

# THE WORLD SPLIT OPEN



**How the Modern  
Women's Movement  
Changed America**

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**RUTH ROSEN**

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PUBLISHED BY TANTOR eBOOKS

## Praise for Ruth Rosen and *The World Split Open*

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“Thoroughly absorbing”

—*Chicago Tribune*

“Ruth Rosen has produced an indispensable history of the contemporary women’s movement. Her book should be required (and enthralling) reading for women and men who want to understand recent developments shaping the longest revolution in American history.”

—Sandra M. Gilbert, co-author of *The Madwoman in the Attic*

“Superb . . . tough-minded, fair, finely written and exhaustively documented, *The World Split Open* offers stunning amounts of information that can enlighten even those who’ve been immersed in the women’s movement for the last thirty years and more. . . . *The World Split Open* is a model of its kind—at once intensely personal and intellectually solid.”

—*The Dallas Morning News*

“Comprehensively researched and exquisitely written, *The World Split Open* is destined to become a classic for teachers and students of U.S. history.”

—Kathryn Kish Sklar, Distinguished Professor of History, SUNY Binghamton

“As an activist herself, Rosen is particularly adept at capturing the passion that motivated many participants in the movement . . . a noted feminist academic, in *The World Split Open* she creates a narrative account that should appeal to non-academic readers as well.”

—*Bookpage*

“In this brilliant history of recent decades in the feminist movement, Rosen gives us views both panoramic and close up, authoritative and lively. She reviews our triumphs, our mistakes, and the vision we need for the years ahead. Must reading for those who’ve been in the thick of it, those who’ve gritted their teeth through it, and those who’ve done neither.”

—Arlie Russell Hochschild, author of *The Second Shift* and *The Time Bind*

“A lively, comprehensive chronicle of the women’s movement . . . Rosen vividly describes the key events of the women’s movement [and] provides fascinating accounts of the infighting that plagued progressive left-wing groups . . . a fascinating, beautifully readable account of a movement that in many ways profoundly changed America.”

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

“We can never go back to the way things were, but if we want to go forward the feminist vision so powerfully laid out in this book must be our guide.”

—Robin D. G. Kelley, author of *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*

“This lively history offers much to learn and ponder.”

—*The Boston Sunday Globe*

“Ruth Rosen has given us a study not of abstractions but of real people brought compellingly to life on the pages of her probing, illuminating, engagingly-written history of the modern women’s movement.”

its culture, and its legacy.”

—Lawrence W. Levine, author of *The Opening of the American Mind*

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“Finally we have a history worthy of the broadest, most successful movement in post-war America and the world. Ruth Rosen explains the rise and spread of feminism in a narrative that is original, comprehensive, critical, witty, and wise. Like the women’s movement itself, this splendid book will last.”

—Michael Kazin, co-author of *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*, and Professor of History, Georgetown University

Ruth Rosen, a professor emerita at the University of California, Davis, teaches history and public policy at U.C. Berkeley. She is the editor of the highly acclaimed *Maimie Papers*, and author of the classic *Prostitution in America*. An award-winning journalist, she is a former columnist for the *Los Angeles Times* and editorial writer and columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. A cofounder and senior fellow of the Longview Institute, she writes for a wide variety of magazines and journals, including [TomDispatch.com](http://TomDispatch.com), *The History News Network*, [TomPaine.com](http://TomPaine.com), *The American Prospect*, *Dissent*, *The Nation*, [AlterNet.org](http://AlterNet.org), and is a regular contributor to the online political Web site *Talking Points Memo Café*.

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HOW THE MODERN WOMEN'S  
MOVEMENT CHANGED AMERICA



Ruth Rosen

THE WORLD SPLIT OPEN

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IN HONOR OF WOMEN—

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PAST,

PRESENT, AND

FUTURE

AND

FOR WENDEL

*If anything remains more or less unchanged,  
it will be the role of women.*

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—David Riesman, sociologist, Harvard University

*Time*

July 21, 1967

*If we do not know our own history,  
we are doomed to live it as though  
it were our private fate.*

—Hannah Arendt, political theorist



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# PREFACE: THE LONGEST REVOLUTION

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Bursts of artillery fire, mass strikes, massacred protesters, bomb explosions—these are our images of revolution. But some revolutions are harder to recognize: no cataclysms mark their beginnings and ends, no casualties are left lying in pools of blood. Though people may suffer greatly, their pain is hidden from public view. Such was the case with the American women’s movement. Activists did not hurl tear gas canisters at the police, burn down buildings, or fight in the street. Nor did they overthrow the government or achieve economic dominance or political hegemony. But they did subvert authority and transform society in dramatic and irrevocable ways; so much so that young women who come of age in the twenty-first century would not even recognize the America that existed before the feminist revolution came about.

