

## Generations Later, Retelling the Story

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**Abstract** As the half-century anniversaries begin, study of the Second Wave is in vogue in both print and visual media as it has never been before. In this chapter, Sara M. Evans reflects on some of the ways the story is being told now, the power of iconic representations, and new questions arising from the experience of new generations. Addressing many of the myths and generalizations about the movement, Evans counters the oversimplification of the Second-Wave feminists as uniformly white, middle class, selfish, and antisex. This characterization, Evans argues, misses the role of minorities, the poor, and other feminist perspectives on sexuality that were a growing part of the Second-Wave feminist movement. Thus, as opposed to seeing themselves as a continuation of the Second Wave, many Third-Wave feminists saw themselves as a completely new “rupture with the past.” Evans then reviews more recent historical work, some of which takes a broad international view, while others explore a narrower context and examine the history of feminists and feminism within a particular community. These studies clearly show the multiracial, international, multiclass, and selfless actions of many feminists and feminist groups. Rather than being a monolithic American movement of white middle-class women, led by only a few visible leaders, the women’s movement continues to be

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a patchwork of groups, many not even aware of one another, and many who disagree with one another on various topics, but all working together for improving some aspect of women's lives. Ultimately, Evans insists that viewing the women's movement in "waves" that seem to begin and end at specific points in time obscures the fight that many Second-, Third-, and multiple-wave feminists continue to wage.

The year 2013 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the President's Commission on Women Report that spelled out in considerable detail the discrimination embedded in our laws and practices and the hardships this entailed. The commission described a world in which poor and working women lacked access to childcare; businesswomen could not obtain credit in their own names; working women received lower wages than men in the same jobs and were "disqualified" for higher-paying jobs; graduate and professional schools held female admissions to quotas of 5% or less, and many states barred women from jury duty.

In 1963 Congress also passed the Equal Pay Act to make it illegal to pay differentially on the basis of sex for the exact same job, and Betty Friedan published her blockbuster, *The Feminine Mystique*, that railed less against legal restrictions than the psychic toll of the social role of "housewife" as prescribed in the popular culture, Freudian psychology, and higher education.

We are at the beginning of what is going to be a very long series of anniversaries for the women's movement as well as the civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, and a host of other "rights-based" movements that grew from and were inspired by them. This means that we are at last going to have that story told, and retold. My interest here is to explore some of the myths that serve as blinders, blocking our ability to tell the full story, and to explore some of the complexities revealed in recent scholarship that make such a telling both critically important and extremely difficult.<sup>1</sup>

### STEREOTYPES TAKE OVER

For the first two decades during and after the initial feminist eruption in the 1960s and 1970s, historians paid little attention to its story, in part because it was so recent. Mainly, however, they were busy establishing women's history as a legitimate field of inquiry (a project that was itself

part of the feminist upsurge) and looking for the deep roots of women's agency in the past: in daily life, labor struggles, the experience of slavery, the evolution of cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity, and so forth. The very range of subjects examined makes it clear that historians, deeply influenced by socialist feminism as well as the emerging social history fields of African American, working class, and family history, construed the new field of women's history as a project to understand the past lives of *all* women.<sup>2</sup>

There were a handful of books on late twentieth-century feminism, my own among them, but for the most part the "Second Wave" receded into a series of stereotypic assumptions, namely that feminists in the 1970s were "white, middle-class, and strident." It is ironic that in the 1980s, even as parts of the feminist movement were gaining in strength and sophistication, popular culture proclaimed a "postfeminist" age, and most young women wanted nothing to do with those they thought of as angry/ugly/strident/lesbian (or paradoxically, asexual) feminists. Indeed, I used to read the following quote from a 1927 article in *Harper's* entitled "Feminist—New Style" to my women's history classes: "Feminism has become a term of opprobrium to the modern young woman. For the word suggests either the old school of fighting feminists who wore flat heels and had very little feminine charm, or the current species who antagonize men with their constant clamor about maiden names, equal rights, women's place in the world, and many other causes."<sup>3</sup> My students agreed that it sounded awfully familiar.

Feminist scholars in the 1980s and 1990s, mostly interested in the literary and theoretical, and struggling with the theoretical conundrums of gender, race, and class, fixed the perception of Second-Wave feminists in the 1970s as white, middle class, self-interested, and antisex. They declared themselves a "third wave" under the rubric of "intersectionality," presuming an almost total rupture with earlier feminist theorizing.<sup>4</sup>

When Third-Wave feminists named the Second Wave, which was not a term used by activists at the time, they pointed to an intellectual genealogy that in effect took the part for the whole. One of the most powerful analyses in this vein is Jane Gerhard's *Desiring Revolution: Second Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of American Sexual Thought* published in 2001.<sup>5</sup> *Desiring Revolution* is an important and insightful book, but by tracing the lineage of a particular conversation about sexuality, and positioning that conversation as constitutive of Second-Wave thought, she reinforces the larger narrative from the point of view of the 1990s third

wave that has made it more difficult to see the complexity of the movement in the 1970s and 1980s.

