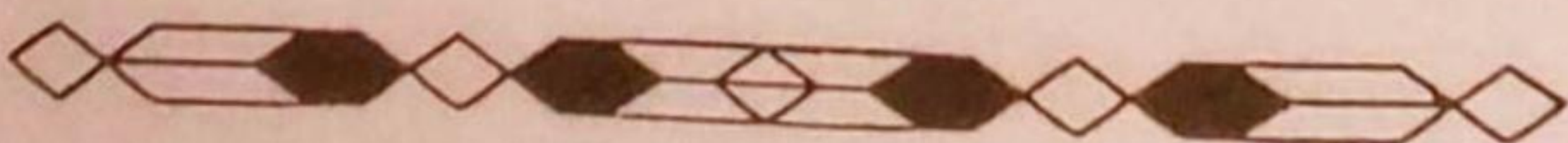




Native Women's Reproductive Rights Agenda

"Empowerment Through Dialogue", a historical three-day meeting was held in Pierre, South Dakota, on May 16, 17, and 18, 1990. More than 30 Native Women, representing over eleven (11) Nations from the Northern Plains came together in a collective decision making process to form a Reproductive Rights Coalition. Their efforts resulted in an Agenda for Native Women's Reproductive Rights.



Women's Rights after 1970

The August 26, 1970, Women's Strike for Equality signaled the arrival of a full-fledged "women's movement." Despite differences among activists over goals, strategies, and philosophies, the term became shorthand used by journalists and others seeking to encapsulate the myriad events and groups working for women's rights and equal citizenship. Like all umbrella terms, "the women's movement" collected under one rubric a wide variety of disparate groups, organizations, and individuals, with both conflicting and overlapping interests and goals. For a time during the 1970s, it appeared that members of the "movement" shared one goal, securing an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the Constitution. But just as the terms "woman movement" and "suffrage movement" had concealed some fundamental disagreements among women's rights activists earlier in the century, especially over how to define and achieve the elusive goal of "equality," the shorthand use of "women's movement" or, more disparagingly, "women's lib" conferred a false unity upon advocates of gender equity.

To an extent, some feminists contributed to the blurring of differences by claiming a universal "sisterhood" among like-minded activists. In the heady early days of the women's liberation movement in particular, invocations of women's common experiences as women overshadowed the reality that differences in the social experiences of race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality separated women as often as the mere fact of shared womanhood united them. Within both women's rights and women's liberation groups, feminists of color, along with white working-class

and lesbian feminists, bore the burden of challenging easy assumptions about sisterhood and pressing for feminisms that confronted differences among women while also dismantling the intersecting racial, class, and sexual privileges that gave some women more rights than other women.

The struggle for an ERA brought those internal divisions to the surface; it also revived well-organized antifeminist efforts and sparked a significant backlash against gains in women's rights. When Congress passed and sent the ERA to the states for ratification in 1972, a nine-year effort to gain approval ensued but ultimately failed; the amendment fell three states short of the three-quarters needed to ratify. Nevertheless, during those years, advocates for women's full citizenship won a number of victories in the areas of educational, economic, reproductive, and personal liberties. When some twenty thousand delegates to a Congressionally funded National Women's Conference came together in Houston in 1977, the platform they built and voted upon reflected the successes that advocates had won, the topics on which they agreed, and the divisions that remained. Neither successes nor divisions disappeared once the delegates went home, but a continuing backlash during the 1980s meant that women's rights advocates had to expend time and energy merely to maintain gains that had been won during the heady early days of the women's movement. When members of a younger generation—the first generation to reap the benefit of those gains—came of age in the 1980s and 1990s, they brought new perspectives, ideas, and priorities to their advocacy of women's rights.

In recent decades, as American feminists participated in international Women's Conferences sponsored by the United Nations, they encountered women around the world making equal rights demands based on their own experiences, cultures, and political positions. The establishment of global connections among women's rights advocates carried echoes of earlier international meetings. In the context of the 21st century, however, global ties carried both the promise of common undertakings and the peril of miscommunication and misunderstanding. As women's rights advocates sought common ground with colleagues from around the world, it remained to be seen whether and how they would learn from the past.

"Sisterhood" and Its Challengers

In 1970, writer and radical feminist Robin Morgan published an influential collection entitled *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement*. Its title seemed to say it all: that

when women spoke from personal experience, then united and worked together to seek social change, they had great power. It also captured an ideal that captivated many activists at the time: that women could form a "sisterhood" across racial, class, and sexual lines, one that would transform social, economic, and political institutions. In the book's introduction, Morgan situated herself politically, differentiated the women's liberation approach to women's rights from that of the National Organization for Women, and summarized the rapid pace of change occurring even as she wrote.

"[W]hen I first began work on this book, . . . I was a so-called 'politico,' who shied away from admitting (on any but a superficial level) that I was oppressed, and who put all other causes above and ahead of my own. . . . [But] it isn't until you begin to fight in your own cause that you (a) become really committed to winning, and (b) become a genuine ally of other people struggling for their freedom. I also nurtured a secret contempt for other women who weren't as strong, free, and respected (by men) as I thought I was (that's called 'identifying yourself with the oppressor' . . .). Especially threatening were the women who admitted that they were simply unable to cope with the miserable situation we were all in, and needed each other and a whole movement to change that.

Well, somewhere during that year, I became such a woman—and it's been a radicalizing experience. . . . It makes you very sensitive—raw, even—this consciousness. . . . You begin to see how all-pervasive a thing is sexism—the definition of and discrimination against half the human species by the other half. Once started, the realization is impossible to stop, and it packs a daily wallop. . . . (The monies from the book's sales, by the way, will go to the women's movement, for day-care and abortion projects, bail and defense funds, etc.). . . .

The women's movement is a non-hierarchical one. It does things collectively and experimentally. It is also the first movement that has the potential of cutting across all class, race, age, economic, and geographical barriers—since women in every group must play essentially the same role. . . .

[The National Organization for Women] fights *within* the System, lobbying legislators, concentrating on job discrimination, etc. NOW helped win the airline stewardesses' fight against mandatory retirement when a woman married or reached the age of thirty-five; the group was almost solely responsible for the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission ruling that segregated

male-female help-wanted ads in newspapers were discriminatory and illegal. They have worked hard to change abortion laws and to call attention to educational discrimination against women.

NOW is essentially an organization that wants reforms about the second-class citizenship of women—and this is where it differs drastically from the rest of the Women's Liberation Movement. Its composite membership [which includes men] . . . determines, of course, its politics, which are not radical. . . . The only hope of a new feminist movement is some kind of only now barely emerging politics of *revolutionary feminism*, . . .

Alternative institutions are springing up: women's liberation child-care centers and cooperative nurseries; all-women's communes; halfway houses for women separating, divorcing, or recently widowed; abortion counseling and referral services; women's liberation books, magazines, newspapers and theater groups that can create our own new media, and bail funds to free our political prisoners—among them, prostitutes. . . . [T]he general consciousness about the oppression of women is spreading through all groups and classes, . . . partly because the women's movement has set itself the task of analyzing divisions (race, class, age, hetero- and homosexuality) that keep us apart from each other, and is working very concretely to break down those divisions. . . .

It is now the spring of 1970. During the past few months, wildcat strikes by women workers at General Electric, Bendix, and the New York Bell Telephone Company surprised both management and labor; . . . The first serious woman jockey was pelted by rocks before a major race. Housewives in Stockton, California, went on strike for wages and for a clear definition of their 'job'—in writing. Women's caucuses have been formed or are forming in . . . established professional gatherings. Welfare mothers have been disrupting welfare centers all over the country to protest the bureaucracy that robs them of human dignity. Roman Catholic women are in revolt over the Pill, and Catholic nuns demand greater autonomy from the male clerical hierarchy. . . . Women are marching, picketing, and mounting a variety of actions against abortion laws in every state. Boycotts have been started against billionaire corporations like Procter & Gamble or Lever Brothers, which manipulate women as consumers but are blatantly discriminatory in their own hiring and salary practices. . . . Women's Liberation Centers are being set up by local groups all around the country, to try to deal with the women who are pouring into the

movement every day. Nurses are organizing. Women in the Armed Forces are organizing. Women have attacked, disrupted, seized, or completely taken over certain media institutions. . . . *Newsweek* women employees brought suit against the magazine for discrimination in salaries, promotions, and assignments. . . .

We know that it is not enough to look around in awe at the rising tide of anger over the lack of 'women's rights.' We know that we want something more, much more, than the same gray, meaningless, alienating jobs that men are forced to sacrifice their lives to. . . . We know that the vote proved useless for our needs (perhaps those of men, too). We know that the so-called sexual revolution was only another form of oppression for women. . . . We know that 'hip culture' and 'radical life style'—whatever those mean—have been hip and radical for the men, but filled with the same old chores, harassment, and bottling-up of inner rage for the women, as usual. . . .

More and more, I begin to think of a worldwide Women's Revolution as the only hope for life on the planet. It follows, then, that where women's liberation is, *there* is, for me, the genuine radical movement. . . . The Women's Liberation Movement exists . . . in your mind, and in the political and personal insights that you can contribute to change and shape and help its growth. It is frightening. It is very exhilarating. It is creating history, or rather, *herstory*."

Not everyone agreed that sisterhood was possible. In a 1977 statement, a group of African American lesbian feminists terming themselves the Combahee River Collective (after an 1863 action that Harriet Tubman undertook to free slaves) underlined their commitment to the struggle for racial equality (hence their rejection of feminist separatism) and reminded white feminists about the blinders they too often wore about their own racial privilege.

"We are a collective of black feminists who have been meeting together since 1974. . . . [W]e are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives. As black women we see black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face. . . .

Although we are feminists and lesbians, we feel solidarity with progressive black men and do not advocate the fractionalization

that white women who are separatists demand. Our situation as black people necessitates that we have solidarity around the fact of race. . . . We struggle together with black men against racism, while we also struggle with black men about sexism. . . . [W]e are not just trying to fight oppression on one front or even two, but instead to address a whole range of oppressions. We do not have racial, sexual, heterosexual, or class privilege to rely upon, nor do we have even the minimal access to resources and power that groups who possess any one of these types of privilege have. . . .

One issue that is of major concern to us and that we have begun to publicly address is racism in the white women's movement. As black feminists we are made constantly and painfully aware of how little effort white women have made to understand and combat their racism, which requires among other things that they have a more than superficial comprehension of race, color, and black history and culture. Eliminating racism in the white women's movement is by definition work for white women to do, but we will continue to speak to and demand accountability on this issue."

