

Women's Rights Newscast

Class Procedure: The class will be graded together on the flow of the newscast and the organization between groups along with the final segment the group creates. Each class will choose an anchor and a co-anchor who will set the order of the presentation and handle the lead ins to the subtopics, writes and reads off the lead story. In addition, an Executive Producer and editor will work with this group.

Preparation: Read your section interactively noting some statistics and ideas you'd like to include in the newscast. Consider these questions for your topic:

What were the chief frustrations of the women's movement on your topic?

What were the most prominent successes of the women's movement in your topic area?

What obstacles and failures did feminists experience in fighting for change?

In what significant ways did the reforms change American society?

Did the women achieve full equity in your area?

What remains to be done to earn equality?

Bring some costumes and props to class that you might use for your story.

Day of: Write the script of your story, find appropriate attire and for your presentation, rehearse it, film it (2-4 minutes) and edit it. Yes, in literally one period so get to work.

Domestic Life Key Concerns of the Women's Movement The women's movement pressed for changes in domestic life (family life inside the home). Feminists demanded freedom for women to go beyond society's designated roles for them as wives, mothers, and homemakers. The women's movement called for societal acceptance of women as equal individuals with needs for personal fulfillment. In addition, they pressed for changes in family structure, recognition of housework as unpaid labor, and government support for childcare.

Personal Fulfillment The women's movement criticized society's expectation that women would find complete fulfillment in domestic life. In her 1963 groundbreaking book, *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan argued that American culture did not accept women's need to grow and reach their human potential. She argued that housewives and mothers were held up as the model of femininity, and that society told women that "the highest value...for women is the fulfillment of their own femininity." Friedan urged, "We can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: 'I want something more than my husband and my children and my home,'" Friedan's ideas electrified many women, who strove to open new opportunities for women outside the home. As Carol Connolly reflected in *In the Company of Women*, changing people's ideas about women's roles was difficult:

I was married in the '50s, when I was 23. That was late, very late, for that time. I was rebellious, even then. I knew that marrying was kind of the end, but really there were no other career choices. I can remember arguing years later with a guy who said, "That's ridiculous. You could have gone to law school you could have gone to medical school" Well, maybe, but you would have chosen to be a freak. You would have been the outsider.

Family Structure While most feminists did not want to abandon marriage or motherhood, they demanded greater equality within the home. Women who had always worked outside the home to

support their families sought recognition of the “double burden” they were carrying—work both inside and outside the home. They argued that men should assume more responsibility for care of the family and home and treat their wives equally. Feminists also brought attention to the need for women’s protection, pointing out that domestic violence was the main cause of injury among women of childbearing age. Lesbian women— excluded from the practice of marriage—sought to broaden the definition of *family* to a group of people who support and love each other. Many women of color, however, were concerned about adequately playing the role of wife and mother, rather than escaping it. One African-American woman said, ““At a time when some radical white feminists are striving for a different family structure, many black women are trying to stabilize their families. They are making a special effort...to assume the wife and mother role more effectively.”

Housework as Unpaid Labor The women’s movement also demanded recognition that women’s unpaid labor in the home was essential to the family’s and society’s well-being. Many women found housework and care of the family exhausting, boring, and unappreciated. A 1965 poll showed that women performed 80 percent of all household work. One study found that housewives worked 99 hours a week. Edith M. Stern, a housewife and writer, described a want ad for a housewife: “Help Wanted: Domestic: Female. All cooking, cleaning, laundering, sewing, meal planning, shopping, weekday chauffeuring, social secretarial service, and complete care of three children. Salary at employer’s option. Time off if possible.” She commented, “No one in her right senses would apply for such a job.”.

Childcare Adequate childcare was seen as a pressing need for both women already in the workforce and those who wanted to join it. Since women were not paid for taking care of children but society benefited from their work, feminists argued that the government should help pay for childcare. This would allow women to work outside the home and keep their jobs. Childcare proponents also believed that children would benefit more from being with other children under the supervision of qualified childcare providers than staying at home with a single parent. Some activists further argued that children growing up in racially mixed centers could help reduce racism in American society.

Changes in Domestic Life The women's movement successfully raised public awareness about society's restrictions on women, and changed many people's ideas about what were "proper" male and female roles in the family. As a result, greater numbers of men began to take on a share of the household labor, actively participate in raising children, and support women’s attempts to enter the workforce. In 1974, the use of “**Ms.**”—**which** unlike “Miss” and “Mrs.” does not indicate a woman’s marital status—**was** legalized in California. Feminists also successfully pressured lawmakers to pass equal opportunity employment laws, paving the way for women to enter new fields of work.

On the legal front, feminists' pressure for government-supported childcare resulted in special tax breaks for families who paid for outside childcare. The women's movement also lobbied for maternity leave so that women could keep their jobs after taking time off to have babies. Their efforts led to several state laws that approved unpaid maternity leave. Finally, feminists were

instrumental in having laws passed in a few states that required that a divorced couple's property be equally divided between the husband and wife, recognizing housewives' contribution to the couple's well-being. By the late 1970s, the women's movement had not achieved the widespread changes it desired, but it had paved the way for greater equality between men and women in the home.

Today: Women have surpassed men in obtaining college degrees. Women have flocked to many formerly male-dominated occupations such as law and medicine. In 2018, a record number of women candidates were elected to Congress. And high-school seniors today are more likely than their counterparts 40 years ago to say they strongly believe that women should have the same opportunities as men to succeed in school and at work. But gender equality for women still lags in another realm: their own home. Married American mothers spend almost twice as much time on housework and child care than do married fathers. Although American mothers—including those with young children—are far more likely to be working now than in past decades, they spend *more* time on child care today than did moms in the 1960s.

Overall in the U.S., women clean more than men do. American men did an average of 15 minutes of housework each day, while women did over 45. Most men—77 percent—did no housework on any given day. American women tend to do more housework than women in other countries—about four and a half hours each week, on average. “Meanwhile, Spanish women only spend about an hour and a half a week on housework, Brazilian women spend only 1.6 hours a week,” they write. But “French women spend almost no time on housework at all. French men, on the other hand, spend 1.2 hours a week on housework, well more than the .8 hours a week spent by American men.”

A recent study showed that doing domestic work also leaked into the office place. Women do a majority of the “domestic work” in the office setting to and are expected to by management. When it comes to domestic duties, the workplace gender dynamic near perfectly mirrors what is happening in our homes. Women are assigned 55% of work in the office and do 10% more work than men.