Response Week 9

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HST 415 / Alex Wellerstein

It seemed that civil defense was mainstream even though it was widely protested. Were there other instances in the nuclear era that were similar? For example, would the Rosenberg trial be one of those instances?

I do like the argument that Cohn makes in her paper. The only way one can argue is to learn the language of military and when you learn it is severely limited in what you can say to speak out against it or give criticism. Also, if you do not use the language used by the security specialists, you will not be able to voice your opinions and be taken seriously. I see the argument here and why it is important to take a humanitarian look at the way we do military operations. I did not like the start of her argument however, it seemed to me that she was trying to push masculine stereotypes onto the nuclear civil defense program. For example, the reporter the Air Force brought to watch the Nagasaki bombing described it as a beast unchained with some adjectives. Maybe because I am a guy, but I did not see any masculine or patriarchal language. The only thing I really saw was “pat the missile,” but even that did not seem that terrible. For me, it seemed like being in a petting zoo and getting to see an exotic once in a lifetime animal. Those arguments that Cohn made for those examples did not seem very valid to me. However, I do understand the point she makes later in her conclusion in the sense that some things become easier to understand once you are indoctrinated into a culture.

I think in the class itself Cohn’s analysis is very relevant. Our glorious professor has given us the viewpoint inside the government and military positions as well as the people living in the countries that are affected as well as the people in US that protest these actions. One can see that there is a dissonance between the people and the people making decisions. Those that protest these decisions, do not seem to have a lot of effect.

The short videos on “Duck and Cover” and “House in the Middle” both have the same message of impending doom. In 2020 this seems quite funny but was probably very serious at the time. Seeing these messages reminds me of CDC messages that were spread early on during the pandemic. For some reason I feel like they listened more to those videos in than the CDC messages of today. One can see an entire city annihilated even if it is unthinkable. But in a pandemic one cannot imagine or see the spread of Corona until is too late. These old videos emphasized the doom way more and I therefore I feel like it brings across the point a lot better.