

Modern Feminism

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Patricia Burnett, Detroit's chapter president of the National Organization for Women, shows off large signs bearing the group's message in 1970. AP Images

Sixty years ago, most women worked inside their homes. They were wives and mothers. They were told this was the most important thing they could do.

Not every woman wanted to be a homemaker. Some of them wanted jobs outside of their homes.

In 1963, Betty Friedan wrote a book called "The Feminine Mystique." It suggested that women were able to do more than work in their homes. It urged women to do other things with their lives.

Women wanted the same rights as men

Many women read Friedan's book. They liked what she said. A new form of feminism was born. The feminist movement is about women wanting the same rights as men. In the early 1900s, feminists fought for the right to vote. Now, they wanted more rights in society, like in the workplace and in education.

Friedan helped form a group called the National Organization for Women, or NOW for short. It urged women to be a full part of American society.

The group pushed for many things. It wanted women to earn the same amount of money as men. It wanted laws that prohibited discrimination against women.

Many women realized they shared a problem

Many women joined groups where they shared their feelings. They realized they were struggling with a common problem.

Americans began to use the word "sexism." It means discrimination based on whether someone is male or female.

Sixty years ago, most college students were men. Very few women were lawmakers. Women did not earn as much money as men. Slowly, people became educated and things began to change.

Women changed the way they worked and lived

More women entered college. More women began to work outside their homes. Women waited longer to get married and have children. They earned their own money. This allowed them to leave unhappy marriages.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg is a Supreme Court justice. She is a judge with a very important job. Her mother did not live long enough to see the feminist movement. Ginsburg says she hopes her mother would have been proud of her.