

Fill in the chart below, explaining the successes and failures of the Women’s Rights Movement for each era listed.

ERA	SUCCESSES	FAILURES
Pre-Civil War		
Civil War to the 1920s		
1920s-1950s		
1960s-1970s		
1980s-Today		

TEACHER DEBRIEFING SHEET**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. How did the early Women's Rights Movement (prior to 1920) set the stage for the Women's Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s?
2. Describe the goals and methods of the Women's Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s.
3. What were the successes and challenges of the Women's Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s?
4. How are the issues women face today similar to or different from the issues American women faced in the past?
5. What might account for the gap in earnings between men and women? The post-1920 gap in political representation?
6. To what extent has the Women's Rights Movement made the United States a more equal and just society?

TASK:

Reenact a multi-generational women's family reunion at which women who came of age in different eras share their experiences and discuss the successes and failures of the Women's Rights Movement.

TASK EVALUATION CRITERIA:

- Family reunion includes at least three generations of women.
- Discussions at the family reunion include reference to specific people, places, events, legislation, statistics, and court cases.
- Family reunion makes use of two or more of the following: props, costumes, visuals, and flashbacks.
- Family reunion attendees represent multiple points of view within each generation.
- Family reunion includes discussion of the extent to which the Women's Rights Movement has made the United States a more equal and just society.

EXTENSION QUESTIONS:

1. Are men and women equal? Why or why not?
2. Explain whether or not it is possible for men and women to be equal?
3. Why do women earn less than men?
4. Compare and contrast the two different streams of the Women's Rights Movement of the 1960s.
5. How were/are the challenges of minority women similar to or different from those faced by white women?
6. Describe the arguments for and against the Equal Rights Amendment. Which side of the debate do you agree with and why?
7. Why are reproductive rights such an explosive issue?
8. Why are there still so few women in government?
9. What are some of the obstacles women face on the road to equality?
10. Compare and contrast the goals and methods of the Women's Rights Movement with those of the African American Civil Rights Movement.

ACTIVITY FIVE: WOMEN

ACTIVITY CARD

Although American women won the right to vote in 1920, broader economic and social change has been a longer time coming, and the pace of progress has often been uneven. In the United States during the 1960s, there began a period of substantial social change; in women's issues, the result was a phenomenon known as the Women's Rights Movement.

Influenced by the success of the Civil Rights Movement for racial equality and other progressive currents sweeping the nation during the 1960s and 1970s, a wide array of organizations and lobbying groups urged full equality for American women as well. The call was not only for a fundamental revision of American institutions, customs and values, but also for a revolution in consciousness – in the minds of women as well as men – and especially in the way women thought about themselves.

Although the movement began primarily among white, middle-class women, by the 1970s it had spread across all racial, social, and economic lines. The movement did not achieve all its legislative goals. Nevertheless, it accomplished major changes in the status of women at home, in school, at work, and in their professional and personal relationships.

Not everyone welcomed the resulting changes, as evidenced by the formation of a number of organizations intent on countering what they viewed as unrestrained feminism. But whatever the perspective, there can be no doubt the changes have been telling. American women are living very different lives now than they did in the 1950s and earlier.

Directions: Read the Resource Cards and analyze the visuals. Discuss the following questions with your group:

1. How did the early Women's Rights Movement (prior to 1920) set the stage for the Women's Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s?
2. Describe the goals and methods of the Women's Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s.
3. What were the successes and challenges of the Women's Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s?
4. How are the issues women face today similar to or different from the issues American women faced in the past?
5. What might account for the gap in earnings between men and women? The post-1920 gap in political representation?
6. To what extent has the Women's Rights Movement made the United States a more equal and just society?

Task: Reenact a multi-generational women's family reunion at which women who came of age in different eras share their experiences and discuss the successes and failures of the Women's Rights Movement.

TASK EVALUATION CRITERIA

- **Family reunion includes at least three generations of women.**
- **Discussions at the family reunion include reference to specific people, places, events, legislation, statistics, and court cases.**
- **Family reunion makes use of two or more of the following: props, costumes, visuals, and flashbacks.**
- **Family reunion attendees represent multiple points of view within each generation.**
- **Family reunion includes discussion of the extent to which the Women's Rights Movement has made the United States a more equal and just society.**

RESOURCE CARD 1 OF 7

The Beginnings of the Women's Rights Movement

In the early nineteenth century, women were considered second-class citizens whose existence was limited to the interior life of the home and care of the children. Women were considered sub-sets of their husbands, and after marriage they did not have the right to own property, maintain their wages, or sign a contract, much less vote. It was expected that women be obedient wives, never to hold a thought or opinion independent of their husbands. It was considered improper for women to travel alone or to speak in public.

