

TURNING LEFT

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

When young black southerners began their boycotts and sit-ins to integrate busses and lunch counters, they started something that reached beyond the civil rights movement. By the late 1960s, as the Vietnam War raged on, Americans took to the streets in protest. Draft-age college students, clergymen, and even Vietnam veterans turned out by the hundreds of thousands. Beyond the antiwar movement, the 1960s launched an experiment in mass, participatory politics. Street demonstrations, protests, and community organizing focused on a range of issues, and activists saw themselves as keepers of America's democratic promise. New groups organized as never before, and "rights consciousness," as some have called it, accompanied the assumption that democracy involves more than mere voting. Social change happened when the excluded—often identified by ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation—became aware of their plight and asserted themselves. Activists defined themselves as liberal, progressive, or radical, and they are the subject of this chapter.

The new activism was different from the old organizing efforts of the class-based labor movement, which had its roots deep in the nineteenth century and found its greatest triumphs during the Great Depression and its aftermath. In the 1930s, intense work by unionists in America's basic industries led to the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Massive new unions like the United Auto Workers were legitimated by the Wagner Act of the New Deal, which gave federal sanction to workers' collective bargaining rights for the first time. During the post-World War II era, roughly a third of America's workers belonged to labor unions, and they led the way in setting a rising standard of living for working people that lasted until the end of the 1970s.

But the activism of the 1960s was not primarily motivated by economic justice. An unusual cultural tone pervaded the 1960s. America's affluence and the upbeat rhetoric during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations gave a sense of limitless possibilities. More, a distinct spirituality pervaded many of the era's reforms. The civil rights movement, with its base in the black churches, was the most obvious example. New organizing among Native Americans also gained energy from spiritual sources, as did efforts among Mexican farm workers and by American women. Beyond the specific groups, the era was characterized by

remarkably utopian hopes, as if humankind stood at the verge of a social, spiritual, and personal millennium that for centuries had tantalized yet eluded the faithful.

What became known as the counterculture was the era's most obvious manifestation of utopian dreams. The shock troops of the counterculture, the so-called hippies, sought not so much political or economic solutions to American problems but cultural ones. During the 1960s countless youths responded to the call to "turn-on, tune-in, drop-out," an ambiguous phrase that implied leaving behind the world of school, work, and career for a freer life centered on the open expression of impulses and desires, all made easier with recreational drugs such as marijuana and LSD. A very popular book of the era, Charles Reich's *Greening of America*, argued that the counterculture foretold a change of consciousness in America—youths were leading the way toward abandoning the work ethic, the obsession with success, and the destructiveness of American business culture. The phrase "sex, drugs, and rock and roll" implied a hedonism that was real enough, but the counterculture also embodied important ideological commitments. The new order would be founded on communal consciousness, freedom, play, and the sacredness of the natural world; it opposed the 1950s image of "the organization man," or "the man in the gray flannel suit."

The counterculture had its attractions for many youthful Americans, and certainly "hippie" styles quickly entered consumer awareness. Long hair, bell-bottom jeans, and psychedelic displays grew common by the 1970s, long after the numbers of hippies in meccas like the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco declined. But equally important, and perhaps more profound than the counterculture, was America's tilt toward the political left. Within the federal government, the Kennedy and Johnson administrations sponsored a range of new programs that extended the old social welfare interventions of the New Deal—civil rights and voting rights laws, Medicare and Medicaid, expanded versions of Aid to Families with Dependent Children and unemployment compensation, equal opportunity programs, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and so forth. Such policies and programs did not end with the 1960s but continued long into the 1970s, as the Republican administration of Richard M. Nixon added Affirmative Action, strong new environmental laws, and the Endangered Species Act.

But it was outside of mainstream politics that some of the most interesting developments took place. For example, the long history of women attempting to gain full recognition and equality reignited in the 1960s. A founding document of "second wave feminism" was the unlikely bestseller, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). Friedan, a journalist with experience in the labor movement, asked why it was that after participating broadly in American society and economy during World War II, American women found themselves shunted back into their homes as wives and mothers, caretakers of new postwar suburban households. By "feminine mystique" she meant that women were now valued only for their "sex functions," which in American culture meant traditionally female attributes—beauty, child rearing, nurturance, housekeeping—rather than job skills or creativity. For many women, it was the sense of achievement that came from working in the civil rights or antiwar movements, followed by the frustration of not having their contributions acknowledged by the men who dominated those movements, that led toward feminism.

Two-dozen women founded the National Organization for Women in 1966 to lobby the federal government for enforcement of antidiscrimination laws. From there the movement grew. In 1971, the very first issue of *Ms.* magazine sold over a quarter million copies. Women founded new groups, some of them overtly political, some of them dedicated to "consciousness raising." Like most of the movements of this era, there was no single voice, point-of-view, or organization representing everyone. Many women considered lack of opportunity in the workplace to be the most compelling problem; others focused on inequalities in relationships between men and women; "homemakers" and "career women" sometimes expressed opposing goals. Health issues, daycare, and the cult of beauty all came under scrutiny. Equal opportunity and equal pay remained fundamental concerns of the women's movement, but cultural issues grew increasingly prominent, and often very divisive. Many women believed that laws making abortion a crime must be overturned, and the U.S. Supreme Court agreed in 1973 with the *Roe v. Wade* decision. Despite this ruling, not only has the abortion issue not gone away, positions have become ever more entrenched, dividing Americans along lines of religion, gender, and region.

A new movement also began among Latino Americans. In California's central valley, the United Farm Workers gained unexpected success organizing poor itinerant farm laborers, mostly Mexicans and the children of Mexicans. Inspired in part by the civil rights movement under Martin Luther King Jr. and led by the equally charismatic Cesar Chavez, this AFL-CIO affiliate began with grape pickers in the town of Delano in 1965 and quickly gained converts in California's enormous "factories in the fields." This was no simple union movement, however. The farm workers' rallies took place in both English and Spanish, they borrowed anthems from the civil rights movement like "We Shall Overcome," and they featured banners with the symbolism of an Aztec eagle and of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Chavez received considerable support from other unions like the United Auto Workers, from student groups, and from the Catholic Church. Above all, the farm workers melded their commitment to economic justice with ethnic nationalism, with the recognition that they were mostly of Mexican descent. They made "la causa" and "la huelga" their own. Soon Latino organizing spread beyond the farm workers to urban battles for quality schools in western cities and to other groups, especially Puerto Ricans in New York and Chicago.

The breaking down of the old Cold War consensus—which included increasingly militant protest for African-American equality and growing street demonstrations against the Vietnam War—continued to manifest itself as a rising tide of dissent among other groups. After decades of relative calm, Native Americans began a cycle of protest in the late 1960s and 1970s. New challenges regarding tribal rights and land claims began to enter the courts. More dramatically, a group of nearly 100 Indians from various tribes took over and occupied Alcatraz Island—formerly a federal prison—in the middle of San Francisco Bay, and held it for eighteen months. By 1973, 300 Oglala Sioux, members of a new organization called the American Indian Movement (AIM), occupied Wounded Knee, South Dakota, scene of the massacre where the Plains Wars had ended eighty years before. The American Indian Movement fought FBI and other federal agents to a standoff, and only after more than two months was a truce arranged and the shooting stopped.

Also in the late 1960s came the beginnings of "Gay Power." Homosexual relationships had been long stigmatized and criminalized. In furtive gay hangouts in large cities, gay bashing by straight men and shakedowns by police had been routine for decades. Rather suddenly, it seemed, gays refused to accept this second-class citizenship. The symbolic beginning came in June 1969, at the Stonewall Inn in New York City, where a riot underscored this unwillingness to put up with harassment any more. Equally important, the 1970s became a time for "coming out of the closet," not just for individuals, but for gays as a group with a distinct identity. Now, many believed, was the time to assert themselves, to fight for legislation ending discrimination, and to resist being stigmatized as sick or depraved.

Finally, the "ecology movement," or what is more commonly referred to today as environmentalism, received an enormous push during these years. The Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Environmental Protection Agency, and Endangered Species Act garnered broad-based support, but much of the impetus for this legislation came from mass organizing. Twenty million Americans celebrated the first annual Earth Day on April 22, 1970, while rallies, teach-ins, and sit-ins, especially on college campuses, alerted people to ecological dangers. Moreover, environmentalism caused Americans to question the wisdom of constant economic growth and technological progress. The movement pushed the ideas of the early twentieth-century conservation movement—which gave us the national forests and parks—further than ever. Now the focus shifted to dealing with the environmental damage caused by mass production and consumption.

