



A newsletter from the Holmes Cultural Diversity Center and the Office of Diversity and Equity Programs

National Women's History Month

March 1 – March 31

THE DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Aretha Jones-Cook and Carson C. Cook, Jr.

As recently as the 1970's, women's history was virtually an unknown topic in the K-12 curriculum or in the consciousness of the general public. To address this situation, the Education Task force of the Sonoma County (California) Commission on the Status of Women initiated a "Women's History Week" celebration for 1978. The activities and events that were held met with an overwhelmingly enthusiastic response, and within a few years, scores of area schools held programs for Women's History Week.

In 1979, Molly Murphy MacGregor, then the Director of the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women, was invited to a Women's History Institute at Sarah Lawrence College to discuss the importance of using Women's History Week as a focal celebration to recognize and celebrate women's historic accomplishments.

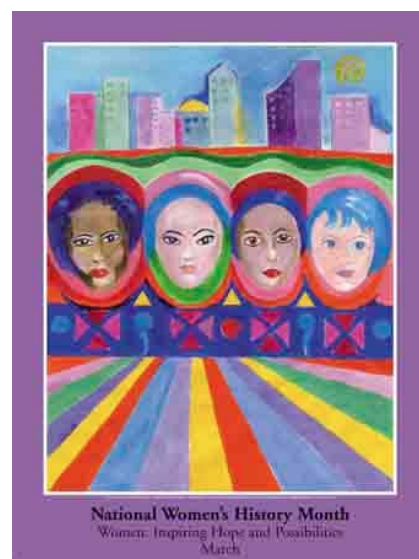
The conference was for leaders of women's and girl's organizations throughout the country. The participants decided unanimously to promote the idea of a Women's History Week within their own organizations, school districts, and states. They also agreed to work toward securing an official Congressional Resolution that would declare the week of March 8th as "National Women's History Week."

In March of 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued a Presidential Message to the American people, encouraging the recognition and celebration of women's historic accomplishments during the week of March 8th, Women's History Week. By the end of 1980, then Representative Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) had co-sponsored the first Joint Congressional Resolution that declared the week of March 8th in 1981 as National Women's History Week.

In 1987, at the request of women's organizations, museums, libraries, youth leaders, and educators throughout the country, the National Women's History Project successfully petitioned Congress to expand the national celebrations to the entire month of March. A National Women's History Month Resolution was quickly approved with strong bipartisan support in both the House and Senate.

Since 1992, a Presidential Proclamation has carried the directive for what is now a major national and international celebration.

The 2004 theme for Women's History Month is "Women Inspiring Hope and Possibility." The theme celebrates the hope and sense of possibility that comes to our lives from the inspirational work of women. Hope comes in many forms from laws challenged and changed, new medical research, stories of compassion and courage, and watching women stand tall against great odds.





Learn more about women's history.

The National Women's History Project (NWHP) web site at www.nwhp.org provides information about women's history, Women's History Month, and other related resources. The NWHP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, educational organization committed to recognizing and celebrating the diverse and historic accomplishments of women. This year, the organization is honoring the inspirational work of eight particular women who are representative of the thousands of women across this country who inspire hope and possibility by their example of courage, dedicated work, and perseverance. [Read more.](#)

!WOW! Facts (U.S. Census Bureau)

- The majority of our nation's population is female. According to the 2000 Census, females outnumbered males by six million (140 million to 134 million) The male-to-female population ratio declines with age.
- Among young adults ages 25 to 29, women typically are better educated than their male counterparts. 30% of the women in this age bracket have a bachelor's degree, compared to 28% for men.
- Women have outnumbered men on U.S. college campuses since 1979; and on graduate campuses since 1984.
- In 2000, nearly three in four women age 15 and over worked in four occupational groups: administrative support, including clerical (24%); professional specialty (18%); service workers, except private households (17%); and executive, administrative and managerial (14%).
- Women are more likely than men to live in poverty. In 2001, 12 percent of the female population and 10.4 of the male population lived below the poverty level.
- The average age of American mothers giving birth to their first child rose from 21.4 in the 1970's to 24.9 in the 2000's.
- In 2000, the average life expectancy at birth for women was 79 years, contrasted by 74 years for men.
- Approximately 61% of the U.S. population is overweight or obese with women having a higher rate of obesity than men. [Read more](#)