Gerhardt traces the evolution of a white feminist “subject” from early radical feminist assertions of sexual freedom such as Anne Koedt’s “Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm” in 1968 through the 1975–1985 cultural feminist emphasis on female difference and victimization in the work of writers such as Adrienne Rich, Nancy Choderow, Mary Daly, Audre Lorde, Susan Brownmiller, Myra Dinerstein, Andrea Dworkin, and Catharine MacKinnon.<sup>6</sup> The latter provided the theoretical underpinning for a growing anti-pornography movement in the late 1970s. For Gerhardt, when “sexual freedom” advocates clashed publicly with anti-pornography activists at the 1982 Scholar and Feminist Conference at Barnard College, the ensuing “sex wars” served as a turning point in which the Second-Wave worldview unraveled. Gerhardt concludes: “Second-wave feminists ... saw sexuality as the most salient component of women’s identity. This assumption, above all, paradoxically gave Second-Wave Feminism much of its radicalism and set the terms for its undoing. The fictional white woman who unconsciously dominated Second-Wave feminist sex theory could no longer stand in unproblematically for the ‘feminist,’ no matter how much she desired revolution.”<sup>7</sup>

While this intellectual genealogy is without question an important strand in the evolution of feminist theory, it obscures the debates that never stopped. As a result, in Gerhardt’s telling, at the Barnard Conference defenders of sexual freedom and individualism along with feminists of color seem to spring out of nowhere to create a tumultuous debate. What is missing here is (a) that the debate had been there all along, (b) that strategic alliances between white feminists and feminists of color had never disappeared and were, in fact, on the increase, and (c) that limiting Second-Wave Feminism to the feminist subcultures that evolved in the academy and in events like music festivals renders the on-the-ground battles about issues such as employment equity, welfare rights, credit, and divorce invisible in one of the most compelling versions of feminist history.

As feminist intellectual history mainstreamed the Third-Wave paradigms of multiculturalism, identity politics, and intersectionality, the resulting conception of the Second Wave as white and middle class erased the early interventions of women of color in the 1970s by seeing newer ideas as a rupture with the past rather than a continuation of it. When a new generation of historians sought to reconstruct an

on-the-ground understanding of feminism as a social movement, they were frustrated by the pervasive grip of the Second- versus Third-Wave account. In 2008, Stephanie Gilmore found “the standard narrative that the women’s movement was composed predominantly of white and middle class women” to be an obstacle to understanding the diversity and complexity of that movement. She lamented that “in many ways, it seems that the movement and its actors are suspended in historical—or rather, ahistorical—amber, unable to move or be moved.”<sup>8</sup>

In its less theoretical and more activist versions, the story of the women’s movement was left to be retold from time to time in the popular culture where a more triumphalist narrative arc pulled its story and images from the mass media of the time. This different version, however, was similarly rooted in images that were predominately white and middle class.<sup>9</sup> Key elements of this account include the following:

- According to the media, there were a few great leaders, such as Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem.<sup>10</sup>
- Victories can be traced in the legislative and court battles of the sixties and early seventies: The Equal Pay Act (1963), Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964), Congressional passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA, 1972), the Women’s Educational Equity Act (WEEA, 1972), Title IX (1972), *Roe v. Wade* (1973), the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (1974).
- In addition to the above, key events in this narrative include the 1970 “strike” when thousands of women demonstrated across the country, the massive Houston Conference in 1977, and the ultimately losing battle for the ERA in state legislatures.

*MAKERS: Women Who Make America*, one of the best, recent documentaries on the movement that aired on PBS in February 2013 was almost inevitably stamped with that media-driven (and often New York- and Washington-centered) narrative, though I think the producers made a serious effort to include African Americans and working-class women. The result, however, even in a three-hour documentary, is lots of absent narratives. There are very few Asian American or Latina feminists in *MAKERS*, leaving the very eloquent black women interviewees to stand in for all minorities. Religion is virtually absent, passing over the flourishing debates around feminist theology and the ordination of women, as well as the emerging “cultural feminist” search for ancient sources

of female spiritual power and affirmation. The role of the arts also gets short shrift, though feminism found expression in every art form, and women challenged their exclusion throughout the art world. And, finally, one gets no sense that the movement, from the beginning, was international in scope. It should be no surprise, however, that most of the complexity as well as the rough edges of the story of feminism disappear when you only have 3 hours to tell it. After all, *Eyes on the Prize* was 14 hours long, and even then there were hundreds of local heroes, especially women, who remained offscreen and unnoticed.