The burst of activism on so many fronts did not simply end with the 1970s. Environmental issues, for example, continue to be a strong presence on the political landscape. The gay rights movement garnered headlines in the twenty-first century, as courts ruled on the subject of same-sex marriage and the political parties staked out positions on the desirability of civil unions. Certainly, by the 1980s, however, with the election of Ronald Reagan and the rightward drift of Congress, the courts, and state governments, Americans in general shifted toward more conservative positions. Progressive, left, or liberal causes found themselves increasingly on the defensive as the century waned. Still, the existence today of a substantial black middle class, the presence of women not just in the workforce but in positions of authority, the fact that we have openly gay communities built on gay political coalitions in major American cities, and the cleaner air and water in our environment are all legacies of earlier activism.

INTRODUCTION TO DOCUMENTS 1, 2, AND 3

Although the rhetoric of the family farm still resonates in American culture, rural life in the post-New Deal era has been dominated by large, consolidated "agribusinesses." California led the way in the creation of "factories in the fields," with massive public works programs bringing water into the enormous Imperial, Sacramento, and San Joaquin Valleys. Farms that grew into hundreds, thousands, even tens of thousands of acres employed a succession of immigrant

laborers—Chinese, Japanese, South Asian, Filipino, and especially Mexican. Beginning with World War II, the federal “Bracero” program opened western farms to Mexican nationals explicitly working as migratory, temporary hands. Entire families worked brutal hours for poverty wages. They covered thousands of miles each year, planting and harvesting not only in West but also in midwestern states, riding buses from job to job and living in primitive labor camps. Some times they wintered in Mexico and sometimes in California towns like Salinas. But a permanent home, regular schooling for their children, and health care were all impossible dreams.

Cesar Chavez grew up in Arizona on a tiny family farm. The Great Depression made it impossible for his family to pay the taxes they owed, and they were forced into migratory labor when their farm was taken and their home bulldozed. Years later, after struggling with issues of how best to aid farm workers and their families, Chavez joined the union movement, eventually helping to found the United Farm Workers of America (UFW). Towns in California’s Central Valley such as Fresno, Merced, Visalia, and Bakersfield were consistently ranked among those with the lowest income in America. Migrants had life expectancies twenty years shorter than the American average, and infant mortality rates that doubled national norms. Their work-related injuries came not just from stoop-labor but also from exposure to highly toxic pesticides and herbicides. In California alone, 100,000 hired farm laborers were children.

After several years of organizing, a 1965 strike of Filipino grape pickers began near Delano. This ignited the UFW’s first big organizing drive, which, after a decade of effort, resulted in the signing of collective bargaining agreements between the union and major growers. In Document 1, Cesar Chavez explains the movement and its goals in hearings before the Senate Subcommittee on Labor. Document 2 is the testimony of Dolores Huerta, the vice president of the UFW Organizing Committee of Delano, where the striking began. Note her account of the obstacles that the organizers were up against. Document 3 is from a 1971 talk given by Cesar Chavez on organizing and personal sacrifice.

1. TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND PUBLIC WELFARE (APRIL 16, 1969)

CESAR CHAVEZ

My name is Cesar E. Chavez. I am Director of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee AFL-CIO. . . .

. . . It is indeed a privilege to address this body, so many of whose members have distinguished themselves over the years by their genuine concern for the welfare of farm workers. For this we are grateful. What has impressed us most is your open-mindedness, your desire to explore our problems in depth. Unwilling to

believe what you have heard or read about the farm worker, some of you have even come to our valley to see for yourselves and experience at first hand our deprivation, our frustration and our struggle for social justice.

First, let me say that we too have been learning. In the no-nonsense school of adversity, which we did not choose for ourselves, we are learning how to operate a labor union. The difficulty of our struggle, together



Image 15.1: Strike against S&W Foods for higher wages during the grape boycott in Long Beach, California. Members of the United Auto Workers and the United Farm Workers marched together in 1966 to support the Grape Boycott. In sunglasses is Larry Itliong, a veteran labor organizer who led the largely Filipino-American farmworkers to strike in Delano, California, for pay to match the federal minimum wage. To Itliong's left is Cesar Chavez, who brought Mexican-American workers into strike a month after it began; by August 1966 the two groups merged to create the United Farm Workers.

Source: Courtesy Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State University.

with the growing possibility of labor relations legislation for agriculture, has led us to challenge again and again the assumption that coverage under the NLRA [National Labor Relations Act] would prove the ultimate salvation of the farm worker. This much is certain. His salvation will not be found in sloganeering. . . .

[L]aws cannot deliver a good union any more than laws can bring an end to poverty. Only people can do that through hard work, sacrifice and dedicated effort.

The end to be achieved, and therefore the starting point of the debate, is the elimination of rural poverty in America. How can the nation, how can Congress help the farm worker close the yawning gap between his own social and economic condition and

that of the other wage earners, even those of comparable skill in other industries such as manufacturing and construction?

Answer? Through strong, effective, well-run unions. The road to social justice for the farm worker is the road of unionization. Our cause, our strike and our international boycott are all founded upon the deep conviction that the form of collective self-help which is unionization holds far more hope for the farm worker than any other single approach, whether public or private. . . .

Repressive legislation is not the answer to strikes during harvest time and boycotts of farm products. The farm worker has learned that his sub-human existence is not inevitable. He has awakened to the

realization that something better is possible for himself and his family. Laws are not going to stop strikes and boycotts so long as his honest, law-abiding efforts to improve his condition are met with massive, hostile grower resistance. Such resistance will only feed the fires of his own burning frustration. The best insurance against strikes and boycotts lies not in repressive legislation, but in strong unions that will satisfy the farm worker's hunger for decency and dignity and self-respect. . . .

If we could have our own way, what we would really like to see is a family living wage for every farm worker, a family living income for every family-sized farm owner, and a fair return on investment for every grower, whether he is an employer or not. . . .

Our potential competition appears almost unlimited as thousands upon thousands of green carders pour across the border during peak harvest seasons. These are people who, though lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence, have not now, and probably never had, any bona fide intention of making the United States of America their permanent home. They come here to earn American dollars to spend in Mexico where the cost of living is lower. They are natural economic rivals of those who become American citizens or who otherwise decide to stake out their future in this country. . . .

. . . As one looks at the millions of acres in this country that have been taken out of agricultural production; and at the millions of additional acres that have never been cultivated; and at the millions of people who have moved off the farm to rot and decay in the ghettos of our big cities; and at all the millions

of hungry people at home and abroad; does it not seem that all these people and things were somehow made to come together and serve one another? If we could bring them together, we could stem the mass exodus of rural poor to the big city ghettos and start it going back the other way; teach them how to operate new farm equipment; and put them to work on those now uncultivated acres to raise food for the hungry. If a way could be found to do this, there would be not only room but positive need for still more machinery and still more productivity increase. There would be enough employment, wages, profits, food and fiber for everybody. If we have any time left over after doing our basic union job, we would like to devote it to such purposes as these.

Thirty-four years ago a nation groping its uncharted course through the seas of the Great Depression faced the threatening storms of social and economic revolution.

The late President Franklin D. Roosevelt met the challenge with the Wagner Act and with other New Deal measures, then considered quite revolutionary, such as Social Security, unemployment insurance and the Fair Labor Standards Act.

While these measures modified the existing capitalistic system somewhat, they also saved the nation for free enterprise.

They did not save the farm worker. He was left out of every one of them. The social revolution of the New Deal passed him by. To make our union possible with its larger hope that the farm worker will have his day at last, there was required a new social revolution.¹

2. TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE (1969)

DOLORES HUERTA

Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, we are again glad to be here and present our long, sad story of trying to organize the farmworkers.

. . . As you know, UFWOC has undertaken an international boycott of all California-Arizona table grapes in order to gain union recognition for striking

farmworkers. We did not take up the burden of the boycott willingly. It is expensive. It is a hardship on the farmworkers' families who have left the small valley towns to travel across the country to boycott grapes.

But, because of the table grape growers' refusal to bargain with their workers, the boycott is our major weapon and I might say a nonviolent weapon, and our last line of defense against the growers who use foreign labor to break our strikes. . . .

. . . Many farmworkers are members of minority groups. They are Filipino and Mexican and black Americans. These same minority people are on the frontlines of battle in Vietnam. It is a cruel and ironic slap in the face to these men who have left the fields to fulfill their military obligation to find increasing amounts of boycotted grapes in their mess kits.