With the belief that intense physical or intellectual activity would be injurious to the delicate female biology and reproductive system, women were taught to refrain from pursuing any serious education. Women were considered merely objects of beauty, and were looked upon as intellectually and physically inferior to men. This belief in women's inferiority to men was further reinforced by organized religion, which preached strict and well-defined sex roles.

The women's suffrage movement was formally set into motion in 1848 with the first Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York. The catalyst for this gathering was the World Anti-Slavery Convention held in 1840 in London and attended by an American delegation which included a number of women. In attendance were Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who were forced to sit in the galleries as observers because they were women. This poor treatment did not rest well with these women of progressive thoughts, and it was decided that they would hold their own convention to "discuss the social, civil and religious rights of women." Using the Declaration of Independence as a guideline, the "Declaration of Sentiments" brought to light women's subordinate status and made recommendations for change.

Resolution 9 requesting the right to vote was perhaps the most important in that it expressed the demand for sexual equality. Subsequent to the Seneca Falls Convention, the demand for the vote became the centerpiece of the women's rights movement.

Excerpts of Resolutions from the Seneca Falls 1848 "Declaration of Sentiments":

...Resolved, that all laws which prevent woman from occupying such a station in society as her conscience shall dictate, or which place her in a position inferior to that of man, are contrary to the great precept of nature and therefore of no force or authority. [Resolution 2]

Resolved, that woman is man's equal, was intended to be so by the Creator, and the highest good of the race demands that she should be recognized as such. [Resolution 3]

Resolved, that the women of this country ought to be enlightened in regard to the laws under which they live, that they may no longer publish their degradation by declaring themselves satisfied with their present position, nor their ignorance, by asserting that they have all the rights they want... [Resolution 4]

Resolved, that it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise... [Resolution 9]

Resolved, that the speedy success of our cause depends upon the zealous and untiring efforts of both men and women for the overthrow of the monopoly of the pulpit, and for the securing to woman an equal participation with men in the various trades, professions, and commerce... [Resolution 11]

RESOURCE CARD 2 OF 7 Women's Right to Vote

During the Civil War, women's suffrage was eclipsed by the war effort and movement for the abolition of slavery. While annual conventions were held on a regular basis, there was much discussion but little action. Activists such as slave-born Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony lectured and petitioned the government for the emancipation of slaves with the belief that, once the war was over, women and slaves alike would be granted the same rights as the white men. At the end of the war, however, the government saw the suffrage of women and that of African Americans as two separate issues and it was decided that the African American vote could produce the immediate political gain, particularly in the South, that the women's vote could not. Abraham Lincoln declared, "This hour belongs to the Negro."

With the side-stepping of women's rights, women activists became enraged, and the American Equal Rights Association was established by Stanton and her colleagues in 1866 in an effort to organize in the fight for women's rights. In 1868, the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment proved an affront to the women's movement, as it defined "citizenship" and "voters" as "male", and raised the question as to whether women were considered citizens of the United States at all. The exclusion of women was further reinforced with the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, which enfranchised black men. In a disagreement over these Amendments, the women's movement split into two factions. In New York, Stanton and Anthony established the radical National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). Lucy Stone, Julia Ward Howe, and Henry Blackwell organized the more conservative American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) in Boston. These two groups later merged in 1890 to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) under the leadership of Stanton.



Women's suffrage protest in front of the White House, February 1917.

Susan B. Anthony was arrested for attempting to vote for Ulysses S. Grant in the 1872 presidential election. Six years later, in 1878, a Woman's Suffrage Amendment was introduced in the U.S. Congress. With the formation of numerous groups, such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) and, the Women's Trade Union League, the women's movement gained a full

head of steam during the 1890s and early 1900s. The U.S. involvement in World War I in 1918 slowed down the suffrage campaign as women pitched in for the war effort. However, in 1919, after years of petitioning, picketing, and protest parades, the Nineteenth Amendment was passed by both houses of Congress and in 1920 it became ratified under the presidency of Woodrow Wilson.

Amendment XIX (Ratified August 26, 1920)

1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.
2. Congress shall have power to enforce this Article by appropriate legislation.

