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On August 26, 1970, thousands of women in cities across the country thronged the streets in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the ratification of the suffrage amendment, the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which granted women the right to vote. The Women's Strike for Equality march, one of the largest demonstrations for women's rights in U.S. history, represented a new era in the history of women's reform in which long-standing assumptions about men and women would crumble and institutions, laws, and policies would be redesigned to reflect a new gender order. The 1920 passage of the Nineteenth Amendment also marked a turning point in women's history, although voting rights for African American women in the southern states would not be secured until the 1965 Voting Rights Act ended almost a century of black male and female disenfranchisement in that region.

<A>**Women's Political Power in the Wake of the Nineteenth Amendment**

Winning the constitutional right to vote for the vast majority of American women was a milestone in the history of women's political citizenship. Yet women voted in several states before 1920, when full political rights for women, including equal access to officeholding and representation in the two major political parties and in government, were far from secure. The first woman in the U.S. House of Representatives, Jeannette Rankin, a Republican from Montana, entered Congress in 1917, and in her first vote that same year she recorded her opposition to U.S. entry into World War I. But few women followed her into high-ranking elected political office in the 1920s and 1930s. Those who did were termed the "widow

contingent” because all, with a few exceptions such as Mary T. Norton, Democratic congresswoman from New Jersey, and Ruth Hanna McCormick, Republican congresswoman from Illinois, had succeeded their ill or dying husbands into office. Both the Democratic and the Republican National Committee set up “Women’s Divisions” in the early 1920s, but these separate divisions did little to further women’s advancement into influential party offices. Still, both Women’s Divisions, along with the Democratic and Republican clubs that formed outside the formal party structure, encouraged women’s political education, voting, and party volunteer work. Former National Association of Colored Women (NACW) leaders Mary Church Terrell and Hallie Q. Brown helped organize a large network of active local black women’s Republican clubs in northern urban cities and eventually founded the National League of Republican Colored Women in 1924. In part because of the failure of the Republican Party to enact federal anti-lynching legislation, several prominent black women, most notably Alice Dunbar-Nelson, switched party allegiance and actively campaigned for Democratic candidates in the federal election of 1924. By 1932, as Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham notes, “the honeymoon had ended between black women and the Republican party.” (p. 211) Nevertheless, black women voters remained in the Republican column in national elections until 1936.

In the decades after suffrage, the percentage of women who registered and voted consistently fell below that of men. The absolute numbers of women voters would surpass that of men in 1964, but women continued to vote at a lower rate than men until 1980. As with many newly enfranchised groups, it would take time for women to exercise their voting rights. Women’s right to vote was established by law but not yet by custom or norm. Some women continued to oppose female suffrage; others failed to vote because of the intimidation of family

members or the larger community. Still others remained ambivalent about mainstream electoral politics and its efficacy as an avenue of political persuasion.

Prior to suffrage, women often exercised their political power in different ways than did men; the sources of their political authority were distinct as well. These distinctive patterns and beliefs continued into the postsuffrage era. The largest women's suffrage organization, the National American Woman's Suffrage Association, headed by Carrie Chapman Catt, disbanded after suffrage, and many of its members moved into the National League of Women Voters (NLWV). The NLWV encouraged women to vote and involve themselves in party politics, but it also kept alive the older women's political tradition by positioning women as above and apart from partisan politics and uniquely suited as women to pursue a disinterested, selfless agenda.

Shortly after the founding of the NLWV in 1920, its president, Maud Park Wood, set up the Women's Joint Congressional Committee (WJCC) to coordinate women's lobbying at the national level. The vast majority of women's groups joined, including Progressive-era organizations such as the National Consumers' League (NCL), the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), and the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), as well as newer groups like the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (NFBPWC). The WJCC, like the NLWV, was a hydra-headed creature. Realizing that no single issue united women as had suffrage, it allowed for a range of political agendas from its member organizations. It also relied on the rhetoric of public service and claimed authority based on women's distinctive experiences at the same time it lobbied for more women in public and party office. This approach, however, with its emphasis on gender separatism was losing adherents in the larger society as well as among women reformers. The

tension between integration and separatism and between claiming authority as like men or different from them had always existed in the women's movement, but it intensified in an era in which a growing number of women saw gender integration and equal treatment as possible and desirable.