. . . In addition to the thousands of illegals and green carders being brought in to break the strike in Delano, there are many wetbacks that are being brought to other parts of the State to work, and other parts of the country. . . .

The police harassment against the strikers is unbelievable. We have to say that the police departments and sheriffs' departments are in most cases direct agents of the employers. We have had several hundred arrests. We had one conviction, which was for resisting arrest. All the hundreds of arrests have cost the union a tremendous amount of money in bail and attorneys' fees. . . .

Just Saturday, when 60 melon pickers went out on strike in Lost Hills, there was a picket line, and the sheriff's deputies, David Kaylor and R. M. Osborn, refused to protect our picket line, dragged a striker on the ground and arrested him. We had this picket line; across the street from our picket line was a counterpicket line, which was being conducted by the reactionary groups in Delano. They were shouting things like "Go home, Spic," and saying a lot of four-letter words to the women on the picket line. In fact, the officers went over and shook hands with them, and were conversing with them. The counterpickets opened up a tank of ammonia, and the strikers were getting gagged from ammonia. . . .

Regardless of what may happen to the strikers, they never arrest those who harass strikers and pickets. You have to go to the district attorney's office to try to get a complaint, and the chances of getting complaints are very few and far between. . . .

. . . I don't see that we are going to get any kind of a relief from the courts at all. Even under the national labor relations law, even though we are not covered by the law, the growers are constantly filing unfair labor practices against us, and although they know they can't win them, this takes up the time of our attorneys.

When we try to go to the Government for any kind of help, even for the enforcement of the sanitation laws, the Government turns its head. When we went to a local agent of the Agriculture Department to get information on DDT, our attorney went to the office at 11 o'clock, and by 1 o'clock the growers had an injunction prohibiting us from seeing the records on DDT. . . .

. . . In addition to all of this lack of protection from the police, in addition to the lack of protection from the courts, we also have all of the attempts to break the union. . . .

. . . The growers are willing to spend tremendous amounts of money to try to represent the fact that farmworkers don't want a union, by hiring people like Jose Mendoza, who took a picture with Senator Dirksen to try to prove that the farmworkers don't want a union. They could very easily have paid the workers decent wages with the money they are spending.

They have hired public relations firms to try to prove that we are a violent union, which I think everyone knows we are not.

They are spending an awful lot of money on this campaign. I have heard reports of as high as \$5 million a year, they are going throughout the country, buying television and radio time, printing up brochures by the hundreds of thousands, and I want to express something here.

I think we are very, very concerned. We have seen reports of recent incidents of violence that we know are being perpetrated by someone other than ourselves, and these instances of violence make us believe that there is going to be a concerted effort by individuals to create violence either in some of the boycott cities or in some of the areas of California where the strike is now in progress. . . .

So, you can see that the situation is very, very serious. Now, if we look at some of the noises that some of the people that are fighting the union are making, they are talking about violence.

We look at Mr. Baur, who is one of the members of the California Grape & Tree Fruit League, and he is talking about violence.

Mr. Allen Grant, one of Reagan's top men in agriculture in California, is talking about violence. They are trying to create a climate of fear and violence.

We are going to do everything we can to create just the opposite kind of a climate, but I want you to be aware of this, because I think that all of these aspects should be investigated.

We think that this is a deliberate effort to bring violence into the farm labor scene which we know has not been there.

There have been incidents of violence against the union, many of them, and it has taken all that Cesar

[Chavez] can do and the rest of the people can do to keep workers nonviolent. . . .

. . . The growers don't have any heart at all. They have all the economic power, the power in hiring and firing. There have been entire crews of workers fired because one person in the crew said something favorable about the union. There are entire crews of workers who were fired because they had Kennedy stickers on the bumpers of their cars. . . .

. . . Gunmen have gone to our offices, taken canceled checks, membership files, and some of these membership files have been used in blacklisting for jobs. . . .

. . . We are not afraid, and we will continue, but we do need some help, and we hope that the committee here will be able to furnish some of it.²

3. SPEECH ON MONEY AND ORGANIZING (1971)

CESAR CHAVEZ

What I'm going to say may not make much sense to you. On the other hand, it may make an awful lot of sense. This depends on where you are in terms of organizing and what your ideas are about that elusive and difficult task of getting people together—to act together and to produce something. . . .

We started with two principles: First, since there wasn't any money and the job had to be done there would have to be a lot of sacrificing. Second, no matter how poor the people, they had a responsibility to help the union. If they had \$2.00 for food, they had to give \$1.00 to the union. Otherwise, they would never get out of the trap of poverty. They would never have a union because they couldn't afford to sacrifice a little bit more on top of their misery. The statement: "They're so poor they can't afford to contribute to the group," is a great cop-out. You don't organize people by being afraid of them. You never have. You never will. You can be afraid of them in a variety of ways. But one of the main ways is to patronize them. You know the attitude; Blacks or browns or farm workers are so poor that they can't afford to have their own group. They hardly have enough money to eat. This

makes it very easy for the organizer. He can always rationalize, "I haven't failed. They can't come up with the money so we were not able to organize them."

We decided that workers wanted to be organized and could be organized. So the responsibility had to be upon ourselves, the organizers. Organizing is one place where you can easily get away with a failure. If you send a man to dig a ditch 3 feet by 10 feet, you'll know if he did it or not. Or if you get someone to write a letter, you'll know if he wrote it. In most areas of endeavor, you can see the results. In organizing, it's different. You can see results years later, but you can't see them right away. That's why we have so many failures. So many organizers that should never be organizers go in and muddy the waters. Then good organizers have to come in and it's twice as hard for them to organize.

We knew we didn't have the money. We knew farm workers could be organized and we were going to do it. We weren't going to accept failure. But we were going to make sure that workers contributed to the doing of this organizing job. That has never been done in the history of this country.

We started out by telling workers, "We are trying to organize a union. We don't have money but if you work together it can be done." 95% of the workers we talked to were very kind. They smiled at us. 5% asked us questions and maybe 1% had the spirit and really wanted to do something.

We didn't have any money for gas and food. Many days we left the house with no money at all. Sometimes we had enough gas to get there but not enough to come back. We were determined to go to the workers. In fact at the very beginning of the organizing drive, we looked for the worst homes in the barrios where there were a lot of dogs and kids outside. And we went in and asked for a handout. Inevitably, they gave us food. Then they made a collection and gave us money for gas. They opened their homes and gave us their hearts. And today, they are the nucleus of the union's leadership. We forced ourselves to do this. We kept telling ourselves, "If these workers don't get organized, if we fail, it's our fault not theirs."

Then the question came up, how would we survive? My wife was working in the fields. We used to take the whole family out on Sundays and earn a few dollars to be able to survive the following week. We knew we couldn't continue that way. And we knew that the money had to come not from the outside but from the workers. And the only way to get the money was to have people pay dues.

So we began the drive to get workers to pay dues so we could live, so we could just survive. We were very frank, very open. At a farm worker's convention, we told them we had nothing to give them except the dream that it might happen. But we couldn't continue unless they were willing to make a sacrifice. At that meeting everyone wanted to pay \$5.00 or \$8.00 a month. We balked and said "No, no. Just \$3.50. That's all we need." There were about 280 people there, and 212 signed up and paid the \$3.50 in the first month.

Ninety days from that day, there were 12 people paying \$3.50. By that time we had a small community. There were 6 of us—four of us working full time. There were a lot of questions being asked. Some said, "They're very poor and can't afford it. That's why they're not paying." And a few of us said, "We're poor too. We're poorer than they are. And we can afford to sacrifice our families and our time. They have to pay."

I remember many incidents when I went to collect dues. Let me tell you just one. I'd been working 12 years with the mentality that people were very poor and shouldn't be forced to pay dues. Keep that in mind. Because that comes in handy in understanding what you go through when you're not really convinced that this is the way it should be.

I went to a worker's home in McFarland, 7 miles south of Delano. It was in the evening. It was raining and it was winter. And there was no work. I knew it. And everyone knew it. As I knocked on the door, the guy in the little two room house was going to the store with a \$5.00 bill to get groceries. And there I was. He owed \$7.00 because he was one full month behind plus the current one. So I'd come for \$7.00. But all he had was \$5.00. I had to make a decision. Should I take \$3.50 or shouldn't I? It was very difficult. Up to this time I had been saying, "They should be paying. And if they don't pay they'll never have a union." \$3.50 worth of food wasn't really going to change his life one way or the other that much. So I told him, "You have to pay at least \$3.50 right now or I'll have to put you out of the union." He gave me the \$5.00. We went to the store and changed the \$5.00 bill. I got the \$3.50 and gave him the \$1.50. I stayed with him. He bought \$1.50 worth of groceries and went home.

