

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.

Health: Key Concerns of the Women's Movement: Particularly women's reproductive rights (control over pregnancy and childbirth), were an important focus of the women's movement. Most importantly, feminists demanded that women have complete decision-making power over their bodies. They focused on two areas, in particular the need for improvements in women's healthcare, and greater control for women over reproduction, including access to birth control and legal abortion.

The women's movement had several concerns about women's healthcare. First, feminists argued that some male doctors ignored or misdiagnosed women's symptoms. They also believed that the medical profession failed to address other health-related issues, such as women's sexuality. They said that doctors treated many women of color and poor white women worse than middle-class women, ignoring their needs or refusing to care for them because they could not afford health insurance. Furthermore, feminists noted that health research was primarily based on male bodies and needs. As a result, both doctors and women were ill-informed about female-specific topics such as menstruation, menopause (a midlife process in which women stop menstruating), and natural childbirth. They argued that more money should be spent on research of illnesses that particularly affect women such as breast cancer, which close to 180,000 women develop each year. In *In the Company of Women*, Jeri Rasmussen criticizes the lack of research:

I'll tell you my ultimate outrage now... I'm a survivor of breast cancer. My sister-in-law didn't survive. I'm outraged that the rates of survival are no different from what they were 50 years ago. The fact that there is no research, no fundamental research done for breast cancer ...Something that has the potential of affecting every one of us nobody pays any attention to, because we're female.

Reproductive Rights The women's movement also sought greater control for women over pregnancy and childbirth. Feminists pressed for free and available birth control—which was restricted to married people in the 1950s—for all women. They also lobbied for greater control over the childbirth process. Women typically had their babies in hospitals, and medical staff usually gave women anesthetics right before they gave birth, so that some women could not even remember having had a baby.

One of the most sensitive and significant issues the women's movement addressed was the availability of legal abortions. Feminists argued that illegal abortions—which were dangerous, unsanitary, expensive, and difficult to get—accounted for 40 percent of deaths in pregnant women. In addition, women of color were four to eight times more likely to die from illegal abortions than white women. In the 1960s, a woman could receive a legal abortion only if the pregnancy threatened her life and it was approved by a hospital

However, women still sought abortions for various reasons: they were unmarried and feared being disowned by their families; they felt they were too poor to successfully raise a child; they were victims of incest or rape; they did not wish to have another child; or they had been informed their child would be born with serious birth defects. Because few hospitals approved abortions, an average of 8,000 legal abortions occurred each year, as compared to 200,000 to 1,000,000 illegal abortions. Still, despite many feminists' support for making abortion legal, abortion was a painful and highly controversial subject for women both inside and outside the women's movement. Many women who supported a woman's right to choose whether to have an abortion had deep and painful feelings about the act itself. Other women—particularly those from Christian backgrounds—passionately opposed a woman's right to choose abortion, believing that every fetus had a right to life.

Changes in Women's Health The women's movement achieved widespread changes in the area of women's health. First, feminists began a self-help movement that encouraged women to take control of their own health needs. Feminists were hugely successful in raising women's understanding of many health topics, including women's anatomy, birth control, diseases women were prone to (such as breast and cervical cancer), menstruation, menopause, natural childbirth, and violations of women's bodies, such as rape. Activists established women's health centers that provided women with medical services, counseling, health publications, birth control, and other services. Partly due to pressure from women of color to address poor women's lack of affordable healthcare, many women's health centers provided services at low cost. One feminist group, the Boston Women's Health Collective, published the now-famous book *Our Bodies, Ourselves* in 1969. This book provided women with clear, thoughtful information on everything from aging to sexuality.

The women's movement also made great progress in gaining reproductive rights. Feminists successfully pressured lawmakers and judges to repeal (cancel) state abortion laws. Their activism greatly influenced the momentous 1973 Supreme Court case, *Roe v. Wade*. In this case, the court ruled that a Texas statute (law) outlawing abortion violated a woman's constitutional right to privacy when deciding whether to have children. The ruling meant that performing or receiving an abortion was no longer a crime. Abortion was permitted within the first two trimesters, and even in the third trimester if a woman's health was at risk.

Feminists also achieved greater access to contraception, particularly the birth control pill that was developed in 1960, for all women. By 1962, over 1.2 million were taking it to prevent pregnancy. Finally, feminists of color focused attention on doctors who recommended sterilization operations instead of birth control for poor women and women of color.

Sexual Violence: On average, one in three women are victims of intimate partner violence and one in five women are victims of sexual assault. In 2006 the 'me too.' movement was founded to help survivors of sexual violence, initially focused on Black women and girls. Following the exposure of the widespread sexual-abuse allegations against Harvey Weinstein in early October 2017, the movement began to spread virally as a hashtag on social media. Alyssa Milano posted on Twitter, "If all the women who have ever been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too.' as a status, then we give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem." Though widespread media coverage and discussion of sexual harassment, particularly in Hollywood, led to high-profile firings, there has been criticism and backlash against the movement. More recently, claims of harassment against Donald Trump and Brett Kavanaugh, who had multiple women accuse them of sexual assault, did not stop them from assuming positions as president and supreme court justice respectively. The Trump administration also changed the definition of domestic violence and sexual assault to no longer include forms of domestic violence such as psychological abuse, coercive control and manipulation.

Today: Women's health care has improved, and there have been major strides in areas such as cancer research where breast cancer now sits atop the research spending list. Yet, there are still significant issues women face when it comes to their health care. A sweeping movement to allow religious freedom has allowed some companies to forego paying for women's contraception or abortions. Women, who have health issues are still far more likely to be told by doctor's that they do not have serious issues. The traditional medical system, where 55% of medical practitioners are male and 66% of specialists tends to think that women are socialized to think women's health concerns are hysterical. The result, a recent study concluded that women are more likely to be given sedatives for their pain and men given pain medication, and more likely to be inadequately treated by healthcare providers. The traditional medical system disadvantages women, who, unlike men, are socialized to question themselves. The result is that people are dying because they are female and doctors are blinded by their gender bias.

Emily List and Planned Parenthood are two organizations that focus on women's reproductive rights. Emily's List works to elect women who support a woman's right to choose while Planned Parenthood is an organization that serves 1/5 of the American women's health care needs including birth control. They are in a fight with the Trump administration which has cut government funding to the organization. Planned Parenthood claims that this decision threatens the access of 4 million women to affordable birth control, STD testing, cancer screenings and more.