The problem with that dominant narrative, despite the fact that one cannot tell the story without it, is that feminism in the 1970s was a decentered movement, whose parts were not necessarily in communication with one another. In fact, often they did not even know one another. Each of those parts, in its own location, was in complex relationships and interactions with other movements that were active at the same time. We should also add that the movement's legacies, while considerable and worthy of celebration, are also complex and limited. Future generations need to understand how the problems that remain were shaped by that story without, in the process, failing to draw inspiration from its triumphs.

### RECLAIMING THE STORY

For the last two decades, scholars have turned their attention to unearthing the more complex and rich story of the Second Wave in ways that can help us understand the legacies we live with. The first step, as Stephanie Gilmore argues, is to have a "capacious definition of feminism," which scholars are beginning to do in a variety of ways. The second is to explore the movement through a variety of lenses that can, together, enable a multifaceted narrative to emerge. Finally, it is critical that we unearth and analyze broader societal patterns that can tell us a great deal about the complicated legacies of that movement.

Community studies that cast a broad net, for example, illumine multiple threads of feminist activism based on neighborhood, class, race, and ethnicity, tracing out the points of intersection, conflict, and collaboration.<sup>11</sup> As soon as they do this, it becomes clear that stereotypes cannot hold. Stephanie Gilmore dismantles the "liberal/radical" divide in her study of NOW chapters in Memphis, Columbus, and San Francisco, finding members who saw themselves as deeply

radical and militant as well as those who were more liberal and mainstream.<sup>12</sup> In some places NOW was the only visible feminist presence, and for a time it drew in activists of all stripes. Judith Ezekiel's study of Dayton, Ohio, by contrast, finds that where there was no NOW chapter, Women's Liberation, a direct offshoot of the New Left, grew in multiple directions, generating projects and institutions some of which were very radical, while others had a more liberal political bent.<sup>13</sup> In the late sixties, the radical and liberal branches of the movement had distinctive roots and different generational constituencies, but by the early 1970s the exponential growth of the movement blurred the boundaries rapidly.

Similarly, the "all-white" image of the movement cannot stand in the face of new scholarship. In every branch of the identity-based "rights revolution"—black, Chicano/Latino, Asian American, American Indian—as well as in mainstream institutions such as churches, unions, and mass media—there was a feminist upsurge.<sup>14</sup> And throughout the 1970s, feminists built coalitions that crossed classes, races, and regions, despite a historical context that made coalitions extremely difficult.<sup>15</sup>

Though the movement was unquestionably multiracial, specific organizations were only rarely interracial. Anne Valk's *Radical Sisters: Second-Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington, D.C.*, for instance, explores a complex landscape in the 1960s and 1970s where multiple movements focused on women, black liberation, and economic justice existed in continual interaction.<sup>16</sup> Valk analyzes these separate strands of activism as they intersected and interacted over time. White radical feminists, struggling to build a movement based on gender solidarity, stumbled over and wrestled with the realities of differences among women. African American women engaged with welfare rights and black liberation honed new political skills while they also grew increasingly aware of gender oppression. These separate streams came together in the movement against sexual violence, generating, according to Valk, "distinct black and Third World feminist movements. Separate but interconnected, these branches of feminism provided a foundation for further women's movements that extended into the 1980s and beyond."<sup>17</sup> It is interesting to contemplate the coexistence of these grassroots movements in Washington, DC, where, in those same years, there was enormous feminist ferment in and around the federal government and policy think tanks and in the DC headquarters of numerous national women's organizations.<sup>18</sup>

