

Feminism & the Women's Rights Movement (1960s & 70s)

Feminism is a range of political movements, ideologies, and social movements that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social equality of sexes. This includes seeking to establish educational and professional opportunities for women that are equal to those for men.

Feminist movements have campaigned and continue to campaign for women's rights, including the right to vote, to hold public office, to work, to earn fair wages or equal pay, to own property, to receive education, to enter contracts, to have equal rights within marriage, and to have maternity leave. Feminists have also worked to ensure access to legal abortions and social integration, and to protect women and girls from rape, sexual harassment, and domestic violence. Changes in dress and acceptable physical activity have often been part of feminist movements.

Feminist campaigns are generally considered to be a main force behind major historical societal changes for women's rights, particularly in the West, where they are near-universally credited with achieving women's suffrage, gender neutrality in English, reproductive rights for women (including access to contraceptives and abortion), and the right to enter into contracts and own property.

Task: Assess the cause, along with the success, of the Women's rights movement during the 1960s and 1970s as they fought for their social and political civil liberties

Document 1: From Mark Jonathan Harris. *The Homefront: America During World War II*. New York: Putnam, 1984.

SYBIL LEWIS: The war years had a tremendous impact on women. I know for myself it was the first time I had a chance to get out of the kitchen and work in industry and make a few bucks. This was something I had never dreamed would happen. In Sapulpa all that women had to look forward to was keeping a house and raising families. The war years offered new possibilities. You came out to California, put on your pants and took your lunch pail to a man's job. In Oklahoma a woman's place was in the home, and men went to work and provided. This was the beginning of women's feeling that they could do something more. We were trained to do this kind of work because of the war, but there was no question that this was just an interim period. We were all told that when the war was over we would not be needed anymore.

Document 2: "The Donna Reed Show"



This ABC situation comedy told the story of a typical white, middle class suburban family: Alex, a pediatrician; his wife, Donna; and their children, Mary, Jeff, and Trisha. The adventures of the family were similar to those of other TV families - measles, girlfriends, school problems, little white lies, and so on. The show had a wholesome quality that endeared it to audiences. The show was wildly popular. 275 episodes were filmed and broadcast between 1958 and 1966.

Document 3: Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. W. W. Norton and Co., 1963.

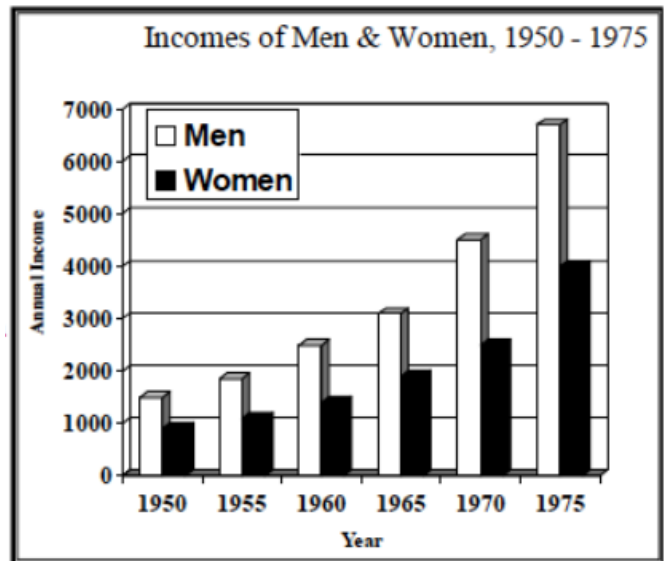
The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night--she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question-- "Is this all?"

Document 4: "NOW 1966 Statement of Purpose." *National Organization for Women, 1966, now.org/about/history/statement-of-purpose/*.

The National Organization for Women (NOW) was formed in response to what many women saw as neglect of the concerns and condition of women during the Civil Rights Movement. Betty

Friedan's groundbreaking work, *The Feminine Mystique*, had given a voice to widely held feelings in 1963 and NOW sought to mobilize an increasingly conscious female population. NOW resolved to fight the iniquities of women being consistently marginalized in politics, paid only a percentage of what men earned, and all but barred from the professions and higher education.

