duck and Cover* sends a confusing message to children because it says that atomic safety is as simple as a fire drill and that students can easily protect themselves, while simultaneously feeding students the message that the atomic bomb is the most powerful force known to mankind. In many ways, the video’s voice and imagery are not aligned. The voice of the film presents, as then Board of Education representative John C. Cocks observed, “underlying

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51 *Duck and Cover.*
52 Rose, pp. 4.
qualities of cheerfulness and optimism." But when you look past this cheerfulness and take a deeper, analytical examination of the video, a message of helplessness and despair comes out.

The most basic way that this can be seen is the greater symbol of what “duck and cover” really means. By ducking and covering, Bert the Turtle essentially moves into the fetal position. The video talks of the need to “all be ready to take care of ourselves,” but never in American history has “protection” ever been classified as dropping into the fetal position. In this way, the simple act of ducking and covering quickly dispels the notion that Americans were in any way in control of their own fate. Children were not numb to this reality, and soon caught on to the subtle signs of their uncertain future. As historian Kenneth Rose states, “Children may have found civil defense creations such as Bert the Turtle both funny and accessible, but they also understood that a very grim, frightening specter lurked behind Bert’s friendly banter.”

The positive and informative impact that Duck and Cover had on students was minimal at the very best. After all, the only real advice or “safety tip” that is discussed in the film tells everyone to duck and take cover. The Federal Civil Defense Administration was passing off going into the fetal position as a defense tactic. Acting in the way instructed in the video was really just acting in a way that your body might tell you to when you’re in grave danger and helpless. Disguised under the mask of Duck and Cover was the message that there was nothing that we could do to protect ourselves in the event of an attack. The film’s stilted (and ultimately failed) attempts at depicting an atomic attack as survivable could be seen by even a casual observer, and in this way, Duck and Cover created more harm than good by illustrating the hopeless and helpless nature of civil defense.

54 Duck and Cover, 5:40.
55 Rose, pp. 149.
One-way to gauge the effects that civil defense had on children is to look at what the children themselves said about it. I have chosen to examine the transcript from an interview with four sixth-graders from San Bruno, California, on February 19, 1963. The interview was recorded and moderated by Elsa Knight Thompson, the director of public affairs for KPFA, the San Francisco-based radio station that aired the interview. The transcript is printed in a book entitled *Children and the Threat of Nuclear War*, which is a compilation of primary source pamphlets, interviews and reports from the early 1960s. The book was published in 1964, by the Child Study Association of America, a nonprofit membership organization that was founded in 1888 with the goal of serving the interests of parents and parent educators.

The interview sheds some light onto the mindset and emotions of the youth of the time. The students definitely show an uncertainty and a disapproval of the civil defense projects in place. A 1961 poll of middle and high school students in New York, Philadelphia and their surrounding suburbs showed that 40 percent of junior high students and 70 percent of high school students disapproved of school shelters because of their feeling of the shelter’s ineffectiveness.\(^56\) As one student said, "They are stupid, a farce, a money-making proposition."\(^57\) Although the students interviews by KPFA are younger than those in the polls, their views still align with a lot of the views of the students in the polls, which supports the argument that civil defense was an inadequate system.

The students interviewed—Susan Whitaker, Kathy Fitzgerald, Fred Barnhart, and Robert Rodgers—hailed from multiple schools, though the exact number is not made clear (Kathy and Fred went to the same school and Robert went to a different one, but it isn’t clear where Susan went to school). Robert, Susan, and Fred all have parents who are involved with organizations


\(^{57}\) Ibid, pp. 26.
that lobby for peace, while Kathy is unsure of her parents involvement in such things. The racial
and economic background of the students is not mentioned in the interview.

The time of the interview is a few months after the Cuban Missile Crisis ended, at a time
when fear and tension about nuclear war was extremely high. Though the Cuban Missile Crisis is
never explicitly mentioned, themes of the questions reflect a nation that is very aware of this
looming threat of nuclear war. One way this is seen is through the seemingly casual tone that the
students use when discussing the threat of atomic bombs and when talking about their fears
about their families being blown up.

The interview starts out with the moderator, Miss Thompson, asking the students about
what kind of drills—if any—the students have in their schools. The students then explained how
the various drills in their schools worked and what their feelings on them were. The first thing
that pops out in their descriptions is how little faith they seem to have in the usefulness of the
drills. While only Susan says that duck and cover drills are completely useless, however, all the
others express at least some doubt in the drill’s ability to offer them any safety. Robert, Fred and
Kathy all agree that they might be useful to a certain degree, but all say that if the bomb is
dropped close to them at all, their desks would do nothing to protect them. Even when it comes
to hiding in underground shelters the young students seem less than convinced that they would
remain safe. Robert and Susan both talk about how it would be hard to protect themselves from
radiation and that even if they were to get into a bomb shelter in time, they would eventually run
out of food and have to come out before the radiation had dispersed.\footnote{Interview on KPFA Radio Station, host Elsa Knight Thompson, Feb. 19\textsuperscript{th}, 1963, San Francisco. Transcript in \textit{Children and the Threat of Nuclear War: What Do We Tell Them?} Produced by the Child Study Association of America. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pierce, 1964.}

These ideas echo the sentiments of many Americans who understood that hiding under
their desk wasn’t going to keep them safe if a bomb was dropped in their vicinity. As Nobel
Peace Prize-winning chemist Harold Urey put it, “Atomic bombs don’t land in the next block, leaving survivors to thank their lucky stars and...to hope the next bomb will also miss them.”

While Urey makes the argument that not even good luck would truly be enough to save people in the case of an atomic attack, the civil defense administrations in cities across the nation held firm to the belief that preparedness could save American lives. Government civil defense posters from the 1950s all provide a message of the necessity and life-saving capabilities of being prepared for a nuclear attack. One such example is a poster that shows the image of “Mr. Civil Defense,” a short man with his hands on his hips and a slightly tilted army helmet that bore the Federal Civil Defense Administration’s (FCDA) logo on it, standing in the middle of circular text that read “Alert Today, Alive Tomorrow.” “Mr. Civil Defense” was shown wearing black boots, a dark jumpsuit, and in place of his torso are the giant letters “CD” in the same style that they appear on the FCDA’s logo. Though the FCDA used this image of “Mr. Civil Defense” on several of its publications, this specific poster was meant to gather support for National Civil Defense Week, which was taking place from September 9-15, 1956.