The complexity of this feminist tapestry may go far toward explaining the movement's massive achievements in the early 1970s. Carrie Baker's analysis of grassroots activism in the 1960s that led to and framed landmark appellate court decisions on the issue of sexual harassment makes it clear that a close-up study of specific legal changes cannot escape the coexistence and intersections of these multiple strands. The brilliant lawyer and legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon is commonly credited with inventing the legal concept of sexual harassment.<sup>19</sup> Yet the term was created by a local organization in Ithaca, New York, led by feminist activists with roots in one of Washington, DC's most famous lesbian separatist groups, the Furies Collective, as well as other radical women's liberation groups such as New York Radical Women and the *Rat* Collective. Radicals, however, worked together with women in the ACLU Women's Rights Project under the direction of Ruth Bader Ginsberg as well as clerical workers, undergraduates, and a local NOW chapter. A second group that developed out of a rape crisis center in Washington, DC, abetted their organizing and educational work. These activist groups, in the mid-1970s, completely belie the notion that liberal, radical, lesbian, and socialist feminists existed in highly separated ideological and activist worlds. While there were indeed ideological battles and raging wars of words, some women moved with apparent ease from one to another. And on the ground, focused on a concrete issue, "women found common cause across difference to create feminist change."<sup>20</sup> Attention to the "stars" would miss the ferment, which in fact drove those changes.<sup>21</sup>

Another innovative study by Ann Enke steps away from the stories the movement told about itself to look for the movement in specific, contested public spaces: public civic spaces such as city parks and ball fields and newly invented public spaces created by the women's movement such as coffee houses in church basements, health clinics, women's centers, feminist bookstores, and credit unions. In *Finding the Movement* we are getting closer to the underground force of those shifting plates when we locate women in the 1960s who would never call themselves "feminists" but who stake firm claims to formerly forbidden spaces and find themselves emulated by the feminists. Detroit's "Soul Sisters" were a black women's softball team in the 1960s that had already claimed public space for serious, hard-playing, tough, black, lesbian, working-class athletes. When socialist feminists and lesbians in Chicago set out in the early to mid-1970s to create softball teams, they modeled themselves on women who would never have accepted the label "feminist."<sup>22</sup>



In her exploration of institutions like coffee houses, bookstores, and health clinics, Enke gives us a deeper understanding of the power of race and class to divide an emerging movement and its often unstable coalitions. In self-identified feminist institutions, coalitions between white, middle-class founders and working-class and minority women sometimes grew but too often foundered. Under pressure to survive, both financially and politically, some spaces of interaction collapsed or migrated to neighborhoods marked as white and middle class; others institutionalized and professionalized, losing their activist edge. It was not simply a failure of ideas—as later theorists of feminist intersectionality imagined—but a consequence of the class, race, and sexual inflections of spaces in which people lived and worked and the communities that their activist spaces enabled or discouraged, sometimes by intention but often by happenstance and inertia. The result frequently eroded the coalition building that these creative, fluid, and unruly spaces had seemed to promise, leading feminist groups, despite their self-conscious laments, to emerge from the 1980s still deeply divided by class and race.<sup>23</sup>

If we can remove the distorted lenses of stereotypes, perhaps we can understand better the changing dynamics of the women's movement over time. There is definitely something to understand about the apparently sudden upsurge of women's rights activism in the 1960s and its evolution through the 1970s. By the 1980s, the dynamics were clearly different, though parts of the movement, such as the programs against domestic violence and sexual harassment and the intellectual ferment in and around the academic enterprise of women's studies, continued to grow despite an increasingly hostile political context.

From the outset, the simultaneity of feminist insurgencies in numerous communities and social movements was not simply a North American phenomenon. As I have described elsewhere, the global student uprisings in 1968, sparked by opposition to the Vietnam War as well as generational demands for greater freedom, catalyzed feminist organizing and ideas on virtually every continent.<sup>24</sup> It is startling to realize how similar the dynamics were in very different political and cultural contexts: France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Argentina, and Japan. But from the point of view of the USA where one can tell similar stories about women's experiences in the civil rights movement, the New Left, Black Power, Chicano, American Indian, and Native American movements, one should not be surprised. In every case, women gained political skills and self-respect at the same time that they became increasingly

aware of gender oppression. And they put those newly honed skills to the task of understanding and changing that reality.

In the case of 1968, specifically, late twentieth-century feminism arose around the globe, at least in part, because of an interestingly similar constellation of generation, class, and gender in radical student movements. The university-based parts of those movements were often seen as a revolt of sons against their fathers, a refusal to proceed lockstep into hierarchical structures of power (corporate, military, or political) that regulated their lives in oppressive ways and wrecked imperialist, racist, and class oppression both in their own countries and around the world. Children of the Cold War, entering a rising middle class in the 1960s but inspired by revolts of peasants, workers, and racial minorities around the world, imagined the possibility of a new kind of personal freedom. These sons eschewed some of those markers of manhood, not only traditional careers but also traditional sexual propriety leading to proper breadwinner jobs and marital obligations. Their long hair invited brutal police responses in places as different as Germany and Mexico.