In the 1920s the WJCC and its member organizations pursued the social reform agenda first articulated by Progressive-era reformers like Jane Addams, Florence Kelley, and Julia Lathrop. These women, born in the 1870s and 1880s and among the first generation of women to be college educated, devoted themselves to creating institutions and public policies that would heal class divisions and ameliorate the problems of the poor, the majority of whom were women and children. Along with a younger generation of women whom they had mentored in the prewar suffrage, consumer, and labor movements, they played key roles in the passage of the first federal social welfare legislation, the 1921 Sheppard-Towner Act, which set up prenatal and infant health centers across the country. Yet a combined assault from business and self-styled patriot groups cut into the public and congressional support for the WJCC coalition. In addition, as fear of a "woman's voting bloc" waned after the 1924 election revealed women's diverse political preferences, so did WJCC lobbying power. The Sheppard-Towner legislation expired in 1929, and the child labor amendment to the Constitution, one of the key goals of the WJCC in the 1920s, was voted down by the states, at times by public referendum.

Not all women shared the WJCC priorities in the 1920s. Facing the growing threat of a revitalized Ku Klux Klan, a movement in which white women were deeply involved, the NACW put its energy into coalition work with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and expressed their disappointment at the WJCC's failure to see antilynching legislation as a "woman's issue." Jane Addams increasingly shifted her energies to the WILPF,

founded in 1915 to study the causes of war and to work for permanent peace. The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), once a former WJCC ally, turned against the WJCC by the mid-1920s, accusing it of being un-American because it favored expanding federal powers and remained too closely allied with the peace initiatives of the WILPF. The battle over temperance also continued as a high priority for many women. Following the 1920 implementation of the Eighteenth Amendment, banning the sale and consumption of alcohol, some joined the growing efforts to repeal the amendment, which ended in victory in 1933. Others fought a rearguard action in its defense, continuing to claim that alcohol consumption fueled poverty, vice, and family dissolution.

In the 1930s, with Franklin Delano Roosevelt in office, the social welfare wing of the women's movement achieved much of their political agenda. Facing pressure from First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and the Democratic Party Women's Division chair, Molly Dewson, Roosevelt appointed a number of women to public office, including Frances Perkins, who as secretary of labor became the first female cabinet member. Women like Perkins were critical in the design and passage of the Social Security Act, which established old-age pensions, unemployment insurance, and new federal income guarantees for the poor, including poor mothers and children; the Wagner Act, which protected worker rights to bargain collectively with employers; and the Fair Labor Standards Act, which restricted child labor and established minimum wage and hour provisions for industrial workers.

<A>Social Reform in the Post<n->World War II Decades

The number of female governmental political appointments inched upward during World War II but fell back again in the war's aftermath. In the 1950s and 1960s, however, slow but steady

progress in integrating party and governmental ranks occurred, laying the basis for more rapid advances in the 1970s. Former actress Helen Gahagan Douglas ably represented her blue-collar Los Angeles district in Congress throughout the 1940s, only to be defeated by Richard Nixon in a 1950 Senate campaign that was notable for his anti-Communist smear tactics. By the 1960s congressional ranks had opened to Martha Griffiths (Democrat of Michigan), Frances Bolton (Republican of Ohio), Edith Green (Democrat of Oregon), Katharine St. George (Republican of New York), among others, and in 1965 Patsy Takemoto Mink (Democrat of Hawaii) became the first woman of color and the first woman of Asian-Pacific islander descent in the House. A handful of women also moved into the Senate, including Margaret Chase Smith (Republican of Maine). Elected first to the House in 1940 and then to the Senate in 1948, her long and successful congressional career continued into the 1970s.

In 1953 Democratic National Committee (DNC) officials dissolved the DNC's Women's Division amidst protest by female party activists who claimed women were being scapegoated for the loss to the Republicans in 1952. Women had shown a slightly larger preference for Eisenhower in 1952, provoking the debate, but this gender gap in national party preference vanished quickly. Women's voting patterns in national elections were virtually indistinguishable from those of men from 1920 until 1980, when a sizable number of Democratic men shifted their allegiance to the Republican Party and women did not.

In the decades following World War II, as in earlier eras, women's political influence was expressed most powerfully outside the traditional party avenues. The separatist social welfare network of women reformers declined, but a new generation of women reinvigorated progressive grass-roots social reform through their leadership in the labor, civil rights, human

rights, and peace movements. In part because these were new movements, and at times marginal ones, women were welcomed as members and even as leaders.