This message of “Alert Today, Alive Tomorrow” really brings up questions of what this alertness would do exactly. It gave off the idea that by being aware of the danger, citizens could protect themselves from it. However, if being alert meant being ready to duck and cover, then it would seem that this alertness would be in vain, because that would bring Americans little protection. What the government was really trying to do with all of these posters and pamphlets promoting preparedness and alertness was to give citizens the idea that they were in fact in control of their own destiny. Another example of this comes on the cover of a FCDA pamphlet

59 Rose, pp. 4.
entitled “What You Can Do Now!” The cover shows a happy family overtop of the pamphlet title, the FCDA logo, and the label “Home Defense Pledge.” But the part that really stands out is the statement: “Remember that a trained, alert America is a mighty force for peace.”

There is no connection between the preparedness of a nation for an atomic attack and the likelihood that such an attack might occur. In many ways in fact, it would appear that by being more prepared and feeling safer as a nation, the United States government might actually be more likely to attack another country because of its feeling of security at home. This is because the government would be much more comfortable bombing another country if it felt as though its citizens could survive and attack at home. The bottom line becomes that while the federal government was attempting to make Americans feel safer and more in control of their own fate by telling them that by being prepared they could protect themselves, they were actually feeding them a deception that was geared towards developing increased backing and support of the FCDA and the military.

One common, militaristic thread that can be found within all of these forms of civil defense is the use of the word “alert.” This word is used prominently in many civil defense materials from the 1950s and early 1960s, and serves the purpose of invoking a quick and immediate reaction from the reader or viewer. One of the definitions in the Oxford English Dictionary for the word “alert” is as follows:

A signal given by means of a siren or hooter to indicate that an air attack is imminent; an air-raid alarm or warning; also, the state of preparedness so produced or the period during which this alarm is in effect. (Used esp. in the war of 1939–45.)

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This definition shows how deeply rooted “alert” is in the military industry. The use of it throughout civil defense materials, whether it be on a poster (“Alert Today, Alive Tomorrow”), or in the Duck and Cover opening song (Bert the Turtle was very alert), was clearly meant to bring out a certain edge in citizens, and create a society that was ready to jump at the sound of any warning. While words like “readiness” or “preparedness” have a somewhat dull tone to them, the notion of being alert brings to mind images of lightning quick reactions to anything you might encounter. Another definition that is offered for alert is “on the look-out, watchful, vigilant, and wide-awake,”63 which are all very militarized notions. In this way, the government’s use of the word alert further pushes the argument that there existed a militaristic agenda behind much of the civil defense doctrine. Because of the uniformity and control that are basic principals of any military, the thought of a militarized nation would seem the best in a time of worldly chaos. If the government could create an alert, militarized nation, it could not only gain more backing for military programs, but also could ideally create a nation of unity and conformity.

FALLOUT SHELTERS

As a result of all of the nationwide attention on civil defense drills and safety, the fallout shelter began making its way deep into American dialogue. In the fall of 1961, President John F. Kennedy began putting together a national fallout shelter program that included identifying and marking buildings that housed shelters, stocking these sheltered with non-perishable goods, and developing improved warning systems to better alert citizens to danger.64 Kennedy promoted all of these plans by publishing a statement in the September 15 issue of Life magazine. Throughout

64 Rose, pp. 84.
the issue, the magazine stressed the need for shelters to be built as a basic way for Americans to protect themselves and their families, and even made the bold declaration that if you were prepared, "you and your family could have 97 chances out of 100 to survive." The article also spent a lot of time attempting to make shelters seem like a part of everyday life and as something that should not be dreaded. They gave tips about painting the interior bright colors to "add a note of cheerfulness," and gave examples of people who used their shelters as makeshift clubhouses and lounge rooms in order to integrate them into normal life. Life marketed shelters as a necessity for every family and as an extremely necessary tool for nuclear survival.

Almost immediately after this issue hit newsstands, Life began receiving criticism for how it represented the realities of fallout shelters. Citizens nationwide turned from their obsession to acquire shelters for safety, and began vilifying the structures as ineffective wastes of money. Some of the main factors in this change were the views expressed in two of the nation's other leading magazines: Time and Newsweek.

In the months following the publication of the Life article, Time published several stories exploring the intensifying cultural battle surrounding fallout shelters. The magazine took in-depth looks into the morality of the bomb and how its presence, and the presence of shelters, affected the American public's moral stance. It also challenged Life's image of fallout shelters as a safe and cozy place for refuge. As one University of Maryland professor stated in reference to the dangers of shelters, "we must refuse to walk into the H-crematoria."

Newsweek offered similar views on shelters, and expressed doubts that the steep prices homeowners must pay for shelters were even feasible given most American's income. The

65 Henriksen, pp. 207.
66 Henriksen, pp. 207-8.
magazine also asked the question of what alternatives there might be to shelters, which they perceived as creating a "mole-like life." Newsweek argued that the only productive alternative was to engage in arms control and a push for worldwide disarmament because, as professor Seymour Melman wrote, "to me planning a ‘good’ shelter is like talking about an efficient design for Auschwitz."\(^{68}\) It was this notion of the shelter as an unreliable fortress for safety that sparked a lot of the national debate. A November 6 article in Newsweek blasted Life’s upbeat portrayal of shelter life, saying that “the facts of nuclear war, fallout, and shelter life are far more complex and sobering” than Life’s depiction, and that it was remarkable how “the talk of shelters and protection has by some mad alchemy transmuted the unutterable horrors of thermonuclear war into a rather cozy affair.”\(^{69}\)

The tide turned so quickly on the subject of shelters that a mere four months after publishing the issue endorsing Kennedy’s new plans, Life was feverishly backing off its initial statements. In the January 12, 1963 edition, the magazine completely changed its tone in regards to the necessity of shelters, now saying instead that there was “unwisdom, if not added danger, in an over-ambitions shelter program.”\(^{70}\) Life also backed away from its previous claim that shelters would save 97 percent of people, instead taking the stance that “shelters would somewhat increase the chances of survival” and that “under certain ghastly circumstances they might save millions of lives—and the nation” (emphasis in original).\(^{71}\)

These debates over the effectiveness and necessity of fallout shelters triggered the Consumers Union, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing unbiased information and evaluations of consumer goods, to publish a review entitled “The Fallout Shelter” that was set as

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\(^{68}\) Henriksen, pp. 215.
\(^{69}\) Henriksen, pp. 215.
\(^{70}\) Rose, pp. 81.
\(^{71}\) Rose, pp. 81.
"a review of the facts of nuclear life and the variables that bear on the effectiveness of a shelter."72 This review first appeared in the January 1962 issue of the Consumers Union’s monthly publication Consumer Reports, which served as the outlet for all of the Consumers Union’s assessments and evaluations of products and goods.73 The very fact that this report was published was very telling to how the American population had begun to view civil defense. Civil defense had essentially become a consumer good that could be acquired if one possessed the financial means. Throughout the 1950s the American public had been consuming the government’s sale of the proper civil defense mindset, and now they were debating the purchase of its physical structure.