That experience hurt me but it also strengthened my determination. If this man was willing to give me \$3.50 on a dream, when we were really taking the money out of his own food, then why shouldn't we be able to have a union—however difficult. There had never been a successful union for farm workers. Every unionizing attempt had been defeated. People were killed. They ran into every obstacle you can think of. The whole agricultural industry along with government and business joined forces to break the unions and keep them from organizing. But with the kind of faith this farm worker had why couldn't we have a union? . . .

When you sacrifice, you force others to sacrifice. It's an extremely powerful weapon. When somebody stops eating for a week or ten days, people come and want to be part of that experience. Someone goes to jail and people want to help him. You don't buy that with money. That doesn't have any price in terms of dollars.

Those who are willing to sacrifice and be of service have very little difficulty with people. They know what

they are all about. People can't help but want to be near them—to help them and work with them. That's what love is all about. It starts with you and radiates out. You can't phoney it. It just doesn't go. When you work and sacrifice more than anyone else around you, you put others on the spot and they have to do at least a bit more than they've been doing. And that's what puts it together.

These observations tie in directly with the whole question of organizing. Why do we have leaders? We put some people out in the fields and all of a sudden they hit, they click. Everyone's happy with them and they begin to move mountains. With

other people there are problems and heartaches. They just don't go. When we look and see what's happening, almost invariably the differences are along the lines of willingness to sacrifice and work long hours.

We didn't start out knowing these things. We have discovered them. During those six years of strike and boycott it never seemed like that much of a struggle. We accepted it as a fact. Now that we're over that big hurdle, we look back and say, "My God. People really sacrificed. And the things that I asked them to do! Did I really ask them to do that much?" I asked them to do it to the maximum and they did it. . . .

INTRODUCTION TO DOCUMENTS 4-8

When Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, women's wages were less than three-fifths of those earned by men, and fewer than 10 percent of American professionals—doctors, lawyers, architects, college professors—were women. Increasingly in the late 1960s and into the 1970s, women organized and demonstrated for greater equity on the job. One result was the revival of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which was first proposed in 1923. The amendment's aim was to grant constitutional guarantees of full citizenship to women. Some opponents argued that women were incapable of equality; others feared that the ERA would abrogate women's protective workplace legislation. Finally, though, in 1972, with both Democrat and Republican backing, the proposed Twenty-Seventh Amendment to the Constitution passed both houses of Congress. But getting ratification from three-quarters of the states was another matter. Thirty-five states—70 percent of the total, just three shy of approval—were on board by 1975. But then the country slowly drifted toward conservatism, and the opposition became better organized. Claims that the amendment jeopardized wives' rights to be supported by husbands, that it opened the door to greater leniency on abortion, and that women might be sent into combat all took their toll. Time ran out on the ratification process before another state mustered the votes in favor of the amendment.

In Document 4, New York City Congresswoman Shirley Chisolm—one of the only women in Congress during the 1960s—argues for the ERA. Document 5 is the amendment itself. Document 6 is a letter from a citizen in California opposed to the amendment, sent to her representative, Don Edwards, an ERA supporter. Document 7 is an equally passionate letter to Representative Edwards from Liz Carpenter, press secretary to Lady Bird Johnson (President Johnson's widow), supporting the ERA. In Document 8, Gloria Steinem—one of the most visible and important leaders of the women's movement—lays out the types of discrimination women faced and its corrosive effects. Steinem also forcefully argued that the largest goal of the women's cause was creating not just gender equality but also a more humane society. Her testimony before Congress reflects the nationwide attention to the issues around feminism by the early 1970s.

4. EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN

HON. SHIRLEY CHISHOLM OF NEW YORK,
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, MAY 21, 1969

Mr. Speaker, when a young woman graduates from college and starts looking for a job, she is likely to have a frustrating and even demeaning experience ahead of her. If she walks into an office for an interview, the first question she will be asked is, "Do you type?"

There is a calculated system of prejudice that lies unspoken behind that question. Why is it acceptable for women to be secretaries, librarians, and teachers, but totally unacceptable for them to be managers, administrators, doctors, lawyers, and Members of Congress.

The unspoken assumption is that women are different. They do not have executive ability, orderly minds, stability, leadership skills, and they are too emotional.

It has been observed before, that society for a long time, discriminated against another minority, the blacks, on the same basis—that they were different and inferior. The happy little homemaker and the contented "old darkey" on the plantation were both produced by prejudice.

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 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.

Considering that there are about 3 1/2 million more women in the United States than men, this situation is outrageous.

It is true that part of the problem has been that women have not been aggressive in demanding their rights. This was also true of the black population for many years. They submitted to oppression and even cooperated with it. Women have done the same thing. But now there is an awareness of this situation particularly among the younger segment of the population.

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 reexamine 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. . . .³

5. THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

Section 1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

Section 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Section 3. This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.

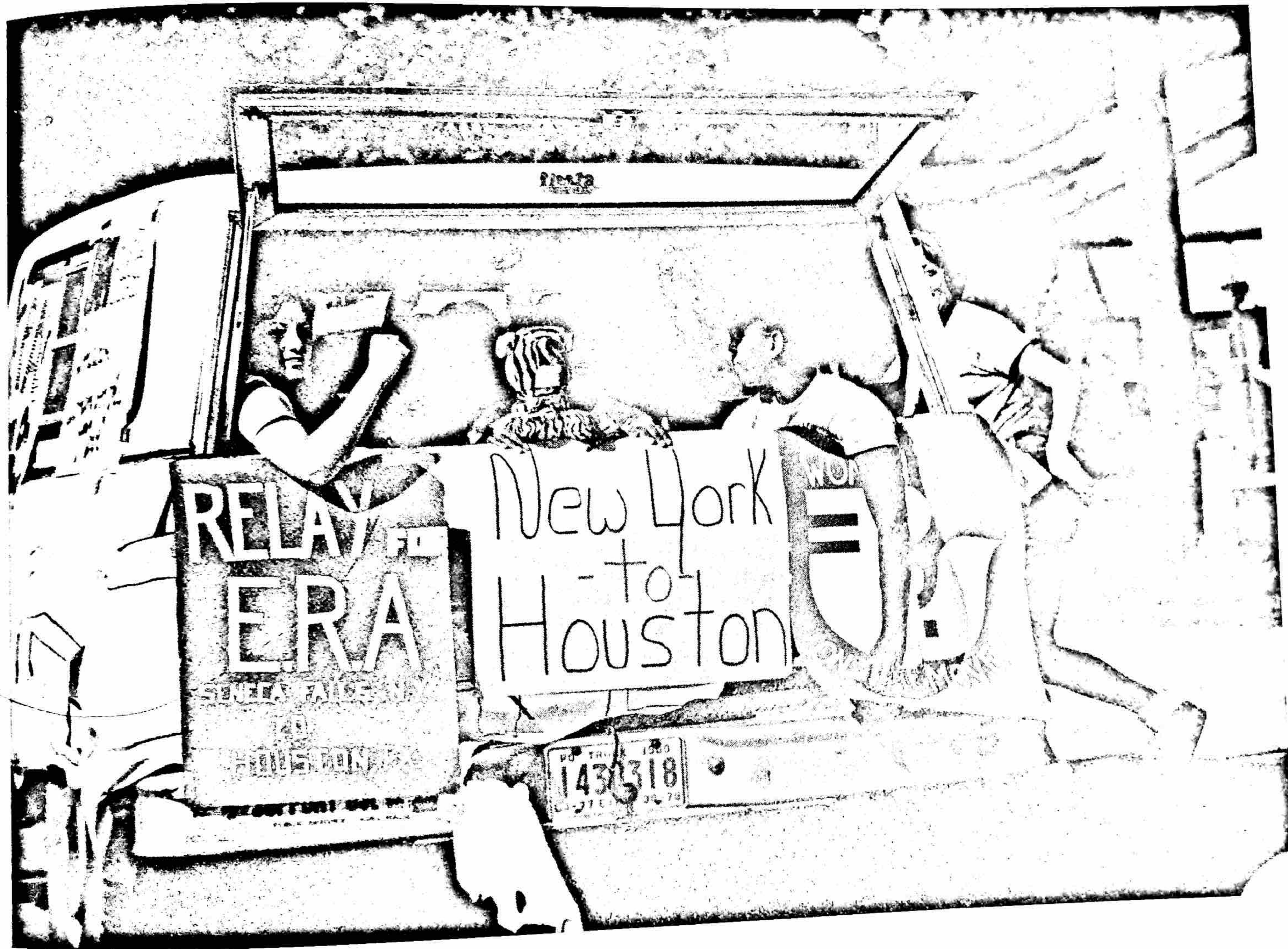


Image 15.2: Equal rights supporters on a "Relay for the ERA" (1977)
 These women were on their way from Seneca Falls, site of the first women's rights convention in 1848, to Houston for a national women's conference in 1977.