The labor movement had risen dramatically in the 1930s, offering a vision of interracial and interclass solidarity, avid political advocacy for state regulation and social benefits and a new openness to a range of political perspective. In the 1920s the primary worker-based reform organizations, the American Federation of Labor, the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), each pursued separate agendas. In the mid-1930s, however, many Socialists and Communists decided to work within the new labor federation, the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO), helping organize the millions of mass production and other low-income workers who would be the basis of labor's power in the postwar era. Women flooded into the new movement, and some such as Ruth Young of the United Electrical Workers Union, Myra Wolfgang of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union, and Caroline Davis, Lillian Hatcher, and Millie Jeffrey of the United Automotive Workers moved into key secondary positions of leadership.

By the 1940s a formidable women's labor movement existed that included close to 3 million women in unions, a million homemakers in women's labor auxiliaries, and a dynamic national network of women labor officials. Through their participation in the U.S. Women's Bureau reform network, women labor officials allied with like-minded women leaders of the National Council for Negro Women (NCNW) founded in 1935 by Mary McLeod Bethune and later led by Dorothy Height the American Association of University Women, the YWCA, and other groups. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, at the height of the supposed era of domesticity and gender conservatism, this coalition pushed for equal pay for equal work; an end

to unfair discrimination on the basis of race, sex, marital status, and nationality; improved labor standards legislation; universal day care and other supports for working mothers.

In the early 1960s, under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, many of their goals were realized, including the establishment of the 1961 President's Commission on the Status of Women, the passage of the 1963 Equal Pay Act and the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and in 1966 the extension of the Fair Labor Standards Act to cover the majority of workers. Esther Peterson, a longtime labor activist and former lobbyist for the AFL-CIO whom Kennedy appointed assistant secretary of labor in 1961, was instrumental in these victories, as was the lobbying of women's, labor, and civil rights organizations.

Women of color were key public actors and social change advocates in the postwar decades. Black men held the top leadership positions in African American civil rights organizations such as the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), the NAACP, and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), but the majority of participants were female, in part due to the movement's close connection to organized religion. In addition, Ella Baker, Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer, and others provided indispensable inspiration and intellectual leadership to the movement. Spanish-speaking women helped sustain the work of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the oldest Hispanic advocacy organization, and the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), set up in 1968. Josefina Fierro de Bright served as the first executive secretary of the Congress of Spanish-Speaking People, a national Latino civil rights organization founded in 1939.

African American and Spanish-speaking women also led and were the majority constituency in the welfare rights movement. Johnnie Tillmon, a mother of six, became executive director of the National Welfare Rights Organization, founded in 1966, and spoke

compellingly about the rights of mothers to care for their children and the social value of the mother-work of all women. In the labor movement, African American women like Addie Wyatt of the United Packinghouse Workers Union and Maida Springer-Kemp of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union rose to prominence, as did Mexican-American Dolores Huerta, who became vice-president of the United Farm Workers of America.

A surprising number of black women ran for public office. Shirley Chisholm, for example, who in 1968 became the first black woman elected to Congress, ran for the Democratic nomination for the presidency in 1972. During seven terms representing her Brooklyn, New York, district in the House, she effectively championed the concerns of women and minority groups. Her book, *Unbought and Unbossed* (1970), chronicles her life in public office.

Disagreement over the equal rights amendment (ERA) ran deep among women in the post-World War II decades. The ERA, a constitutional amendment calling for equal rights for men and women, encountered bitter hostility from the social reformers linked to the U.S. Women's Bureau after the National Woman's Party (NWP) introduced it in Congress in 1923. Women like Mary Anderson, the director of the U.S. Women's Bureau, feared the ERA would jeopardize the legality of the considerable body of woman-only state labor laws that social reformers had worked hard to win. The battle over the ERA raged for nearly a half century, exacerbated by class and other differences. Before the 1970s, conservative Republicans and business groups joined the NWP in backing the ERA, in part because they saw it as a way of overturning labor standards legislation. In contrast, ERA opponents found allies in the progressive wing of the Democratic Party and among organized labor. Eleanor Roosevelt and other prominent women reformers dropped their opposition to the ERA in the postwar decades, but many continued to fight the ERA until the early 1970s when, following the 1969

administrative ruling of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and subsequent federal court decisions, the last of the sex-based laws were either repealed or redrafted.