Margaret Sloan, a founder of the National Black Feminist Organization in 1973, described the ways in which African American feminists conceptualized their work, emphasizing the "duality" (or intersectionality) of their experiences.

"Black women comprise over half of the black population in this country. We see ourselves as strengthening the black community by calling upon all the talents of an entire people to combat racism. We feel that there can't be liberation for less than half a race. We want *all* black people in this country to be free, and by organizing around our needs as black women, we are making sure that we won't be left out. . . . Many of us come out of the Women's Movement, and are still active in a variety of its organizations, but we felt that the duality of being black and female made us want to organize around those things which affect us most."

In an essay published in 1971, a group of California Asian American feminists identified themselves as "Third World" women and described how they experienced gender, racial, and class status; oppressions overlapped, making their layers inseparable.

"American society is broken up into different levels based on economic income, education, politics, color, and sex. . . . At the bottom of these varying gradations are women of color. Third World women face domination by both racism and sexism (discrimination based

Intersectionality: Coined by the legal theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, the term "intersectionality" became widely used to refer to the "multidimensional" aspects of women's experiences as members of racial, sexual, class, and ethnic groups. Although Crenshaw's original formulation sought to "demarginalize" the "intersection of race and sex" for black women, scholars have found her work extraordinarily fruitful as a way to describe how women can experience either oppression and marginalization or privilege and power in their relationships with other women—and with men.

on sex). Both racism and sexism are means by which American society controls and oppresses everyone. Everyone is forced to conform to the values and roles established by the dominant group in order to 'succeed.' For the Asian movement to progress, it must have a clear understanding of sexism, racism, and imperialism; and deal with them simultaneously."

At the same time that they contended with myopia within feminism, feminists active in ethnic and racial liberation movements continued to struggle with the assumption of masculine superiority within those movements. The comments of Jennie V. Chavez in a 1972 essay reflected those frustrations.

"It has taken what I consider a long time for [Chicanas] to realize and to speak out about the double oppression of the Mexican-American woman. . . . As the social revolution for all people's freedoms has progressed, so Chicanas have caught the essence of freedom in the air. The change has occurred slowly. Mexican-American women have been reluctant to speak up, afraid that they might show up the men in front of the white man—afraid that they may think our men not men. Now, however, the Chicana is becoming as well educated and as aware of oppression, if not more so, as the Mexican-American male. . . . As the new breed of Mexican-American women, we have been, and probably will continue to be, ridiculed by our men for attempting the acrobatics of equality. . . . [B]ut I believe that this new breed of bronze womanhood, as all women today, will be a vanguard for world change."

Naming Wrongs, Seeking Rights

As they sought to define women's rights, feminists identified and named women's wrongs. A group calling themselves simply "The Feminists" made the inequities of marriage and the persistence of coverture their target when they handed out an in-your-face leaflet at the New York marriage license bureau in 1969.

"Women: Do You Know the Facts about Marriage?

DO YOU KNOW THAT RAPE IS LEGAL IN MARRIAGE?

According to law, *sex* is the purpose of marriage. You have to have sexual intercourse in order to have a valid marriage.

DO YOU KNOW THAT LOVE AND AFFECTION ARE NOT REQUIRED IN MARRIAGE?

If you can't have sex with your husband, he can get a divorce or annulment. If he doesn't love you, that's *not* grounds for divorce.

"[A] pervasive feeling of mistrust toward the women in the movement is fairly representative of a large group of women who live in the psychological place we now call Asian Pacific America. A movement that fights sexism in the social structure must deal with racism, and we had hoped the leaders in the women's movement would be able to see the parallels in the lives of the women of color and themselves, and would 'join' us in our struggle and give us 'input.'"

—writer Mitsuye Yamada, 1979

Mitsuye Yasutake Yamada (1923–) is a poet, women's rights activist, and feminist whose work reflects her experiences being interned with her Japanese American family at the Minidoka Camp during World War II and her belief that Asian American women in the United States experience double invisibility as Asians and as women. Her essays and poems have appeared in a number of venues, including the anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Radical Writings from Women of Color* (1981), and along with the poet Nellie Wong, she has been the subject of a documentary film, *Mitsuye and Nellie: Asian American Poets*.

N*o-fault divorce:* In 1969, California became the first state to reject the centuries-old notion that one party must be "at fault" when individuals sought to dissolve a marriage. By 1977, nine states had "no-fault" divorce statutes.

DO YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE YOUR HUSBAND'S PRISONER?

You have to live with him wherever *he* pleases. If he decides to move someplace else, either you go with him or he can charge you with desertion, get a divorce and, according to law, you deserve nothing because *you're the guilty party*.

DID YOU KNOW THAT, ACCORDING TO THE UNITED NATIONS, MARRIAGE IS A 'SLAVERY-LIKE PRACTICE'?

According to the marriage contract, your husband is entitled to more household services from you than he would be from a live-in maid. So, why aren't you getting paid? Under law, you're entitled only to 'bed and board.'

Feminist activism in legislatures and courthouses opened the floodgates to women's grievances. Soon, ordinary women and men began to name the wrongs they had experienced and claim their rights. Sharron Frontiero was an Air Force officer who challenged inequitable rules on dependents' benefits whereby men but not women could automatically claim their spouses as dependents. In its 1973 decision in the case of *Frontiero v. Richardson*, the Supreme Court agreed with Frontiero's lawyer, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, that distinctions based on sex, like those based on race, were legally "suspect."

"The question before us concerns the right of a female member of the uniformed services to claim her spouse as a 'dependent.' . . . [A]ppellants contend that classifications based upon sex, like classifications based upon race, alienage, and national origin, are inherently suspect and must therefore be subjected to close judicial scrutiny . . . We agree. There can be no doubt that our Nation has had a long and unfortunate history of sex discrimination. Traditionally, such discrimination was rationalized by an attitude of 'romantic paternalism' which, in practical effect, put women, not on a pedestal, but in a cage. . . . [T]he position of women in America has improved markedly in recent decades. Nevertheless, . . . women still face pervasive, although at times more subtle, discrimination in our educational institutions, in the job market, and perhaps most conspicuously, in the political arena. . . ."

Girls' and women's unequal access to education and training was a key target of women's rights agitation. Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments Act was a major victory for equal rights and became a powerful tool for addressing widespread discrimination in educational institutions, including everything from quotas on women's admission to elite law and medical schools (usually 5 percent), to unequal pay for female

college professors, to girls' almost non-existent opportunities for athletic competition. In 1975 Congressional testimony opposing an effort to exempt "revenue-producing" sports (such as football) from Title IX coverage, Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana, who had sponsored Title IX in the Senate, took the opportunity to note the many still-existing disparities between women's and men's opportunities in college sports. In the process, he identified arguments made by those who sought to limit Title IX's coverage.

"[I take] the opportunity to testify here today on legislation which seeks to fundamentally alter the original goals of Title IX, goals which included equal opportunity for women in athletics and physical education. . . . Congress's decision to uphold the coverage of athletics by Title IX has been buttressed by a number of court decisions which mandated equal opportunity for women in high school and college athletics based upon the due process guarantees of the Fourteenth Amendment. . . .

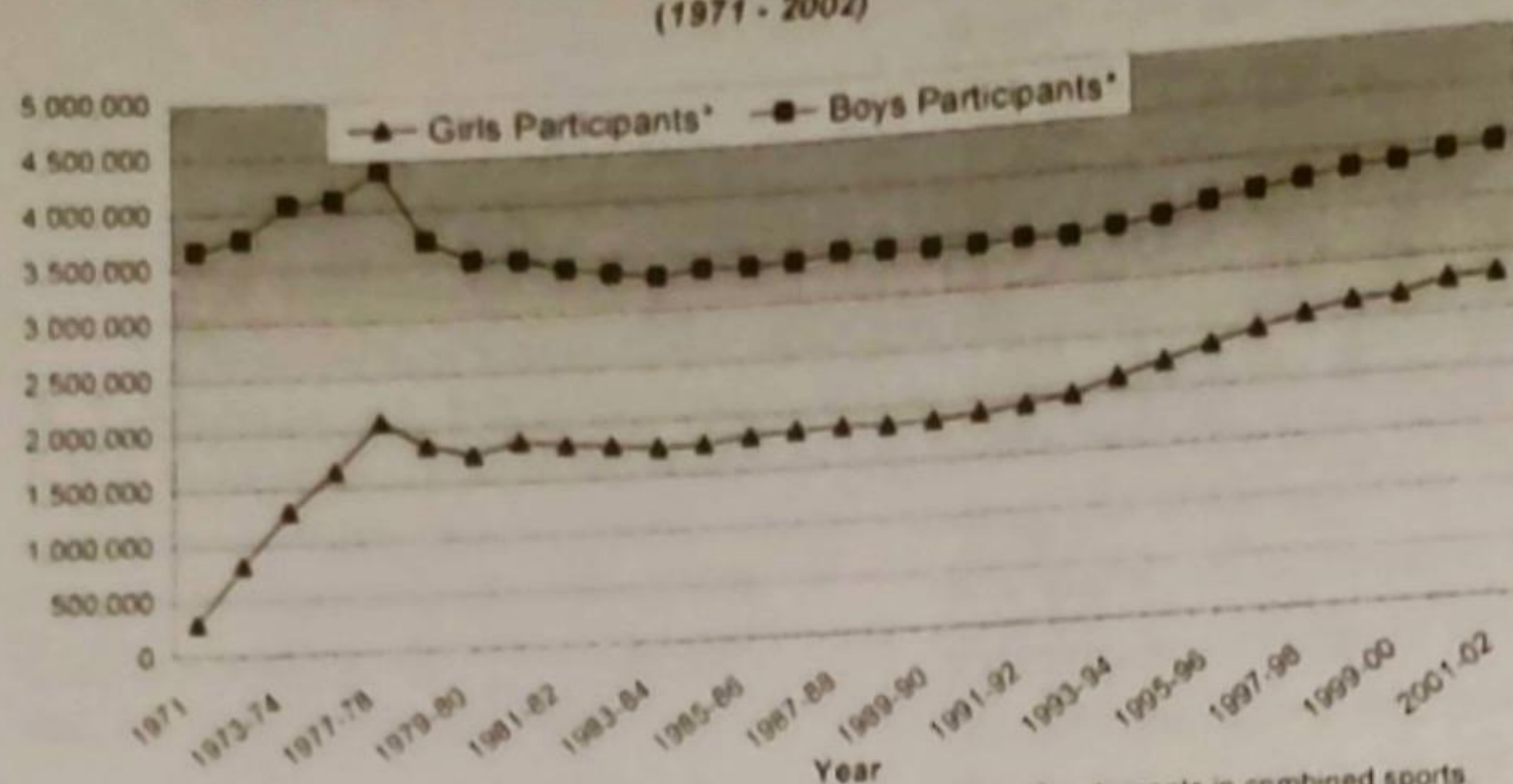
The question . . . is whether the Congress should retreat from the full commitment it has given to provide equal opportunity for women in athletics by exempting revenue-producing sports from Title IX. . . . [I]t is interesting to me that . . . no one is making the argument that there is not discrimination against women. No football coach or athletic director is denying that this is something fundamentally wrong with a college or university that relegates its female athletes to second-rate facilities, second-rate equipment, or second-rate schedules, solely because they are women. No one seriously disputes the fact that athletic budgets for women are a fraction of those provided for the men. Instead, the argument has focused on the ability of certain intercollegiate sports to withstand the financial burdens imposed by the equal-opportunity requirements of Title IX. . . .

