

1960s women in american society: a sudden revolution on a way of thinking

[History](#), [Revolution](#)



Dinner Parties and Dichotomy

In the 1950s a perfect woman was described to be pretty, well-mannered, an excellent housewife, and to assume their position gratefully as a stay-at-home mother. Woman rights activists had been present for many decades, but it wasn't until the 1960s that they rose eyebrows addressing the basic social issues that surrounded women. Women questioned the equality of the sexes in the workplace and in relationships. Women activists in the mid 1960s were suppressed under the "larger" topics of racism and poverty, their voices became heard in 1969 when women drove full force into the revolution demanding sexual equality.

In the 1960s there were deep cultural changes altering the role of women in American society. The sex caste system dictated the roles of women in work and personal relationships, many women at this time assumed to their given position. Women were not given fair chances in taking predominantly male positions at the time in places such as corporations or politics. The idea that the male was the breadwinner and dominant in the relationship while the female was submissive was often the philosophy in middle-class households. The odds of starting a women's movement based off the inequality of the caste system seemed slim to none at the time, most groups focused their attention to issues like war, poverty and race. There seemed to be a correlation between the treatment of negroes and the treatment of women in society.(303)

Women learned self worth and to question their role in society, topics that had gone unchallenged previously. The responses from men in the movement were “ That’s just the way it’s supposed to be” or “ There are biological differences.(304)” Men became defensive over the sex caste system from the fear of being exposed as “ weak”. First wave groups that promoted racial and economic equality, such as the SDS and SNCC, embraced 1950s assumptions of women. The male dominated groups expected their female members to make the coffee, type, and show their dedication to the cause by being sexually available at all times. A handful of women questioned these issues within the movement only to be suppressed by the male leaders. A true women’s revolt would take place a few years later during the second wave of protest.

In the age of the second wave of protest, starting in 1968, women were active in various protest movements and began organizing separate “ women’s liberation” groups. The females were fed up with the suppression of their issues and the sexism of the male activists. The women came into the era loud and demanding, arguing that the revolution would be cut short of its full potential because of sexism (309). Louise Crowley, who was a member of the Women’s Majority Union in Seattle, was outraged when women’s critique of male dominance was mocked at a conference against war and fascism in Oakland, California. Crowley stated that radical women “ with only minor bitching have accepted their given positions in kitchens and front desks. (309)” Crowley wrote and published Lillith’s Manifesto in 1969 as a response to the sexist conference. Crowley refused to let more women mold

themselves into society. In the manifesto she states that “ the biological assignment of women does not need to be reinforced by the culture.(309)”

During the mid 1960s women were made to feel “ silly” or “ dumb” by the male dominated protest groups when questioning female roles. At the time, nobody talked publicly about women that in any way reflected the problems that women in this movement came across (304). In the late 1960s women organized groups like the Women’s Majority Union, and became reluctant to conforming. Women like Louise Crowley published manifestos stating the basic issues that women faced daily and their voices became heard. The goal was to build a society which would see basic human problems and shape institutions to meet human needs instead of meeting the needs of those in power. The change in urgency and volume of women activists between the middle 1960s to the late 1960s was extraordinary. Women refused to let their problems be suppressed and in the late 1960s finally gained recognition.