From the very beginning of the report, the Consumers Union makes it very clear that they do not believe that shelters of any kind are going keep people safe in the event of an atomic attack. The report makes a point of making the distinction between a blast shelter and a fallout shelter. The CU describes blast shelters as those designed to protect humans from the actual blast of the attack. The report argues that this kind of shelter could be very effective theoretically, though, a workable design and model did not exist. The fallout shelter, made for protection against the nuclear radiation fallout that would follow a blast, could be devised very easily according to the report, but would not actually be effective.

To be blunt about it, fallout shelters of the type widely proposed to date are so costly and complex in their requirements, so limited and unreliable in usefulness, and so generally dependent on variables and unknowns, that there is very little which an organization such as the Consumers Union can do by way of evaluating them.74

The first threat that a fallout shelter would face was the simple power of the blast itself. If a 100-megaton nuclear bomb, which was believed to be the probable size of the newest Russian bombs, was exploded at seven miles above ground, a fireball that would “far exceed the temperature at the surface of the sun” could set ablaze an area of roughly 11,000 square miles, a space slightly larger than the state of Vermont. At a heat like this, even the sturdiest of fallout shelters would run a very serious risk of becoming crematoriums. For example, the air-raid shelters that were opened in Hamburg, Germany after the Allies firebombed the city in 1943 still contained air heated to about 1500 degrees Fahrenheit two full days after the blast. The fact that the results in Hamburg were produced without the presence of any nuclear weapons only deepened the uncertain protection that a fallout shelter could provide.

Additionally, if a bomb were dropped from an altitude that high, it would produce no actual fallout. The only time fallout would truly be a threat is if the bomb were exploded at nearly ground level. Even then, the range of fallout danger would be determined by numerous variables such the wind, the terrain, the time of year, the character of the soil and so many other minute details. The CU assesses all these variables by stating that “meaningful evaluation is all but impossible where variables and unknowns outweigh what’s know as completely as they do with fallout shelters.” In the eyes of the CU, the only way to truly protect from an attack would be a thermal protected blast shelter, but such a shelter would be very expensive and “is simply beyond the purchasing power of the great majority of U.S. families.”

However, this move toward shelter opposition was hardly a monetary issue, nor was it triggered solely by questions about the reliability and safety of shelters. The real issue that

75 “The Fallout Shelter,” pp. 3.
concerned Americans lay in the many questions about what the presence of shelters might do to American society. This was especially true for suburban homeowners, the majority of whom had moved out of the city in the post-war era as a way to get a piece of "the good life."\textsuperscript{78} In the early 1950s, the FCDA had focused on selling the illusion of post-atomic attack survival to these suburbanites, for not only were the suburbs easier to protect than large cities, but the suburbs had also come to represent the ideal in American society. Civil defense administrators' insistence on upholding this image of suburban perfection, "these newly middle-class, first-generation suburbanites had to be unequivocally convinced that their government could do something to protect them if the worst happened and the Cold War became a "hot" war."\textsuperscript{79} These civil defense illusions were soaked up with questions in the early 1950s, but when the 1960s came around, many had begun to doubt their perfect safety. Suburbanites had spent the better part of the decade at the pinnacle of American culture, but now, in 1961, they were faced with newly developing shelter-based civil defense programs that, as Newsweek said, "may well involve a monumental change in the very quality of American life, the consequences of which cannot be foreseen."\textsuperscript{80}

Suburban Americans did not know how to cope with the thought of seeing all the hard-sought amenities of their idealized lifestyle turn into a nation that, as New York State Civil Defense Commission director Clarence Huebner predicted, by the mid-1960s "might be dwelling permanently in fallout shelters, emerging into the sunshine only as a calculated risk."\textsuperscript{81} In many suburban communities, shelters were a subject brought up at cocktail parties as a joke and were treated rather lightheartedly. As historian Kenneth Rose argued, this was not due to a lack of

\textsuperscript{78} Grossman, pp. 77.
\textsuperscript{79} Grossman, pp. 76-77.
\textsuperscript{80} Rose, pp. 86.
\textsuperscript{81} Rose, pp. 86.
knowledge surrounding the devastating power of the bomb, but was rather an attempt to cling to the normalcy of suburban life, because "the relaxed, carefree life promised by the suburbs was clearly compromised by fallout shelters." Therefore, it became much easier and more comfortable for these suburbanites to playfully pass off civil defense in a joking manner than face the harsh realities of the world they lived in.

Not only did fallout shelters represent the inescapable doom that could befall the United States at anytime, but they also had a very dangerous, exclusionary reality to them. Civil defense as a whole was, for the most part, a very individualized form of protection. Whether it was children ducking under their desks for cover or families rushing to hide in their own basements, civil defense was often a very self-centric program. But the presence of fallout shelters took this individual protection to the utmost extreme. The reality of shelters was that unless national ones were built, fallout and bomb protection would go only to those who possessed the capital to purchase or build one. In this way, fallout shelters put the physical divide of the natural earth between the haves and the have-nots, splitting friends, neighborhoods, and communities down the middle.

Many, including Newsweek, blamed the government's civil defense programs for creating this culture of individual focused safety, and worried about its potential to bring out the worst in people.

There is evidence that the Administration policies, which seem to emphasize an every-man-for-himself approach, have succeeded in bringing out the worst side of human nature. Some citizens are behaving as if they were cavemen already...Ethics-in-the-shelter has become a subject of serious theological debate.83

82 Rose, pp. 190.
83 Henriksen, pp. 214-215.
All of these suburban realities of civil defense were sharply illustrated in a 1961 episode of the science fiction television show *The Twilight Zone*. The episode, entitled "The Shelter," provides a deep and provocative social commentary on the worrisome direction that the nation may be headed in by depicting the lengths to which a group of neighborhood family friends will go to try to survive in the face of an impending nuclear attack.