What does Title IX require of colleges and universities in order to meet their equal opportunity guidelines in intercollegiate athletics? . . .

[O]ne example of how Title IX would change things is that . . . if the men are trying out for the [basketball] team, and the university feels that buying the shorts and the shirts and the attendant equipment is a university expense, but the women, to try out for the women's team, must bear the expense themselves. . . .

[F]rom the college coed to the ten-year-old longing to play Little League baseball, American women have been consistently denied adequate athletic opportunities. Funding, coaching, scheduling,

Athletics Participation Totals - All Sports (1971 - 2002)



*In years prior to 2000-01, these figures did not include a portion of participants in combined sports.
Source: National Federation of State High School Associations 2002 Participation Survey

A chart demonstrates Title IX's impact on women's athletics.

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."

—Title IX

In 1973, the National Organization for Women created a Rape Task Force to develop statutes revising existing state laws. The task force challenged laws requiring rape victims to prove that they had been "chaste" before the rape and had resisted the rape with "utmost force." Susan Brownmiller's 1975 book, *Against Our Will*, exposed the ways in which rape had historically been used to subjugate women, including the use of mass rape as a weapon in wartime. By 1978, feminists were holding "Take Back the Night" marches to claim women's right to freedom of access and safety on public streets.

scholarships, and access to facilities are only a few of the areas where inequities are glaring.

Title IX attempts to address these inequities, not through rigid requirements of equal expenditures for males and females, but through an assessment of a variety of factors including student interest and participation, past history of athletic opportunities for members of both sexes, and current fiscal constraints that will vary from institution to institution....

It is unbelievable to me that sports programs so steeped in tradition as [are] most of our big-ten schools[,] are suddenly going to disintegrate or even be seriously damaged or even slightly damaged by permitting women to attend these same fine institutions and have an equal opportunity to participate in athletic programs and programs of physical education."

Feminists highlighted women's vulnerability to sexual assault and shone a spotlight on the often dismissive treatment of rape victims by the police and courts. Writer Susan Griffin contributed an important conceptual analysis of rape in a 1971 essay by identifying it as a signal example of the pervasiveness of violence against women, and a mechanism whereby men control women and maintain gender hierarchy.

"Rape is an act of aggression in which the victim is denied her self-determination. It is an act of violence which, if not actually followed by beatings or murder, nevertheless always carries with it the threat of death. And finally, rape is a form of mass terrorism, for the victims of rape are chosen indiscriminately, but the propagandists for male supremacy broadcast that it is women who cause rape by being unchaste or in the wrong place at the wrong time—in essence, by behaving as though they were free.

The threat of rape is used to deny women employment. (In California, the Berkeley Public Library... refused to hire female shelvers because of perverted men in the stacks.) The fear of rape keeps women off the streets at night. Keeps women at home.

Keeps women passive and modest for fear that they be thought provocative."

Calling attention to the plight of women victimized by spousal abuse, feminists gave domestic violence a name—"battering." They analyzed it both as evidence of the inequities of coverture in marriage and as a mechanism for maintaining male supremacy. In her 1979 book, *The Battered Woman*, Lenore E. Walker provided a succinct introduction to the issue, offering women's stories to help personalize the issue.

"Denise: After we got married, every little thing would set him right off. It seemed he needed extra special loving at all times, and I kept throwing hurdles because I wasn't doing that. Evidently, that was causing him to be very upset. I always got the impression that I wasn't loving enough, giving enough, that there was something defective in my character as far as giving love. That's basically the message he gave to me.

There was physical abuse right away. He would slap me a lot, and I would fight back. Sometimes I didn't, because I thought if I didn't, it might cure him.... In the beginning, I couldn't tell anyone what was happening; yet it was terrorizing me. I had one girl friend I told about it, and it turned out she was being slapped, too. She could sympathize with me, but it was something that I couldn't and wouldn't talk to anyone else about. Every time I went to my parents, I wouldn't tell them. My brothers and sisters... I wouldn't tell anyone. It was very, very embarrassing to me. To them, he was still this gentle, kind, charming man."

Working women's experiences of sexual teasing, propositions, jokes, and forced intimacies from male supervisors and employers had long been dismissed as one of the hazards of the workplace. In May 1975, while working at Cornell University, feminist activist Lin Farley and several colleagues held the first "speak out" to discuss those experiences. A new term—sexual harassment—enabled participants to describe what they had endured. After *New York Times* reporter Enid Nemy used the term in an August article, it gained wide currency.

"For years, many women accepted it as a job hazard. Now, with raised consciousness and increased self-assurance, they are speaking out against the indignities of work-related sexual advances and intimidation, both verbal and physical.

'Sexual harassment of women in their place of employment is extremely widespread. It is literally epidemic,' said Lin Farley,

In 1994, the Violence Against Women Act became law. A landmark provision stated: "All persons within the United States shall have the right to be free from crimes of violence motivated by gender." In 2000, 2005, and again in 2013, Congress reauthorized the law. The 2013 reauthorization explicitly included gay, bisexual, and transgender women in its provisions.

First performed in 1996, *The Vagina Monologues*, a play by Eve Ensler, became a significant mechanism for calling attention to the issue of violence against women. It led to the designation of February 14 (St. Valentine's Day) as "V-Day," when college students and activists around the world stage productions of the play.

After enduring continual sexual harassment from her supervisor, a vice-president of Meritor Savings Bank who eventually raped her, Mechelle Vinson took her case to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and, with the legal backing of women's rights advocates, to the courts. The result was a redefinition of harassment as a form of sex discrimination, prohibited under the 1964 Civil Rights Act. In the 1986 case of *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson*, the Supreme Court unanimously agreed that "unwelcome sexual advances that create an offensive or hostile working environment violate Title VII [of the 1964 Civil Rights Act]. . . . [A] claim of 'hostile environment' sex discrimination is actionable under Title VII."

In 1991, sexual harassment became a topic of widespread public discussion when President George H. W. Bush nominated a former head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Clarence Thomas, to a seat on the Supreme Court. One of Thomas's former employees, law professor Anita Hill, testified at the Senate confirmation hearings that years earlier Thomas had sexually harassed her. Because she had never formally complained about Thomas's behavior, Hill found her credibility attacked, with Democratic Senator Howell Heflin of Alabama questioning whether she was a "scorned woman" who possessed "a martyr complex." The Senate confirmed Thomas's nomination.

director of the women's section of the Human Affairs Program at Cornell University.

She listed the forms such harassment could take:

- Constant leering and ogling of a woman's body.
- Continually brushing against a woman's body.
- Forcing a woman to submit to squeezing or pinching.
- Catching a woman alone for forced sexual intimacies.
- Outright sexual propositions, backed by threat of losing a job.
- Forced sexual relations.

Miss Farley, in testimony given before the Commission on Human Rights of New York City, noted that, in the past, women . . . were . . . humiliated or intimidated, and had watched 'the ridicule and condescension' heaped upon women who did complain. . . .

The women of Tompkins County, N.Y., who have banded together to form Working Women United, agree that sexual harassment is humiliating. They do not believe it is trivial. They have now launched a campaign to expose the problems of sexual exploitation of women on the job.

'[M]en think . . . they have a right to touch me, or proposition me because I'm a waitress,' said Janet Oestreich, . . . 'Why do women have to put up with this sort of thing anyway? You aren't in any position to say "get your crummy hands off me" because you need the tips, that's what a waitress job is all about. Women are the ones who are punished. They have to leave a job because of a man's behavior and the man is left there, sitting pretty.'

Women's rights to autonomy and self-ownership at work and in personal relationships extended to reproductive decisions as well. Building upon the *Griswold v. Connecticut* case (1965), women's rights lawyers won the *Roe v. Wade* case in 1973. The Supreme Court, invoking the constitutional right to privacy, found blanket restrictions on abortion unconstitutional.

"The Constitution does not explicitly mention any right of privacy. In a line of decisions, however . . . the Court has recognized that a right of personal privacy, or a guarantee of certain areas or zones of privacy, does exist under the Constitution. This right . . . is broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy. . . . We . . . conclude that the right of personal privacy includes the abortion decision, but that this right is not unqualified and must be considered against important state interests in regulation."

Speaking at a Black Women's Community Development Foundation Conference in Washington, D.C., in 1974, Naomi Gray of Black Women Organized for Action offered specific examples of the denial to black women of reproductive autonomy.

"Over the years I have come in contact with a substantial number of women who have been sterilized, either by tubal ligation or hysterectomy. Many, at the time, were unaware that this had occurred, because they never consented to have the operation performed. For instance, the majority of these women signed a medical consent form, not to be sterilized but rather placing their faith in the doctor to discover and rectify the so-called trouble. This is not informed consent; instead these women have been sterilized through means of deceit and trickery. Many of us were aware through the black grapevine that black women had been forced to undergo involuntary sterilizations in the South and elsewhere. However, it was not until recently that it was possible to document the extent to which black women have suffered involuntary sterilization. . . . As is always the case with such laws, it is the poor and more often the black female, including minors, who are victimized."