Before the revolution, during the 1950s, the president of Harvard University saw no reason to increase the number of female undergraduates because the university’s mission was to “train leaders of men” and Harvard’s Lamont Library was off-limits to women for fear they would distract male students. Newspaper ads separated jobs by sex; employers paid women less than men for the same work. Banks often refused to serve women; banks routinely denied women credit or loans. Some states even excluded women from jury duty. Radio producers considered women’s voices too abrasive to be on the air; television executives believed they didn’t have enough credibility to anchor the news; no woman ran big corporations or universities, worked as firefighters or police officers, sat on the Supreme Court, installed electric equipment, climbed telephone poles, or owned construction companies. As hurricanes bore female names, thanks to the widely held view that women brought chaos and destruction to society. As late as 1970, Dr. Edgar Berman, a well-known physician, proclaimed on television that women were too tortured by hormonal disturbances to assume the presidency of the nation. Few people knew more than a few women professors, doctors, or lawyers. Everyone addressed a woman as either Miss or Mrs., depending on her marital status, and if a woman wanted an abortion, legal nowhere in America, she risked her life, searching among quacks in back alleys for a competent and compassionate doctor. The public believed that rape victims had probably “asked for it,” most women felt too ashamed to report it, and no language existed to make sense of marital rape, date rape, domestic violence, or sexual harassment. Just two words summed up the hidden injuries women suffered in silence: “That’s life.”

Long before the women’s movement began, American women’s participation in both the labor force and the sexual revolution had dramatically altered their lives. But it took a women’s movement to address the many ways women felt exploited, to lend legitimacy to their growing sense of injustice, and to name and reinterpret customs and practices that had long been accepted, but for which there was no language.

One day in the fall of 1967, soon after I arrived at the University of California, Berkeley to begin graduate studies, I noticed a small card tacked to a bulletin board in the student union: “Women

Liberation Group forming—all are welcome.” At the time, I was also working as a journalist and photographer in the antiwar movement and was quite certain that I didn’t need any more emancipation, thank you very much. “But it could be a great story,” I thought. On the appointed day, I entered a small room in the student union and announced I wanted to write a story about the group. They agreed, but insisted that I participate. Two hours later, my world began to turn upside down. As with so many in my generation, feminism cast a new, sometimes thrilling, sometimes unnerving light on my own personal and intellectual past. I lived on the edge, experienced the trauma of a kind of rebirth, and emerged with a sensibility and intellectual commitment that has shaped the rest of my adult life.

Fast-forward to the waning weeks of the year 1979, when media pundits declared—with a collective sigh of relief—that the women’s movement was dead, and that the entire decade had been nothing but a political and cultural black hole of self-absorption, populated by hedonists and narcissists who spent their time in cults and hot tubs. Already the media had dubbed the people who came of age during the 1960s and 1970s “the Me Generation.” To put it mildly, I was flabbergasted. I wondered if they and I had lived through the same years. Had they really missed the not-so-quiet revolution in women’s—and therefore men’s—lives? True, the media had eventually tuned out, demonstrations had gradually diminished, but the women’s movement had ignited a cultural war that raged for decades. As a historian, I was appalled that pundits had already packaged the decade, without recognizing the birth of a revolution that would irreversibly transform American culture and society.

One day, in the early 1980s, I was standing at the front of a cavernous hall that passes for a classroom at the Davis campus of the University of California. I gazed out over hundreds of my students, many of whom were no older than I’d been in 1967. I was just about to give a lecture on the roots and impact of the contemporary women’s movement. On an impulse, I began by asking the class what they knew of the world of women before the movement had taken off, the era of their parents. And what issues, I also asked, had the women’s movement redefined?

Eyes glazed over. Their main political memories focused on cars waiting in long lines for gas, and helicopters fetching a disgraced president into retirement or lifting Americans out of Saigon. What was the world I was talking about? What issues? I stood there listening to the silence and then spontaneously began to sketch out that world. I began to cover the blackboard with short catchphrases that reflected some of the ordinary but invariably painful female experiences that the women’s movement had excavated and exposed to public view. Then, noting their growing amazement, I paused, took a deep breath, and stared at my own sprawling list.

Every life, I suppose, is allowed at least one epiphany. I could have been depressed by how little they knew. Instead, I felt a strange sense of elation. It wasn’t just the enormity of all that women had challenged that still seemed breathtaking. What stunned me was that the changes in women’s lives had been so deep, so wide-ranging, so transformative. I realized that the women’s movement could not be erased, that it had brought about changes that these young people now took for granted.

That realization led, through many unexpected twists and turns, to years of archival research, interviewing, and analysis for a book on the origins and impact of the contemporary women’s movement. I wanted to evoke the remarkable passion and accomplishments of that powerful moment in our history—and perhaps the future history of women worldwide—without romanticizing it, ignoring the many mistakes, squandered opportunities, and failures of imagination that are part of every life and every movement.

Research for this book proved to be a pleasure, as well as an exercise in frustration. Sometimes, I sat at clean desks with a pencil in tidy, well-organized archives. Often, I sat on dusty floors, in attics

or in library stacks, examining cartons filled with uncatalogued documents, yellowed letters, and undated flyers. I interviewed people who lived in penthouses with wrap-around terraces, in suburban homes with decks and pools, and in sixth-floor walk-up apartments, where bathtubs sat in the middle of kitchens, surrounded by armies of roaches.