Document 5: "Income Graph"



Document 6: Sex and Caste: A Kind of Memo from Casey Hayden and Mary King to a Number of Other Women in the Peace and Freedom Movements (1965)

Sex and caste: There seem to be many parallels that can be drawn between treatment of Negroes and treatment of women in our society as a whole. But in particular, women we've talked to who work in the movement seem to be caught up in a common-law caste system that operates, sometimes subtly, forcing them to work around or outside hierarchical structures of power which may exclude them. Women seem to be placed in the same position of assumed subordination in personal situations too. It is a caste system, which, at its worst, uses and exploits women...

Women and problems of work: The caste system perspective dictates the roles assigned to women in the movement, and certainly even more to women outside the movement. Within the movement, questions arise in situations ranging from relationships of women organizers to men in the community, to who cleans the freedom house, to who holds leadership positions, to who does secretarial work, and who acts as spokesman for groups.

Document 7: New York Radical Women, "No More Miss America!" manifesto, 1968

On September 7th in Atlantic City, the Annual Miss America Pageant will again crown "your ideal." But this year, reality will liberate the contest auction-block in the guise of "genyooine" de-plasticized, breathing women. Women's Liberation Groups, black women, high-school and college women, women's peace groups, women's welfare and social-work groups, women's job-equality groups, pro-birth control and pro-abortion groups- women of every political persuasion- all are invited to join us in a day-long boardwalk-theater event, starting at 1:00 p.m. on the Boardwalk in front of Atlantic City's Convention Hall. We will protest the image of Miss America, an image that oppresses women in every area in which it purports to represent us.

Document 8: Jet Magazine, November 21, 1968



Document 9: The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) (1972)

Section 1 – Equality of Rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of sex.
 Section 2 – The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.
(Written in 1921, Passed Congress in 1972, but failed to be ratified by the 1982 deadline.)

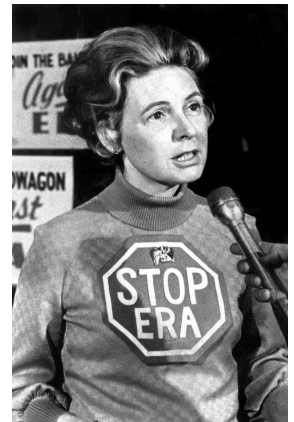
Document 10: Gloria Steinem, "Statement in Support of the ERA" (1970) *(Gloria Steinem is a journalist who has founded several feminist organizations and is the editor of Ms. Magazine.)*

During the 12 years of working for a living, I have experienced much of the legal and social discrimination reserved for women in this country. I have been refused service in public restaurants, ordered out of public gathering places, and turned away from apartment rentals; all for the clearly stated, sole reason that I am woman... I have been excluded from professional groups, writing assignments on so-called "unfeminine" subjects such as politics, full participation in the Democratic Party, jury duty, and even from such small male privileges as discounts on airline fares. Most important to me, I have been denied a society in which women are encouraged to think of themselves as first-class citizens and responsible human beings.



Document 11: Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum Opposes the ERA *(Phyllis Schlafly was a lawyer, a mother, and an opponent of feminism and the Equal Rights Amendment.)*

1. ERA would take away legal rights that women possessed - *not* confer any new rights on women.
2. ERA would take away women's traditional exemption from military conscription and also from military combat duty.
3. ERA would take away the traditional benefits in the law for wives, widows and mothers. ERA would make unconstitutional the laws, which then existed in every state, that impose on a husband the obligation to support his wife...
4. ERA's impact on education would take away rights from women students, upset many customs and practices, and bring government intrusion into private schools.
5. ERA would put abortion rights into the U.S. Constitution, and make abortion funding a new constitutional right.
6. ERA would put "gay rights" into the U.S. Constitution, because the word in the Amendment is "sex" not women.



Document 12: Title IX of the Higher Education Act, 1972

"Section 1681. Sex
 (a) Prohibition against discrimination; exceptions. No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance..."

Document 13: Roe v. Wade (1973)

Supreme Court held that the "fundamental right of single women and married persons to choose whether to have children is protected by the Ninth Amendment, through the Fourteenth Amendment," and that the Texas criminal abortion statutes were void on their face because they were both unconstitutionally vague and constituted an overbroad infringement of the plaintiffs' Ninth Amendment rights. The court then held that abstention was warranted with respect to the requests for an injunction. It therefore dismissed the Does' complaint, declared the abortion statutes void, and dismissed the application for injunctive relief.