

Document A

Throughout the 1970s, many women noted the progress made by civil rights activists in the work place, public spaces, and education for people of color. However, little progress was made by feminists working on behalf of all women. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 came with a provision guaranteeing equal rights for women, the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was unable to effectively enforce that equality. In response, the National Organization of Women (NOW) stepped in. Twelve years later, NOW printed this brochure promoting the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) as a reminder to everyone in the United States that women's rights had not yet advanced far enough.



Source: Cover of brochure created by the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1976.

Full Brochure and Background Available From:

"National Organization for Women (NOW) Brochure on Equal Rights Amendment, 1976." *Preserving American Freedom: The Evolution of American Liberties in Fifty Documents*. Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Web. 26 Dec. 2014. <<http://digitalhistory.hsp.org/pafm/doc/national-organization-women-now-brochure-equal-rights-amendment-1976>>.

Student Background Information/Timeline

Preceded by first wave feminism, which focused on women's suffrage, second wave feminism, also known as the women's liberation movement, took place in the 1950's and 1960's. It focused on breaking out from oppressive gender roles and gaining greater access to jobs and education. The women's liberation movement saw the passage of several pieces of legislation that expanded and protected women's rights legally. Despite these victories, the women's rights movement continues to struggle for equality and has experienced some defeats, including the continual rejection of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).

Civil rights movements had historically only succeeded at the federal level, so the women's liberation movement focused its efforts on Congress and on obtaining a constitutional amendment. Even though organizations like NOW focused on affecting change through the federal government, many women were actively working for women's rights at the local level. In Nebraska's capital city, the women's liberation movement was alive in the 1970s and early 1980s as women fought for gender equality through social and political avenues. As you examine the following documents, including interviews with women who made important progress towards equality for women in Nebraska, keep in mind the question: How did the struggle for women's equality play out on a local level?

1945 – World War II ends and most women industrial workers are let go

1961 – The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) sponsors major conference on the problems of working women

1963 – Congress passes the Equal Pay Act (the first federal gender equity law since 1920)

1964 – Civil Rights Act passed; Title VII prohibits discrimination in employment, including sex

1966 – National Organization for Women (NOW) is founded

1967 – Lyndon B. Johnson issues Executive Order 11375, requiring affirmative action for women

1968 – Shirley Chisholm becomes first African American woman elected to Congress

1971 – U.S. Civil Rights Commission creates task force on sex discrimination

1972 – Title IX of the Higher Education Act is passed, outlawing discrimination on the basis of sex in higher education institutions, such as sports and academic programs, ERA passes both houses of Congress; goes to states for ratification, First rape crisis centers and batter women's shelters open their doors

1974 – Eleven women are ordained as Episcopal priests, defying church rules

1975 – United Nations declare a "Decade for Women"

1980 – Gender integration of the armed forces begins, Sandra Day O'Connor becomes the first woman U.S. Supreme Court justice

1982 – ERA fails for lack of ratification by enough states

1984 – U.S. Congresswoman Geraldine Ferraro is the first major-party female vice-presidential candidate

1986 – Congress designates March as Women’s History Month

1989 – NOW organizes largest rally in Washington, D.C. history

1993 – UN Human Development Report concludes that despite many changes, “women are the world’s largest excluded group”

Background Information and Timeline Adapted from:

MacLean, Nancy. *The American Women's Movement 1945-2000: A Brief History with Documents*. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009. Print.

"Women's Rights Movement (Overview)." *American History*. ABC-CLIO, 2014. Web. 27 Dec. 2014.

Document B (excerpted)

The National Organization for Women (NOW) became the largest mass-membership feminist organization in the country. It outlined a wide-ranging agenda for a movement that emphasized a "fully equal partnership" with men in every area of life.

We, men and women who hereby constitute ourselves as the National Organization for Women, believe that the time has come for a new movement toward true equality for all women in America, and toward a fully equal partnership of the sexes, as part of the world-wide revolution of human rights now taking place within and beyond our national borders.

We organize to initiate or support action... to break through the silken curtain of prejudice and discrimination against women in government, industry, the professions, the churches, the political parties, the judiciary, the labor unions, in education, science, medicine, law, religion and every other field of importance in American society.

Enormous changes taking place in our society make it possible and urgently necessary to advance the unfinished revolution of women toward true equality, now.

In all the professions considered of importance to society... women are losing ground. Women comprise less than 1 percent of federal judges; less than 4 percent of all lawyers; 7 percent of doctors... And increasingly men are replacing women in the top positions in secondary and elementary schools, in social work, and in libraries – once thought to be women's fields.

Official pronouncements of the advance in the status of women hide not only the reality of this dangerous decline, but the fact that nothing is being done to stop it... There is no civil rights movement to speak for women, as there has been for Negroes and other victims of discrimination. The National Organization for Women must therefore begin to speak.

We believe that this nation has a capacity... to enable women to enjoy true equality of opportunity and responsibility in society, without conflict with their responsibilities as mothers and homemakers... True equality of opportunity and freedom of choice for women requires... a nationwide network of child-care centers, which will make it unnecessary for women to retire completely from society until their children are grown...

We believe that women must now exercise their political rights and responsibilities as American citizens... participating fully in the selection of candidates and political decision-making, and running for office themselves.

We believe that women will do most to create a new image of women by *acting* now, and by speaking out in behalf of their own equality, freedom, and human dignity... By so doing, women will develop confidence in their own ability to determine actively, in partnership with men, the conditions of their life, their choices, their future and their society.

Source: *National Organization for Women, Statement of Purpose, October 1966*

Full Text Available From:

MacLean, Nancy. *The American Women's Movement 1945-2000: A Brief History with Documents*. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009. Print.