RESOURCE CARD 3 OF 7 The Women's Rights Movement in the 1960s

The Women's Rights Movement that sprang up in the 1960s had multiple origins, which perhaps accounted for how quickly it swept the country. One wing of the women's movement grew out of the civil rights struggle. Another got its start with Betty Friedan, who first identified the "problem that had no name" in her 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique*.

Excerpt from *The Feminine Mystique*:

...Over and over women heard ... that they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity. Experts told them how to catch a man and keep him, how to breastfeed children and handle their toilet training, how to cope with sibling rivalry and adolescent rebellion; how to buy a dishwasher, bake bread, cook gourmet snails, ... how to dress, look, and act more feminine and make marriage more exciting; how to keep their husbands from dying young and their sons from growing into delinquents. They were taught to pity the neurotic, unfeminine, unhappy women who wanted to be poets or physicists or presidents. They learned that truly feminine women do not want careers, higher education, political rights...

The Women's Rights Movement developed in two separate streams. One stream, a formally structured national set of organizations, centered around the National Organization for Women (NOW), organized in 1966. This stream primarily included adult women and men and sought equality for women within mainstream institutions such as government, employment, labor unions – civic and public life particularly. Another stream, beginning at the end of that decade, never resulted in a dominant national organization. Informally named women's liberation, it attracted primarily young women college graduates, many of whom had been active in the antiwar and civil rights movements. This more radical stream concentrated on changing personal, social, and cultural life and challenged the male-dominated power structure. It focused on issues that had not been previously considered political, such as housework, beauty, reproductive rights, violence, and sexuality.

The National Organization for Women's 1966 Statement of Purpose:

We, men and women who hereby constitute ourselves as the National Organization for Women, believe that the time has come for a new movement toward true equality for all women in America, and toward a fully equal partnership of the sexes, as part of the world-wide revolution of human rights now taking place within and beyond our national borders...

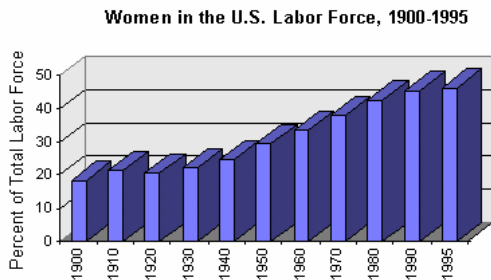


The 1972 inaugural issue of *Ms.* Magazine (above), founded and edited by Gloria Steinem.

The two streams emphasized different forms of organization. NOW used more traditional tactics: it had elected, salaried officers, brought in local dues-paying chapters, held national conferences, and worked through lobbying, petitioning, trying to change laws, and bringing suits in cases of discrimination. The women's liberation stream developed a strikingly new activist form: consciousness-raising, in which small groups of women explored their own experiences – including the personal – to arrive at new political understandings of women's oppression. The movement's commitment to democratic, grass-roots participation meant the majority of these feminists did not prioritize building stable national organizations or promoting visible leaders. They preferred provocative, colorful, inventive actions to publicize their positions, including sit-ins, street theater, poetry and song, speak-outs, irreverent images, and slogans. For example, women testified in public about their illegal abortions; feminists conducted an "ogle-in" to show men what it felt like to have their bodies rated. These tactics were extremely effective in changing mass consciousness, partly because they appealed to the media. Within just a few years millions of American women came to understand and use new terms such as "sexism," "Ms.," "male chauvinism," and "gender." They were, however, less effective in sustaining long-term organization.

**RESOURCE CARD 4 OF 7
Challenges Facing Women in the 1960s**

Women in 1960 played a limited role in American government. Although women comprised about half of the nation's voters, there were no female Supreme Court justices, federal appeals court justices, governors, cabinet officers, or ambassadors. Only 2 of 100 U.S. senators and 15 of 435 representatives were women. Of 307 federal district judges, 2 were women. Of 7,700 members of state legislatures, 234 were women. Nor were these figures atypical. Only 2 American women had ever been elected governor, only 2 had ever served in a president's cabinet, and only 6 had ever served as ambassador.



Economically, women workers were concentrated in low-paying service and factory jobs. The overwhelming majority worked as secretaries, waitresses, beauticians, teachers, nurses, and librarians. Only 3.5 percent of the nation's lawyers were women, 10 percent of the nation's scientists, and less than 2 percent of the nation's leading business executives.

Lower pay for women doing the same work as men was commonplace. One out of every three companies had separate pay scales for male and female workers. A female bank teller typically made \$15 a week less than a man with the same amount of experience, and a female laundry worker made 49 cents an hour less than her male counterpart. Altogether, the earnings of women working full-time averaged only about 60 percent of those of men.