The episode starts out with a small neighborly dinner at the house of Dr. Bill Stockton to celebrate his birthday. While finishing their meal, one of the guests, Jerry, gives a long toast to the doctor about how much he has taken care of all of them and their children over the years. During the speech, the guests also give Bill a hard time about all the banging and hammering that they’ve had to put up with because of him building a bomb shelter in his basement. Soon after, as the guests are preparing to leave, an announcement comes on the radio saying that several unidentified objects had been spotted in the sky and that the President was issuing a civil defense warning to all citizens, advising them to gather supplies and head to their shelters or basements as quickly as possible.

The guests immediately leave and the Stocktons begin to collect important belongings, food, and water from the house and move into the shelter. As they hurry to get as much into the shelter as possible, Dr. Stockton’s wife breaks down about the prospect of not coming out of the shelter for weeks or possibly months. “Then what?” she asks in response to the idea of emerging to find a world that has been destroyed by the bomb. “Why is it necessary to survive? What’s the good of it?” This connects directly to military theorist Herman Kahn’s question: after a nuclear war “will the survivors envy the dead”? This question addresses the fears expressed by Mrs.

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85 Rose, pp. 68.
Stockton about the horrors that might await them when they reopen that shelter door. Americans had to face the fact that even a bomb shelter could protect only so much. It could not protect their homes. It could not protect their cars. It could not protect their suburban luxuries. It could keep them alive, but it could not protect the life they had built for themselves.

Dr. Stockton manages to calm his wife down, but immediately afterward he is faced with the bigger problem of his dinner guests and close friends showing up and trying to get into the shelter. Through the bolted hatchway the neighbors and their families plead for the doctor to let them in. He refuses, saying that he is terribly sorry, but he built the shelter to protect his family and there isn’t enough room for everyone. The neighbors grow increasingly hostile as one of them cries angrily, “You’ll probably survive, but you’ll have blood on your hands! You’re a doctor! You’re supposed to help people!” As the small mob grows more and more desperate, they begin turning on themselves, and fighting about what actions to take. They finally decide to go get a pole to bust in the door. When they return with it, they begin repeatedly bashing at the door until they have ripped it off the hinges and rendered the shelter useless to them all. Just as they are climbing through the doorway, a radio announcement comes through that Washington has identified the flying objects as satellites and that there is absolutely no danger to the American public.

Everyone quietly begins trying to laugh off the whole thing. Some of the dinner guests try half-heartedly to apologize for things that they said and but didn’t mean. As a visibly shaken and distraught Dr. Stockton emerges from the now broken shelter, his neighbors try to make up for their doings, saying that they will pay to fix the shelter, and do “anything to get back to normal.”

86 The Twilight Zone, 13:05.
The shaken and sweaty Dr. Stockton gives a short speech, which concludes with: “We were spared a bomb tonight, but I wonder...I wonder if we weren’t destroyed even without it.”

“The Shelter” episode stands as a great example of the tenuous mood and climate that arose out of the tensions and fears that encapsulated shelter life in the early 1960s. These fears of atomic war had the potential to spark the deepest human instinct for survival. The looming doom turned these friends and neighbors into savages with only themselves in mind. In the end, they destroyed the only thing that could have kept any of them safe. The episode illustrates the realities of the very real and intense fears that resided deep within the American consciousness. The characters’ actions expose the ugly truth that underneath all of the friendly faces and pleasant greetings of suburbia, there still existed a savage, animalistic instinct to survive at any cost.

It was fear of situations like this that caused many Americans to keep their fallout shelters secret from friends and neighbors in hopes that they would not be faced with decisions about who to save in the event of an attack. Some citizens, however, planned on simply keeping intruders out through brute force. One man wrote that once he finished his shelter he was “going to mount a machine gun at the hatch to keep neighbors out.” In this manner, imaginations about the bomb were creating intense divides among citizens who were just as worried about surviving the wrath of their neighbors as they were about surviving the blast.

“The Shelter” also brings into question the success of civil defense as a normalizing mechanism in American society. Much of the goal of Bert the Turtle and other civil defense videos were to turn the idea of nuclear war into a seemingly manageable possibility as a way to keep public order and prevent chaos. By comparing nuclear defense drills to fire drills, the

87 *The Twilight Zone*, 23:35.
88 Rose, pp. 93-94.
government was attempting to normalize the idea of civil defense and create an environment in which Americans felt that they could feasibly protect themselves in the event of an attack. The effects of this normalizing can also be seen in the radio interviews through the matter-of-fact manner that that the kids can talk about the possibility of a nuclear war. This may be the only junction in American history when everyday fourth graders engaged in conversations not only about their personal feelings regarding the annihilation of their own country and the strategies that they felt would be the most useful in preventing it, but also about how an enemy attack would almost certainly kill their entire family. "The Shelter" shows the dinner guests carelessly laughing and poking fun at Dr. Stockton, complaining that he kept them all up at night while building his "pointless" shelter.

While these everyday life encounters portray an image that citizens have adopted some of the nuclear normalization pushed on by civil defense, "The Shelter" shows us what might have happened to these "normalized" Americans in the face of a true emergency. In this moment of sheer panic, all of the strategies that Americans had been fed about the need to unite as a nation and to remain calm under duress were thrown out the window, and the most desperate form of man came out. This shows that while civil defense may have calmed down everyday life, it did not truly turn Americans into highly trained agents of civil defense. Civil defense was supposed to unify the nation and protect citizens’ lives and property, but instead the government supported and encouraged citizens to build shelters that inherently divided people. The greatest division between people is death, and that was essentially what fallout shelters did—they locked

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89 KPFA Interview.
90 *The Twilight Zone*, :00-1:00.
91 FCDA, *This is Civil Defense*. In Scheibach (2003), pp. 7-9.
people underground to keep them alive, while leaving the less fortunate up above to face the monster.
SECTION III: SCHOOL SHELTER DRILLS AND THE MORALITY OF EDUCATION

Civil defense served a particularly important purpose in schools because schools were the arena where the foundation for the next generation of Americans was constructed. Education in the atomic age was seen as the key to not only surviving the bomb, but, as it always was, to the sustained future of the nation and world. This emphasis on the future of the world was particularly important in the face of rapidly developing atomic science. As a Temple University professor framed it in 1946, “We have an appointment with Destiny...What happens in the next few years will shape the course of history for decades, perhaps centuries to come.” 92 Charles Edison, the Governor of New Jersey and son of the famous inventor Thomas Edison, echoed these sentiments in 1947 by arguing that atomic energy had made “the unintelligent man obsolete. We have got to strive to make our heads more potent than uranium...Our public schools and our colleges must do a great deal more.” 93

