



Timeline of Womens' Movements, Achievements, and Events during the 1960s and 1970s

1960

Civil Rights activist Ella Baker organizes the first meeting that leads to the formation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

1961

President John F. Kennedy establishes the President's Commission on the Status of Women, which serves to advise the President on issues related to women, and encourages 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."

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*, a book credited to helping popularize the Women's Rights movement. In the book, Friedan asserts that educated white middle-class women find their traditional roles as housewives and mothers unfulfilling.

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.

Fannie Lou Hamer, co-founder of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, testifies in before the Credentials Committee at the Democratic National Convention in an attempt to integrate Mississippi's all white delegation. In her testimonial, Hamer explains the racism and abuse she experienced in attempting to register to vote, and questions America's reputation as the "land of the free" considering its historic treatment of African Americans. Her televised speech is interrupted by an impromptu conference by President Lyndon B. Johnson, who felt Hamer's testimony threatened party unity.

1965

The Delano Grape Strike begins and lasts for five years. Along with the help of fellow activist Cesar Chavez, co-founder of the National Farm Workers Association Dolores Huerta helps lead the boycotts against abusive grape growers. Her work helped farm workers, who were mostly Mexican and Filipino, earn better wages and humane working conditions along with getting the Agricultural Labor Relations Act passed a decade later.

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's failure to enforce new anti-discrimination laws. The first



president of NOW is Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique*.

The Black Panther Party is founded in Oakland, California. While founded by men, the BPP included notable women such as Elaine Brown, who was the only woman chairperson of the Black Panther party from 1974 until 1977, in addition to leaders Kathleen Cleaver and Yuri Kochiyama.

1967

Riots break out in Detroit due to high rates of black unemployment, police brutality, and segregation. Lasting five days, they become one of the most destructive urban riots. Activist Grace Lee Boggs organizes community groups, protests, and other social initiatives in Detroit in the aftermath.

1968

Shirley Chisholm becomes the first black woman elected to Congress. Four years later, she would go on to be the first black woman of a major political party to run for the presidential nomination.

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.

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

Activist and scholar Angela Y. Davis is arrested for her connection to a courtroom shootout involving black inmates. Leading up to her arrest, Davis appeared on the FBI's Most Wanted List. Her arrest gained international attention and support from celebrities such as Aretha Franklin, who offered to pay for Davis' bail. Davis was acquitted two years later and continued her activist work.

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 of health that had been left out of medical journals, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, birth control, spousal abuse, and more. The book becomes a huge seller, and is still in print today.

The American feminist magazine *Ms.* publishes its first issue. It is co-founded by activists Gloria Steinem, Dorothy Pittman Hughes, and editor Letty Cottin Pogrebin.

1974

The Combahee River Collective was cofounded by black feminist Barbara Smith in response to the exclusion of black women from the Women's Liberation movement that was led by white women. The Combahee River Collective published a statement focusing on the experiences of black women due to race, gender, class, and sexuality, their beliefs, and goals in 1977.