This is not a book just about an isolated section of society. Dissident movements provide a microcosmic view of the dominant culture's values, assumptions, and social structure. American political culture shaped contemporary feminism, and the women's movement, in its turn, helped transform that political culture. Many readers, I suspect, probably know that American feminism was shaped by the political culture of the fifties and sixties. But it also developed out of much longer and deeper political traditions—such as the disestablishment of religion as a state force and a profound distrust of centralized government; the celebration of individual enterprise and initiative; class politics expressed mostly through race and gender; a long evangelical tradition that has existed outside political parties and government; and a deep and abiding belief that in America, one can always reinvent oneself.

Since this book covers the entire second half of the twentieth century, I knew my first task was to explain how Cold War culture and its ideas about gender patrolled the boundaries between men and women, gay and straight, patriotic and subversive. For those who weren't there, it's necessary to grasp how much the immediate postwar era suppressed dissent, glorified motherhood, celebrated women's biological difference, and sanctified the nuclear family, all of which led to a revolt against the decade's cultural icon of motherhood.

But movements are made by people, not simply by ideas. The more I interviewed women, the more I understood that the movement arose from two generations of women who recognized, with considerable anguish and anger, that neither traditional liberalism nor the politics of the New Left was addressing what equality could mean for modern working women. And this was just the beginning. As these women activists learned to see the world through their own eyes, the feminist movement fragmented, and new populations of women—trade unionists, the old, the young, racial and ethnic minorities, some of whom had initially spurned feminism—began to assert different priorities. With that broadening constituency, many different feminisms began permeating American society.

Such a threatening movement spread to the general public through familiar sources of media and popular culture. Feminism became palatable to American mainstream culture by addressing the individual woman, rather than women as a group. What I began to call "consumer feminism" and "therapeutic feminism" had enabled a small political movement to enter daily life. Eventually, the idea of "sisterhood" gave way to the image of the Superwoman, who, with her hair swept back and briefcase in one hand, baby in the other, tried to have it all, by doing it all.

A backlash was inevitable, though few anticipated its religious and political ferocity. With its rallying cry of "family values" in the 1980s, the Republican Right successfully tied up the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in state legislatures and took the first steps to curtail the right to a legal abortion. So many hard-won gains of the women's movement seemed under siege. But the backlash, eventually realized, masked another reality. By the end of the twentieth century, feminist ideas had burrowed too deeply into our culture for any resistance or politics to root them out. Meanwhile, women in other parts of the globe, fueled by international conferences, began challenging different forms of patriarchal authority and inventing feminism all over again.

The women's movement changed lives in ways that are rare in the history of social movements.

Living life as a feminist was—and is—an intensely personal and dramatic experience. Naturally, there will be some people who will be disappointed not to find their particular memories and experiences in this book. All of us experienced the women's movement from our own perspectives, at different distances, and at varied ages. Some of us never experienced it at all. There were many stories; there are many memories. I hope there will be many more histories.

I did not write this book only for my generation, those of us raised to live as traditional women whose lives were dramatically disrupted and transformed by the power of feminist insights. Although I believe present and former activists need to rethink the past, to know where we have been and how we arrived there, I have always kept a much broader audience in mind. This book is also written for those women and men who did not participate in the women's movement, who were too busy trying to survive, who felt excluded or estranged, who were too scared, were too old or too young, were not yet born, are still not born.

Ruth Rossett  
Berkeley, California

# CHRONOLOGY

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(Signs of backlash in heavier type)

- 848 Married women allowed to own property.  
The First Women's Rights Convention, held in Seneca Falls, New York, produces the "Declaration of the Rights of Woman" and the demand for women's suffrage.
- 872 Victoria Woodhull is the first woman to run for president, even though she cannot vote and is in prison for violating the famous Comstock Law by sending obscene literature through the mail, in this case, about free love.
- 893 Colorado is the first state to allow women's suffrage.
- 919 Congress passes the Nineteenth Amendment, called "The Susan B. Anthony Amendment."  
Three-fourths of the states ratify it on August 26, 1920.
- 923 The Equal Rights Amendment is first introduced in Congress.
- 953 The National Weather Service begins naming hurricanes after women.
- 954 In *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court declares that separate but equal facilities for the races are not constitutional.
- 955 The first lesbian organization, the Daughters of Bilitis, is founded. Rosa Parks refuses to give up her bus seat to a white man, igniting the Montgomery Bus Boycott.  
Daisy Lee Bates, President of Arkansas NAACP, leads nine African-American teenagers to integrate Little Rock High School.
- 957 The Soviet Union launches the first space satellite, Sputnik, spurring a demand to train women in math and science.
- 959 Barbie doll is introduced to girls.
- 960 John F. Kennedy is elected president.  
Four young men sit-in at a Greensboro, North Carolina, lunch counter after they are refused service. Their action ignites youthful civil rights activists all over the South.  
The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) is founded.  
**Young Americans for Freedom founded.**
- 961 President Kennedy appoints Eleanor Roosevelt as chair of the first President's Commission on the Status of Women and Esther Peterson, who had a long history of improving working women's lives, as head of the Women's Bureau, making her the assistant secretary of the Department of Labor.  
Fifty thousand women in sixty cities, mobilized by Women Strike for Peace, protest aboveground testing of nuclear bombs and tainted milk.  
Birth control pills approved in 1960 and made available in 1961. Patricia McGinnis and Laraine Phelan start the Society for Humane Abortion in California to demand access to abortion as

woman's right. In 1966 McGinnis sets up the Association to Repeal Abortion Law in California which provides lists of abortion doctors and offers free classes in self-abortion.