Source: Records of Temporary Committees, Commissions, and Boards, Record Group 220, National Archives, Identifier 7452296.

6. CONSTITUENT'S LETTER TO CONGRESSMAN DON EDWARDS

September 9, 1971

Dear Mr. Edwards,

I am writing to voice my opposition to the so-called "Equal Rights Amendment, H.J. Res. 208."

The mal-contents, lesbians and Communists of women's lib main purpose seems to be to downgrade the marvelous vocation of mother-homemaker, have the government play babysitter, and make women feel subservient who aren't competing with men in the business world.

Women, of course, should receive equal pay for equal work, but to make it seem that a woman will find her fulfillment in competing for some traditionally male position just isn't so. Having worked in the personnel field a number of years before taking on the more challenging role of wife-mother-homemaker,

I am aware that most men just don't have that exciting a job—many are boring, frustrating, and dead-end.

I feel that if the aims of women's lib are realized it will be a big step down for women. If more women worked for a few years BEFORE marriage, they might come to a greater appreciation of the responsibility involved in rearing a family. From the high rate of crime, venereal disease, drug abuse and suicide among the young, and lack of respect for God and country, it would seem women are failing terribly in their most important job.

Please don't help the women's lib movement, but work toward restoring a higher regard for family life, which would greatly improve our country.

Sincerely,
Mrs. T. Z.⁴

7. LETTER TO CONGRESSMAN DON EDWARDS

September 23, 1971

Dear Congressman,

As you know, through the years women have been stepped upon, wept upon and slept upon. Still we find something in men to love—and I will be glad to say this again to every one of you after the Equal Rights Amendment is passed *without* crippling amendments.

As you know, this issue has been with us since 1920, when women were given the vote. It would have passed by now except for being fogged up by the phony issue of "protective" legislation for women.

It is high time men recognized that some "protective" laws treat women like idiots, and others keep

women out of jobs where they'd lift no more than a three-year-old child does.

Don't be fooled by the bugaboos raised by the Amendment's opponents. Women will gladly trade protective laws for some equal pay and equal rights.

I hope very much that you will give this your real support. I have traveled 100,000 miles this past year, and one thing is clear—women are ready for it, the country is ready for it. Won't you be with it?

Sincerely,
Liz Carpenter⁵

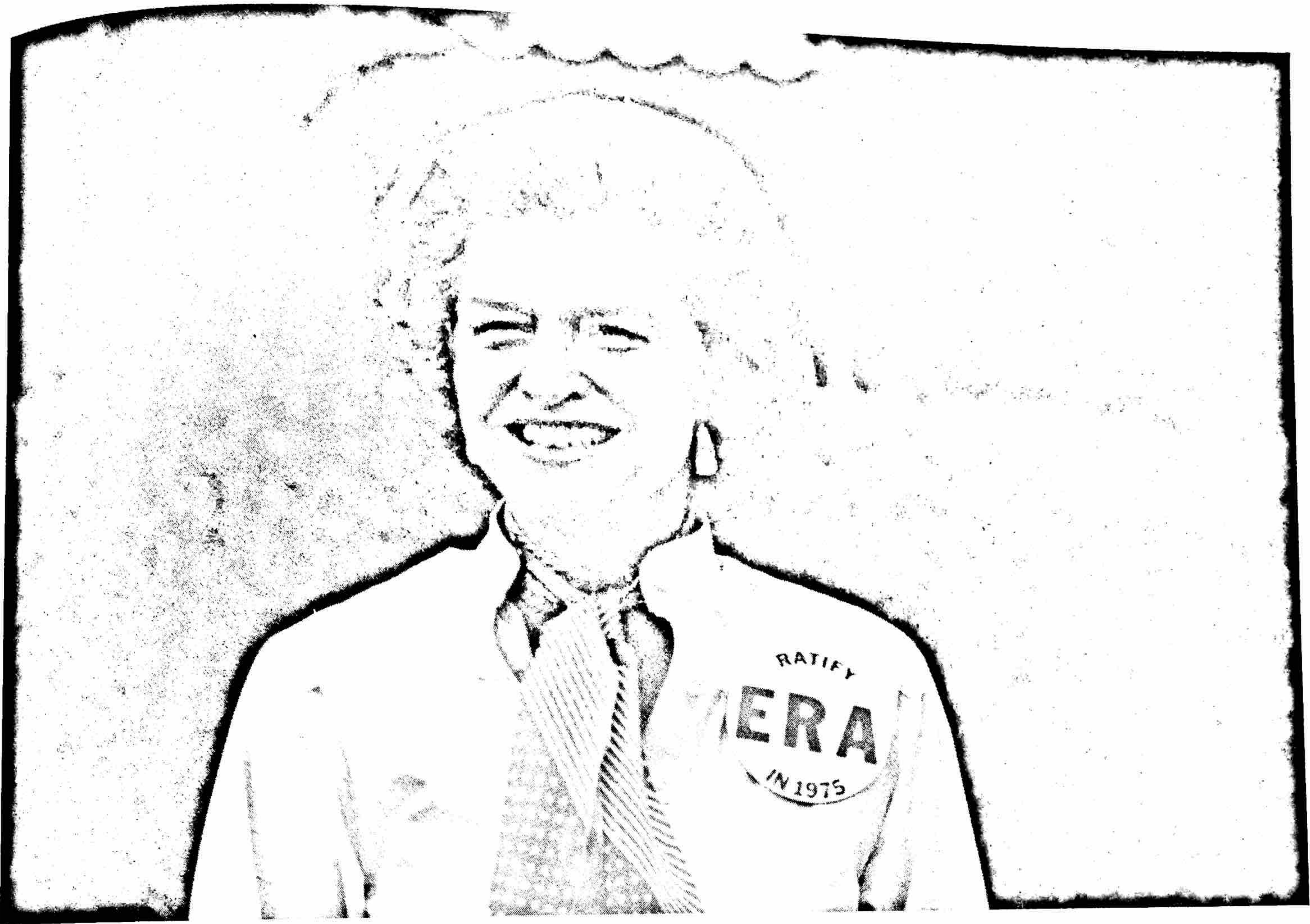


Image 15.3: Betty Ford, February 1975

First Lady Betty Ford was an outspoken feminist, a position which many worried would generate opposition among Republican voters. Surviving breast cancer as well as substance addiction, she became a hero to many for her candor and activism.

Source: Courtesy National Archives.

8. STATEMENT OF GLORIA STEINEM, WRITER AND CRITIC (MAY 1970)

My name is Gloria Steinem. I am a writer and editor, and I am currently a member of the policy council of the Democratic committee. And I work regularly with the lowest-paid workers in the country, the migrant workers, men, women, and children both in California and in my own State of New York. . . .

During 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 a woman. And all without the legal remedies available to blacks and other minorities. 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, or even allowed to think of themselves as first-class citizens and responsible human beings.

However, after 2 years of researching the status of American women, I have discovered that in reality, I am very, very lucky. Most women, both wage-earners and housewives, routinely suffer more humiliation and injustice than I do.

As a freelance writer, I don't work in the male-dominated hierarchy of an office. (Women, like blacks and other visibly different minorities, do better in individual professions such as the arts, sports, or domestic work; anything in which they don't have authority over white males.) I am not one of the millions of women who must support a family. Therefore, I haven't had to go on welfare because there are no day-care centers for my children while I work, and I haven't had to submit to the humiliating welfare inquiries about my private and sexual life, inquiries from which men are exempt. I haven't had to brave the sex bias of labor unions and employers, only to see my family subsist on a median salary 40 percent less than the male median salary.

I hope this committee will hear the personal, daily injustices suffered by many women—professionals and day laborers, women housebound by welfare as well as by suburbia. We have all been silent for too long. But we won't be silent anymore.

The truth is that all our problems stem from the same sex based myths. We may appear before you as white radicals or the middle-aged middle class or black soul sisters, but we are all sisters in fighting against these outdated myths. Like racial myths, they have been reflected in our laws. Let me list a few.