Critics of the *Roe v. Wade* decision worked to undermine its impact by seeking state and national legislation restricting women's access to abortion. Through the Hyde Amendment (1977), Congress eliminated all federal funding for abortions. When the Pennsylvania legislature passed a series of new restrictions on that state's abortion rights statute, lawyers defending women's reproductive rights challenged the legislation. The end result was a 1992 Supreme Court case, *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*. In rendering its 5-4 decision, the court permitted many of the restrictive provisions to stand, but reaffirmed the *Roe v. Wade* decision and overturned one of the last vestiges of coverture, a requirement in the law that wives, but not single women, notify their sexual partners before having an abortion.

"Liberty finds no refuge in a jurisprudence of doubt. Yet 19 years after our holding that the Constitution protects a woman's right to terminate her pregnancy in its early stages . . . that definition of liberty is still questioned. . . . After considering the fundamental constitutional questions resolved by *Roe*, . . . we are led to conclude this: the essential holding of *Roe v. Wade* should be retained and



With her 1978 poster, artist Rachael Romero highlighted the denial of reproductive rights to poor and minority women by pointing to laws permitting women to be sterilized without their consent.



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In 1990, Native American women from the Northern Plains held a three-day meeting in South Dakota that resulted in the formation of an Agenda for Native American Women's Reproductive Rights.

In the 2000 case of *Stenberg v. Carhart*, the Supreme Court upheld Congress's restriction on a particular abortion method, "intact dilation and extraction," termed "partial birth" abortion by opponents.

once again reaffirmed. . . . Constitutional protection of the woman's decision to terminate her pregnancy derives from the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. . . . It is a premise of the Constitution that there is a realm of personal liberty which the government may not enter. . . .

Men and women of good conscience can disagree, and we suppose some always shall disagree, about the profound moral and spiritual implications of terminating a pregnancy, even in its earliest stage. Some of us as individuals find abortion offensive to our most basic principles of morality, but that cannot control our decision. Our obligation is to define the liberty of all, not to mandate our own moral code. . . .

Our law affords constitutional protection to personal decisions relating to marriage, procreation, contraception, family relationships, child rearing, and education. . . . These matters . . . are central to the liberty protected by the Fourteenth Amendment. At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, or meaning, or the universe, and of the mystery of human life. Beliefs about these matters could not define the attributes of personhood were they formed under compulsion of the State. The woman's right to terminate her pregnancy before viability is the most central principle of *Roe v. Wade*. It is a rule of law and a component of liberty we cannot renounce."

Religious feminists challenged women's exclusion from spiritual leadership in their denominations. At a 1975 meeting of about 1,200 Catholics held in Detroit to discuss women's ordination, Margaret Farley, RSM, a member of the Sisters of Mercy, articulated her views on the topic.

"I . . . wish to argue that the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood must indeed be central to any considerations of roles for women in the Church, and that the many moral imperatives which confront the Church regarding women and ministry unavoidably converge in the imperative to ordain women to the priesthood. The office of priesthood, in fact, offers a particularly potent focus for addressing directly the sources of sexism in Christian thought. Reasons and attitudes which have kept women from the

office of priesthood are remarkably similar to reasons and attitudes which continue to keep them from full participation in the general priesthood of the faithful. . . . [T]he Church ought to open its ordained sacramental ministry to women. It ought to do so because not to do so is to affirm a policy, a system, a structure, whose presuppositions are false (for the nonordination of women is premised on the denial in women of a capacity for leadership, a call to represent God in the community and the community to God, and a worthiness to approach the sacred in the fullness of their womanhood)."

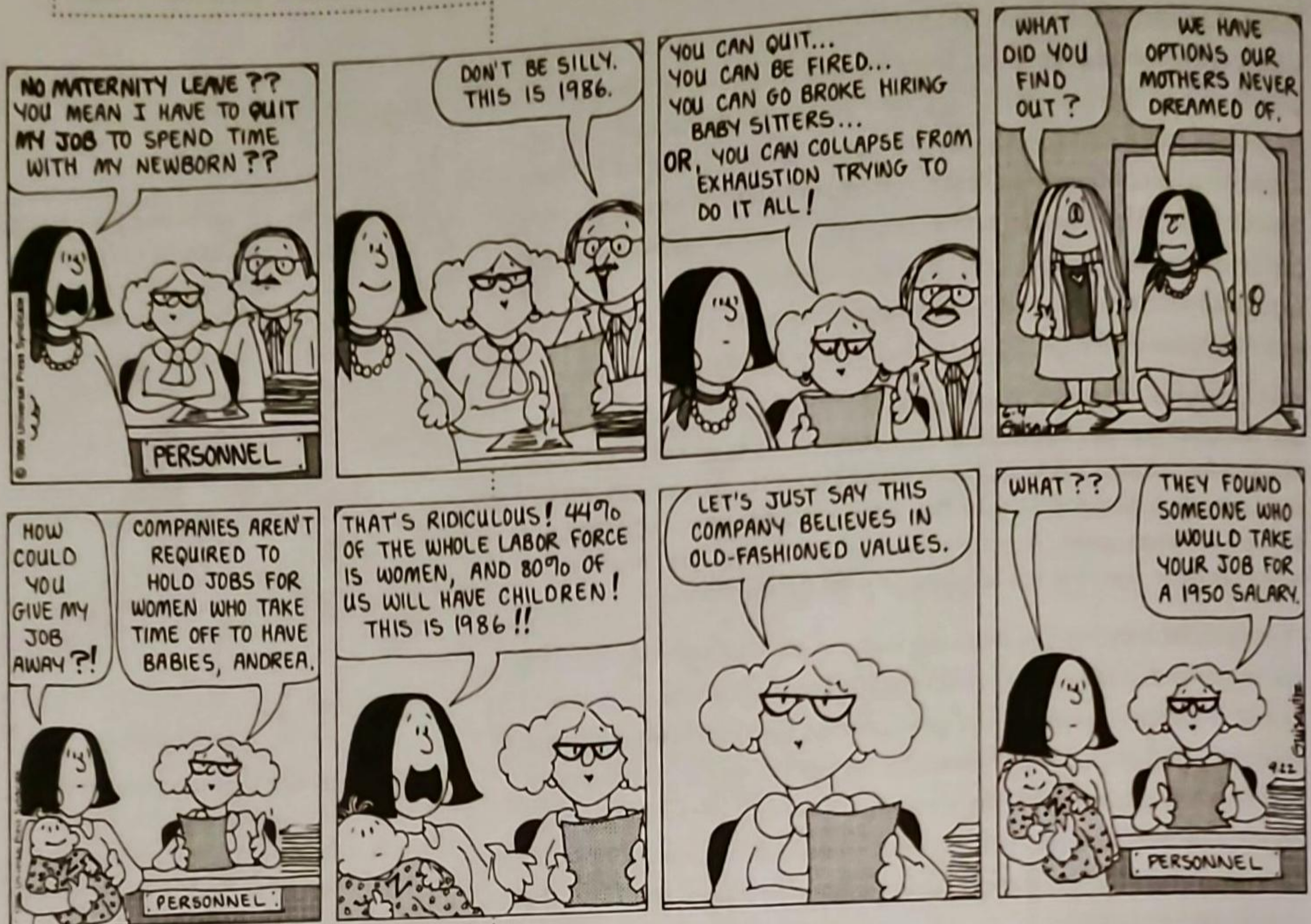
Working women's advocacy groups, especially "9 to 5," founded in 1973, and the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), founded in 1974, advocated for women workers, homemakers, and women who faced job discrimination. At a 1980 Labor Day rally in Washington, D.C., they put forward a fifteen-point "Working Women's Platform," later reported by writer Lorraine Sorrel in the feminist journal *Off Our Backs*.

"Because the concerns of working women are still not addressed by the major political parties in their 1980 platforms, four national women's labor organizations proclaimed the Working Women's Platform [today.] . . . The working women's organizations sent copies of the platform to their local groups and national women's organizations. They want these issues raised to public debate, and each candidate for public office to state where they stand on the specific issues. . . .

1. RECOGNITION. Recognize, understand and value the strong tradition and increasing importance of women as workers in all aspects of social, political and economic life in America. . . .
2. MINORITY WOMEN. Recognize the special needs, concerns and problems of minority women workers who face both sexism and racism. . . .
3. JOB OPTIONS. Eliminate job segregation by sex [which] is a major factor in the overall low status of women in the work force. . . .
4. WAGES. Eliminate wage discrimination by sex. . . .
5. EDUCATION AND TRAINING. Eliminate sex-stereotyping and other barriers to equity in all publicly funded educational, employment and training programs, and promote equal access to these programs. . . .
6. EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS. Expand and create special programs to improve employment opportunities

Although women are barred from being ordained in the Catholic Church, local parishes opened the door for girls to be altar servers in the 1980s; in 1994 the Vatican signaled its consent, subject to the approval of the local diocesan bishop.

Women's rights concerns made their way into popular media. In the 1980 comedy *Nine to Five*, three women stuck in low-paying jobs outwit their sexist boss and introduce numerous changes into the office, including a merit-based promotional system for female employees and an on-site day care center. The 1982 comedy *Tootsie* puts a man in women's clothing at a job; through it he discovers the kinds of sexist put-downs and stereotyping that women deal with daily. The 1984 film *The Burning Bed* exposed the phenomenon of wife battering, and the 1988 drama *The Accused* dramatized the way the legal system dealt with rape. In the television series *Remington Steele*, which aired from 1982 until 1987, a smart and feisty female private investigator has little luck getting clients until she invents a male figurehead, whom she names "Remington Steele." Audience members empathized with her as clients insist on dealing only with her "boss" and with her effort to maintain the fiction that he, and not she, has solved complicated crimes.



Unlike women in most western European countries, American women did not have the right to maternity leave (let alone paid leave); syndicated cartoonist Cathy Guisewite used humor in a 1986 comic strip to make that point.

Passed by Congress but vetoed by President George H. W. Bush in 1991, the Family and Medical Leave Act was re-passed in 1993 and signed by President Bill Clinton. It protects qualified employees' jobs for up to twelve weeks of unpaid family leave. As of 2014, the United States remained the only industrialized country without provisions for paid parental leave for the birth or adoption of a child.

