



# **Women Against the Good War: Conscientious Objection and Gender on the American Home Front, 1941-1947 (Gender and American Culture)**

*Rachel Waltner Goossen*

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During World War II, more than 12,000 male conscientious objectors seeking alternatives to military service entered Civilian Public Service to do forestry, soil conservation, or other 'work of national importance.' But this government-sponsored, church-supported program also attracted some 2,000 women--most of whom were part of Mennonite, Amish, Brethren, or Quaker families with deeply held antiwar beliefs--to 151 alternative service locations across the country. Rachel Waltner Goossen tells the story of these women against the 'good war,' women who identified themselves as conscientious objectors. Despite cultural hostility and discriminatory federal policies, they sought to demonstrate their humanitarian convictions by taking part in Civilian Public Service work. Based on little-known archival sources as well as oral history interviews and questionnaire responses, Goossen's study reveals the extent to which these women's religious and philosophical beliefs placed them on the margins of American society. Encouraged by religious traditions that prized nonconformity, these women made unusual choices, questioned government dictums, and defied societal expectations, all of which set them apart from the millions of Americans who supported the war effort.

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