Timeline of The Women’s Movement during the 1960s

1961 – President John F. Kennedy establishes the President’s Commission on the Status of Women. The commission will advise the President on issues related to women, along with encouraging policy and legislation pertaining to women’s rights. The first line of the Executive Order reads, “Prejudices and outmoded customs act as barriers to the full realization of women’s basic rights which should be respected and fostered as part of our Nation’s commitment to human dignity, freedom, and democracy.”

1961 – The birth control pill (oral contraception) becomes legally available in the United States, allowing women to engage in sexual activity without fear of pregnancy. The 1950s had seen the highest number of out-of-wedlock teen pregnancies in American history.

1963 – Betty Friedan publishes *The Feminine Mystique*. The book is credited to helping to popularize the women’s rights movement. In the book, Friedan asserts that educated middle-class women find their traditional roles as housewives and mothers unfulfilling.

1963 – Congress passes the Equal Pay Act, requiring employers to pay men and women the same wage for equivalent work. In 1963, women earned 59 cents for every dollar their male counterparts earned. Until the early 1960s, newspapers had separate job listings for men and women; sometimes the same job listed for women at a lower pay scale.

1964 – Congress passes Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, banning discrimination on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, or gender.

1966 – The National Organization for Women (NOW), a lobbying group for women’s equality, is founded. Women’s rights activists were frustrated with the federal government failure to enforce new anti-discrimination laws. The first president of NOW is Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique*.

1969 – Elite all-male colleges including Princeton and Yale begin admitting women.

1970 – A sit-in at the *Ladies’ Home Journal* exposes the sexism of “women’s magazines” that reinforce gender roles

1970 – Thousands of women march in the Women’s Strike for Equality on the 50th anniversary of women’s suffrage.

1971 – The first edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, a handbook on women’s health, is published by a feminist collective in Boston. It takes a frank look at certain areas health that had been left out of medical journals, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, birth control, spousal abuse, and more. A huge seller, it is still in print today.

1971 – The American feminist magazine *Ms.* publishes its first issue. It is co-founded by activist Gloria Steinem and editor Letty Cottin Pogrebin.