- for all women (including young women, women on welfare, ex-offenders, displaced homemakers, handicapped, older and minority women), providing them with career development, skills training (including nontraditional work), supportive services, and access to upwardly mobile jobs. . . .
7. **ENFORCEMENT.** Enforce laws and regulations mandating equal employment opportunities for women. . . .
 8. **HEALTH AND SAFETY.** Promote healthy and safe working conditions. . . .
 9. **SEXUAL HARASSMENT.** Maintain work environments free of sexual harassment and intimidation. According to several recent surveys, approximately 60–75% of the women questioned experienced sexual harassment on the job. Economic dependency and the fear of losing jobs or promotions make women particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment.
 10. **DEPENDENT CARE.** Provide accessible, quality care for children and other dependents. . . .

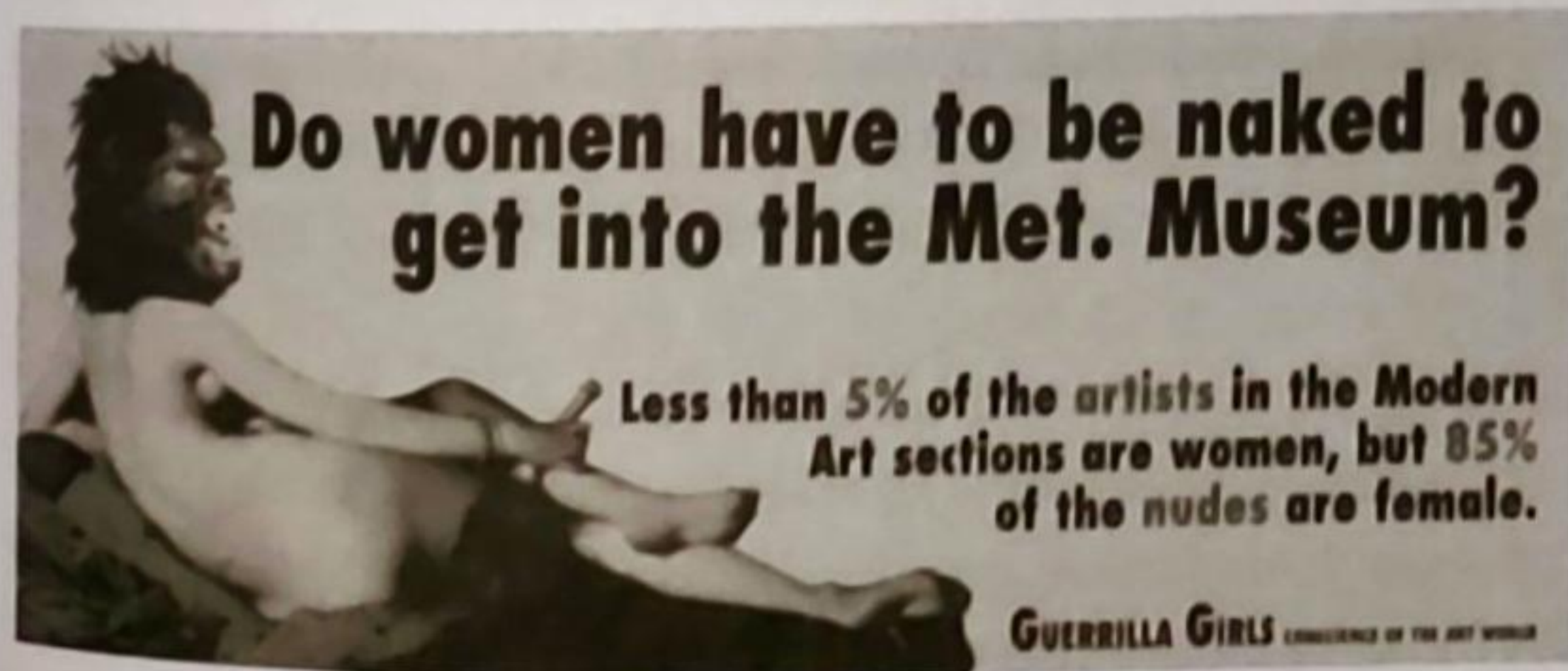
11. **ORGANIZING.** Support the organization of the millions of unorganized women workers, and strengthen the role and participation of women in labor unions. . . .
12. **HOMEMAKING.** Recognize homemakers as an important segment of the country's labor force and recognize unpaid labor in the home as a significant contribution to the national economy. . . .
13. **BENEFITS.** Promote equitable benefits for women, including pensions, social security, paid maternity leave, health care and health insurance. . . .
14. **WORK SCHEDULES.** Promote alternative work schedules (including flex-time, part-time, compressed work week, and job sharing) with appropriate benefits. . . .
15. **PUBLIC POLICY.** Promote the participation of women in the formulation and evaluation of public policy affecting employment. . . ."

"Equality of Rights under the Law": The ERA Revived

The National Organization for Women (NOW) endorsed a new Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the Constitution in 1967. In 1969, Representative Shirley Chisholm of New York, the first African American woman to serve in Congress, introduced the ERA into the House with a speech entitled "Equal Rights for Women."

"As a black person, I am no stranger to race prejudice. But the truth is that in the political world I have been far oftener discriminated against because I am a woman than because I am black.

Prejudice against blacks is becoming unacceptable although it will take years to eliminate it. But it is doomed because, slowly, white America is beginning to admit that it exists. Prejudice against



All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave

Black Women's Studies

Edited by Gloria T. Hull,
Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith

THE FEMINIST PRESS
Old Westbury, New York

Girls' and women's right to know their own history and to make women the subject of academic study led to the creation of courses in Women's History and Women's Studies during the 1970s. These, in turn, created a demand for works by and about women. The anthology, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (1982), was a landmark book in Black Women's Studies published by The Feminist Press, which had been founded in 1970.

A group of feminist artists calling themselves Guerrilla Girls called attention to the vastly unequal opportunities afforded women within the art world with posters such as this one from 1989. In it, they reproduced a painting by Ingres but added the group's trademark signature: a gorilla mask and some telling statistics.

Born in Brooklyn in 1924, Shirley Anita St. Hill Chisholm (1924–2005) was the daughter of a factory worker and a seamstress. After spending part of her childhood during the Depression with her maternal grandparents in Barbados, she completed her education at Brooklyn College, where she excelled as a debater, and then earned a master's degree in elementary education at Columbia University. She first won political office on the state level, serving in the New York State Legislature, and in 1968 was elected to the U.S. House from her Brooklyn district, defeating a well-known civil rights leader who referred to her as "a little schoolteacher" and argued that the district needed "a man's voice in Washington." Focusing on issues such as women's rights, early childhood education, educational funding, and the concerns of poor people, she served until 1983 and was a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus (1971) and the Congressional Women's Caucus (1977). In 1972, Shirley Chisholm became the first woman to seek a major party's nomination for the presidency, running in Democratic Party primaries against better known and better funded candidates. Although she won no primaries, she garnered 152 delegate votes, about 10 percent of the total. Her slogan, "unbought and unbossed," reflected both her personal feistiness and a lifetime of political independence.

women is still acceptable. There is very little understanding yet of the immorality involved in double pay scales and the classification of most of the better jobs as 'for men only.'

More than half of the population of the United States is female. But women occupy only 2 percent of the managerial positions. They have not even reached the level of tokenism yet. No women sit on the AFL-CIO council or Supreme Court. There have been only two women who have held Cabinet rank, and at present there are none. Only two women now hold ambassadorial rank in the diplomatic corps. In Congress, we are down to one Senator and 10 Representatives. . . .

As in the field of equal rights for blacks, Spanish-Americans, the Indians, and other groups, laws will not change such deep-seated problems overnight. But they can be used to provide protection for those who are most abused, and to begin the process of evolutionary change by compelling the insensitive majority to re-examine its unconscious attitudes.

It is for this reason that I wish to introduce today a proposal that has been before every Congress for the last 40 years and that sooner or later must become part of the basic law of the land—the equal rights amendment."

Once the ERA had been introduced, NOW devoted substantial resources to getting Congress to pass it and send it to the states for ratification, which it did in 1972, establishing a seven- and then nine-year limit on the ratification process. Within NOW, however, not everyone agreed on how to define and achieve "equality." At its 1970 annual meeting, as Karla Jay recalled in her autobiography, the issue of whether equal rights should include lesbian rights proved contentious.

"Conservative elements of the women's movement were openly hostile to lesbians. For instance, Betty Friedan had branded us a 'lavender menace.' Lesbians, she believed, would blight the reputation of the National Organization for Women if its members were labeled 'man-haters' and 'a bunch of dykes.' The very threat of such appellations led NOW to deny the number of lesbians in its ranks. . . . Calls for attention to lesbian issues were attacked as divisive. . . . By the spring of 1970 many lesbian/feminists were frustrated at feeling ignored by both the women's and gay [liberation] movements. . . . A large group of us began to meet regularly . . . and . . . set about crafting the now-famous manifesto called 'The Woman-Identified Woman.' . . . It has become an oft-reprinted classic because it summed up so much of what we as radical lesbians thought about ourselves. . . . We . . . called ourselves 'woman-identified women'—that is, those



At a 1978 "March for Equality" in Washington, D.C., participants carried a banner with the twenty-four-word text of the ERA.

who chose to work with and for others of our gender. It was a term even heterosexuals could feel comfortable claiming. . . . We knew we could no longer accept second-class status in the women's movement or the gay movement. We would be equal partners, or we would leave the straight women and gay men behind."

By 1977, when twenty thousand women, men, and children of all racial, ethnic, religious, political, sexual, and class identities gathered in Houston for a three-day National Women's Conference sponsored and financed by Congress, resolutions endorsing both an ERA and lesbian rights were on the agenda. Both passed. But, as a summary of the "National Plan of Action" included in the official report suggests, there were intense discussions and heated exchanges among the two thousand delegates over those and other controversial questions.

"The main work of the delegates was to vote on a proposed National Plan of Action, a 26-plank program that was itself the product of a lengthy democratic process that had taken almost a year. . . .

In 1971 NOW adopted a resolution acknowledging that lesbian rights are "a legitimate concern of feminism"; in 1984, it held a Lesbian Rights Conference.



Delegates to the Houston Convention wore buttons connecting their 1977 conference with the 1848 Seneca Falls Conference and identifying their state affiliations. The letters IWY referred to the United Nations International Women's Year, celebrated two years earlier.

Only one of the 26 planks was unchanged [from the year-long discussions]. Approved by 41 State meetings, it stated simply: 'The Equal Rights Amendment should be ratified.'

All 26 planks in the National Plan of Action were open to debate on the floor at the Houston meeting. . . .