Lower pay for women doing the same work as men was commonplace. One out of every three companies had separate pay scales for male and female workers. A female bank teller typically

In December 1961 President John F. Kennedy placed the issue of women's rights on the national political agenda. Eager to fulfill a debt to women voters – he had not named a single woman to a policymaking position – Kennedy established a President's Commission on the Status of Women, the first presidential panel ever to examine the status of American women. Chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, the commission issued its report in 1963, the year that Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*. The report's recommendations included a call for an end to all legal restrictions on married women's right to own property, to enter into business, and to make contracts; equal opportunity in employment; and greater availability of child-care services.

The most important reform to grow out of the commission's investigations was the 1963 Equal Pay Act, which required equal pay for men and women who performed the same jobs under equal conditions. The Equal Pay Act was the first federal law to prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender.

The next year, Congress enacted a new weapon in the fight against sex discrimination. Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibited discrimination in hiring or promotion based on race, color, religion, national origin, or sex by private employers and unions. As originally proposed, the bill only outlawed racial discrimination; but in a futile effort to block the measure, Representative Howard Smith of Virginia amended the bill to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex. Some liberals opposed the amendment on the grounds that it diverted attention from racial discrimination. But it passed in the House of Representatives 168 to 133. "We made it! God Bless America!" shouted a female voice from the House gallery when the amendment passed.

Minority women faced a special problem in that they encountered sexual and racial discrimination at the same time. They experienced sexual discrimination by men, both white and minority; and they faced racial discrimination by whites, men, and other women. In describing that period, the author Toni Morrison explained how black women "look at white women and see the enemy..." Many African American, Hispanic American, Native American, and Asian American women chose to delay their fight for equality in one sphere while they struggled for recognition in the other. Because priorities needed to be established, many women chose to seek full civil liberties for their ethnic group as their first objective. Equality between men and women would have to come later.

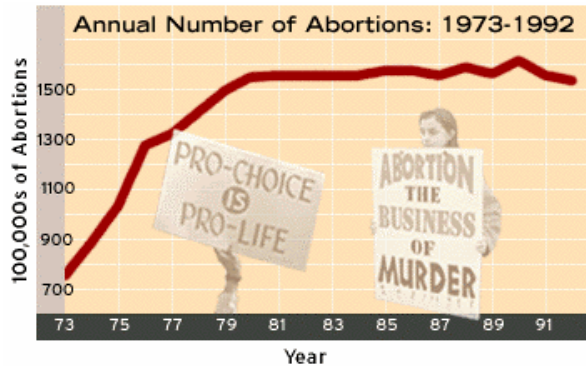
RESOURCE CARD 5 Of 7 Reproductive Rights

At the same time that women were growing more aware of the limits on their economic and political freedoms, many also began demanding more personal freedoms. The right to control their own sexuality and reproductivity became a rallying cry of many feminists.

In 1960, the Food and Drug Administration approved the sale of the birth control pill, ushering in a period of new sexual freedom. Married and unmarried women became more knowledgeable about their own health and their bodies. Many women felt that the pill gave them the freedom to be sexually active without the risk of pregnancy. The pill gave these women more opportunity to make their own decisions about their bodies.

Meanwhile, many women had been making these decisions another way – through abortion. Because abortions were illegal, finding a qualified physician who was willing to illegally perform the procedure was difficult and costly. Many who could not afford to have a safe abortion resorted to procedures performed by unqualified people. Many women suffered injury, sterility, or death because of unsafe abortions.

The push for reform of existing abortion laws came first from some doctors and lawyers, who were acutely aware of the dangers of illegal abortions. They were soon joined by many feminists. However, many people believed that abortions should not be allowed, so that by the time of the 1972 Democratic party convention, abortion had become an explosive political issue.



In 1973, the Supreme Court announced its decision in *Roe v. Wade*, which established a woman’s right to have an abortion. Even before the court’s historic pronouncement, several states had modified their laws to permit abortion under specific conditions. Many feminists, however, wanted all abortion limits repealed on the grounds that women should have absolute control over their own bodies. However, many people, including some feminists, were against abortion. These people believed that life begins at conception, and that abortion at any time during pregnancy constituted murder. Therefore, they opposed abortion on moral grounds.

The Court’s decision set forth the manner in which states could limit the right to abortion. The decision established that no limitations could be imposed by the states during the first trimester, or first three months, of pregnancy. State law could restrict abortions during the second trimester to cases that were potentially dangerous to a woman’s health. The state could choose to restrict abortion during the third trimester to protect the life of the unborn child capable of sustaining life outside the womb.