962 Helen Gurley Brown publishes *Sex and the Single Girl*, which gives single women permission to enjoy sex outside of marriage.

Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) launches the student protest movement with "The Port Huron Statement," a critique of American domestic and foreign policy that also decries the powerlessness of ordinary people.

Rachel Carson publishes *Silent Spring*, which attacks the reckless use of toxins and pesticides.

Dolores Fernandez Huerta helps Cesar Chavez start the Farm Workers' Association (Later the United Farm Workers). The Union's first woman organizing in the field is Jesse Lopez de la Cruz.

963 The report from the President's Commission on the Status of Women, *The American Woman*, is published.

Some 200,000 people rally in Washington, D.C., and hear Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech.

Betty Friedan publishes *The Feminine Mystique*.

Congress passes the Equal Pay Act.

964 Congress passes the Civil Rights Act, including Title VII, which prohibits discrimination in employment—not only on the basis of race, color, religion, and national origin, but also on sex. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is created to enforce Title VII, but women's complaints are ignored and ridiculed.

Freedom Summer: One thousand northern students join SNCC workers in the South on voter registration and Freedom School projects.

Congress passes the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which allows funding for the Vietnam War.

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party tries, but fails, to replace the all-white Mississippi delegation at the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta. Disillusionment within the civil rights movement deepens.

Casey Hayden and Mary King circulate a memo about sexual inequality within the civil rights movement.

The Beatles take the U.S. by storm on their first tour of the country.

965 Executive Order 11246 is signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, requiring companies doing business with the government to undertake affirmative action in hiring minorities.

Casey Hayden and Mary King send "A Kind of Memo" to fifty women in the antiwar and student movements. At an SDS conference in 1965, the first group of women meet alone in order to discuss the "Memo."

In *Griswold v. Connecticut*, the Supreme Court declares that married couples have a right to birth control based on their "right to privacy."

Dorothy Height leads the National Council of Negro Women to address problems of women.

966 At the Third Annual Conference on the Status of Women in Washington, women realize that the EEOC will not enforce the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and discover that their attempts to pass resolutions are foiled. The National Organization for Women (NOW) is founded.

NOW petitions the EEOC to end the sexual segregation of classified advertisements from employment.

The call for Black Power begins.

967 At a press conference, Betty Friedan, president of NOW, announces that federally funded child

care centers for working mothers and a full income-tax deduction for child care costs are central to NOW's goals.

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President Johnson extends affirmative action to women.

The Conference for a New Politics ridicules young feminists' demands.

The Chicago Women's Liberation Group begins meeting.

New York Radical Women also forms.

Barbara Avedon and other women organize Another Mother for Peace with the slogan, "War is not healthy for children and other living things."

NOW adopts a Bill of Rights for Women.

Women on welfare begin to organize. In California Alicia Escalante starts the East Los Angeles

Welfare Rights Organization and later founds the Chicano National Welfare Fights Organization.

Black activist welfare recipients such as Johnnie Tillmom, Etta Horn, and Beulah Sanders join

forces in the National Welfare Rights Organization to educate women about applying for benefits

and lobbying for respect within the system as well as for job-training and day care programs. By

1969 there are 22,000 members, but the NWRO lacks funds to continue beyond 1975.

968 January 15. New York feminists bring a dummy of "Traditional Womanhood" to the all-women's

Jeanette Rankin Brigade demonstration against the war in Vietnam in Washington, D.C., and

state their intention to bury her. For the first time, feminists use the slogan "Sisterhood

Powerful."

In Chicago, over two hundred women from thirty-seven states and Canada meet for the First

National Women's Liberation Conference.

New York Radical Women begin process of "consciousness-raising."

Shirley Chisholm is elected first African-American woman representative (D-NY) to Congress.

New York NOW members picket the *New York Times* to end sex-segregated classified advertising.

The Women's Equity Action League is formed by women who leave NOW to pursue feminist goals other than abortion.

The National Abortion Rights Action League is formed.

Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy are assassinated. Students and young people in

Mexico, France, Germany, and dozens of other countries rally, protest, and demand social and

economic change.

In August, U.S. students are beaten in Chicago at the Democratic National Convention, and

Soviet troops trample "Prague Spring."

*Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement*, first newsletter from WLM, is published by Joree

(Jo Freeman) in Chicago. In New York, radical feminists publish *Notes from the First Year*

Feminist publications sweep across the nation. Between 1968 and 1973, five hundred publications

appear.

IRS allows widows and single or divorced women over thirty-five to receive head-of-household status with deductions.

Dorothy Lee Bolden organizes the National Domestic Workers Union.

New York women's liberationists protest against the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City.

Ground zero for myth of bra burning.

969 Gay men resist police raid at the Stonewall Bar in New York City, launching the gay liberation movement.

The Boston Women's Health Collective publishes a pamphlet, *Our Bodies, Ourselves: A Book for*



and for Women. In 1973, it is published as a book.