This concept of doing a great deal more was not just left to the academic side of schooling. In the eyes of the government, it was also vitally important to train and protect the physical wellbeing of these post-war students. With this in mind, the Federal Civil Defense Administration published a manual entitled Civil Defense in Schools as a measure to help guide individual schools on how to deal with the threat of nuclear war. The manual, published in 1952, was “intended as a guide and reference primarily for local and State superintendents of schools in organizing and operating programs for the self-protection of schools, their physical facilities,

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their staff, and students."\textsuperscript{94} The document outlines the role that schools should have in civil defense, the processes to go through in assessing the safest defense plan, and sample letters that could be sent out to parents to inform them of the school's defense policies.\textsuperscript{95}

One thing that is interesting about the manual is that in one of the sample letters that the FCDA gives schools to send out, the last line before the signature is the line, "We trust that an enemy attack will never occur, but we are adopting these precautions for the safety of your children."\textsuperscript{96} What is important about this line is that the FCDA is not saying that it \textit{hopes} there will not be an attack, but rather that they \textit{trust} that one will not occur. This wording is a deception in itself because a mere few months before the release of \textit{Civil Defense in Schools, Project East River}, the government-funded civil defense study that was conducted at the request of the FCDA, had "concluded that the United States had seriously underestimated the gravity of the Soviet nuclear threat."

An attack with modern weapons would be much more damaging to our population, our property, our way of life, and to our democratic institutions generally than is realized by the public or even by many responsible government officials.\textsuperscript{97}

On the basis of this information there is no reason that the FCDA should be assuring parents and students that there would not be a nuclear attack unless they were purposefully attempting to deceive the school community as a way to more easily implement civil defense drills in schools. The FCDA would look to do this because the more access that they had to children through defense drills, the easier it would be to create a uniform nation. There is also

\textsuperscript{95} FCDA, \textit{Civil Defense in Schools}, pp. 1-32.
\textsuperscript{97} Oakes, pp. 48.
simply no way to argue that the FCDA would be funding civil defense videos such as *Duck and Cover*, conducting air raid drills in major cities, and compelling the New York City school system to spend $159,000 to provide 2 million identification tags for elementary school children in all city schools (public, parochial, and private),\(^98\) if it was not concerned with the possibility of an atomic attack.

The manual also references the future of education should there be a nuclear attack on the country. In the conclusion section of the document, the FCDA states that once all schools in the country have adopted the guidelines laid out before them, the nation will be able to rest assured that its children will be protected in case of an emergency. Americans will also have “the satisfaction of knowing their (children’s) education can be resumed soon and in a more orderly way after an attack than would ever be possible without civil defense preparation.”\(^99\) With credible sources such as *Time* magazine predicting that an attack on New York City would claim 100,000 lives and require 600,000 pints of blood to aid survivors,\(^100\) how could the FCDA bring up the notion of quickly going back to normal after an attack? There was quite simply no justifiable argument for a hasty return to normal life after an atomic blast. However, throughout the 1950s, the FCDA stressed this idea of normalcy, despite the fact that they were at same time disrupting “normal life” through air-raid drills, fallout shelters, and civilian trainings.

Many in the educational community felt deceived by the FCDA’s propagation of these not always true messages. Tensions over these feelings surrounding civil defense drills began creating a rift between the teachers in the classroom, many of whom did not believe in the drills, and the administrators and board members who required that the drills be done. These tensions,

\(^98\) Garrison, pp. 44.
\(^100\) Rose, pp. 53.
which were built up throughout the 1950s, launched into the public view in the early 1960s when educators began resisting the drills by campaigning to abolish them or by simply refusing to participate. Much of the public resistance towards the drills on the east coast was led by the Citizens Committee to Abolish School Shelter Drills, a New York based group of educators and social activists that became known from their strong effort in rallying behind New York City teacher James Council who was fired in 1962 after failing to take part in a shelter drill at his school. By utilizing the Citizens Committee’s archived papers as a launching point, I will use this section to take an in depth look into the power struggle over rules and morality that took place between the students and teachers inside the classroom and the rule-makers who oversaw them.

In the late fall of 1962, James Council was a 32-year-old teacher who had been teaching math and English in New York City schools for a little over two years. He was in his first year of teaching at Junior High School 44, on West 77th St. in Manhattan. When a teachers meeting was called on October 29th to plan the shelter drills that would be taking place the next two days, Council knew immediately that he would not participate in the drills. The week before Council had been in the hallway to witness a drill similar to those being planned for the upcoming days, and had been left very disconcerted by what he had seen.

I was appalled to see the cringing act that we are told to perform along with our children, in response to the realities of our contemporary world. At the sound of a gong, the teachers announce: “Take cover!” In grim unison they and their pupils dive under the desk, where they are supposed to hold their hands over their eyes, and await the “all clear.”

This description, offered by Council about two months after the incident, puts a lived experience to the "training" that students received in the *Duck and Cover* video. Just as in the video, the students ducked down under desks, shielded their eyes, and hoped for the best. As the young teacher watched these students cover up for dear life, he knew that he could not in good conscience put his students through a drill that was supposed to make them safe, but in reality did no such thing. Because he did not have a class at the time, Council did not have to partake in the drill. However, upon hearing that the upcoming drills would fall during a time in which he was in class, he left the meeting, informed the school's principal of the reasons for his unwillingness to participate, and asked her to please arrange for coverage of his class during the drill the next morning. She urged him to reconsider this decision, but the teacher held strong to his convictions and refused to partake in the drills.

The next morning the drill took place as scheduled and Council's class was covered. He remained in the hall near the main office until the drill had concluded, before returning to his teaching duties. Shortly afterwards, the principal came to Council's classroom and asked him to please put in writing his reasons for not participating in the drill.

I wrote that, as a thinking and morally aware human being, I could not take part in any activity designed to perpetrate the illusion that nuclear war can be survived or is a constructive means with which to deal with human problems. I added that the shelter drills contribute particularly to the preparation of this falsehood and indoctrinate the children in it.102

After the principal read his explanation she asked him again, this time more formally, if he would reconsider his position on the issue. Council informed her that he would not. She then informed the teacher that, as a result of this, after the next day, which was the last of the month,

102 Council, pp. 25.
he would be relieved of all teaching duties. Council assured her that his stance on the shelter drills did not in anyway affect his teaching, but the principal held firm to her stance, which it turned out had come down from the New York State Board of Education, and told him that the next day would be his last. The board’s refusal to allow Council to continue to teach fits in with the goal of civil defense to create a unified and militarized nation. Within such a nation, there exists no room for dissenters or non-conformists. In short, there is no place for personal expression or beliefs.