Young women participated in student revolts throughout the world in equal numbers, often against severe parental pressure, though they were rarely visible in the top leadership. Their revolt against patriarchy, however, was fundamentally different from that of their male comrades, as it required a challenge to traditional female roles. To the extent that their brothers in the struggle invented new signs of manhood such as sexual access to young women in their class without the trappings of marriage and monopolized positions of leadership, women began to challenge the restrictions they experienced within the very movements that had liberated them and raised their expectations. The erotic intensity of street demonstrations, building occupations, and apocalyptic expectations could only be liberating for women when they redefined themselves as sexually autonomous, capable of defining their own desires. Their anger when this was not the case elicited furious manifestos in numerous countries once young women found their voice. "The international 1968" offers a fascinating intersection of generation, class, and a very specific moment in time. But similar things also occurred in very different contexts, suggesting that in the late twentieth-century women, especially younger women, found new ways to imagine a world in which being female was no longer a second-class status in whatever other contexts they found themselves. That imagining, and the multitude of resulting struggles to overturn laws, open opportunities, change

power relationships within families, undermine heterosexual norms, establish reproductive rights, equalize women's access to the labor force, and revalue the work that they traditionally do, also generated a massive political and cultural backlash that framed the evolution of those struggles into the 1980s and beyond.

In the USA, the context of radical, utopian, even apocalyptic movements such as Black Power, antiwar movements, and campus insurrections in the late 1960s and early 1970s prompted many to imagine that radical change—even revolution—was just around the corner. It framed some of the more extreme feminist experiments (e.g., separatist communes like the Furies) as well as the countercultural strategy of starting institutions—bookstores, health clinics, rape crisis centers, shelters for battered women, daycare centers—that would model new possibilities to the world. Those institutions themselves, as Anne Enke has shown, created new forms of public space where the meanings of the movement were invented and enacted by diverse and changing communities.<sup>25</sup> Yet media images of young, white, and middle-class activists obscured the similar expectations of dramatic change welling up in settings ranging from labor unions to religious institutions and welfare rights organizations.

### AN UNFINISHED REVOLUTION

As we begin to unravel the complexities of the movement, we are also beginning to understand the broader societal impact of feminist activism and some of the paths not taken. Changes wrought by the movement have left a swath of unresolved problems affecting the lives of large numbers of women, marked by class as well as race. Katherine Turk's study of Title VII explores some of the broader implications of the strategic shift in NOW and much of mainstream feminism toward individual opportunity as symbolized by the ERA and away from policies that acknowledge the different realities of women and men in the labor force and the family. In doing so, she also complicates the label "liberal feminist" by showing that, like self-defined radicals, liberals also wrestled with the deeper meanings of the changes they sought.

In an article in the *Journal of American History* Turk focuses on the Chicago branch of NOW which had built a nationally influential campaign against Sears for its practices of refusing to hire women in higher ticket sales jobs, confining them to the lowest paid clerical and retail

jobs. Internal battles for the leadership of NOW in the mid-1970s, however, sidelined the Chicago group led by Mary Jean Collins and Anne Ladke. As a result, NOW became a more streamlined and centralized organization focused on the ERA, leaving local campaigns like the SEARS campaign stranded. Turk then follows the trajectory of NOW under the leadership of Karen DeCrow and then Eleanor Smeal away from the concerns of working women in low-paid jobs and toward an agenda emphasizing individual rights and opportunity. This shift, Turk argues, was not just tactical; it was ideological, abandoning broader feminist ideas about economic justice, employees' rights, and citizenship.<sup>26</sup> In her broader study of Title VII, she argues that the SEARS campaign was part of a shift within liberal feminism away from emphasizing sex difference between women and men toward an emphasis on individual mobility, individual rights, and meritocracy. This had the effect of undermining "the possibility of shared female solidarity while contributing to the societal devaluation of the labors of workers in feminized positions."<sup>27</sup> Doors opened to professional opportunities, but the majority of working women remain confined to the lowest wage, female-dominated (and mostly unorganized) clerical and service jobs.<sup>28</sup>

Alison Lefkowitz's recent dissertation on marriage in the time of women's liberation bolsters Turk's conclusion that low-income and poor women have basically been left behind in the changes wrought by feminism.<sup>29</sup> Her study explores the dismantling of coverture, not so much by federal laws and courts but by state laws regulating marriage and divorce. Feminists made multiple arguments about marriage in the early 1970s. Some proposed simple, formal equality while more radical critiques demanded that the institution of marriage itself be dismantled, as it could not be reformed. What is interesting here is the behavior of thousands of men and women in response to shifting legal requirements that linked no-fault divorce and state-level equal rights amendments. In effect, and without clear intention, the new legal regime effectively dismantled the male breadwinner/female housewife model of marriage that had been fundamental to marriage law for centuries and was the foundation for legal coverture. Lefkowitz describes "how a host of lawmakers, judges, activists, and ordinary men and women ... struggled to redefine family and marriage without gender."<sup>30</sup> Men, for example, challenged the gendered premises of alimony, which soon became maintenance based on a percentage of contribution by either spouse to the household. Women achieved some legal recognition of the value of their household

labor when that justified the division of household property rather than assuming that it belonged to the man.