That women are biologically inferior to men. In fact, an equally good case can be made for the reverse. Women live longer than men, even when the men are not subject to business pressures. Women survived Nazi concentration camps better, keep cooler heads in emergencies currently studied by disaster-researchers, are protected against heart attacks by their female sex hormones, and are so much more durable at every stage of life that nature must conceive 20 to 50 percent more males in order to keep the balance going. . . .

However, I don't want to prove the superiority of one sex to another. That would only be repeating a male mistake. English scientists once definitively proved, after all, that the English were descended from the angels, while the Irish were descended from the apes; it was the rationale for England's domination of Ireland for more than a century. The point is that science is used to support current myth and economics almost as much as the church was. What we do know is that the difference between two races or two sexes is much smaller than the differences to be found within each group. Therefore, in spite of the slide show on female inferiorities that I understand was shown to you yesterday, the law makes much more sense when it treats individuals, not groups bundled together by some condition of birth. . . .

Another myth, that women are already treated equally in this society. I am sure there has been ample testimony to prove that equal pay for equal work, equal chance for advancement, and equal training or encouragement is obscenely scarce in every field, even those—like food and fashion industries—that are supposedly "feminine."

A deeper result of social and legal injustice, however, is what sociologists refer to as "Internalized Aggression." Victims of aggression absorb the myth of their own inferiority, and come to believe that their group is in fact second class. Even when they themselves realize they are not second class, they may still think their group is, thus the tendency to be the only Jew in the club, the only black woman on the block, the only woman in the office.

Women suffer this second class treatment from the moment they are born. They are expected to be, rather than achieve, to function biologically rather than learn. A brother, whatever his intellect, is more likely to get the family's encouragement and education money, while girls are often pressured to conceal ambition and intelligence, to "Uncle Tom."

I interviewed a New York public school teacher who told me about a black teenager's desire to be a doctor. With all the barriers in mind, she suggested kindly that he be a veterinarian instead. The same day, a high school teacher mentioned a girl who wanted to be a doctor. The teacher said, "How about a nurse?"

Teachers, parents, and the Supreme Court may exude a protective, well-meaning rationale, but limiting the individual's ambition is doing no one a favor. Certainly not this country; it needs all the talent it can get. . . .

Another myth, that children must have full-time mothers. American mothers spend more time with their homes and children than those of any other society we know about. In the past, joint families, servants, a prevalent system in which grandparents raised the children, or family field work in the agrarian systems—all these factors contributed more to child care than the labor-saving devices of which we are so proud.

The truth is that most American children seem to be suffering from too much mother, and too little father. Part of the program of Women's Liberation is a return of fathers to their children. If laws permit women equal work and pay opportunities, men will then be relieved of their role as sole breadwinner. Fewer ulcers, fewer hours of meaningless work, equal responsibility for his own children: these are a few of the reasons that Women's Liberation is Men's Liberation too. As for psychic health of the children, studies show that the quality of time spent by parents is more important than the quantity. The most damaged children were not those whose mothers worked, but those whose mothers preferred to work but stayed home out of the role-playing desire to be a "good mother."

Another myth, that the women's movement is not political, won't last, or is somehow not "serious."

When black people leave their 19th century roles, they are feared. When women dare to leave theirs, they are ridiculed. We understand this; we accept the burden of ridicule. It won't keep us quiet anymore.

Similarly, it shouldn't deceive male observers into thinking that this is somehow a joke. We are 51 percent of the population; we are essentially united on these issues across boundaries of class or race or age; and we may well end by changing this society more than the civil rights movement. That is an apt parallel. We, too, have our right wing and left wing, our separatists, gradualists, and Uncle Toms. But we are changing our own consciousness, and that of the country. Engels noted the relationship of the authoritarian, nuclear family to capitalism: the father as capitalist, the mother as means of production, and the children as labor. He said the family would change as the economic system did, and that seems to have happened, whether we want to admit it or not. Women's bodies will no longer be owned by the state for the production of workers and soldiers; birth control and abortion are facts of everyday life. The new family is an egalitarian family.

Gunnar Myrdal noted 30 years ago the parallel between women and Negroes in this country. Both suffered from such restricting social myths as: smaller brains, passive natures, inability to govern themselves (and certainly not white men), sex objects only, childlike natures, special skills, and the like. When evaluating a general statement about women, it might be valuable to substitute "black people" for "women"—just to test the prejudice at work. And it might be valuable to do this constitutionally as well. Neither group is going to be content as a cheap labor pool anymore. And neither is going to be content without full constitutional rights.⁶

INTRODUCTION TO DOCUMENT 9, 10, AND 11

What today is called the environmental movement has a long history. Theodore Roosevelt was associated in image and in fact with the American West, and he is thought of as the father of the National Park System. The early environmental movement stressed "conservation," managing natural resources efficiently. Over the years, a range of writers, from Henry David Thoreau to John Muir and from Aldo Leopold to Edward Abbey sought a less calculating vision of the environment. Wilderness was not a resource to be mined but humankind's foundation in the natural world.

One book in particular, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, brought environmental issues to the front of Americans' awareness. For years Carson had been writing popular books about the new science of ecology—about the relationships and interdependencies of species with each other. *Silent Spring*, however, did not so much describe the “web of life,” as raise in alarming detail the possibility that humankind was slowly poisoning the world. Carson focused especially on the chemical DDT, an unusually effective insecticide used during the postwar era that helped farmers control pests. She revealed that a growing body of research demonstrated the long-term, cumulative effects of such sprays. Simply put, DDT did not break down, did not just float away, it accumulated and made its way up the food chain. *Silent Spring* was the beginning of environmental consciousness for many Americans because it demonstrated so powerfully that the benefits of progress came at an enormous cost—in the case of DDT, poisoning the earth and water. Within a few years, grassroots pressure prompted the federal government under President Nixon to establish the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970. Soon after, Congress passed the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts. States and local communities created their own environmental agencies, while militant activist groups like Green Peace and Earth First pressed hard for change. In 1972, the federal government banned the use of DDT.

Citizen participation took many forms, most spectacularly the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970. The idea of a day devoted to celebrating nature and pondering ecological issues had been around for a while, but an environmentally minded senator, democrat Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin, took a leading role in garnering political support. Earth “Day” was a series of mass meetings in hundreds of cities and on college campuses across the country. These were a bit reminiscent of the demonstrations against the Vietnam War, with speeches, poetry readings, and music. Above all, the idea was to bring people out, and in fact, roughly 20 million Americans attended the first Earth Day celebrations, providing striking footage on the evening news. Document 9 is text from a January 1970 advertisement for Earth Day, one of many in an enormous if uncoordinated campaign to raise awareness about an issue that few Americans thought about in any serious or sustained way. Messages like this across the country—issued by grassroots organizations through newsletters as well as national media—contributed to the enormous turnout on Earth Day and a lasting shift in environmental awareness. Document 10—also from January 1970—is excerpted from Senator Nelson's speech introducing an ambitious bill to regulate various threats to the environment. Ask yourself how Nelson frames the urgency of the situation, and what he sees as the federal government's role.

While Nelson was developing his bill, students at the University of Michigan were simultaneously organizing their own movement to fight pollution and raise awareness about environmental degradation. Document 11 is an account of the first teach-in at Michigan, just a few weeks before the national Earth Day. It is taken from *Environmental Action*, a newsletter created by the activists. How did they articulate their goals, and what were their strategies to achieve them and enlarge the movement? What differences do you see between Nelson and the students at Michigan? Were they reinforcing Nelson's efforts or advocating something different? What is the relationship of environmentalism to capitalism?

9. EARTH DAY ADVERTISEMENT (JANUARY 1970)

A disease has infected our country. It has brought smog to Yosemite, dumped garbage in the Hudson, sprayed DDT in our food, and left our cities in decay. Its carrier is man.

The weak are already dying. Trees by the Pacific. Fish in our streams and lakes. Birds and crops and sheep. And people.

On April 22 we start to reclaim the environment we have wrecked.

April 22 is the Environmental Teach-In, a day of environmental action.

Hundreds of communities and campuses across the country are already committed.

It is a phenomenon that grows as you read this.

Earth Day is a commitment to make life better, not just bigger and faster. To provide real rather than rhetorical solutions.

It is a day to re-examine the ethic of individual progress at mankind's expense.

It is a day to challenge the corporate and governmental leaders who promise change, but who short change the necessary programs.

It is a day for looking beyond tomorrow. April 22 seeks a future worth living.