Council’s dismissal draws some interesting comparisons to a similar historical example. One of Council’s legal representatives, United Federation of Teachers’ (UFT) lawyer Benjamin Mazen, brought up the point that the school board could have exempted Council from the drills on his moral stance just as they had done during the First World War. According to Mazen, during World War I, the school system did not compel teachers who were conscientious objectors to sell war bonds and stamps to their students.

While to the UTF this may have seemed like a historical statute on which to argue that Council had been unnecessarily terminated, the Superintendent of School did not agree. According to Council, the Superintendent said that partaking in the school civil defense drills “in no way interferes with contentious objection to nuclear war.” By refusing to acknowledge Council’s actions as an act of contentious objection, the Superintendent could more easily pass the event off as a teacher neglecting to fulfill his “moral obligation to act in loco parentis.” However, based on his conscience and moral beliefs, Council was acting perfectly in line with his definition of in loco parentis. He was refusing to participate in an event that he believed was

105 “Council Tells TU Meeting Reasons for Refusal to Take Part in Shelter Drills.”
psychologically harmful to his students, and was therefore perfectly upholding his moral duty to act “in place of parents,” even more so than the school was.

So who, then, should be looked upon to decide what actions are actually in the best interest of students? Based on the FCDA’s guide, *Civil Defense in Schools*, which stated that, “The responsibility for protecting children at school rests on school authorities,” the Superintendent or Board of Education should have the final say on what constitutes the best action for students. While this protocol would put Council in the wrong, there were school districts in the United States where the “educational authorities” would have sided with Council’s plight.

One example of this came in 1961 in Wichita, Kansas, where the Superintendent of Schools, Lawrence Shepoiser, made the bold move of eliminating all school shelter drills on the basis of his perspective that they were ineffective in protecting students against nuclear war. As he put it, “the Wichita Public School System is in no position to guarantee physical protection to adults or pupils from a thermonuclear explosion or radioactive fallout.” He goes on to say that the responsibility for decisions regarding fallout protection should rest on families first, and then, if this is truly a national concern, it should be the responsibility of the President or Congress to provide all citizens with public shelters. “In neither case does this responsibility rest with the public schools.” In some ways this seems to be a lack of ownership of the need for teachers to do their utmost to protect students when they are in school. However, what Shepoiser is arguing here seems to be that his schools do not have the resources to protect students so it is more harmful to students if they pretend as though they do. While all schools practiced civil defense

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107 Civil Defense in Schools, pp. 2.
drills, many, like James Council’s, did not actually have any physical shelter for students and teachers to take refuge in. Though the Superintendent was very critical in his assessment of the drills, he did not totally let himself and his teachers off the hook in their responsibilities for civil defense.

It is, however, the responsibility of the schools to search for the truth of how to live in our emerging nuclear and space age. It is an obligation of the schools to train the mind of the child so that he may think clearly and act wisely. This is the Civil Defense program of the schools.

Here Shepoiser begins to frame civil defense in schools in a different light. He is, like the Citizens Committee, advocating for the abolition of shelter drills altogether and a redefinition of how issues of civil defense should be addressed inside the classroom. The Citizens Committee even references Shepoiser in its Statement of Principles that was drawn up to be sent out along with a letter to garner support for the fired James Council. The Statement of Principals proclaims that these issues of a lack of protection and shelters are even more relevant in metropolitan areas like New York City than they are in Kansas because of the stronger likelihood of a bomb being dropped there. Because of this reality, the statement argues, it becomes even more important for city schools to update their civil defense policies and cease to put students and staff through these drills, which are “exercises in futility.”

In the case of James Council, the shelter drills were of immense futility. Not only was the very concept of duck and cover civil defense quite farfetched, but, as Council wrote, “There are, of course no actual ‘shelters’ in our schools.” You can tell by Council’s tone that he believed

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109 Council, pp. 25.
110 “Report on Civil Defense by the Wichita, Kansas, Superintendent of Schools.”
111 “Statement of Principals.” Citizens Committee to Abolish School Shelter Drills. (No date). SCPC Archives, Citizens Committee to Abolish School Shelter Drills Papers, Box 1, Folder 1.
112 Council, pp. 25.
that even if such shelters did exist in his school, they would do very little good in protecting students and teachers from an atomic attack. The fact that they did not even have such physical structures in place signifies that the Board of Education was clearly of the mindset that ducking into the corner of a school hallway would protect students not only from the blast, but also from the intense radioactive fallout that would shower down following an attack. This shows the helpless and immoral nature of civil defense in schools. As historian Robert Jacobs put it, “To duck and cover is to fall to the ground and hope that you live to stand back up.”\(^{113}\) If this is the reality of the situation, what kind of “defense” is actually taking place? While this system of civil defense was feeding children the idea that defense measures were being taken, in reality the Board of Education was doing nothing more than pretending to protect students and hoping for the best.

As a result, teachers like Council, who had been entrusted to act in the best interest of his students at all times, were forced to conduct shelter drills that did not provide even feasible protection to their pupils. As the Citizens Committee argued, teachers were being put in a position that compromised their proscribed responsibilities.

> We are shocked that teachers who have been entrusted with the time honored responsibility of guiding our students toward truth and knowledge should instead be required by the Board of Education to teach false security to our children.\(^{114}\)

Teachers are looked up to and expected to be role models for young people and should therefore always present students with the truth. By having students participate in shelter drills, educators were further contributing to the illusion of the survivability of a nuclear attack, which


\(^{114}\) "Statement of Principals." Citizens Committee to Abolish School Shelter Drills.
goes against the duty of teachers to look out for each and every student. They are, after all, supposed to be beacons of learning, so with this power it is their duty to act responsibly. Letters sent from the Teachers Shelter Drill Protest, a group formed much in line with the Citizens Committee’s view points, to the Board of Education after Council’s dismissal stated that teachers are morally trusted figures and must not give a false sense of security to their students. As one committee member, Janice Smith, wrote in a letter, the drills created a “fatalistic acceptance that war is inevitable.”

This notion of moral duty comes up a lot in James Council’s writing. He holds a very strong belief that it is a citizen’s duty to act in the most morally responsible way possible, even if that action means dissent. Council argues that it is not only every citizen’s democratic privilege, but also their duty “to dissent from any law that asks him to act in contrary to the moral law as he see it,” and that the protection of this individual right is “essential to the preservation of democracy.” By refusing to take part in the drills, Council was actively fulfilling his duty to dissent from a law that he felt to be wrong. In his mind, standing strong to his convictions against what he viewed as a deceptive and immoral practice was not so much a choice as an obligation. Council believed that he had to act based on his conscience regardless of the consequences or repercussions.