The complex consequences of removing prescribed gender roles from the legal understanding of marriage were twofold. Anxiety about the failing family galvanized the right-wing opposition to feminism. Lefkowitz argues “the convergence of class, gender, sexual, and even race equality at woman’s position in the family evoked fears that helped construct the new Republican Party by bringing in a broad swath of men and women who objected to changes to the traditional family structure.”<sup>31</sup> The organized power of that reaction helps to explain the fierce resistance to gay marriage, which became in a legal sense totally logical once marriage and gender were disconnected. It also fed the refusal of policy-makers to extend the recognition that women’s labor in the home has monetary value to poor women on welfare. In 1972, Johnnie Tillmon had argued that simply “paying women a living wage for doing the work we are already doing, child raising and housekeeping” would end the welfare crisis “just like that.”<sup>32</sup> But wages for housework never gained any traction, and poor women were left with a diminished capacity to argue effectively for their own needs.

### WOMEN IN MOTION: LEGACIES OF A TURBULENT TIME

No metaphor can capture the power and complexity of what many call the “Second Wave,” but we will always grope for images that move us in that direction. Women were in motion. Women seized the opportunity to sue their employers, fought for access to male-defined spaces from iron and coal mines to street repair crews, ordained ministries, art galleries, professions, athletics both amateur and professional, and the leadership of their own social movements, and struggled openly to revalue women’s traditional labors in the home and in the labor force. The movement was never all white and middle class, but in fact consisted of multiple, simultaneous streams that erupted in almost all corners of American society. At the same time, the public, media-driven face of activism in the 1970s was more often white and middle class than not. Feminist movements struggled in different ways to define the nature of gender oppression and the most effective remedies. Some developed theories and actions that (in very different ways) prioritized sexuality and the body. Some turned to legislatures and courts, moving gradually toward a liberal, individualist definition of both problem and solution.

Some demanded access to civic public spaces or created their own new forms of public space, too often migrating spatially away from places where divergent communities intersected and toward locations increasingly stamped as white and middle class.

Among the hardest things to convey in narrative form are the intersecting possibilities of every moment and the fact that activists themselves had very different conceptions of what was going on. No one could know how it would turn out. And in a time of apocalyptic expectations—indeed, that may be the hardest thing of all to convey—the fierce debates had resonances we can hardly imagine from decades down the road. The movement was filled with conflict, both intellectual and personal. It was messy. How do we tell that? Many versions just smooth it over, making everything seem inevitable, while a few portray divisions as deeper and more absolute than they were.<sup>33</sup> When we pull back to take in a larger view it is clear that maelstrom deeply altered the world as we know it, creating changes that younger generations cannot fathom if we do not tell them.

Another part of the story, however, must be the unintended consequences as changed ways of living and speaking were appropriated, resisted, and reworked in the daily lives of millions of women and men as well as in a host of court decisions and laws. Change was always partial, and we need a clear assessment of both the gains and the failures. Specifically, feminists must analyze the consequences of an extremely incomplete challenge to the masculinist structure of the labor force that routinely devalues labor traditionally associated with women and allows employers to escape all responsibility for the difficulty of supporting families with low wages and no benefits. No health care, sick leave, vacation, or retirement are standard for the low-wage, part-time jobs that many poor women have as their only option. And at the other end of the scale, high-income professional women must live in a work culture that makes little or no allowance for the responsibilities of family life and children. What they can afford to do is to hire other women, at low wages, to do that work, but they cannot insist that their employers ease their workload so that they can be more involved in family life without severe penalties in terms of professional stature and advancement. Marriage may have no gender, but the labor force still does in very class-specific ways.

Finally, our retelling must also recognize that the evolution of feminism was shaped by the organized force of its opposition, the broader political currents in the country, and the changing nature of the political

economy. Feminism was so deeply unsettling that reaction against it reshaped the political landscape, bringing into being a highly ideological right wing focused on the cultural issues of abortion and gay rights and fanatically opposed to the ERA and affirmative action. That, too, is part of its legacy.