**Accuracy in Media (AIM), a right-wing watchdog on “liberal bias,” is formed.**

Members of Redstockings disrupt a hearing on abortion laws of the New York State legislature when the panel of witnesses turns out to be fourteen men and one nun. They demand repeal, not reform, of abortion laws.

NOW celebrates Mother’s Day with the slogan “Rights, Not Roses.”

**The Federal Bureau of Investigation begins widespread infiltration of the women’s movement at all levels.**

970 The great media blitz begins, with stories all year long on the new women’s movement.

Pat Mainardi offers a proposal for “wages for housework.”

California is first state to adopt “no-fault” divorce, which ends up impoverishing older women who have no skills.

The North American Indian Women’s Association is founded.

Toni Cade publishes *The Black Woman*.

Bella Abzug is elected to Congress.

Feminists stage sit-ins at *Newsweek* and *Ladies’ Home Journal* and file an antidiscrimination suit against *Time*, *Life*, *Fortune*, and *Sports Illustrated*. The Feminist Press is started.

Major classic works appear in 1970 and 1971: Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch*; Vivian Gornick and Barbara Moran, editors, *Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness*; Shulamith Firestone, *Dialectics of Sex*; Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*; Robert Morgan, *Sisterhood Is Powerful*; Celestine Ware, *Woman Power*.

In Wisconsin, the first AFL-CIO conference meets to discuss the status of women in unions. It endorses the ERA and opposes state protective legislation.

On August 26, fifty thousand women march to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the suffrage amendment in New York. Feminists drape a huge banner over the Statue of Liberty that says “Women of the World Unite.” In forty-two states, women participate in the “Strike for Equality.”

Maggie Kuhn forms the Gray Panthers to fight for older citizens’ rights.

NOW sues 1,300 corporations.

WEAL files class action suit against more than one hundred colleges and universities.

The Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church allow women to be ordained.

The Episcopal Church permits women deacons, but not ordination for women.

Barbara Herman is the first woman cantor, in a Reform Jewish temple in New Jersey.

**National Right to Life Committee is established by the Catholic Church to block liberalization of abortion laws.**

Hawaii, Alaska, and New York become the first states to liberalize their abortion laws.

Barbara Seaman and others disrupt the Senate subcommittee’s hearing on the Pill, protesting that most witnesses are male doctors and that women are being used as “guinea pigs” in testing.

Forty-six editorial staff women win a settlement in their suit charging sexual discrimination in *Newsweek* magazine.

Women on the staff of RAT take over the New York radical underground newspaper.

Sit-in at *Ladies’ Home Journal* by one hundred women leads to a special supplement in the August, 1970, issue.

The Congress to Unite Women meets in New York City. Lesbians stage the Lavender Menace Action, one of the first asserting the right to be public lesbians.

Chicana feminists in California found the *Comision Feminil Mexicana Nacional*. They start model service center for working women. Founders include Gracia Molina Pick, Francis Flores, Graciella Oivares, and Yolanda Nova.

Singer Janis Joplin dies of a heroin overdose.

971 New York Radical Feminists hold a “Speak-out on Rape,” in which women disclose the personal experiences.

New York NOW forms a “Baby Carriage Brigade” to demonstrate its support of women’s right to deduct child care expenses. “Are Children As Important As Martinis?” is their slogan.

**Norman Mailer’s *Prisoner of Sex*, a sophisticated and highly publicized attack on the women’s movement, is published.**

On her first day as representative from New York, Bella Abzug demands that all U.S. troops be withdrawn from Vietnam.

Bella Abzug, Shirley Chisholm, Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, and others help found the National Women’s Political Caucus to support more women candidates.

First Feminist Women’s Health Center founded in Los Angeles by Carol Downer and Lorraine Rothman.

The National Press Club allows women to become full members. Berkeley, California, initiates women’s studies in primary schools.

The Professional Women’s Caucus files a class action sexual discrimination suit against every law school in the country receiving federal funds.

President Richard Nixon vetoes the Comprehensive Child Development Bill, passed by both houses of Congress, which would have provided \$2 billion for child care.

Three hundred and forty French women sign a petition, “Manifesto of 340 Bitches,” declaring they have had an abortion.

The FBI reports that the increase in women’s crime rate is up sharply over that in men’s.

972 Puerto Rican women hold their first national conference.

The Equal Rights Amendment passes both houses of Congress; ratification is necessary by 1979.

Congress passes Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments to the Civil Rights Act to enforce sex equality in education, which forces educational institutions to support women’s sports.

Congress passes the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, which prohibits sex discrimination in employment.

*Ms.* magazine is launched.

Representative Shirley Chisholm runs for the Democratic Party nomination for president of the United States and loses.

In San Francisco, Margo St. James organizes COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics) to improve the working conditions of prostitutes.

**Phyllis Schlafly attacks the ERA in her newsletter and forms a new organization “StopERA.”**

**Midge Decter, neoconservative, publishes an attack against the women’s movement in *The New Chastity and Other Arguments Against Women’s Liberation*.**

**Jesse Helms is elected to the U.S. Senate.**

The country debates whether Maude, a fictional character in a television sitcom, should have a late-life abortion.