This morally righteous stance garnered Council immense amounts of support from fellow educators and activists. The Citizens Committee banded together around Council’s story, sending out scores of letters to teachers, parents, community leaders, and local board members to

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115 Smith, Janice. Letter to NYS Board of Education, 1963. SCPC Archives, Citizens Committee to Abolish School Shelter Drills Papers, Box 1, Folder 3.
invoke their support in getting Council’s firing overturned.\textsuperscript{117} The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) sponsored the appeal of the school board’s decision, and petitions for his reinstatement were signed by thousands of teachers.\textsuperscript{118} When Council spoke at the Teacher’s Union meeting shortly after his dismissal, his peers in attendance met him with a standing ovation.\textsuperscript{119} All of this support from fellow teachers and community members shows the high level of disapproval that the educational community had with the required shelter drills. They all shared the feeling that the drills were not in the best interest of the children and that Council was doing the right thing in refusing to participate in them.

At the local school board meeting on November 19, 1962, 18 people got up to speak on Council’s behalf. All of them spoke in support of the teacher’s moral right and duty to dissent, and lobbied for his reinstatement.\textsuperscript{120} As a result of this, the local school board held a vote, and decided 7-1 in favor of petitioning the New York Board of Education to reinstate James Council as a teacher. The highlights of the local board’s request were as follows:

1. We urge that the Board of Education honor a teacher’s conscientious objection to participation in civil defense drills...The better traditions of American education dictate the wisdom of preserving the right of dissent.

2. We urge that Mr. Council’s license be restored, within the framework of the principle outlined in paragraph 1 above.

4. We suggest that the Board of Education reexamine and reevaluate the Civil Defense Drills Program in the city’s schools.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{117} Various letters from committee coordinator David McReyolds. SCPC Archives, Citizens Committee to Abolish School Shelter Drills Papers, Box 1, Folder 3.
\textsuperscript{118} “Teacher Backed on Shelter Stand,” pp. 42.
\textsuperscript{119} “Council Tells TU Meeting Reasons for Refusal to Take Part in Shelter Drills.”
\textsuperscript{120} Council, pp. 26.
\textsuperscript{121} “Recommendation of School Board 6 – 8: James Council Case.” SCPC Archives, Citizens Committee to Abolish School Shelter Drills Papers, Box 1, Folder 2.
The fact that Council was able to gather up enough support to convince the very same local school board that first dismissed him to rally on his behalf only a month later, shows the high level of public disapproval of the way that school civil defense was operating. Many in the school communities believed, as New York City fifth grade teacher and Citizens Committee member John Darr Jr. wrote in his open letter to the Board of Education, that “Participation in civil defense drills and shelter programs involves participation in the promulgation of a cruel deception.” They recognized the damaging nature of these drills, and were insistent on trying to put a stop to them.

Unfortunately for Council, even the massive support efforts by teachers and parents, and his public endorsement from the local West Side School Board could not sway the opinions of the New York City Board of Education. On January 3, 1963, the Acting Superintendent of Schools, Bernard Donovan, reaffirmed the revocation of Council’s teaching license. The decision came down with all but one of the city board members in support of continuing the ban. The only dissenting member, Clarence Senior, cited being disturbed by the fact that Council, as a “regular substitute,” did not have the right to a public hearing before his dismissal because of his non full-time status. Even after the resounding 8-1 decision, the board still said that Council was “welcome” to restatement at any time if he would consent to take part in all future shelter drills. Council, as he had done throughout the entire process, stuck to his beliefs and took as job as a guard at New York’s Metropolitan Museum.

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123 Hentoff, Nat. “Meet the Villain.” The Village Voice, Jan 3, 1963. SCPC Archives, Citizens Committee to Abolish School Shelter Drills Papers, Box 1, Folder 4.
James Council was not the only teacher to take a stand against the morality of shelter drills. Roughly one month after Council's dismissal was reaffirmed in early January 1963, another New York City teacher, 28-year-old Barney McCaffrey, was fired for refusing to accompany his students into a shelter during a school-wide drill. McCaffrey, a professional photographer and folksinger, had been teaching as a substitute an average of two days a week in different schools throughout the city for almost a year when the incident occurred. McCaffrey previously had arrangements with principals that he would not be called in on days when drills were to occur because of his moral opposition to them. On January 29, 1963, however, McCaffrey was called to sub at Junior High School 60 without being informed that a shelter drill was planned for that afternoon. When McCaffrey arrived and found out that there was to be a drill, he informed administrators that he did not "take part in these drills as matter of conscience." He offered to lead his students down to the shelter "in order to not disrupt the functioning of the school," but said that he would not enter it himself. McCaffrey went back to class, but was relieved of his duties before the sirens sounded, and was instructed to go see the principal, Max Francke. Once in Francke's office, the principal said: "I don't want any compromises, nor do I want to hear any of your ideas or philosophy. All I want to know is will you take the class to the shelter and stay with them—yes or no?" To this McCaffrey responded that he would "stand with Emerson and Thoreau," who espoused individual resistance to laws.

they considered evil and “who [he] felt were pretty good Americans.” After clarifying that this meant he would not participate, Francke informed the teacher that, by mandate from the Board of Education, he could not teach if he did not perform the drills and therefore he was relieved of his duties. A week later, on February 6, Josephine O’Brien, the Superintendent of Personnel for the New York City Board of Education, announced that McCaffrey’s teaching license was being revoked as a result of his refusal to lead his class in the mandated shelter drill. Just as they had done with James Council’s case, the Citizens Committee to Abolish School Shelter Drills threw itself in Barney McCaffrey’s corner and began soliciting support for the teacher, but unfortunately could not stir up enough change to reverse the decision.

