

# 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.

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**Sports: Key Concerns of the Women's Movement** A key goal of the women's movement was to gain entry to a cherished male preserve: the world of athletics. To do so, feminists and athletes pushed for equal opportunity for women in sports, and the expansion and protection of women's rights in the world of athletics.

**Discrimination Against Women in Sports** The women's movement brought attention to the number of barriers to women's involvement in sports. Despite the accomplishments of women athletes before the 1970s, most women were discouraged from participating in sports, which were considered "unwomanly" and "too strenuous." Instead, they were relegated to the sidelines, as observers or cheerleaders. Women who did pursue professional athletics were paid significantly less than their male counterparts, and at both the amateur and professional levels they were barred from competing in certain sports. For example, officials at the Boston Marathon didn't allow women to enter the race until 1972. Many had run the race unofficially before, including Katherine Switzer, who entered the 1967 marathon under her brother's name and ran with a cap covering her hair until she was discovered. Officials tried to chase Switzer off the course, but she outran them all and finished the race.

**Title IX Bars Discrimination** The women's movement met with success when feminist efforts led to Congress passing Title IX, a key piece of education legislation. Part of the 1972 Educational Amendments, Title IX outlawed sex discrimination in educational programs that received federal money. Under Title IX, if a school was caught discriminating on the basis of sex, the government would cut off its funding. The law included sports programs at federally funded schools, mandating that they give female sports programs and teams the same funding as male sports programs, and access to equivalent (equal) facilities. This meant that if a school's enrollment was half male and half female, then the same amount of its money would be available to men's and women's athletic teams for scholarships, equipment, coaching, travel, and so forth.

**Resistance to Title IX** Initially, high schools and colleges throughout the United States resisted Title IX. Some resisted because they didn't believe that women should be as heavily involved in sports as men. For example, one Wisconsin high school coach complained in 1973, "I think girls have a right to participate, but to a lesser degree than boys. If they go too far with the competitive stuff, they lose their femininity." Some athletic administrators resented allocating equal funds to women's sports because it reduced the amount of money spent on men's sports. Others were reluctant to invest in women's sports because they believed that they were not as important—or as lucrative—as men's sports. Even though violations of Title IX were rampant, the U.S. Health, Education, and Welfare Department (HEW) was lax in enforcing the law. As a result, by the mid 1970s a number of women's organizations focused on education—such as the Project on Equal Education Rights (PEER)—began to monitor enforcement. Despite successes in getting schools to comply with Title IX, many schools continued to resist through the end of the twentieth century. Male sports like wrestling and gymnastics were often cut by universities in order to allow equality for women

**Changes in Funding for Women's Sports** Title IX's greatest impact was on high school and college sports programs for girls and women, which were expanded through increasing funding. The funding for collegiate women's sports grew from approximately 1 percent in 1972 to over 16 percent by 1984. By 1990, the schools with big athletic programs, dominated by football, spent 82 percent of their budgets on men's programs and 18 percent on women's. In smaller schools without football teams, though, the gap in spending was smaller, with an average of 54 percent of funds spent on men's athletics and 46 percent spent on women's. In response to the disparity in funding, numerous women athletes have sued their schools for an equal share of the athletic budget. *Women's Sports and Fitness* magazine reported that in the fall of 1995, women had won 31 Title IX discrimination cases, and had lost none. In one case, Brown University was required to reinstate women's gymnastics and volleyball teams to their varsity status to offer more equal athletic opportunities for female students, who make up 51 percent of student body.

**Changes in Women's Participation in Sports** The expansion of sports programs and facilities generated a dramatic increase in girls' and women's participation in high school and college sports. Before 1972, only 16,000 college women participated in women's sports each year. By 1984, the number had risen to over 150,000. Title IX's positive impact was confirmed at the 1984 Olympic Games, where three quarters of the American women who competed said they would not have been at the games without Title IX. By the mid 1990s, over 2 million girls played on high school sports teams, more than six times the number involved in athletics in 1971. Susan Baumbach Vass comments on changes brought about by Title IX in the book *In the Company of Women*:

*When I was growing up—and this was before Title IX—I was an excellent athlete.... I was a really good basketball player.... After Title IX, the first girls' basketball tournament that I ever watched was on television. I sat in my apartment, I watched the girls play...and I wept and I wept and I wept. It's a small thing, hardly earth-shattering compared to grinding kinds of oppression. But on a personal level, that hurt so much. I cried with happiness for the girls now, but also with this great sense of loss that I never had a chance to compete*

**Women in Sports and the Media:** Women athletes are also given short shrift in the media. Margaret Carlisle Duncan and Michael Messner studied sports coverage on three network affiliates in Los Angeles. They report that only 9 per cent of airtime was devoted to women's sports, in contrast to the 88 per cent devoted to male athletes. Female athletes fared even worse on ESPN's national sports show Sports Center, where they occupied just over two per cent of airtime. During the last 2 decades, numerous empirical studies investigating the interaction of gender, sport, and the media have consistently found that media coverage of female athletes have failed to mirror their athletic achievements. Studies of media coverage of female athletes show that they are generally under-represented compared to their male counterparts. Despite the exponential growth in women's sport in the last three decades, elite female athletes typically receive only about 10 percent of print media coverage.

**Fit Shaming and Appropriate Sports:** Research has indicated that female athletes competing in the traditionally "gender-appropriate" individual sports such as swimming, diving, gymnastics, and tennis, which represent a narrow, culturally stereotyped view of female athleticism, receive more electronic and print media coverage than female athletes competing in the traditionally "gender-inappropriate" team sports such as field hockey, softball, rugby, and bodybuilding. One bodybuilder discussed the battles, "I had two workouts today. The first I did at the gym, where I sweated, strained, pushed and coaxed myself to push more. There I visualized strong sexv curves and rippling muscle. Counting off reps, I imagined the vision I want to see when I look in the mirror. The second workout was with men who criticized the way I look. 'You don't want to do much more of that or you'll look like a man.' I have to force myself to push past the forces of sexism and misogyny which are products of gender norms and a key part of the industry media publications. This workout is also transformative and has lasting effects, though they do not contribute to a positive self- portrait.

Media images of women in sports are also very different from the familiar pictures of male athletes in action. Female athletes are increasingly photographed in what Professor Pat Griffin calls "hyper- sexualized poses." Griffin notes, "When it was once enough to feminize women athletes, now it is necessary to sexualize them for men. Instead of hearing, 'I am woman, hear me roar,' we are hearing 'I am hetero-sexy, watch me strip.'" Meanwhile muscles on women like Serena Williams boasts and help them succeed in the sport are shamed. Williams recently responded to her critics on Reddit stating, "I've been called man because I appeared outwardly strong. It has been said that that I use drugs. No, I just work hard and I was born with this badass body and proud of it.