NOW launches an attack on sexism in schoolbooks, with its pamphlet *Dick and Jane As Victims*. For the first time, a girl wins a soap box derby. She apologizes.

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 is extended to cover administrative, professional, and executive employees.

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The Feminist Press starts the *Women's Studies Newsletter*. (In 1977, the National Women's Studies Association formed; by 1978 there are over 15,000 courses.)

Women's issues, including the right to abortion, are included in the platform of La Raza Unida, Mexican-American political movement.

Marlo Thomas and friends produce the record *Free to Be . . . You and Me*, the first record nonsexist, multiracial songs, poems, and stories for children.

Judy Chicago, Miriam Shapiro, and members of the Feminist Art Program of the California Institute of the Arts open a seventeen-room *Womanhouse* exhibit, viewed by 4,000 people.

The first conference of Older Women's Liberation (women over thirty) is held in New York City.

973 In its *Roe v. Wade* decision, the Supreme Court establishes a woman's right to abortion.

Congress allows the first female page in the House of Representatives.

Singer Helen Reddy wins a Grammy Award for her song "I Am Woman," which becomes a kind of informal anthem of the movement.

AT&T agrees to end discrimination in women's salaries and to pay retroactive compensation to women employees.

The National Black Feminist Organization is formed.

More than three hundred women from twenty-seven countries attend an International Feminist Planning Conference in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Their goal is to create an international movement through global conferences.

Conservative Judaism permits women to be counted in making up the minyan, or ten people necessary for congregational worship. Dr. Mary Daly's book, *Beyond God the Father*, rejects male divinity and questions all received religious wisdom.

**George Gilder's *Sexual Suicide*, a sustained attack against the women's movement, published.**

Billie Jean King's efforts succeed when the U.S. Tennis Association announces that the U.S. Open will award equal prize money to women and men.

Bernice Reagon Johnson forms an a cappella group, *Sweet Honey in the Rock*, which emphasizes songs about civil rights and social justice.

Redwood Records, a women's music record company, is founded, and issues Holly Near's *Harvest in There*.

In Los Angeles, the first West Coast Lesbian Feminist Conference is held.

Office workers form Women Employed in Chicago, Women Office Workers in New York, and 95 in Boston. Union Wage in San Francisco had been formed in 1971.

First U.S. battered women's shelters open.

Attorney Marian Wright Edelman founds Children's Defense Fund. Billie Jean King defeats Bobby Riggs in the "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match.

The Supreme Court outlaws sexually-segregated classified ads.

The AFL-CIO National Convention endorses the ERA.

The Government Printing Office style book accepts Ms. as a prefix.

Dr. Benjamin Spock renounces his earlier views on child care and revises his classic book.

Stewardesses for Women's Rights formed to support job rights, a dignified public image, and health issues of female flight attendants.

The National Association for the Repeal of Abortion, founded in 1969, changes its name to the

National Abortion Rights Action League and makes its goal the preservation of the 1973 Supreme Court Decision.

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974 The Freedom of Information Act passes.

Congress passes the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, which allows married women to get credit in their own name for the first time.

Over one thousand colleges and universities offer women's studies courses and eighty have full programs.

Helen Thomas, after covering Washington for thirty years, is finally named White House reporter for UPI and becomes the first woman to hold this position.

Little League, for the first time, allows girls to compete in baseball. Diana Russell publishes *The Politics of Rape*.

The Mexican American Women's National Association (MANA) is founded. It is pro-choice, against forced sterilization, and starts a successful Hermanitas ("Little Sisters") program.

Domestic workers covered by the minimum-wage law.

First Lady Betty Ford and Happy Rockefeller, wife of New York's governor, speak openly about their own mastectomies.

Class action suit against the *New York Times* is settled in 1978 in favor of five hundred fifty female employees.

First National Women's Music Festival is held.

**Paul Weyrich receives funds from Joseph Coors to organize the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress, and Richard Viguerie becomes the organization's direct mail fund-raiser and establishes the Conservative Caucus. The National Conservative Political Action Committee established by John "Terry" Dolan is created one year later.**

The Washington State Court grants a lesbian mother living with her lover custody of her children. Passport Office allows use of maiden name.

The National Women's Football League is formed and the All-America Girls' Basketball Conference is held.

More than 3,000 women from 58 unions attend a Chicago meeting where the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) is formed. The group is made up entirely of union members; the goals are to combat sexism within unions, to push for legislation addressing female workers' needs, and to organize the thirty million women workers who are not in unions.

After a three-year campaign by women's groups, New York no longer requires a rape victim to give independent corroboration from witnesses of the crime.

975 The United Nations sponsors the First International Conference on Women in Mexico City.

For the first time, federal employees' salaries can be garnished for child support and alimony.

**National Right to Life PAC organized.**

**Phyllis Schlafly organizes Eagle Forum as an alternative to "women's lib," in support of voluntary school prayer, law and order, and a strong national defense, and against busing, federally funded child care, and abortion.**

Tish Sommers, chair of NOW's Older Women Task Force, coins the phrase "displaced homemaker."

The Vietnam War ends, after fourteen years and the deaths of 56,559 Americans and millions of Vietnamese.

Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will* on the ubiquity of rape is published.