Every generation has to define its own battles, but they do so in contexts created by what went before. Future generations need to know the full story of the feminist upsurge in the late twentieth century because they live with the consequences. It is an empowering and sobering story of great dreams, partial victories, and unresolved dilemmas. If it was a tidal wave, a storm, an earthquake, a set of pulses—pick your metaphor—it is not over. Not only have most former activists not packed up their bags and declared victory, but also each newer generation has generated new initiatives to address the issues that affect them the most. This continuity is the baton that we hand on along with stories of a time when imagining a better future and acting to bring it about went hand in hand.

## NOTES

1. It occurred to me to think about how the woman's rights story was being told 50 years after Seneca Falls. That would be 1898, when the vote had been granted in only a handful of states and municipalities and victory on the national level was not in sight. Only a few of the early activists were still alive then. Elizabeth Cady Stanton lived until 1902 and Susan B. Anthony to 1906, but most of their coworkers were long gone, though some of their daughters, for example, Alice Stone Blackwell and Harriot Stanton Blatch, were still active in the arena of women's rights. Interestingly, the narrative of their movement had already been framed in the first three volumes of *History of Woman Suffrage*, which appeared between 1881 and 1886, written and edited by Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joselyn Gage, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Volume 4 in 1902 was the last to be edited by Anthony. Because there had been a deep split in the movement after the Civil War, Lucy Stone and others in the National American Woman Suffrage Association received relatively short shrift. Volumes 5 and 6 appeared in 1922, 2 years after passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Their tone, by contrast to the first four, is far more triumphalist, and the story has a sense of inevitability that the earlier volumes could not achieve. For many generations, this monumental effort fixed the story of the "first wave" as the story of the long struggle

for woman suffrage with a relatively small cast of characters. It was finally complicated by Eleanor Flexner in 1959 whose book, *Century of Struggle: The Women's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), broadened "women's rights" to include the struggles (most of them actually named in the original document of 1848) for access to legal rights, education, and labor rights, and to more fully acknowledge the separate struggles of black women in a time first of slavery and then of segregation. Today scholars are uncovering additional hidden histories of women of color whose stories add further layers of richness and complexity. So, even that first one was not a single "wave" but a complex constellation of movements and struggles addressing the multiple ways that gender intersects with the realities of race, class, religion, region, and ethnicity.

2. To get a sense of this early paradigm-shifting work, see for example: Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (New York: Grossman, 1976); Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters of South Carolina: Pioneers for Abolition and Women's Rights* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967) and *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Pantheon, 1972); Nancy Cott, *Root of Bitterness: Documents of the Social History of American Women* (New York: Dutton, 1972) and *The Bonds of Womanhood* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977); Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism: 1870–1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981); Ellen DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848–1869* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978); Mary P. Ryan, *Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975); Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750–1800* (Boston: Little Brown, 1980).
3. Dorothy Dunbar Bromley, "Feminist—New Style," *Harper's* 155 (October 1927): 552.
4. For an excellent analysis of this process, see Leela Fernandes, "Unsettling 'Third Wave Feminism': Feminist Waves, Intersectionality, and Identity Politics in Retrospect," in *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism*, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 98–118.
5. Jane Gerhardt, *Desiring Revolution: Second Wave Feminism and the Rewriting of American Sexual Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).



6. Anne Koedt, "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm," *Notes from the Second Year* (New York: New York Radical Feminists, 1970), 37–41. Koedt's article also appeared in *Radical Feminism*, ed. Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anita Rapone (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1973), 198–207, and a briefer version in *Notes from the First Year* (1968). Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton, 1976); Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1982); Mary Daly, *Gyn-Ecology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978); Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Myra Dinerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (New York: Putnam, 1981); Catharine A. Mackinnon, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979).
7. Gerhardt, *Desiring Revolution*, 195.
8. Stephanie Gilmore, "Thinking about Feminist Coalitions," in *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States*, ed. Stephanie Gilmore (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 2. The few historical studies available in the 1980s, such as Alice Echols's *Daring to Be Bad*, traced a story of declension from (white) radical feminism in the late 1960s and early 1970s to (white) cultural feminism in the late 1970s. My own work in *Personal Politics* rooted the women's liberation movement in the experience of the civil rights movement, community organizing experiences in poor urban communities, and the student antiwar movement. On the multiple roots of feminism, see Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
9. See, for example, Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Times Books, 1994). For an analysis of the intersection between feminism and popular television shows, see Bonnie J. Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women's Movement Since 1970* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).
10. I am sure that Steinem did not want to be our Susan B. Anthony and though Friedan probably *did* want to be our Elizabeth Cady Stanton, there were many other contenders (I think of Shulamith Firestone, Kate Millett, Susan Brownmiller, and bell hooks for starters).
11. For a quick introduction to some of what is out there in this area, see Gilmore's collection, *Feminist Coalitions*, and Part 2 of Nancy Hewitt's, *No More Permanent Waves*.