In the process of moving through the Supreme Court, the abortion issue shifted in focus from the rights of the mother to the rights of the unborn child. Rather than settling the issue of abortion, however, the Supreme Court decision intensified controversy. The political and moral battle between the “pro-choice” supporters (for the individual’s right to choose on abortion) and the “pro-life” forces (against abortion) dominated many political contests. Indeed, the debate has continued no less passionately into the present.



ACTIVITY FIVE: WOMEN

RESOURCE CARD 6 Of 7 The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)

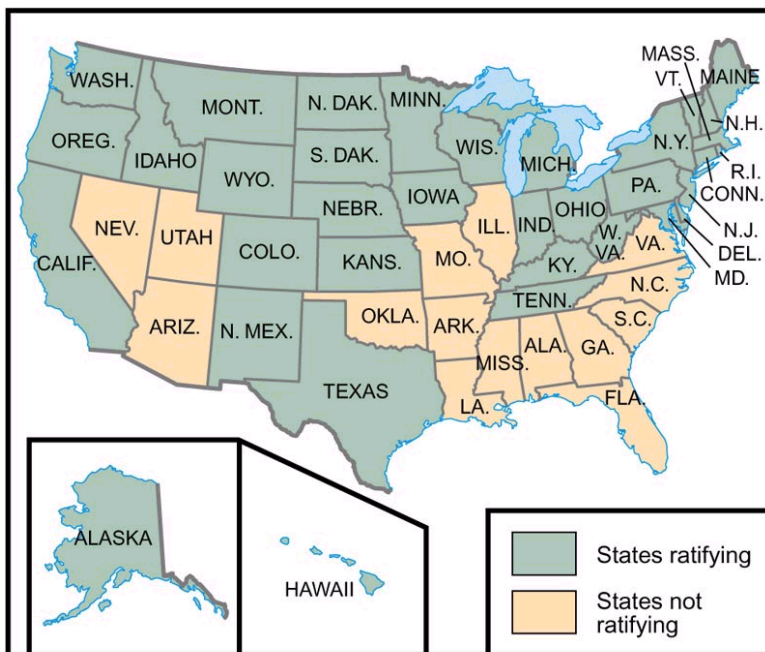
The idea of a constitutional amendment specifically addressing the issue of women's equality was not a new one. The National Women's Party had first proposed an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in 1923 and reintroduced it in every subsequent session of Congress.

As late as 1962, the President's Commission on the Status of Women did not favor passage of the amendment. This view was shared by many women's groups, including the League of Women voters, who were concerned that passage of the ERA would cancel legal protections women already enjoyed. But in the late 1960s, the courts began to strike down these protective laws because they were in conflict with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. As a result, the League withdrew its objection to the amendment.

The proposed amendment was a simple one. It read: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States any State on account of sex." Two other brief clauses provided Congress with enforcement power and established that the amendment would go into effect two years after ratification.

The proponents of the amendment felt that in 1970 the time was right for its passage. That year the amendment flew through the House of Representatives on a voice vote of 350 to 15. Two years later, it carried the Senate by a vote of 84 to 8. To become law, the amendment needed to be ratified, or approved, by three-fourths of the state legislatures within the next seven years.

Thirty states quickly approved the amendment by 1973; then the drive for ratification stalled. NOW, which took over leadership of the drive for ratification after a short power struggle among women's groups, was taken by surprise.



The feminists had underestimated the opposition to the amendments and the ability of conservative women's groups to mobilize opinion against women's liberation. Although opinion polls showed that the majority of Americans favored the concept of equality between men and women, the same polls also indicated that an even larger percentage of the population did not wish to change men's and women's social and family roles. For these concerned people, The ERA represented too radical a change.

Phyllis Schlafly, head of the anti-ERA Eagle Forum, and her supporters charged that passage of the ERA would lead directly to women in combat in wartime, the breakdown of the family, government funding of abortion, and elimination of separate public bathrooms for men and women.