April 22 seeks a future.⁷

10. SENATOR GAYLORD NELSON INTRODUCES AN ENVIRONMENTAL AGENDA FOR THE 1970S (JANUARY 19, 1970)

... The mindless pursuit of quantity is destroying—not enhancing—the opportunity to achieve quality in our lives. In the words of the American balladeer, Pete Seeger, we have found ourselves “standing knee deep in garbage, throwing rockets at the moon.”

Cumulatively, “progress—American style” adds up each year to 200 million tons of smoke and fumes, 7 million junked cars, 20 million tons of paper, 48 billion cans, and 28 billion bottles.

It also means bulldozers gnawing away at the landscape to make room for more unplanned expansion, more leisure time but less open space in which

to spend it, and so much reckless progress that we face even now a hostile environment.

As one measure of the rate of consumption that demands our resources and creates our vast wastes, it has been estimated that all the American children born in just one year will use up 200 million pounds of steel, 9.1 billion gallons of gasoline, and 25 billion pounds of beef during their lifetimes.

To provide the electricity for our air conditioners, a Kentucky hillside is strip-mined. To provide the gasoline for our automobiles, the ocean floor is drilled for oil. To provide the sites for our second homes, the shore of a pristine lake is subdivided.

... It is the laboring man, living in the shadows of the spewing smokestacks of industry, who feels the bite of the "disposable society." Or the commuter inching in spurts along an expressway. Or the housewife paying too much for products that begin to fall apart too soon. Or the student watching the university building program destroy a community. Or the black man living alongside the noisy, polluted truck routes through the central city ghetto.

... Man is on the way to defining the terms of his own extinction. . . .

America is one again faced with a crisis that has to do with material things—but it is an entirely different sort of dilemma. In effect, America has bought environmental disaster on a national installment plan: Buy affluence now and let future generations pay the price. Trading away the future is a high price to pay for an electric swizzle stick—or a car with greater horsepower.

... What has been missing is the unity of purpose, forged out of a threat to our national health or security or prestige, that we so often seem to have found only during world war.

But there is now, I think, a great awakening underway. We have begun to recognize that our security is again threatened—not from the outside, but from the inside—not by our enemies, but by ourselves. . . .

A freshman college student attitude poll, conducted last fall by the American Council on Education, found that 89.9 percent of all male freshmen believed the Federal Government should be more involved in the control of pollution. And a Gallup poll published in late December found that the control of air and water pollution is fast becoming a new student cause, with students placing this issue sixth on a list of areas where they felt changes must be made. . . .

In short, I believe that today we are at a watershed in the history of the struggle in this country to save the quality of our environment. . . .

A victory will take decades and tens of billions of dollars. Just to control pollution, it will take \$275 billion by the year 2000. Although that sounds like a lot of money, it will be spent over the next 30 years and is equivalent to the Defense expenditure for the next 4 years.

More than money, restoring our environment and establishing quality on a par with quantity as a goal of American life will require a reshaping of our values, sweeping changes in the performance and goals of our institutions, national standards of quality for the goods we produce, a humanizing and redirection of our technology, and greatly increased attention to the problems of our expanding population. . . .

American acceptance of the ecological ethic will involve nothing less than achieving a transition from the consumer society to a society of "new citizenship"—a society that concerns itself as much with the well-being of present and future generations as it does with bigness and abundance. . . .

An Environmental Agenda for the 1970's. . . .

The first item I suggest for this agenda will be the introduction of an amendment to the U.S. Constitution which will recognize and protect the inalienable right of every person to a decent environment.

As the second item for an agenda, I propose immediate action to rid America in the 1970's of the massive pollution from five of the most heavily used products of our affluent age. For each of these products, I am convinced that it can be done—with firm Federal action to assure it.

The five areas are: Internal combustion engines, hard pesticides, detergent pollution, aircraft pollution, and nonreturnable containers. . . .

The third item on an agenda . . . should be protecting the right of every citizen to plan his family. The funds and coordination must be made available for conducting necessary research into population problems and providing family planning services.

The fourth item . . . must [include] new channels and forums for public participation, creation of a citizen environmental advocate agency, and creation of an environmental overview committee in Congress. . . .

A national policy on land use must be delineated and implemented that will halt the chaotic, unplanned combination of urban sprawl, industrial expansion, and air, water, land, and visual pollution that is seriously threatening the quality of life of major regions of the Nation.⁸

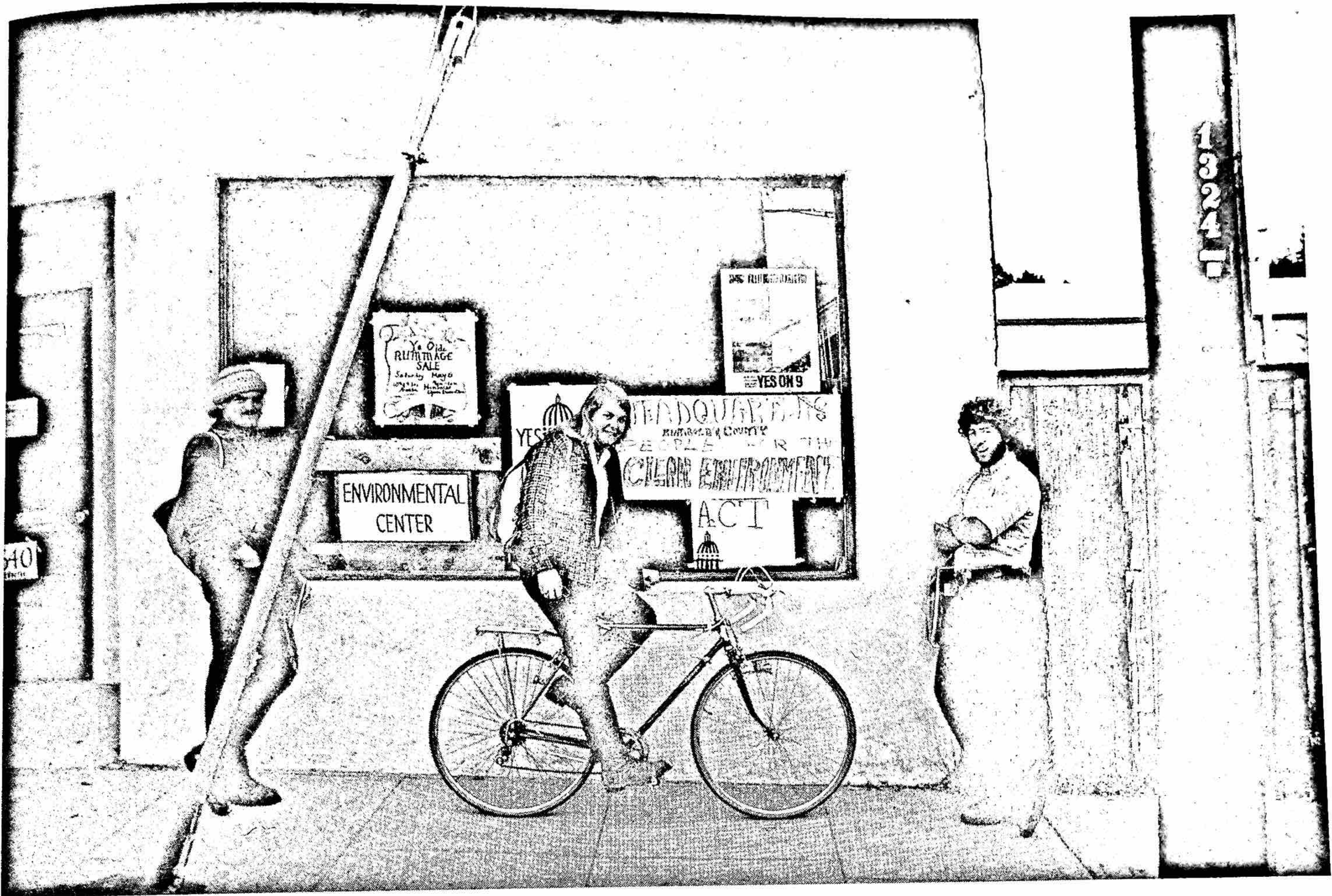


Image 15.4: Cyclist in front of local environmental center, Humboldt County, California, May 1972

The environmental movement involved not just an ethic of activism, but an interest in reconfiguring the very structure of modern life around grassroots networking and attention to local conditions.

Source: Records of the Environmental Protection Agency, Record Group 412, National Archives, Identifier 543032.

11. "MICHIGAN TEACH-IN FACES SOCIETAL ISSUES" (MARCH 1970)

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

In a confrontation with the underlying social, political, and economic issues involved in the environmental movement, the University of Michigan student group ENACT (Environmental Action for Survival) put on one of the largest programs of talk, action and concern yet for their teach-in, March 11-14.

