

Women's Liberation Movement (1960's – 1980's)

The Women's Liberation Movement began to grow and bring about change from the bottom up.

The Women's Movement in the 1960's built upon a small group which met in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York which was the location for the first Women's Rights Convention. Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote "The Declaration of Sentiments" creating the agenda of women's activism for decades to come.

In 1866 Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony formed the American Equal Rights Association, an organization dedicated to the goal of suffrage for all regardless of gender or race. Over the next 53 years, the small beginning grew into a nationwide, Suffragette movement, which finally got the U.S. Congress to pass the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. On August 26, 1920 three quarters of the state legislatures ratified the Nineteenth Amendment. American Women finally won full voting rights.

As the struggle for civil rights began to have some major successes, women in our country and in many other parts of the world started to push for total equality under the law for themselves.

Those participating in the movement believed that the moral and social climate which perceived women as second-class citizens needed to change. Challenging patriarchy and the hierarchical organization of society which defined women as subordinate in both public and private spheres, liberationists believed that women should be free to define their own individual identity as part of human society.

The women who supported the movement chose not to create a single approach to addressing the problem of women being treated as second-class citizen. Unlike many, if not most male-headed organizations, they did not want to foster an idea that any one group or idea could address all the societal problems women faced. They wanted women, whose voices had been silenced, to be able to express their own views on solutions. Rejecting authority and espousing participatory democracy as well as direct action, they promoted a wide agenda including civil rights, eliminating objectification of women, ethnic empowerment, granting women reproductive rights, increasing opportunities for jobs and education.

In 1967, the first Women's Liberation organizations in the US formed in major cities like Berkeley, Boston, Chicago, and New York City. Very quickly organizations spread across the country.



Organizations were loosely organized, without a hierarchical power structure. Support for women's liberation grew quickly across the country. Legislation was passed to make changes in state and some national laws to promote a more fully human role for women in society. Eventually, this movement helped bring about the Equal rights Amendment.