With only 20 percent of the delegates opposing some or most of the planks, there emerged from Houston a consensus on what American women need and want to achieve equal rights, equal status, and equal responsibilities with men.

At the heart of the consensus was the belief that final ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment is needed, as one speaker said, 'to put women in the Constitution' and to establish a framework of justice for their efforts to remove remaining barriers to equality.

Their other demands . . . ran the gamut of issues that touch women's lives: equal opportunities for women in the arts and humanities, in the media, in elective and appointive office, in credit and insurance, in business and education, in formulating foreign policy; extension of social security benefits to homemakers and programs to provide counseling and other services for displaced homemakers; assistance to battered women, disabled women, minority women, older women, rural women, and women in prison; concern for women's health needs and the right to choose abortion, with Federal and State Medicaid benefits for those who cannot afford it; pregnancy disability benefits for employed women; civil rights for lesbians; protection against rape and child abuse; comprehensive child care facilities; welfare reform, educational and job programs for poor women; an end to all discrimination in employment and an opening up of new job opportunities for women."

Ann Follis, president of the Homemakers' Equal Rights Association, commented in 1977 on the Amendment's importance to the women in her organization.

"When I began to work for ERA, I was appalled at the laws regarding the married woman. The law essentially regards the married woman as the property of her husband. Well, ERA is not going to send policemen into everybody's house to make sure that everything is being done equally. It is just a legal situation that will recognize that the wife, under law, will be a partner in the family enterprise."

Disagreements among the delegates to the Houston Conference were not confined to disputes among supporters of women's rights. Some

delegates opposed all of the main resolutions, especially those supporting an ERA, abortion rights, and lesbian rights. They circulated a "Call to Action" but did not formally submit it to the Conference Resolutions Committee.

"We are unalterably opposed to any extension of the ratification period for ERA. If the amendment cannot be ratified within seven years, it obviously has no significant or worthwhile merit.

While we wholeheartedly favor equal pay, equal educational opportunities, and job opportunities for women, we cannot support this dangerous amendment.

It will do nothing to solve any of woman's real problems. . . . Instead, constitutional scholars and attorneys have warned us repeatedly that ERA can:

- Remove the legal requirement that husbands support wives . . . ;
- Require the legalization of homosexual marriages and allow these couples to adopt children . . . ;
- Constitutionally mandate the 'right' to kill unborn babies . . . ;
- Subject women to compulsory military service and combat duty on a par with men . . . ;

Forbid any religious body which has a tax-exempt status from refusing certain roles within their body to women or homosexuals. . . ."

Chief among the opponents of the Houston Conference "Plan of Action" and especially the ERA was Phyllis Schlafly, founder of STOP-ERA and leader of a political organization entitled Eagle Forum. In a 1976 interview with the Washington (D.C.) *Star*, she explained her views.

"[T]he voters recognized ERA as a fraud, and they're against it. They recognize it as a takeaway of women's rights; they recognize it won't do anything good for women, and so they're against it. . . . ERA will take away the right of the wife to be supported and to have her minor children supported. Obviously, this is an attack on the rights of the wife and on the family. The principal thing that ERA does is to take away the right of the wife in an ongoing marriage, the wife in the home. . . . I think our laws are entitled to reflect the natural differences and the role assigned by God, in that women have babies and men don't have babies.

Therefore, the wife has the right to support, and the husband has the duty to pay for the groceries on the table. Anything that ERA does to that is a takeaway of what she has now. It's a reduction in those rights. . . .

ERA Ratification 1972-1982



Thirty-eight states were needed to ratify the ERA. In 1977, Indiana became the thirty-fifth state to ratify, but no other states did so before the 1982 deadline. The amendment failed.

[T]he women's movement... is destructive and antifamily. I think their goals can be summed up as, first, for ERA, which is a takeaway of the legal rights that wives now have. Second, it is pro-abortion on demand and government-financed abortion and abortion in government hospitals or any hospitals. Third, it's for state nurseries, to get the children in the nurseries and off the backs of the mothers.

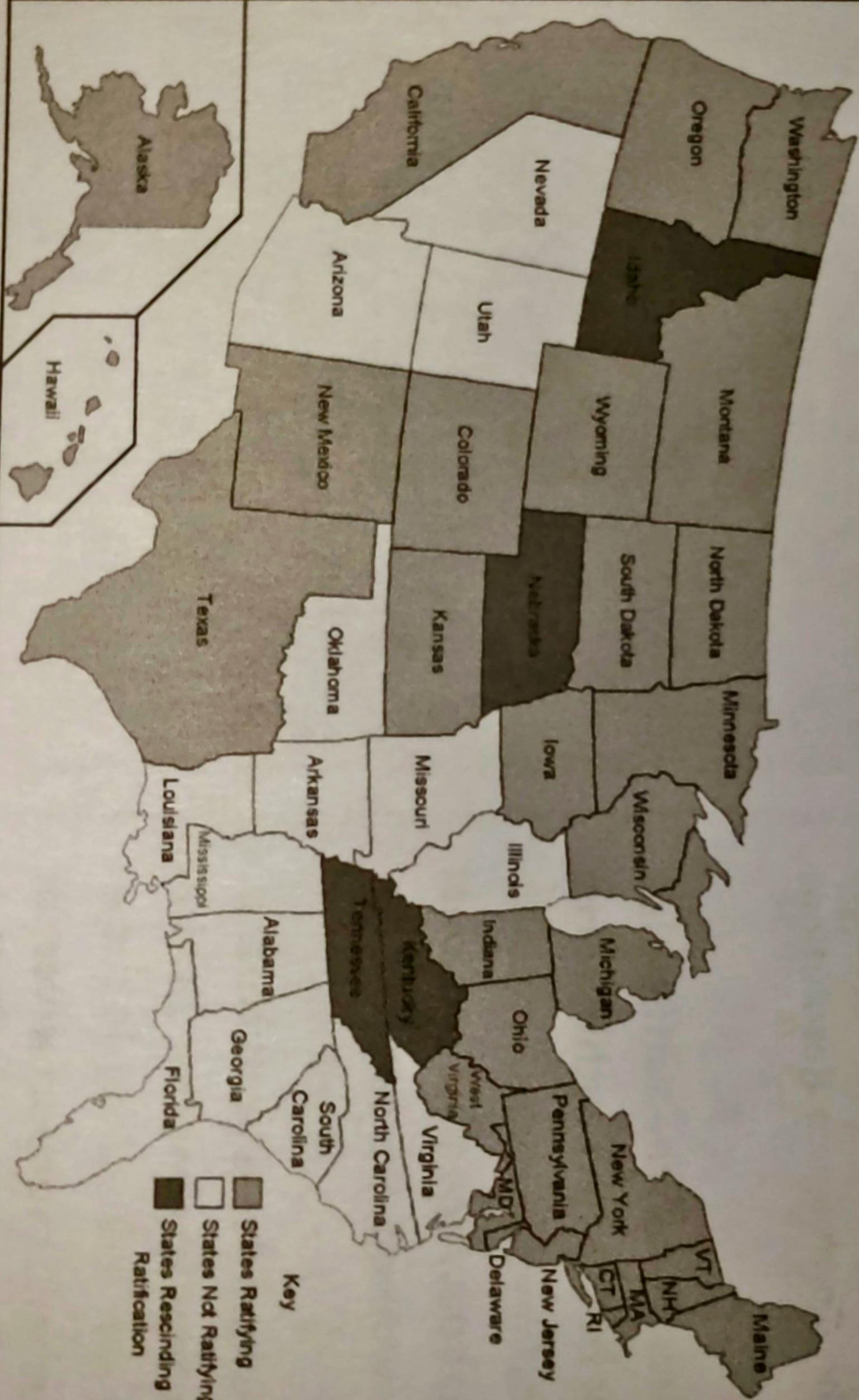
Fourth, it is for prolesbian legislation, which is certainly an anti-marriage movement. And fifth, it is for changing the school textbooks in

order to eliminate what they call the stereotype of woman in the home as wife and mother. So I consider that all five of their princip[al] objectives are antifamily."

The ERA campaign had brought women's rights issues, including the question of what equal rights might mean, into regular public discussions and provoked a serious backlash. In the early 1980s, Gloria Steinem, editor of *Ms.* magazine, took stock of what had—and had not—occurred in the 1970s as a result of feminist activism, and outlined ideas about next steps.

"[W]e might see the seventies as a time of massive consciousness-raising: of breaking the conspiracy of silence on the depth of sex-based inequities, both nationally and internationally, and of achieving token victories that raised women's hopes. Having forged a major change in consciousness, we are now ready for more institutional, systematic change in the eighties. A redistribution of power in families, a revolution in the way children are raised and by whom, flexible work schedules outside the home, a lessening of the violence that is rooted in the cult of masculinity, the redistribution of wealth that would begin if we actually got comparable pay: all these structural changes are possible because hopes were raised in the seventies.

If, on the other hand, we are simply among the millions of women struggling to survive the double burden of working outside the home, yet carrying the major responsibility for homemaking



and raising children, we might describe the seventies as the decade in which we advanced *half* the battle. We've learned that women can and should do 'men's jobs,' for instance, and we've won the principle (if not the fact) of getting equal pay. But we haven't yet established the principle (much less the fact) that men can and should do 'women's jobs': that homemaking and child-rearing are as much a man's responsibility, too, and that those jobs in which women are concentrated outside the home would probably be better paid if more men became secretaries, file clerks, and nurses, too.... If men become flight attendants but women don't become pilots and airline executives, ... women will still be on the losing end.

Politicians and organizers would surely measure the success of the seventies ... by the force of the right-wing backlash against all of these majority changes in hopes and values. Representatives of a social order that depends mostly on sex, race, and class privilege for its power, and is often justified by the mythic economic force of patriarchal religions, are feeling endangered. They have paid this feminism the honor of opposing it very seriously indeed...."

Susan Faludi's 1991 book, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, offered a stinging critique of how various media portrayed the gains women had made in seeking equal rights, and dissected claims that equality between the sexes had been fully realized.