12. Stephanie Gilmore, *Groundswell: Grassroots Feminist Activism in Postwar America* (New York: Routledge, 2012).
13. Judith Ezekiel, *Feminism in the Heartland* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002).
14. On the multiracial roots of contemporary feminism, see Becky Thompson, "Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism," originally in *Feminist Studies* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2002), reprinted in Hewitt, ed., *No Permanent Waves*, 39–60, and Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). See also Maylei Blackwell, *Chicana Power! Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011); Sonia Shah, *Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire* (Boston: South End Press, 1997); Kimberly Springer, *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968–1980* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Devon Abbott Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003; Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986); Johnetta B. Cole and Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Gender Talk: The Struggle for Women's Equality in African American Communities* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003); Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Persephone Press, 1981); Barbara Smith, ed., *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (New York: Kitchen Table Women of Color Press, 1983); Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983).
15. See Stephanie Gilmore, ed., *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).
16. Anne M. Valk, *Radical Sisters: Second-Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington, D.C.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).
17. Valk, *Radical Sisters*, 186.
18. For firsthand accounts of the latter, see Irene Tinker, ed., *Women in Washington: Advocates for Public Policy* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983).
19. Catharine Mackinnon, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979).
20. Carrie N. Baker, *The Women's Movement against Sexual Harassment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), quote on p. 4.

21. A growing group of 1970s feminists have written memoirs, among them Susan Brownmiller, Sheila Tobias, Betty Friedan, Arvonne Fraser, Gloria Steinem, Gloria Anzeldua, Alice Walker, Alix Dobkin, Andrea Dworkin, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Robin Morgan, and Katha Pollitt. For the most part, of course, it is the famous ones whose accounts are seriously considered by major publishers. Some states like Iowa and Minnesota have published books of brief memoirs by activist women from those states, and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin houses an impressive oral history program designed to elicit the stories of midwestern feminists. There is also Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Ann Barr Snitow, eds., *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women's Liberation* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998), and Rosalyn Fraad Baxandall and Linda Gordon, eds., *Dear Sisters: Dispatches from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 2000). One of the largest resources for memoir is MAKERS.com with more than one hundred first-person interviews in addition to the documentary. The great value of all of these stories is that readers and viewers get to witness the movement through the lens of a specific life.
22. Anne Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).
23. Ibid.
24. Sara M. Evans, "Sons, Daughters, and Patriarchy: Gender and the 1968 Generation," *American Historical Review* 114 (April 2009): 331–47.
25. Enke, *Finding the Movement*.
26. See Katherine Turk, "Out of the Revolution, Into the Mainstream: Employment Activism in the NOW Sears Campaign and the Growing Pains of Liberal Feminism," *Journal of American History* (September 2010): 399–423, and Katherine Lee Turk, "Equality on Trial: Women and Work in the Age of Title VII" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2011). The Chicago NOW chapter was also influenced by the Midwest Academy, a Chicago organizer training center founded by Heather Booth. Booth was one of the early members of the first women's liberation group in Chicago and a founder of the socialist feminist Chicago Women's Liberation Union.
27. Turk, "Equality on Trial," 416.
28. In the 1980s, with colleague Barbara Nelson, I undertook a study of comparable worth in Minnesota. This policy, initially from the era of WWII, was revived in a series of labor union initiated lawsuits. Bolstered by a National Academy of Sciences study chaired by economist Heidi Hartman (a socialist feminist and former editor of *Feminist Studies*), it briefly appeared that state and perhaps national legislation could mandate the reevaluation of female-dominated jobs to bring their pay in line

with similarly skilled male-dominated jobs. While Minnesota did, in fact enact such laws for state and local employees, the lack of broad grassroots support and the active hostility of the EEOC, then headed by Clarence Thomas, made the promise of comparable worth short lived indeed. See Sara M. Evans and Barbara J. Nelson, *Wage Justice: Comparable Worth and the Paradox of Technocratic Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

29. Alison Lefkovitz, "Marriage in the Era of Women's Liberation" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2010).
30. Ibid., 9.
31. Ibid., 8.
32. Johnnie Tillmon, "Welfare Is a Women's Issue," Liberation News Service (1972), quoted in Lefkovitz, 2.
33. For analyses that vividly describe conflict, especially in the radical wing of the movement, see Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, and Susan Brownmiller, *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution* (New York: Dial Press, 1999).

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