
Beginning of the Modern Feminist Movement

In 1960, American women lived in almost every respect from family life to the workplace. A woman was expected to follow one path: to marry in her early 20's, start a family fast, and devote her life to house making. The Feminist movement started when women were expected to raise a family and stay home. Women wanted things to be equal. For example, they wanted equal pay with their male workers. They wanted less discrimination as many business owners did not want to hire women. Women wanted the ability to choose what they did to their bodies. They wanted it to be normal for women to get a higher education. Women also fought against sexual harassment. Women should be able to earn more money. They also wanted the ability to determine their own sexuality, role in relationships, birth control, and abortion, and their clothing and body image.

One reason the feminist movement occurred was because of the "Head and Master Laws" which stated: Women were legally objected to serving their husbands and were limited to only three jobs. They had no legal right to any of their husband's earnings or property aside from a limited right to proper support. Husbands, however, would control their wife's property and earnings. If the marriage was broken, divorce was difficult to obtain, as "no-fault" divorce was not an option, forcing women to prove wrongdoing on the part of their husbands to get divorced.

During the 1960s and the '70s feminism was a prominent issue that affected women across the country. In 1966, The National Organization for Women (N.O.W) was formed to attempt to get anti-discriminatory laws passed. It was founded by Betty Friedman, Coretta Scott King, and Pauli Murray. Their goal was to gain support for it to be equal for men and women in the workforce. They worked to change the institutional structures of society so that women could achieve economic, political, and social equality. Critically important changes took place during this period. Before this organization, Congress shot down many anti-discriminatory laws.

Betty Friedman was an American writer, Activist, and Feminist. She wrote the "Feminine Mystique" in 1963. Betty helped establish the National Women's Political Caucus and the Women's Strike for Equality in 1970. Coretta Scott King (Martin Luther Jrs' wife) was an American author, activist, and civil rights leader. She was an active advocate for African American equality alongside an advocate for the equality of women as well. Pauli Murray was the first African American Women Episcopal Priest, American Civil Rights Activists, Women's Rights Activist, Lawyer, and Author.

Gloria Steinem was an American Feminist, Journalist, and Social-Political Activist. She was nationally recognized as a leader and spokesman for American Feminist. Gloria was nicknamed

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" The Mother of Feminism". She attracted attention to feminism through their writings and images. These images and writings emphasized women that went against stereotypes. Gloria was the co-founder of the Ms. Magazine, National Women's Political Caucus, and the Women's Management Council. Gloria also had sinister links to the FBI and CIA.

In 1963 The Equal Pay Act required that men and women be paid the same amount of money for the same work performed. Civil Rights Act of 1964 brought forth the issue of " protected categories," and its Title VII helped to create the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, making it illegal to deny employment on the basis of race, religion, country of origin, color or sex. Title IX of the Higher Education Act provided the impetus and federal funding for women's sports programs in schools, creating an unprecedented shift in the educational and social experiences of women and girls. In 1965, Griswold v. Connecticut struck down remaining anti-birth control laws, and importantly, established a " right to privacy" for all U.S. citizens. The 1973 Roe v. Wade Supreme Court case declared a woman's decision to have an abortion during the first trimester a fundamental right of liberty as defined by the due process clause of the 14th Amendment, thus declaring as unconstitutional all existing federal and state bans on abortion. In August, The Women's Strike for Equality took place. It was a wave of protests, marches, and sit-ins. However, it soon gave way to a backlash exemplified by the failure of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) which was passed by Congress in 1972 but failed to get enough states for ratification. It was defeated in 1982 by a coalition of religious and conservative women's groups that spearheaded the beginning of another backlash against feminism.

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