"Just when women's quest for equal rights seemed closest to achieving its objectives, the backlash struck it down. Just when a 'gender gap' at the voting booth surfaced in 1980, and women in politics began to talk of capitalizing on it, the Republican party elected Ronald Reagan and both political parties began to shunt women's rights off their platforms. Just when support for feminism and the Equal Rights Amendment reached a record high in 1981, the amendment was defeated the following year. Just when women were starting to mobilize against battering and sexual assaults, the federal government stalled funding for battered-women's programs, defeated bills to fund shelters, and shut down its Office of Domestic Violence—only two years after opening it in 1979. Just when record numbers of younger women were supporting feminist goals in the mid-'80s (more of them, in fact, than older women) and a majority of all women were calling themselves feminists, the media declared the advent of a younger 'post-feminist'

Gender Gap: Introduced into the language during the 1970s, when electoral polling data first showed that women's voting patterns diverged significantly from men's, the term came into wide use to describe persistent differences between women and men in areas such as job opportunities and pay equity. The National Committee on Pay Equity (<http://www.pay-equity.org/info-time.html>) found that in 2013, full-time, year-round women workers earned, on average, about 78% of what men earned. For African American women, the figure was 68%, for Latinas 60%, and for Asian American women, it was 85% of all men's earnings.

generation that supposedly reviled the women's movement. Just when women racked up their largest percentage ever supporting the right to abortion, the U.S. Supreme Court moved toward reconsidering it.

In other words, the antifeminist backlash has been set off not by women's achievement of full equality but by the increased possibility that they might win it. . . .

Although the backlash is not an organized movement, that doesn't make it any less destructive. In fact, the lack of orchestration, the absence of a single string-puller, only makes it harder to see—and perhaps more effective. A backlash against women's rights succeeds to the degree that it appears *not* to be political, that it appears not to be a struggle at all. It is most powerful when it goes private, when it lodges inside a woman's mind and turns her vision inward, until she imagines the pressure is all in her head, until she begins to enforce the backlash, too—on herself.”

Journalist Barbara Ehrenreich reflected on what “equality” meant, and should mean, in a 1993 magazine article covering “women’s progress in the last couple of decades.”

“How far did we get and is there anything left over for anybody else to do? When we assess this progress, we have to remember that there were always at least two goals for the women's movement. The first goal is equality, which is a simple, though not necessarily easy, goal. It means simply that women's life chances must not be diminished by male supremacist beliefs and practices.

The second goal, which often gets lost or forgotten, involves challenging oppression based on race and class and all the other dimensions of potential inequality and injustice. . . .

We want equality, but we also want a world worth being equal in—a world in which repression and rigid forms of hierarchy would be seen as ugly relics. It's pointless even to imagine what equality for women would mean or could mean in the context of racial and class inequalities for both women and men. We reject . . . the idea of equality for women as a category, so long as there is inequality along these other lines, on the lines of color, ethnicity, and class.”

Young women, referring to themselves as a “Third Wave” of feminism and often proudly calling themselves “girls,” wondered how much had

really changed as they experienced the backlash against feminist gains, especially in popular culture. In a 1998 article, fifteen-year-old Jessica Rosenberg explained the philosophy of Riot Grrrls, a "loosely connected group of punk feminists who publish zines and play in bands" such as *Bikini Kill*.

"Riot Grrrl is much angrier than was the second wave of feminism of the 1970s. Riot Grrrls are loud and, through zines, music, and spoken word, express themselves honestly and straightforwardly. Riot Grrrl does not shy away from difficult issues and often addresses painful topics such as rape and abuse. Riot Grrrl is a call to action, to 'Revolution Girl-Style now.' At a time in their lives when girls are taught to be silent, Riot Grrrl demands that they scream. . . . Riot Grrrl, although remaining staunchly political, also pays attention to the personal and the everyday. It focuses more on the individual and the emotional than on marches, legislation, and public policy. . . .

Across the country and even internationally, girls produce countless zines. Riot Grrrl sees zine writing and publishing as a basic method of empowerment; zine production is self-motivated, political activism that a girl can do entirely independently. Zines subvert standard patriarchal mainstream media by critiquing society and the media without being censored. . . .

More recently, Riot Grrrl has formed a community on the Internet. . . . Because the feminism of Riot Grrrl is self-determined and grassroots, its greatest power is that it gives girls room to decide for themselves who they are. It provides a viable alternative to the skinny white girls in *Seventeen* and *YM* (*Young and Modern*) magazines."

A 1992 report from the American Association of University Women (AAUW) documented *How Schools Shortchange Girls* and challenged "the common assumption that girls and boys are treated equally in our public schools."

"Girls and boys enter school roughly equal in measured ability. Twelve years later girls have fallen behind their male classmates in key areas such as higher-level mathematics and measures of self-esteem. Yet gender equity is still not a part of the national debate on educational reform. . . .

What Happens in the Classroom?

- Girls receive significantly less attention from classroom teachers than boys.

After the turn of the century, Internet-based social networks, blogs, Twitter, and other social media sites became increasingly important as forums for feminist debates, as well as means for organizing and mobilizing around women's rights issues.

- African American girls have fewer interactions with teachers than do white girls, despite evidence that they attempt to initiate interactions more frequently. . . .

A large body of research indicates that teachers give more classroom attention and more esteem-building encouragement to boys. . . . In a study . . . boys in elementary and middle school called out answers eight times more often than girls. When boys called out, teachers listened. But when girls called out, they were told to 'raise your hand if you want to speak.' Even when boys do not volunteer, teachers are more likely to encourage them to give an answer or an opinion than they are to encourage girls. . . .

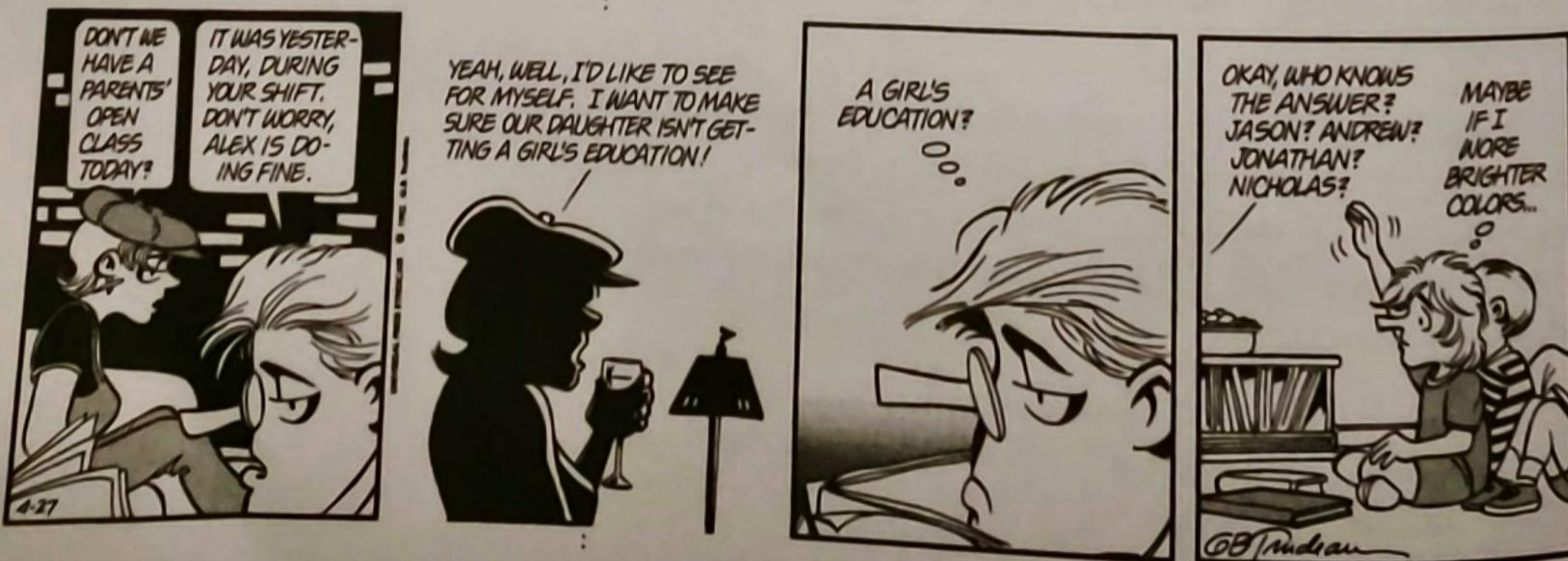
What Do We Teach Our Students?

- The contributions and experiences of girls and women are still marginalized or ignored in many of the textbooks used in our nation's schools. . . .

Perhaps the most evaded issue of all topics in schools is the issue of gender and power. As girls mature they confront a culture that both idealizes and exploits the sexuality of young women while assigning them roles that are clearly less valued than male roles. If we do not begin to discuss more openly the ways in which ascribed power—whether on the basis of race, sex, class, sexual orientation, or religion—affects individual lives, we cannot truly prepare our students for responsible citizenship. . . .

The formal school curriculum must include the experiences of women and men from all walks of life. Girls and boys must see women and girls reflected and valued in the materials they study."

Cartoonist Gary Trudeau illustrated the findings of the AAUW report in his comic strip "Doonesbury."



In an anthology published in 1995, writer JeeYeun Lee contributed her thoughts on how the feminism of young "women of color" like herself differed from that of their predecessors.

"I want to emphasize that the feminism that I and other young women come to today is one that is at least sensitive to issues of exclusion. If perhaps twenty years ago charges of racism, classism and homophobia were not taken seriously, today they are the cause of extreme anguish and soul-searching. I am profoundly grateful to older feminists of color and their white allies who struggled to bring U.S. feminist movements to this point. . . . Women of color do not struggle in feminist movements simply to add cultural diversity, to add the viewpoints of different kinds of women. Women of color feminist theories challenge the fundamental premises of feminism, such as the very definition of 'women,' and call for recognition of the constructed racial nature of all experiences of gender. . . . Sisterhood may be global, but who is in that sisterhood? None of us can afford to assume anything about anybody else. This thing called 'feminism' takes a great deal of hard work, and I think this is one of the primary hallmarks of young feminists' activism today: We realize that coming together and working together are by no means natural or easy."

Perhaps the best-known work by younger feminists who identified themselves as members of a "Third Wave" was the 2000 book *Manifesta* (with a new edition in 2010) by the journalists Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards. They conceived their "Third Wave MANIFESTA: A Thirteen-Point Agenda" as a modern-day "declaration of sentiments," comparable to that first issued at Seneca Falls in 1848.