Women's History Month Trivia Quiz

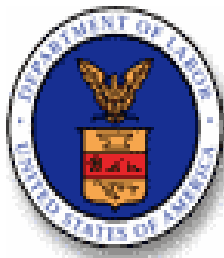
1. Who is the General Director of the NY City Opera?
2. She wrote about contemporary problems such as women's suffrage, temperance, prison reform and child labor.
3. In 1939, she was the first African American female to sing at Constitutional Hall in Washington where over fifteen thousand people gathered to hear her sing. This incident marked a turning point for black artists.
4. Best known as the founder the American Red Cross, and later became the first full-time clerk in the US patent office.
5. She was the first woman appointed a Supreme Court Justice?
6. She graduated first in her class from Geneva Medical School to become the first woman in America to earn a degree from a medical college.
7. She was the first American woman to travel into space.
8. In 1955, she refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white man.
9. She was the first woman candidate nominated by a major political party for vice president of the US.
10. She was the first woman to serve as chief of a major Native American tribe.

Women's History Month Trivia Quiz

ANSWERS: 1. Beverly Sills; 2. Louisa May Alcott; 3. Marian Anderson; 4. Clara Harlowe Barton; 5. Sandra Day O'Connor; 6. Elizabeth Blackwell; 7. Sally Ride; 8. Rosa Parks; 9. Geraldine Ferraro; and 10. Wilma Mankiller

Internet Links to Women's History Month Articles and Timelines

- Read [biographies](#) of significant women throughout time
- Take a [quiz](#) based on women and their achievements
- Follow a [timeline](#) of significant events in women's history
- Enjoy [activities](#) taken from the Women's History Month Resource Book and [excerpts](#) from Women's Rights on Trial



The U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, established by Congress in 1920, is the only federal agency mandated to represent the needs of wage-earning women in the public policy process.

For 83 years, it has been meeting that mandate -- identifying the issues working women care about most and vigorously pioneering research and remedies to address them. [Read more.](#)

International Women's Day

March 8th commemorates women's rights and peace

In its various incarnations, ranging from a communist holiday to a U.N.-sponsored event, International Women's Day has been celebrated for almost 90 years.

Inspired by an American commemoration of working women, the German socialist Klara Zetkin organized International Women's Day (IWD) in 1911. On March 19, socialists from Germany, Austria, Denmark and other European countries held strikes and marches. Russian revolutionary and feminist Aleksandra Kollontai, who helped organize the event, described it as "one seething trembling sea of women."

As the nascent annual event developed, it took on the cause of peace as well as women's rights. In 1915, Zetkin organized a demonstration in Bern, Switzerland, to urge the end of World War I. Women on both sides of the war turned out.

Some of the current issues the U.N. and International Women's Day have focused on include the following:

- About 25,000 brides are burned to death each year in India because of insufficient dowries. The groom's family will set the bride on fire, presenting it as an accident or suicide. The groom is then free to remarry.
- In a number of countries, women who have been raped are sometimes killed by their own families to preserve the family's honor. Honor killings have been reported in Jordan, Pakistan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and other Persian Gulf countries.
- According to the World Health Organization, 85 million to 115 million girls and women have undergone some form of female genital mutilation. Today, this practice is carried out in 28 African countries, despite the fact that it is outlawed in a number of these nations.
- Rape as a weapon of war has been used in Chiapas, Mexico; Rwanda, Kuwait, Haiti, Colombia, Yugoslavia, and elsewhere.

Increasingly, International Women's Day is a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of women's rights. [Read more.](#)

Did You Know?

- Currently, 164,000 women serve in the U.S. armed forces; another 1.6 million are military veterans.
- Fifty-five percent of women are currently married (including those married to an absent spouse and those who are separated); 25% have never married; and 10% each are divorced and widowed.
- The number of single mothers in the U.S. is 10 million, up from 3 million in 1970. About 26% of all parent-child situations consist of a single mother and her biological child or children, up from 12% in 1970.
- 61 percentage of all women, age 18 and over and citizens, voted in the last presidential election. This compares with 58% of their male counterparts. Among all voting-age people, women have voted at higher rates than men in every presidential election since 1984.



HBO TV will air [Iron Jawed Angels](#) throughout the month of March. The film depicts the women's suffrage movement and the fight for voting rights. [View slide show....](#)

*Women's Advocacy Groups**

- [American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\)](#)
- [Center for Health and Gender Equity \(CHANGE\)](#)
- [The Feminist Majority Foundation](#)
- [Internal Planned Parenthood Federation/Western Hemisphere Region \(IPPF/WHR\)](#)
- [The Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality \(IANWGE\)](#)
- [National Organization for Women \(NOW\)](#)
- [Women's Environment and Development Organization \(WEDO\)](#)

* For informational purposes only. Not an endorsement.



Women