Every major and many minor events were packed with students and citizens from the community of Ann Arbor. ENACT chose the March dates to avoid conflict with the university final exams scheduled the week of April 22.

Fifteen thousand participants in Wednesday's kick off rally heard views ranging from Michigan

Governor Milliken's call for a "clean earth corps" for work on action projects in the state to ecologist Barry Commoner's declaration that "we cannot defer for long a confrontation with the real debt that we owe to nature—the total reorganization of our system of productivity to make it compatible with the ecosystem."

. . . A representative of Black Action Movement on Campus . . . warned against using the environment issue to coopt others from the concerns of the blacks and poor in America.

High school programs abounded during the four-day teach-in with workshops on abortion and population issues, circulation of petitions, and other activities. Women's Liberation conducted some workshops, and disrupted others explaining that "domination of nature by man is the root cause of the ecological crisis" and that "the liberation of woman from her submissive and inferior position in society is essential in changing the relationships of man to his environment."

Dow Chemical President Ted Doan, panelist in a discussion of the root causes of the environmental crisis, faced an evening of heckling and direct questioning about Dow's production of napalm, herbicides used in Vietnam and pesticides used in the United States. Walter Reuther, president of UAW, admitted in the same panel that the world might need fewer automobiles. . . .

POSTSCRIPT

The movements begun in the 1960s and 1970s had far-reaching consequences and lasting results. But as we will see in the next chapter, by 1980 American politics took a decided turn to the right. Beginning with the presidency of Ronald Reagan, conservative ideas and policies clearly had the upper hand. Even in the 1990s, the Clinton administration was most notable for its failure to pass major new legislation, such as a comprehensive health-care bill, and for cutting back on welfare programs like Aid to Families with Dependent Children. It was not until the election of 2008 that a presidential administration seemed to evoke the Great Society of Lyndon Johnson.

With a white mother from Kansas and a black father from Kenya, Barack Obama embodied the diversity championed by the American left. He was raised in the most polyglot American state, Hawaii. He worked on Chicago's south side as an organizer before attending Harvard Law School, where he was elected editor of the *Law Review*. Obama returned to the South Side and married the great granddaughter of former slaves, Michelle Robinson, a successful Princeton-educated attorney from a black working-class family. His brief career in the U.S. Senate clearly

In his first year as president, Obama's support for a major expansion of federal jobs programs, comprehensive health-care reform, and regulation of the financial industry signaled a

Ralph Nader, everybody's lawyer, delivered Saturday afternoon a condemnation of corporate violence, crime, and manipulation of American symbols and bodies. Commenting on the inequities of corporate life, Nader declared that "if an individual cannot relieve himself in the Detroit River, I don't see any reason corporations can be allowed to."

After all the talk, demonstrations by street people, Huron River pollution tours, and a Congressional hearing held in Ann Arbor by the House Subcommittee on Natural Resources and the Environment, the students discussed post-teach-in activities. Co-chairman Doug Scott of ENACT described a strongly-worded letter from the organizing student group to university president Robin Fleming calling for experiments in entirely new forms of life and societal structure.

ENACT demanded specifically that the University of Michigan hold open hearings in the university community on the voting of its 27,538 shares of General Motors stock for the next stockholders meeting May 22 in Detroit. They asked for a student-faculty committee to represent the university at the meeting.

The students also demanded that the university write GM "condemning its arrogant refusal" to submit the proposed corporate policy changes suggested by the Project for Corporate Responsibility and Ralph Nader for stockholders' consideration before the meeting.⁹

more progressive administration than in recent decades. Certainly, Obama's Inaugural address on January 20, 2009, coming as it did after years of the unpopular Iraq War and at the beginning of a major recession suggested the expansive vision of earlier times:

... Everywhere we look, there is work to be done. The state of the economy calls for action, bold and swift, and we will act—not only to create new jobs, but to lay a new foundation for growth. We will build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together. We will restore science to its rightful place, and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality and lower its cost. We will harness the sun and the winds and soil to fuel our cars and run our factories. And we will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age. . . .

Now there are some who question the scale of our ambitions, who suggest that our system cannot tolerate too many big plans. Their memories are short. For they have forgotten what this country has already done, what free men and women can achieve when imagination is joined to common purpose, and necessity to courage. . . .

Nor is the question before us whether the market is a force for good or ill. Its power to generate wealth and expand freedom is unmatched, but this [economic] crisis has reminded us that without a watchful eye, the market can spin out of control—that a nation cannot prosper long when it favors only the prosperous. The success of our economy has always depended not just on the size of our Gross Domestic Product, but on the reach of our prosperity, on the ability to extend opportunity to every willing heart—not out of charity, but because it is the surest route to our common good. . . .

... We know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus, and non-believers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this earth; and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass, that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve, that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself, and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace. . . .¹⁰

Donald Trump followed Obama to the Presidency in 2017. Trump's campaign against Democrat Hillary Clinton and the first weeks of his administration indicate yet another turn to the right, including major budget cuts for social programs, an emphasis on national security, and highly restrictive new immigration rules. Equally important, Trump won his election with the slogan, "America First," rejecting Obama's embrace of globalization and cosmopolitanism.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta think unionizing farm workers was necessary? Might the farmworkers have been sympathetic to the environmental movement, and vice versa?
2. Do you think Cesar Chavez's ideas about personal sacrifice applies to all organizing? What did Huerta and Chavez seek from the federal government?
3. What did Gloria Steinem mean by saying that women's liberation would free men too? Was she simply making a rhetorical point, or was this statement part of her larger vision of the future?
4. Given the relative simplicity of the Equal Rights Amendment, why do you think it sparked opposition strong enough to effectively defeat the measure? Do the arguments of women like Liz Carpenter and Gloria Steinem seem relevant today?

5. Why, according to Senator Nelson and the early Earth Day activists, was there a need for Earth Day? Who were their targets, and who might have been their natural and political allies?
6. Are the issues covered here—workers' rights, women's rights, and the protection of the environment—part of a larger ideology, or is there little overlap or even antagonism between them? Do you see any relevant connection between the activists of this era and the Progressives of the early twentieth century?

ADDITIONAL READING

The literature on the 1960s and 1970s is enormous, but some good titles include Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (1987); Maurice Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New* (1987); G. Calvin Mackenzie and Robert Weisbrot, *The Liberal Hour: Washington and the Politics of Change in the 1960s* (2009); and Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (2002). Other works include James Miller, *"Democracy Is in the Streets": From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (1987), and David Farber, *Chicago '68* (1987). On the women's movement, a now-classic work is Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (1979). Also see Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967–1975* (1989). On the farm workers' movement, see Marshall Ganz, *Why David Wins* (2009); Frederick John Dalton, *The Moral Vision of Cesar Chavez* (2003); and Randy Shaw, *Beyond the Fields* (2008). On the environmental movement, see Adam Rome, *The Genius of Earth Day: How a 1970 Teach-In Unexpectedly Made the First Green Generation* (2014); Benjamin Kline, *First Along the River* (2007); Thomas Jandt, *Greening the Red White and Blue* (2014); and Edward Abbey's novel, *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1976). Other important works on the era include Alexander Bloom, ed., *Longtime Gone: Sixties America Then and Now* (2001); James J. Farrell, *The Spirit of the Sixties* (1997); Martin Duberman, *Stonewall* (1993); William Cronon, *Uncommon Ground* (1995); Beth Bailey and David Farber, *America in the Seventies* (2004). For films, see *Berkeley in the 60's* (1990), *The Fight in the Fields* (1997), and *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006).

ENDNOTES

1. U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor, *Hearings on Agricultural Labor Legislation*, 91st Congress, 1st Session, April 16, 1969.
2. Hearings on Migrant and Seasonal Worker Powerlessness, July 15, 1969 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1970).
3. House *Congressional Record*, Extensions of Remarks, E4165-6, May 21, 1969.
4. Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, Record Group 233, National Archives, Identifier 24824228.
5. Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, Record Group 233, National Archives, Identifier 24224217.
6. Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, May 5, 6, and 7, 1970. 91st Congress, 2nd Session.
7. Gaylord Nelson Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society.
8. Senate *Congressional Record*, 116th Congress, pp. 81–85.
9. *Environmental Action*, v.1 n.6 (March 26, 1970), p. 2. Courtesy of the Gaylord Nelson Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society.
10. President Barack Obama, Inaugural Address, January 21, 2009.