

Bill Ayers

- Leader of the 1960s and 70s domestic terrorist group Weatherman
- "Kill all the rich people. ... Bring the revolution home. Kill your parents."
- Participated in the bombings of New York City Police Headquarters in 1970, of the Capitol building in 1971, and the Pentagon in 1972
- Currently a professor of education at the University of Illinois

Born in 1944, Bill Ayers, along with his wife **Bernardine Dohrn**, was a 1960s leader of the homegrown terrorist group **Weatherman**, a Communist-driven splinter faction of **Students for a Democratic Society**. Characterizing Weatherman as "an American Red Army," Ayers summed up the organization's ideology as follows: "Kill all the rich people. Break up their cars and apartments. Bring the revolution home, Kill your parents."

Today Ayers is a professor of education and a Senior University Scholar at the University of Illinois. He has also authored a series of books about parenting and educating children, including: *A Kind and Just Parent*; *To Become a Teacher*; *City Kids*; *City Teachers*; *To Teach*; *The Good Preschool Teacher*; *Zero Tolerance: Resisting the Drive for Punishment in Our Schools*; and *Teaching Towards Freedom: Moral Commitment and Ethical Action in the Classroom*.

In his 2001 screed, *Fugitive Days*, Ayers recounts his life as a Sixties radical, his tenure as a Weatherman lieutenant, his terrorist campaign across America, and his enduring hatred for the United States. "What a country," Ayers **said** in 2001. "It makes me want to puke."

Ayers was an active participant in Weatherman's 1969 "Days of Rage" riots in Chicago, where nearly 300 members of the organization employed guerrilla-style tactics to viciously attack police officers and civilians alike, and to destroy massive amounts of property via vandalism and arson; their objective was to further spread their anti-war, anti-American message. Reminiscing on those riots, Ayers says proudly: "We'd ... proven that it was possible -- we didn't all die, we were still there."

A substantial portion of Ayers' book *Fugitive Days* discusses the author's penchant for building and deploying explosives. Ayers boasts that he "participated in the bombings of New York City Police Headquarters in 1970, of the Capitol building in 1971, and the Pentagon in 1972." Of the day he bombed the Pentagon, Ayers says, "Everything was absolutely ideal. ... The sky was blue. The birds were singing. And the bastards were finally going to get what was coming to them."

On another occasion, Ayers stated: "There's something about a good bomb ... Night after night, day after day, each majestic scene I witnessed was so terrible and so unexpected that no city would ever again stand innocently fixed in my mind. Big buildings and wide streets, cement and steel were no longer permanent. They, too, were fragile and destructible. A torch, a bomb, a strong enough wind, and they, too, would come undone or get knocked down."

All told, Ayers and Weatherman were responsible for 30 bombings aimed at destroying the defense and security infrastructures of the U.S. "I don't regret setting bombs, **said Ayers in 2001**, "I feel we didn't do enough."

In 1970, Ayers' then-girlfriend Diana Oughton, along with Weatherman members Terry Robbins and Ted Gold, were killed when a bomb they were constructing exploded unexpectedly. That bomb had been intended for detonation at a dance that was to be attended by army soldiers at Fort Dix, New Jersey. Hundreds of lives could have been lost had the plan been successfully executed. Ayers attested that the bomb would have done serious damage, "tearing through windows and walls and, yes, people too."

After the death of his girlfriend, Ayers and his current wife, Bernardine Dohrn, spent the 1970s as fugitives running from the FBI.

In 1974 Ayers co-authored --along with Dohrn, Jeff Jones, and Celia Sojourn -- a book titled *Prairie Fire*. This book contained the following statements:

- "We are a guerrilla organization. We are communist women and men ... deeply affected by the historic events of our time in the struggle against U.S. imperialism."
- "Our intention is to disrupt the empire, to incapacitate it, to put pressure on the cracks, to make it hard to carry out its bloody functioning against the people of the world, to join the world struggle, to attack from the inside."
- "The only path to the final defeat of imperialism and the building of socialism is revolutionary war."
- "Revolutionary war will be complicated and protracted. It includes mass struggle and clandestine struggle, peaceful and violent, political and economic, cultural and military, where all forms are developed in harmony with the armed struggle."
- "Without mass struggle there can be no revolution. Without armed struggle there can be no victory."
- "We need a revolutionary communist party in order to lead the struggle, give coherence and direction to the fight, seize power and build the new society."
- "Our job is to tap the discontent seething in many sectors of the population, to find allies everywhere people are hungry or angry, to mobilize poor and working people against imperialism."
- "Socialism is the total opposite of capitalism/imperialism. It is the rejection of empire and white supremacy. Socialism is the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the eradication of the social system based on profit."