**STUDENTS**

Students soon joined their teachers in recognizing the deceptive nature of school civil defense. As one historian wrote, “many children came away from their schools and their drills with a better understanding of their jeopardy than their survival.” Students could feel the strain of the atomic world, and were very in tune with its dangers. The presence of all of these drills and videos enhanced and promoted children’s fears and uncertainties about war and the world in the very place that was meant to prepare them for life in a global society. As one concerned parent of the time noted,

> These postwar babies feel that they will not live out their lifetime to expectation. I have one boy...He doesn’t think there’s any future. He’s just one of the thousands of young people who grew up ducking under their desks in atomic bomb drills at school. Why would they think there’s a

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129 Bard, “Schools Fire a 2nd Teacher for Balking at Air Raid Drill.”
130 “Shelter Drill Foe: 2nd Teacher Fired in N.Y.” The Guardian.
131 Gottlieb, “2nd UFT Teacher’s License Revoked.”
132 Henriksen, pp. 109.
future? All their lives they’ve heard about the bomb being dropped.\textsuperscript{133}

This is interesting to examine in comparison to the idea put forth in a 1958 civil defense manual that argues that preparation and training of students actually decreases their anxieties about the bomb. \textit{Civil Defense in Oregon School}, an instruction guide published by the Oregon State Civil Defense Agency, states that “experience in foreign countries and investigations in our own have shown that children do not develop anxiety under stress conditions if they have been properly prepared to deal with these problems and have confidence in themselves and their adult associates.”\textsuperscript{134} The manual goes on to explain that a building of this confidence and comfort must come from teachers educating students in a calm and knowledgeable way. However, nowhere in the guide is there any substantiation or explanation of what this “experience in foreign countries” was or what these “investigations in our own (country)” actually were. Without context for where these facts came from, the manual appears to be making unfounded and unsupported claims for the sake of pushing their own cause. There is no way that the mother quoted above who said her son “doesn’t think there’s any future” would agree with these claims. Clearly in her experience the existence of school shelter drills had done nothing to quell students' anxieties and fears about the looming threat of nuclear war. And many students agreed with her.

A 1951 survey of 10,000 high school students from ten states found that half of them were concerned about atomic war, and that over a third were worried about the radiation that might follow an attack.\textsuperscript{135} Another survey, conducted in 1952, showed that eight out of ten

students in Maryland had "serious problems adjusting to normal living" in the atomic age. One high school senior wrote in 1955 that "living has been a difficult and insecure thing; at worst an insurmountable wall of bewilderment and frustration...we've never lived a minute of our lives without war or the threat of war." All of this evidence mounts to support an argument against the Oregon State Civil Defense Agency claims that school civil defense was effective in calming the nerves of American students. Students of the time still expressed great fear and uncertainty surrounding atomic war. The world they were living in was a world on the brink of destruction, and no amount of duck and cover drills was going to change that. As historian Todd Gitlin recalls, the drills only made the threat of mass destruction seem more imminent.

We grew up taking cover in school shelter drills—the first American generation compelled from infancy to fear not only war but the end of days.

The young people of the early 1960s were very in-tune with the realities of the world they lived in, and as a result many could recognize that these drills that were supposedly intended to protect them from a nuclear attack, would in reality do nothing of the sort. They understood that a nuclear bomb was not "just another way of causing an explosion" as the Office of Civil Defense's 1951 booklet *Survival Under Atomic Attack* would have them believe. These students of the 1960s had experienced enough civil defense to understand that school shelter drills were bogus, which led many to feel like their own government was intentionally deceiving them. Just as Dr. Milton Schwebel's 1961 survey of New York and Pennsylvania junior high and high school students showed, students held much distain for shelters, largely because of their

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136 Scheibach (2003), pp. 204.
137 Scheibach (2003), pp. 212.
139 Oakes, pp. 52.
belief that they would be useless against an attack. 70 percent of the high school students in the study were opposed to shelters, citing reasons such as “They are stupid, a farce, a money-making proposition,” “It’s like building your own tomb,” and “There’s no future in them.”

Young people were not convinced of the safety of their future, and many became disheartened by the government’s school civil defense policies. As one student, Robert Musil recalled,

> It was with that awful knowledge—we were not safe at all—that I experienced duck and cover drills, and developed an early disillusionment with, and even distain for, authority.”

The divide between the classroom and the congress was growing wider by the day. This deception could go on no longer. The teachers were fed up with it. The students were fed up with it. It was time for change to come.

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141 Jacobs, pp. 114.
CONCLUSION

And change did come. It came in the form of a generation that had grown up hiding under desks and crouching against hallway walls. It was a generation that had grown up entrenched in the illusive realities of civil defense. They had woken up every morning to a world on the brink of destruction, a world that did not promise them a future. Yet though all of this they blossomed and became the new leaders of a nation. They used the years of deception they experienced as fuel to make change. The normalizing effects of civil defense had worked on them. They recognized the dangers of the bomb, but did not allow it to control them. “They refused to live in the basement shelter of despair and fatalism about nuclear war that was prepared by the generation that preceded them. They grew up and placed flowers in the gun barrels of American militarism and demanded that their government stand down in its imperialistic war in Vietnam.”\(^\text{142}\) They saw the problems and injustices of the world, and took on the challenge and ownership to fix them.

“We are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit,”\(^\text{143}\) starts the Port Huron Statement, the 1962 manifesto written by the Students for a Democratic Society. This manifesto was a call for the young people of the world to take charge and fix the problems that were evident in society. After talking through an extensive list of the problems of the nation, the manuscript ends

\(^{142}\) Jacobs, pp. 117.

with: “If we appear to seek the unattainable, it has been said, then let it be known that we do so to avoid the unimaginable.”

Civil defense had also always told them to avoid the unimaginable. They were shuffled under desk and into basements for fear that it might come. Never were they given the facts straight up. Never were they given choices, or told the true extent of the power of an atomic bomb. Instead they spent their youth behind a vale of deception that continually hid their eyes from the truth. As they grew up through the 1950s, they slowly began to pick out the deception more and more, and by the time they reached the 1960s, a new era had been born. Though still held back by the government, students now had teachers on their side, fighting battles with them. Before long they could see straight through the vale and into light. Once this happened, there was no one who could hold them back. They had triumphed over The Man, and were now in control of their own life and living their own dreams.

Those students who were forced to hide under their desks in the back row of 5th grade, were the same youth people offering flowers to military police in 1967. Those New York City students who had been forced to where military-like ID tags in 3rd grade, were the same young men and women protesting the War in Vietnam in 1969. It was this distain and displeasure for the government and authority that set them free. It allowed them to shed the old world behind them, and create their own lives.

The 1960s generation had been given nothing from the world, but they were willing to give everything to it. They were unhindered by the limitations or constraints of society, because they had freed themselves from the grasp of the atom. Just by growing up they had beaten the odd. They were winners in the game, and we not looking back. Once they had freed themselves

144 Port Huron Statement.
145 Garrison, pp. 44.
from underneath their desks, Atomic Generation stepped out from under the mushroom cloud and took hold of a nation that dearly needed them.
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