

Betty friedan essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Betty Friedman - The Mother of Feminism Betty Friedman was born as Betty Goldstein. She was born in Peoria, Illinois on February 4, 1921. Harry Goldstein, her father, emigrated from Russia in the sass in which he built himself a successful Jewelry business in the United States (Parry, 2010). Miriam Hurwitz, his wife and her mother, was the daughter of Hungarian Jewish immigrants, who actually was unable to attend Smith College due to her parent's' refusal (Parry, 2010).

At the fact that her mother was not able to complete her dream of school and education, her mother would continually push for her to do ell in her academics because she knew the potential her daughter had. However, even though she saw her potential, she knew that her daughter's Jewish upbringing would be her hindrance, but she continued for her to strive on and was not ready to give up and surrender to how things were. Therefore, Betty's rebuttal was always there from the beginning. Her Jewish upbringing caused Betty to experience many blunders along her way.

In her high school located in Peoria, Illinois, Jews were not welcome in sororities or fraternities, which had truly played a detrimental effect on re because they played a big role at her school (Sell, 1998). Even though her academic successes were stellar, she was continually shunned upon due to her ethnicity and background. Not only was Betty a spectacular student, but also she was also a writer, poet, and the founder of a literary (Sell, 1998). But do not think her struggles with her social life in school got to her because she was Jewish and let her focus slip.

She put her focus and concentration on her schoolwork and education that much harder because she knew socially she was not accepted, so she did the one thing she knew no one could take away from her. After graduating from high school, she attended Smith College, a dream of her mother's since her mother was unable to attend it herself, where she proudly graduated first in her class in 1942, and where she also was in charge of editing the college newspaper (Perry, 2010; Sell, 1998).

Following her dreams and completion of undergraduate school, she transferred to the University of California at Berkeley to finish her graduate work in which she did a fellowship in psychology (Sell, 1998). From 1944, she worked as a journalist in Manhattan, where she wrote for the Federal Press and the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America under the name Betty Goldstein (Parry, 2010). After she graduated from University of California at Berkeley, she moved to Greenwich Village in 1947 and married Carl Friedman, who was a World War II veteran (Parry, 2010).

This is when she took on the name Betty Friedman, which is the one she grew famous for. However, her name is not at all what got her the fame, rather her radical and far-reaching feminist actions soared her to becoming the mother of feminism (Bazillion, 2006). Betty Friedman and her husband had three children - Daniel, Jonathan, and Emily, but later divorced in 1969 (Bazillion, 2006; Parry, 2010). It was actually her children that further triggered her feminism motives. Her first child not so much, but her second child propelled her to being the Betty Friedman we honor today.

Prior to this, her focus on women's issues were slim to none as it was for many women of her time, not because they did not want change, but rather because they grew up not knowing their could be much change. Betty was your classical suburban housewife at this time; she lived in a house in Grenadier-on- the-Hudson, New York, where she cooked meals for the theatre-producers husband and did some interior decorating from time to time. In the technical sense, she did not work. She was living her life and being a mother was her main focus, even though she did have a college education (The Economist, 2006).

At this point, it was a male dominated society, where women were told that they should be content if they are a mother and wife and their dreams should not try to surpass this lifestyle, but it was not until an event happened in her life that it hit her that something with this society was completely and terribly wrong. Prior to this, she was no better than her mother, who she knew was miserable from the beginning due to her temper and accreditation (The Economist, 2006). She was fired from her job on a leftist newspaper because she was pregnant (Sell, 1998).

Even though the company claimed that it was due to cutbacks, Friedman believed the real reason was due to the fact that she was pregnant and that they would have to hold her position until she returned after maternity leave (Parry, 2010). This opened her eyes to understanding that women are viewed as second-class citizens in American society, while men are viewed as first-class status (Sell, 1998). She did not understand that if America is the land of the free, then why it could not be the land of equality as well.

At this point, there were certain amendments and laws that contributed to women's equality, but in society women were still viewed as second-class citizens, and that was no longer "okay" with her. After she was fired from her newspaper job, Betty did free lancing for the several women's magazines to help with the family income (Sell, 1998). She knew though that she needed to do something in order to give women the respect they deserve in this world, and gain true equality.

Therefore, since she could see that the work she was contributing to the magazines were not rewarding to her because she could not make the impact she wanted, she changed to another direction by beginning to consider other alternative projects that would raise the eyebrows of society to understand that there is a place in this society for women (Parry, 2010). This was the true beginning of a person who would become a force to be reckoned with, Betty Friedman - mother of feminism (Sell, 1998).

The start of her feminist movement was at her fifteenth college reunion, where she conducted a survey of two hundred Smith's classmates in which she asked them questions about their lives since graduation. She was completely in disbelief at the degree of dissatisfaction they reported (Parry, 2010; The Economist, 2006). She was baffled on how these educated women reverted back to the ropes that the "normal" society women turn to. They put down their college degree in an effort to blend into the society norm of the suburban housewife and mother.

Many of her fellow graduates did not pursue work in their career field as Friedman had. Rather they gave up their work or their education in turn for

motherhood (Parry, 2010). Due to her uncanny findings, she believed that it was imperative for her to write about them. She could not hide the reality of what was really happening in America with their women population.

