**Women in the 1980s**

**Article for Questions 1-2**

**1980s *Women in the Workplace***

After 1980, the speeches and marches were largely over, but women continued to push for economic and social equality in America.

In 1981 Sandra Day O’Connor was appointed to the US Supreme Court, in 1982 the New York City fire department opened their ranks to women firefighters, 1983 brought about the first woman in space and 1984 Geraldine Ferraro made a historic run for the vice-presidency. Women were stepping into boardrooms and all over the country “Women Not Wanted” signs were coming down.

At 24-years old Oprah Winfrey was just beginning to make her mark on the world, co-anchoring a television show in Baltimore. She was outraged when she found out that her co-anchor was making significantly more money than she was. When her boss told her she didn’t need as much money and a man she thought, “I’ll show you.”

Credit: <http://www.pbs.org/makers/movement/1980s/>

PBS Video Clip

<http://video.pbs.org/video/2331419282/>

Article



**A Brief History of Women's Rights Movements**

The prominent figures and notable events of women's rights movements in America and beyond



Women's rights movements are primarily concerned with making the political, social, and economic status of women equal to that of men and with establishing legislative safeguards against discrimination on the basis of sex. Women's rights movements have worked in support of these aims for at least two centuries, from the first feminist publication in 1792, entitled *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, by Mary Wollstonecraft in Britain.

Militant political action among women began in Britain in 1903 with the formation of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) for the right to vote, under the leadership of Emmeline Pankhurst. Women of all ages and classes demonstrated on a massive scale; the demonstrators were jailed, locked out of their meeting places, and thrown down the steps of Parliament. National divisiveness ended in a truce at the outbreak of World War I (1914) with the WSPU's decision to support the war effort. The ensuing mobilization by WSPU of thousands of its members for voluntary participation in the war industries and support services was a highly influential factor in overcoming government resistance to WSPU aims. The right to vote was granted in 1918; it was confined to women of age 30 and above. In 1928 the voting age was lowered to 21.

In the United States the first definitive position on women's rights — hitherto intermingled with antislavery issues — was taken in 1848 under the leadership of Elizabeth Cady Stanton at the Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, N.Y.  In 1850 the National Women's Rights Convention was held, led by Lucy Stone, an early activist. Both groups coalesced in the formation (1863) of the Women's National Loyal League, under Susan B. Anthony, who wrote and submitted in 1878 a proposed right-to-vote amendment to the Constitution.

In 1890, Wyoming became the first state with women's suffrage. The movement was accelerated by the formation (1890) of the National American Women's Suffrage Association and the election (1900) of Carrie Chapman Catt as president. The ensuing campaign attracted many educated, wealthy, and influential women to the cause, with resultant political professionalism, increased funding, and the development of massive parades and demonstrations in the major cities. The Anthony amendment, as written in 1878, was ratified as the 19th Amendment and became law in 1920.

From 1920 to 1960 militancy on behalf of a single issue diffused into a number of women's political groups, such as the League of Women Voters (1920) and the National Council of Negro Women (1935). Such groups supported various types of liberal reforms related to the rights of both men and women. An equal rights amendment drafted in 1923 by the National Women's party (founded 1913) remained dormant for another 50 years.

At the international level, however, the women's rights movement made progress. The preamble to the United Nations (UN) Charter (1945) referred to equal rights for women; in 1948 the UN Commission on the Status of Women was established; in 1952 the UN General Assembly held a convention on the political rights of women.

During the 1960s a militant feminist trend emerged in the United States, encouraged by significant feminist studies, such as *The Second Sex* (1953) by Simone de Beauvoir and *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) by Betty Friedan, and by a general legislative climate favorable to minority rights and antidiscrimination movements. Militant women's groups were formed. The Women's Liberation Movement, which was social rather than political and was manifested in literature and demonstrations by radical feminists, may have raised the awareness of the nation to the prevalence of discriminatory beliefs and attitudes.

More significantly, feminist political organizations arose that developed into a full feminist movement by the 1970s. These included the National Organization for Women (NOW) formed in 1966 under the leadership of Betty Friedan; the National Women's Political Caucus (1971), composed of such nationally known feminists as Bella Abzug, Shirley Chisholm, and Gloria Steinem; the Equal Rights Amendment Ratification Council (1973); and the Coalition of Labor Union Women (1973).

The force of the women's rights movement, spearheaded by NOW, was brought to bear on the major issue of the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the Constitution. The ERA was approved by the U.S. House of Representatives in 1971 and by the Senate in 1972. On June 30, 1982, however, ratification of the ERA fell three states short of the needed 38. Later congressional efforts to reintroduce the measure have failed, although a number of states have added equal rights clauses to their constitutions.

Since the 1980s the women's movement has focused on diverse issues, including reproductive rights (preserving the woman's right of choice to have an abortion against the fervent pro-life movement), sexual harassment, and the so-called "glass ceiling" that impedes women in corporate advancement.

Credit: <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/history-womens-rights-movements>