1. To out unacknowledged feminists, specifically those who are younger, so that **Generation X [a popular term for Americans born in the 1980s and 1990s]** can become a visible movement, and, further, a voting block of eighteen-to forty-year-olds.
2. To safeguard a woman's right to bear or not to bear a child, regardless of circumstances, including women who are younger than eighteen or impoverished. To preserve this right throughout her life and support the choice to be childless.
3. To make explicit that the fight for reproductive rights must include birth control; the right for poor women and lesbians to have children; partner adoption for gay couples; subsidized fertility treatments for all women who choose them; and freedom from sterilization abuse. . . .

4. To bring down the double standard in sex and sexual health, and foster male responsibility and assertiveness in the following areas: achieving freedom from STDs; more fairly dividing the burden of family planning as well as responsibilities such as child care; and eliminating violence against women.
5. To tap into and raise awareness of our revolutionary history, and to the fact that almost all movements began as youth movements. To have access to our intellectual feminist legacy and women's history; . . .
6. To support and increase the visibility and power of lesbians and bisexual women and trans people in the feminist movement, in high schools, colleges, and the workplace. To recognize that queer women have always been at the forefront of the feminist movement, and that there is nothing to be gained—and much to be lost—by downplaying their history, whether inadvertently or actively.
7. To . . . see activism not as a choice between self and community but as a link between them that creates balance.
8. To have equal access to health care, regardless of income, which includes coverage equivalent to men's. . . .
9. For women who so desire to participate in all reaches of the military, including combat, and to enjoy all the benefits (loans, health care, pensions) offered to its members for as long as we continue to have an active military. . . .
10. To liberate adolescents from slut-bashing, listless educators, sexual harassment, and bullying at school, as well as violence in all walks of life, . . .
11. To make the workplace responsive to an individual's wants, needs, and talents. This includes valuing (monetarily) stay-at-home parents, aiding employees who want to spend more time with family and continue to work, equalizing pay for jobs of comparable worth, enacting a minimum wage that would bring a full-time worker with two children over the poverty line, and providing employee benefits for freelance and part-time workers.
12. To acknowledge that, although feminists may have disparate values, we share the same goal of equality, and of supporting one another in our efforts to gain the power to make our own choices.
13. To pass the Equal Rights Amendment so that we can have a constitutional foundation of righteousness and

equality upon which future women's rights conventions will stand."

On August 26, 2008, Women's Equality Day (marking the date in 1920 when the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified), retired factory supervisor Lilly Ledbetter gave a speech to the Democratic National Convention explaining how, despite the provisions of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, she was systematically, and legally, underpaid for nineteen years. The inequities she described were rectified for future workers by the 2009 Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act.

"I'm here to talk about America's commitment to fairness and equality, and how people like me—and like you—suffer when that commitment is betrayed.

How fitting that I speak to you on Women's Equality Day, when we celebrate ratification of the amendment that gave women the right to vote. Even as we celebrate, let's also remind ourselves: The fight for equality is not over. I know that from personal experience. I was a trailblazer when I went to work as a female supervisor at a Goodyear tire plant in Gadsden, Alabama.

My job demanded a lot, and I gave it 100 percent. I kept up with every one of my male co-workers. But toward the end of my nineteen years at Goodyear, I began to suspect that I wasn't getting paid as much as men doing the same job. An anonymous note in my mailbox confirmed that I was right. Despite praising me for my work, Goodyear gave me smaller raises than my male co-managers, over and over.

Those differences affected my family's quality of life then, and they affect my retirement [income] now. When I discovered the injustice, I thought about moving on. But in the end, I couldn't ignore the discrimination. So I went to court. A jury agreed with me. They found that my employer had violated the law and awarded me what I was owed.

I hoped the verdict would make my company feel the sting, learn a lesson and never again treat women unfairly. But they appealed, all the way to the Supreme Court, and in a 5-to-4 decision our highest court sided with big business. They said I should have filed my complaint within six months of Goodyear's first decision to pay me less, even though I didn't know that's what they were doing. . . .

My case is over. I will never receive the pay I deserve. But there will be a far richer reward if we secure fair pay. For our children and grandchildren so that no one will ever again experience the discrimination that I did. Equal pay for equal work is a fundamental American principle."

In 2013, the Secretary of Defense lifted barriers to women in the military serving in combat.

Global Connections

American women's rights advocates established connections with their counterparts around the globe at United Nations conferences where women's rights were on the agenda. Among the most important were the International Women's Year Conference in Mexico City, Mexico, in 1975, the UN World Women's Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1980, the Third World Women's Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1985, and the 1995 UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. As a result of these meetings, and building on its 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 1979, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and established a committee to study the Convention's implementation. The United States' UN representative signed CEDAW, but because the Senate did not ratify it, it has no force in the United States.

"[T]he Charter of the United Nations reaffirms faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women, . . . [yet] extensive discrimination against women continues to exist . . . [Such discrimination] violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries. . . .

[T]he eradication of apartheid, all forms of racism, racial discrimination, colonialism, neo-colonialism, aggression, foreign occupation and domination and interference in the internal affairs of States is essential to the full enjoyment of the rights of men and women. . . .

Article 1. For the purposes of the present Convention, the term 'discrimination against women' shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

Article 2. State Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women. . . .

Article 3. State parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and

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advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men."

Implementing the lofty goals of the CEDAW treaty required U.S. feminists to learn how to work with feminists from around the globe, who held diverse perspectives on women's rights. In a talk delivered at the 2011 Berkshire Conference on Women's History, American feminist Charlotte Bunch reflected upon her activist history, her education in working on global women's issues, and the role of the UN in shaping "transnational feminist activism."

"The four UN World Conferences on Women—Mexico City 1975, Copenhagen 1980, Nairobi 1985, and Beijing 1995—became avenues and opportunities for many feminists to discover each other and to learn and struggle together as we engaged in what has come to be called transnational feminist activism. . . . The United Nations certainly did not create feminism, and its conferences, women's units, declarations, or other activities are not substitutes for women's movements nor should they be expected to be so. However, the UN has provided an invaluable international focus on women's lives and rights, thus expanding the public space in which feminists could work. Women developed international contacts and political savvy, exchanged strategies, and engaged with governments; all of these activities strengthened the impact of their work on the ground.

These events profoundly affected my life and work as a feminist as they did many of my generation, both in the U.S. and elsewhere. I entered UN-sponsored women's space in 1975 as an anti-imperialist U.S. feminist from the women's liberation strand of the women's movement, with its roots in the 1960s U.S. civil rights and anti-war movements. . . . As a member of the women's caucus of the Board of the National Gay (and Lesbian) Task Force, I helped organize 'lesbian visibility' activities around the World Conference in Mexico City, but I did not attend the conference mostly because I thought too many 'gringas' crossing the border would dominate the event, . . . but wished I had gone and vowed never to miss another of these conferences. . . .

[The Mexico City Conference] was a massive global consciousness-raising moment, even if a painful one, as women learned how women's issues were seen in other countries. . . . [It] introduced activists to the potential of pursuing their interests through the UN, at a time when there were few international venues for women's rights, . . . [and led to] the International Tribunal on

Crimes Against Women ... [and] several parallel tribunals... [Women's testimonies] forecasted many women's rights concerns that have made their way onto the UN agenda over the past three decades, from forced motherhood to economic crimes to femicide and violence against women in many forms....

The ... Conference on Women in Copenhagen in 1980 was overwhelmed by ... debate over which factors—sexism, racism, or the economy—were more important to women's subordination.... Of particular importance to me was the debate over 'what is a women's issue,' which initially was polarized between a predominantly 'western' tendency to separate out a limited specific gendered list of women's issues and a more 'southern' approach that saw all issues as women's issues, but often left women open to manipulation by governments or political parties.... I observed that in sessions on violence against women we were most able to talk across various lines of division, ... Women mobilizing against gendered violence could work concretely from a feminist political perspective that acknowledged the many differences among us, while affirming commonality in our struggles....

In the preparations for the Copenhagen conference, I met Roxanna Carrillo from Peru, the woman who would later become my life partner and my closest colleague in the work we began together on global feminism and human rights.... Through my time with her in Latin America, I developed [my understanding] that the ideas we call 'feminism' have many historical roots in every part of the world and that global feminist transnational work must be grounded in, and learn from, the particularities of each locale....

The Nairobi World Conference was particularly important for global feminism as it was the place where it became clear that the movement indeed was global.... Women's diversity was embraced as strength even when diversity produced conflict. A growing consensus was that all issues were indeed women's issues and needed a gendered or feminist lens applied to them....

The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing was a highlight for the global women's movement and consolidated its gains on the UN agenda.... The Beijing Platform for Action took up the new framework of women's rights as human rights ... and included 'the girl child'—a topic African women added to the agenda....

Women's transnational feminist activism has continued since Beijing both at the UN and in other arenas.... But many challenges continue to face feminist transnational activism as backlash and

anti-feminist forces have gained ground in a number of countries and often at the UN as well. The polarizations of the world post-9/11 have made women's alliances across cultural lines more difficult. . . . In the globalized world of today, transnational feminist activism is not only a choice but a necessity for women's rights as local and global actions are so interconnected."

At the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton led the United States delegation. Her speech on that occasion included a ringing declaration that "women's rights are human rights."

"By gathering in Beijing, we are focusing world attention on issues that matter most in our lives—the lives of women and their families: access to education, health care, jobs and credit, the chance to enjoy basic legal and human rights and to participate fully in the political life of our countries. . . .

The great challenge of this conference is to give voice to women everywhere whose experiences go unnoticed, whose words go unheard. Women comprise more than half the world's population, 70% of the world's poor, and two-thirds of those who are not taught to read and write. We are the primary caretakers for most of the world's children and elderly. Yet much of the work we do is not valued—not by economists, not by historians, not by popular culture, not by government leaders. . . .

Our goals for this conference, to strengthen families and societies by empowering women to take greater control over their own destinies, cannot be fully achieved unless all governments—here and around the world—accept their responsibility to protect and promote internationally recognized human rights. . . . Tragically, women are most often the ones whose human rights are violated. Even now, in the late 20th century, the rape of women continues to be used as an instrument of armed conflict. Women and children make up a large majority of the world's refugees. And when women are excluded from the political process, they become even more vulnerable to abuse. I believe that now, on the eve of a new millennium, it is time to break the silence. It is time for us to say here in Beijing, and for the world to hear, that it is no longer acceptable to discuss women's rights as separate from human rights. . . .

If there is one message that echoes forth from this conference, let it be that human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights once and for all."



Established in 1976, UNIFEM was a United Nations agency working to promote women's rights around the world. In 2011, it was merged into UN Women.