Foreign policy issues divided women as well. With the renewal of cold war hostilities at the end of World War II, women's political alliances depended in part on how they envisioned achieving global security and how they viewed the Soviet Union. When Henry Wallace ran for president on the Progressive Party ticket in 1948 calling for détente with the Soviet Union and less U.S. involvement in anti-Communist struggles around the world, he won only a small fraction of the vote. Women, however, comprised a large percentage of his supporters and held some of the top positions in his campaign. Some women such as former IWW organizer Elizabeth Gurley Flynn held leadership positions in the Communist Party USA, an organization whose membership declined precipitously after the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact and the ongoing revelations of Stalin's brutalities. Communist sympathizers as well as anti-Communist Socialists, liberals, and New Dealers women and men found themselves facing vitriolic attacks on their integrity and national loyalty by Senator Joseph McCarthy (Republican of Wisconsin) and others at the height of the cold war in the late 1940s and 1950s. {I PREFER NOT TO NAME NAMES HERE}

The United Nations, established in 1945, remained one of the few forums during the cold war in which all the global powers participated. U.S. women helped establish the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women in 1947, and in 1948 the UN General Assembly passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Eleanor Roosevelt chaired the UN Commission that formulated the declaration's inspiring call for the economic, political, and social rights of all peoples.

< A>The 1960s: Realignments and Redefinitions

Although the two major political parties jockeyed for power in the 1940s and 1950s, they often agreed on many basic political principles and used similar rhetoric in their appeals to voters. A majority within both parties saw the need for a social safety net for the elderly and the poor, embraced the traditional family as crucial to societal well-being and stability, and heralded their commitment to preserving religious freedom, democratic governance, and containing the spread of communism. In 1964, however, a conservative faction within the Republican Party challenged the dominant moderate wing of the party and nominated Barry Goldwater as the Republican Party candidate for president. He was overwhelmingly defeated, but the New Right, as the conservative movement came to be called, continued to gain strength, as evidenced by the 1966 election of Ronald Reagan as governor of California and his subsequent 1980 election as president. Republican clubwomen, organized as the National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW), an auxiliary group of women volunteers that since the 1950s had sought to distance themselves from the more moderate women party officials close to the Republican National Committee (RNC), were a major constituency behind Goldwater and within the New Right. Their emphasis on a moral politics, averse to compromise and distrustful of partisan loyalty, echoed some aspects of an older pre-suffrage women's political culture. Phyllis Schlafly, a leader of the New Right whose book *A Choice Not An Echo* (1964) helped nail down Goldwater's nomination, would eventually take her conservative followers out of the NFRW and build a powerful antifeminist movement in the 1970s based on opposition to the equal rights amendment, abortion rights, gay rights, and the drafting of women into the military. A substantial number of Republican women, however, continued to identify as liberal or moderate Republicans in the 1960s and 1970s and remained sympathetic to a women's rights agenda.

The largest women's movement of the 1960s, often termed "second-wave feminism," happened largely outside the Republican Party. The new feminism of the 1960s had multiple roots and, like all big-tent mass movements, sheltered an array of organizations and political ideologies. Many 1960s feminists were veterans of the postwar labor, civil rights, and peace movements. Some had been inspired by the radical politics of the Communist Old Left and the New Left student movements that emphasized free speech rights and participatory democracy. One of the most influential organizations, the National Organization for Women (NOW), was founded in 1966 initially by labor and Democratic Party activists who had been angered by the Johnson administration's unwillingness to enforce the new prohibitions on sex discrimination in employment in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Led by Betty Friedan, the author of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), a bestselling exposé of the plight of middle-class housewives and the constraints of conventional femininity, NOW sought equal opportunities for women in every sphere and lobbied vigorously for governmental policies such as affirmative action and day care. Other new feminists, chiefly younger, college-educated women, started consciousness-raising groups, founded radical journals, and organized street theater protests. Some groups focused on the politics of reproduction and women's bodies; others explored women's sexuality and intimate relations. Still others debated strategies for transforming patriarchal society and ending the sexual division of labor. The new feminism of the 1960s, building on the social movements and individual pioneers who had preceded it, laid the foundation for the economic and political breakthroughs of the 1970s and beyond.

<CR>See also civil rights; feminism; labor movement and politics; Progressive parties; voting; welfare; woman suffrage.

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