

Exploring American History, 2nd Ed., Melvin Schwarts and John R. O'Connor, NJ: Globe Book Company, 1986. [7-9]

[505-506]

Women's Rights. What rights have women fought for over the year?

7. In the early 1940s, women returned to factories and offices as men went off to fight in World War II. At the end of the war, women once again lost their jobs to men returning from the war. During the 1950s and 1960s more labor-saving machines for the home became available. As a result; some women had more time for jobs outside the home. Others took new jobs to earn money needed for themselves or their families. By 1960 over 23 million women were working outside the home.

8. Beginning in the 1960s, new women leaders such as Betty Friedan spoke out. They argued that home and family need not be a woman's only concerns. There was an active effort known as the women's liberation movement to end discrimination against women in all fields. For example, one of the goals for women was, and still is, to get equal pay for equal work. In 1982, for example, the average income for women who had completed four years of college was \$17,400. The average income for men with the same amount of education was \$28,000.

9. Laws were passed to protect women's rights. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 forbade sex discrimination in hiring. In the late 1970s and early 1980s women seemed to be winning some of the battles for equal rights. Growing numbers of women became lawyers, doctors, and military officers. Women were increasing their activity in politics. For the first time voters had elected women to one out of every ten seats in state legislatures. Chicago and San Francisco elected women as their mayors. Sandra Day O'Connor became the first woman to serve on the Supreme Court.

10. In their personal lives, women have undergone major changes. Fewer women are getting married. Women who do are doing so at a later age. They are also having fewer children. Women are no longer remaining at home. More than two out of three women between the ages of 25 and 50 now hold jobs outside the home. If they are working mothers, child care is important to them. Thus, the number of children in nursery schools has doubled since 1970. More and more companies now have childcare programs for children of employees.

11. In 1972 Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment. Despite hard work by its supporters, the ERA was not passed by the required 38 states. However, this has not stopped the leaders of the women's rights movement. They feel that ERA will be adopted one day. As Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman elected to Congress, said, "It took us 70 years to get the right to vote. If it takes us another ten years to pass ERA, we won't go away mad."

(photo) Mary McCleod Bethune and Eleanor Roosevelt. Bethune served as the president's adviser on minority affairs. In the late 1940s, Roosevelt became a delegate to the UN.

(photo) Associate Justice of the Supreme Court Sandra Day O'Connor. She is the first woman to serve on the Supreme Court.