NOW sponsors "Alice Doesn't" Day, and asks women across the country to go on strike for one

day.

~~Joanne Little, who was raped by a guard while in jail, is acquitted of murdering her offender. The case establishes a precedent for killing as self-defense against rape.~~

Mississippi court rules that women cannot be systematically excluded from jury duty.

Ten California Chicanas file a suit, charging they were involuntarily sterilized at a county medical center.

The first National Women's Health Conference, sponsored by the Our Bodies, Ourselves Collective, is held at Harvard Medical School; four thousand women attend.

*Time* magazine breaks tradition in naming the Man of the Year by designating ten women for cover honors.

The National Congress of Neighborhood Women forms to upgrade the status of working-class women through education, community program training, and college studies. The Sisterhood Black Single Mothers in Brooklyn brings two hundred women together to run a clothing and baby-sitting cooperative and to share information.

976 *Redbook* magazine polls its readers about sexual harassment. Ninety percent of young women say they view the situation as "serious."

The nation's first Center for Displaced Homemakers opens at Mills College, Oakland, California, inspired by Tish Sommers.

**A bill that defines a "person" as "a human being" from the moment of fertilization is signed by Louisiana's governor, but does not survive court challenge.**

The United Nations Decade for Women begins.

**A movement to repeal a gay rights ordinance in Dade County, Florida, is led by singer Anita Bryant.**

ERAmerica is launched to promote the ratification of ERA.

The National Alliance of Black Feminists organizes in Chicago.

The Organization of Pan Asian American Women forms for women of Asian and Pacific American Islander descent.

Barbara Jordan becomes the first African-American and first woman to give the keynote speech at the Democratic National Convention.

**Supreme Court decision agrees with General Electric that the company's failure to cover pregnancy-related disability is not discriminatory.**

**Both the House and Senate pass the Hyde Amendment, which prohibits the use of federal Medicaid money for abortions.**

Many professional and women's organizations decide to boycott those states that have not passed the ERA and to hold their conferences elsewhere.

Sarah Caldwell is the first woman to conduct at the Metropolitan Opera after Beverly Sills refuses to sing unless Caldwell conducts.

The International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women is held in Brussels.

NASA announces it will accept women for astronaut training.

New research gives hitherto unacknowledged credit to geneticist Rosalind Franklin for her work in solving the riddle of the DNA molecule.

French prostitutes stage nationwide strike.

Women in Iceland hold a day-long strike to show their importance to the economy, virtually shutting down the country.

977 Houston, Texas, witnesses the First National Women's Conference, at which twenty thousand

representatives, women from all states, gather to pass a far-reaching National Plan of Action.

National Association of Cuban-American Women formed.

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence established.

Eleanor Smeal, president of NOW, demands that homemakers should have their own Social Security accounts.

The American Civil Liberties Union asks the Rhode Island Supreme Court to allow women to use their own names, rather than that of their husbands.

Joanie Caucus, the runaway wife turned feminist made famous in *Doonesbury*, graduates from law school.

The Air Force graduates its first women pilots.

AT&T announces its willingness to allow dual listing of married people in phone books.

978 Congress passes the Pregnancy Discrimination Act that prohibits discrimination against pregnant women in all areas of employment.

Laura X founds National Clearinghouse on Marital and Date Rape to lobby for changes in state law.

**Proposition 6 in California attempts, but fails, to prohibit gays and lesbians from teaching in California schools.**

Women Against Pornography is founded in New York City.

Congress extends ratification deadline for ERA to June 30, 1982. Over 100,000 people demonstrate in Washington, D.C., to support ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

More women than men enter American colleges and universities. Congress passes a bill prohibiting the introduction of the victim's reputation in cases of rape or attempted rape.

New York is the first state to pass a bill to locate the children of women who have taken the synthetic hormone diethylstilbestrol (DES).

Women sports writers are no longer barred from major league baseball locker rooms.

Congress allocates \$5 million to the Department of Labor to set up centers for displaced homemakers.

The first national feminist conference on pornography is sponsored by Women Against Violence in Pornography and the Media in San Francisco. They sponsor the first "Take Back the Night" march to draw attention to a woman's right to walk the streets at night without fear. So do thousands of women across the country stage similar marches.

John Rideout, the first man charged with raping his wife while they were living together, acquitted by an Oregon Court.

979 **The Moral Majority is founded by Jerry Falwell, television evangelist.**

**President Jimmy Carter fires Bella Abzug from the Advisory Committee on Women because she insists that unemployment, the federal government, and inflation are women's issues.**

The National Weather Service decides to follow a new policy of naming hurricanes after both women and men.

National March in Washington, D.C., for lesbians and gays draws 100,000 participants from all over the country.

Judy Chicago's collaborative art work *The Dinner Party*, with thirty-nine place settings for famous women, creates a stir in the artistic community.

Rose Kushner, author of *Why Me?*, persuades the National Institutes of Health to endorse a two-stage breast biopsy procedure, enabling women to have a choice in their breast surgery for

cancer.

980 ~~Ronald Reagan is elected president of the United States in the first demonstration of the “gender gap,” with more men than women voting for Reagan.~~

Copenhagen, Denmark, hosts the UN’s Second World Conference on Women.