In 1980 Ayers and Dohrn surrendered to law-enforcement authorities, but all charges against them were later dropped due to an "improper surveillance" technicality -- government authorities had **failed** to get a warrant for some of their surveillance. Ayers' comment on his life, as reported by Peter Collier and David Horowitz in their authoritative chapter on Weatherman in *Destructive Generation*, was this: "Guilty as sin, free as a bird, America is a great country."

Notwithstanding his violent past, Ayers today does not describe himself as a terrorist. "Terrorists

destroy randomly," he reasons, "while our actions bore ... the precise stamp of a cut diamond. Terrorists intimidate, while we aimed only to educate."

In *Fugitive Days*, Ayers reflects on whether or not he might use bombs against the U.S. in the future. "I can't imagine entirely dismissing the possibility," he writes.

In the mid-1990s, Ayers and his wife Bernardine Dohrn hosted meetings at their Chicago home to introduce Barack Obama to their neighbors during his first run for the Illinois Senate.

In 1995 Ayers -- whose stated educational objective is to "teach against oppression" as embodied in "America's history of evil and racism, thereby forcing social transformation" -- founded a "school reform organization" called the Chicago Annenberg Challenge (CAC). He appointed Obama as the group's first chairman.

When *National Review Online* writer Stanley Kurtz in 2008 reviewed the CAC archives at the Richard J. Daley Library at the University of Illinois, he found that Ayers had been one of five members of a working group that assembled the initial CAC board which hired Obama.

"Ayers founded CAC and was its guiding spirit," Kurtz wrote. "No one would have been appointed the CAC chairman without his approval." According to Kurtz, the CAC archives show that Obama and Ayers worked as a team to advance the foundation's agenda -- with Obama responsible for fiscal matters while Ayers focused on shaping educational policy. The archived documents further reveal that Ayers served as an ex-officio member of the board that Obama chaired through CAC's first year; that Ayers served with Obama on the CAC governance committee; and that Ayers worked with Obama to write CAC's bylaws.

A September 2008 *WorldNetDaily* report offers still more details: "Ayers made presentations to board meetings chaired by Obama. Ayers also spoke for the Chicago School Reform Collaborative before Obama's board, while Obama periodically spoke for the board at meetings of the collaborative ... According to the documents, the CAC granted money to far-leftist causes, such as the radical Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, or ACORN, which ... has done work on behalf of Obama's presidential campaign."

WorldNetDaily reports further that "while Obama chaired the board of the CAC, more than \$600,000 was granted to an organization founded by Ayers and run by Mike Klonsky, a former top communist activist. Klonsky was leader of the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party, which was effectively recognized by China as the all-but-official U.S. Maoist party."

In 1999 Ayers joined the Woods Fund of Chicago, where he served as a director alongside Barack Obama until the latter left the Woods board in December 2002. Ayers went on to become Woods' Chairman of the Board. In 2002 the Woods Fund made a grant to Northwestern University Law School's Children and Family Justice Center, where Ayers' wife, Bernardine Dohrn, was employed.

At a 2007 reunion of former members of the Weather Underground and Students for a

Democratic Society, Ayers painted a **verbal portrait** of life in the United States which included the following passages:

- "This is a time not only of great stress and oppression and authoritarianism, and a kind of rising incipient American form of fascism, and what the government counts on, what the powerful count on, is that we will stay quiet. It's the idea that we can tolerate these intolerable things without screaming, without somehow coming out, joining up and coming out and saying something. It's what they count on in terms of keeping things under control."
- "Empire resurrected and unapologetic, war without end, an undefined enemy that's supposed to be a rallying point for a new kind of energized jingoistic patriotism, unprecedented and unapologetic military expansion, white supremacy changing its form, but essentially intact, attacks on women and girls, violent attacks, growing surveillance in every sphere of our lives, on and on and on, the targeting of gay and lesbian people as a kind of a scapegoating gesture to keep our minds off of what's really happening."

And here is how Ayers **characterized himself and the longtime radical comrades** to whom he was speaking:

"Even though we think of ourselves as political, we weren't politicians. We were people who had a moral vision of what was possible. And when we talk, for example, about health care, about peace, we're talking a language of ethics, not a language of instrumentalism or opportunism, or what we might get. So we have to speak in a language that's large and generous and encompassing. And then we have to act."

Dorn and Ayers have two children, whom they named Malik (the Muslim name of Malcolm X) and Zayd. Zayd's namesake is Zayd Shakur, a Black Panther killed while driving the radical JoAnne Chesimard (a.k.a. Assata Shakur) to a hideout — the resulting traffic stop shootout ended in the murder of a New Jersey State Trooper. The former Weather Underground terrorists also raised Chesa Boudin because his natural parents, Kathy Boudin and David Gilbert, were serving lengthy prison sentences for their roles in the Brinks murders, a joint Weatherman and Black Liberation Army operation in which two police officers and an armed guard were killed. Unlike Ayers, Dorn actually spent time in prison as a result of their terrorist activities — a contempt citation for refusing to honor a grand jury subpoena in the Brinks investigation.