VOTING ON THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

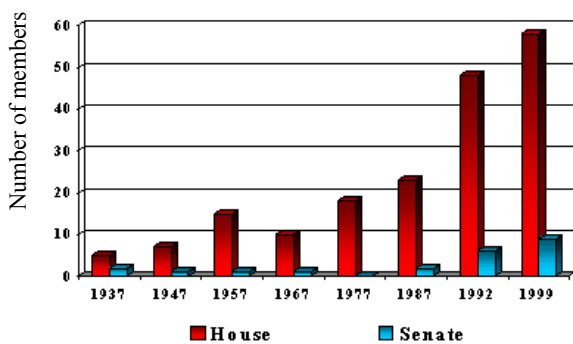
As the original ratification period ran out, supporters of the ERA managed to obtain a three-year extension from Congress. They failed, however, to add a single state during that period, and by the 1982 deadline they were still three short of the 38 state approvals required. The ERA had failed.

RESOURCE CARD 7 Of 7 Women Today

Since 1960 women have made enormous social gains. Gains in employment have been particularly impressive. During the 1970s, the number of working women climbed 42 percent and much of the increase was in what traditionally was considered "men's" work and professional work. The percentage of lawyers who were women increased by 9 percentage points; the percentage of professors by 6 points; of doctors by 3.6 points. By 1986, women made up 15 percent of the nation's lawyers, 40 percent of all computer programmers, and 29 percent of the country's managers and administrators.

Striking gains have been made in undergraduate and graduate education. Today, for the first time in American history, women constitute a majority of the nation's college students and nearly as many women as men receive master's degrees. In addition, the number of women students receiving degrees from professional schools--including dentistry, law, and medicine--has shot upward, from just 1425 in 1966 to over 20,000 by the early 1990s. Women comprise nearly a third of the students attending law school and medical school.

Women in the U.S. Congress 1937-1999



Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro campaigning in 1984.

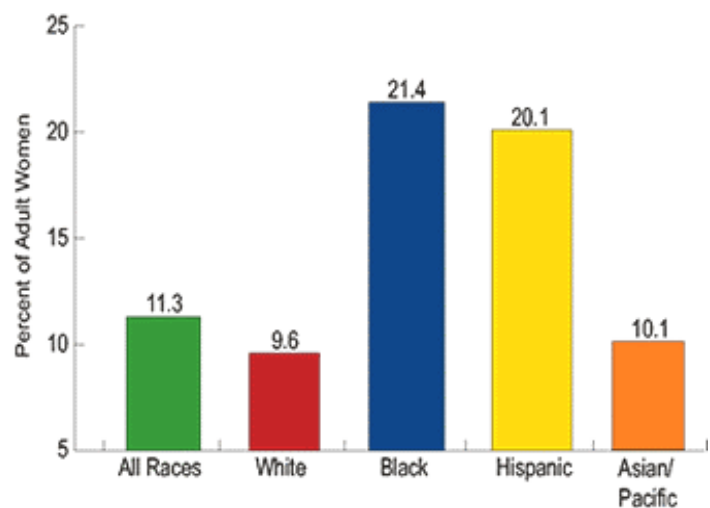
Women have also made impressive political gains. By 1993 1524 women served in public office, in the United States Congress or in state legislatures. In 1984, for the first time, a major political party nominated a woman, Geraldine Ferraro, for the vice

presidency. By 1994, two women – Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sandra Day O'Connor – served on the Supreme Court and 1524 others served in the United States Congress or in state legislatures.

In spite of all that has been achieved, however, problems remain. Most women today continue to work in a relatively small number of traditional "women's" jobs and a full-time female worker earns only 74 cents for every \$1 paid to men. Even more troubling is the fact that large numbers of women live in poverty. The "feminization of poverty" was one of the growing trends of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Today, nearly half of all marriages end in divorce and many others end in legal separation and desertion – and the economic plight of these women is often grave. Families headed by women are four and a half times as likely to be poor as families headed by males. Although female-headed families constitute only 15 percent of the U.S. population, they account for over 50 percent of the poor population.

Adult Women Living Below the Poverty Level, by Race & Ethnic Origin, 2000

Source (1.6): U.S. Bureau of the Census



ACTIVITY FIVE: WOMEN

INDIVIDUAL REPORT

Write a letter from the point of view of a modern-day woman to her great-grandmother (born prior to 1920). In your letter, discuss the extent to which the Women's Rights Movement has made the United States a more equal and just society. Be sure to compare and contrast your life with that of your great-grandmother.

Evaluation Criteria

- Letter is written from the point of view of a modern-day woman to her great-grandmother (born before 1920).
- Letter includes discussion of at least three similarities and at least three differences between your life and your great-grandmother's life.
- Letter refers to at least five specific people, places, events, legislation, court cases, and statistics related to the Women's Rights Movement.
- Letter addresses the extent to which the Women's Rights Movement has made the United States a more equal and just society.