National Judicial Education Program to Promote Equality for Women and Men in the Courts begins to educate judges about gender bias.

The EEOC publishes new guidelines on sexual harassment.

**For the first time, the Republican platform no longer supports the ERA and goes on record as being against abortion.**

The National Women’s History Research Project is established and Molly Murphy MacGregor is named as executive director. Its goal is to promote the multicultural study of women’s history in the k-12 classroom. It lobbies successfully for the National Women’s History Week in 1981.

981 Sandra Day O’Connor is the first woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

**Jesse Helms introduces Human Life Bill, in order to make abortion illegal.**

982 The Equal Rights Amendment is unable to gather the necessary number of states for ratification.

**The Family Protection Act is introduced in Congress. It would have established prayer in the schools, forbidden federal funding for schoolbooks that depicted women in unconventional roles, repealed federal laws against child and spouse abuse, and prohibited coed sports. It doesn’t pass.**

983 Sally Ride becomes the first American woman in space.

Congress passes the Retirement Equity Act that gives equal benefits to women in private pension systems.

**In *City of Akron v. Akron Center*, the Supreme Court upholds parental consent requirements for minors seeking abortions.**

U.S. feminist peace activists establish Seneca Falls encampment against nuclear arms.

Alice Walker receives Pulitzer Prize for *The Color Purple*.

984 Walter Mondale chooses Geraldine Ferraro for his vice-presidential running mate. They lose to Ronald Reagan and George Bush.

Mothers of East Los Angeles organize to oppose violence and to battle against environmental racism.

Leontyne T. C. Kelly becomes the first African-American ordained as a bishop in the United Methodist Church.

985 The UN’s Third World Conference on Women is held in Nairobi, Kenya.

The American Psychiatric Association removes homosexuality from its category of mental illnesses and disorders.

Bella Abzug founds Women’s Foreign Policy Council, which, along with Women for Meaningful Summits and the Jane Addams Conference, struggles to promote women’s interests in foreign policy.

Amy Eilberg becomes first woman Conservative Rabbi.

Ellen Malcolm starts EMILY’s List to give financial backing to pro-choice Democratic women candidates for state and federal office. EMILY stands for “Early Money Is Like Yeast.”

986 **The Meese Commission produces a list of all the films it deems to be pornographic “social menaces.”**

**The Supreme Court rules in *EEOC v. Sears* that Sears did not discriminate.**

Margaret Atwood publishes her dystopian novel *The Handmaid’s Tale*, in which the religious

Right has won electoral power and creates the theocracy and republic of Gilead.

~~The *New York Times* finally agrees to use Ms. instead of Miss or Mrs.~~

Barbara Mikulski, from Maryland, becomes first Democratic woman elected to the U.S. Senate who hasn't succeeded her husband. The number of women in the Senate doubles from one to two. A *Newsweek* poll reveals that 56 percent of women consider themselves feminists; 71 percent say that the movement has improved their lives; only 4 percent describe themselves as antifeminist.

987 Eleanor Smeal and others found the Fund for the Feminist Majority, in part to encourage feminists to run for office.

Congress declares March "Women's History Month."

Court rules against Mary Beth Whitehead in "Baby M" case, highlighting the issue of surrogate mothers.

988 **In *Webster v. Reproductive Services*, the Supreme Court allows Missouri's prohibition of the use of public funds for abortion.**

Toni Morrison receives the Pulitzer Prize for all her work, including *Beloved*.

Methodists create a gender-neutral hymnal.

Congress approves a memorial for the 10,000 women who served in Vietnam.

989 African-American Barbara Harris is ordained as the first female bishop in the Episcopal Church.

990 Congress passes the Americans with Disabilities Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.

991 The country is mesmerized by the confirmation hearings of Clarence Thomas, who is accused by his former special assistant Anita Hill of sexual harassment.

The American Association of University Women publishes a groundbreaking critique, *How Schools Shortchange Girls*.

**The Supreme Court rules that the U.S. government can deny foreign aid to any overseas health organizations that promote abortion.**

The president of NOW, Patricia Ireland, is vilified when she reveals that she lives with a female companion.

NOW sponsors a Young Feminist Conference in Akron, Ohio, which draws eight hundred young women, who also rally against the Gulf War.

The Senate overturns the "gag rule" that bars federally financed family planning clinics from discussing abortion with women.

Susan Faludi publishes *Backlash*, which documents how and who helped create a backlash against the women's movement in the 1980s.

The film *Thelma and Louise* strikes a nerve among women viewers that baffles film critics.

992 **In *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Robert P. Casey*, the Supreme Court affirms a woman's right to abortion but allows certain restrictions based on a state's "compelling" interest in potential human life.**

**Colorado and Oregon pass antigay ordinances, which are overthrown by the Supreme Court in 1996.**

Some 750,000 women, men, and children turn out for the Pro-Choice March in Washington, D.C. with the slogan "We Won't Go Back! We Will Fight Back." The march attracts labor unions, celebrities, and students from six hundred campuses. A similar march is held in Los Angeles the next week.

EMILY's List, the Women's Campaign Fund, and other groups raise money for a record number of women running for electoral office.



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