Therefore, she began working on an article about women's experiences of giving up work or their college education in the event to be a full time mother and housewife (Parry, 2010).

Even though she expected for this sort of article not to be published in magazines since it was such a radical statement, she still did not give up the fight. She was actually rejected by several magazines, even ones she previously wrote for because her words were so powerful and they knew that it would cause a stir. This stir was exactly what Friedman was looking for. She wanted society to recognize what we have done to our women and that it should no longer be accepted or tolerated.

She saw the intelligence that we can use to better our world, but people would rather hide it or pretend like it does not exist in order to mold them into waiting hand and foot on their husband and children. Friedman wanted our women to soar and not be told that they must live their lives with limits because they are female, even though society wanted them to remain at a fixed position, because after all, if women are powerful that can take away some of that power from men.

After all of her rejections and denials, she was finally able to secure a book advance and transformed what was simply a magazine article to a five year task of writing one of the most influential books of the twentieth century, *The Feminine Mystique* (Parry, 2010). Friedman's 1963 book *The Feminine*

Mystique gained blockbuster accreditation selling more than three million copies (Sell, 1998; Sitter, 2013). This book was definitely her rise to fame. It left many women speechless and in tears to really understand their troubling situation.

Friedman stated, " A woman has got to be able to say, and not feel lilt, Who am I, and what do I want out of life (Cox, Matthew, ; Associates, 2006)? " This book highlighted several very important realizations that American women lived with, but never thought of as a problem. However, the way it which Betty Friedman worded her memoir allowed those women who were nonbelievers that this was a man's world to finally wake up and realize that they do have a brain and it is should not only be subjected for household duties and raising children.

She highlighted the fact that the Soviet Union scientists emphasized that America's greatest source of unused brainpower was women (Friedman, 1963). Women have the capability to be a valuable part in the workforce, even though they are fixed to believe their primary role is to be the suburban housewife. The suburban housewife is concerned about everyone other than herself. She is healthy, beautiful, educated, concerned about her husband, her children, and her home. This gives her true feminine fulfillment. Women believed that the role as a housewife and mother were equal to their partner in his world (Friedman, 1963).

This idea of feminine fulfillment became the norm even fifteen years after World War II. Millions of women lived their lives in the image of those picturesque images of the American suburban housewife. Their only dream

was to be the perfect mother and wife (Friedman, 1963). According to many, there was no further purpose for them but that. But who is truly to blame for this problem of the women feeling the ultimate feminine fulfillment in these two roles - wife and mother. In actuality, it is the literature.

In virtually all columns, books, and articles written by experts, it displayed the women's role for seeking ultimate fulfillment as simply a wife and mother. However, American eventually ran into a problem with the majority of women taking on this role. There was a large shortage in specific fields such as nursing, social work, and teaching professions that was causing a crisis in virtually every city of America (Friedman, 1963). These roles are seen as feminine roles, but if women do not see themselves in a professional setting because that is not the American dream, then who will be the ones filling these needed positions.

Friedman includes in her memoir the problem that lay buried and unspoken for many years in the minds of American women by saying that we can no longer ignore the unspoken thoughts of women who have searched for answers of their dissatisfaction. In reality, women are trying to vocalize saying, "I want something more than my husband and my children and my home (Friedman, 1963)." Friedman described this dissatisfaction these women endured as "the problem with no name" (Parry, 2010).

Psychologists could not decipher exactly the problem women were facing, they just knew that women were unhappy, but according to the psychological books and disorders, there was not a specific name for their symptoms they were describing. It was not depression. It was not post-part

disorder. What was it? Friedman came up with a conclusion - the problem was with no name. It was imply women craving more for themselves than just the simplicity of a mother and wife. Friedman stated in the book that independence was enjoyed by women in the sass and sass, but what happened two decades later in the sass (Parry, 2010).

What was the miraculous change? The sass marked a significant shift from women's self-determination, and more towards their determination to their husband (Parry, 2010). She continually contradicted other writers at the time in her book. Whereas other writers wanted to complain that higher education undermined women's abilities to undertake their "traditional" roles as housewives, she fought back stating that women were actually unfairly confined by this expectation, and that this should not be the "traditional" role for women (Parry, 2010).

Our society somewhere between the sass and sass implanted that into the American psyche, and now women are suffering unfairly because of it. Friedman's book *The Feminine Mystique* was a direct reason for the 1964 Civil Rights Act to get passed because it touched so many and left a place in millions of women's hearts around the world that fought for this Act to get passed (Sell, 1998). But what did this act really do for the women of tomorrow? This act enforced: ... E constitutional right to vote, to confer Jurisdiction upon the district courts of the United States to provide injunctive relief again discrimination in public accommodations, to authorize the Attorney General to institute suits to protect constitutional rights in public facilities and public education, to extend the Commission on Civil Rights, to prevent discrimination in federally assisted programs, to establish a

Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity, and for other purposes (Sell, 1998).

In addition, this act ignited another fire under Betty Friedman's belt in which she expounded the National Organization of Women (NOW) in 1966 (Sell, 1998). This organization campaigned for equal pay, maternity leave, abortion choice, and decent child care. NOW was also fighting for the Equal Rights Amendment (The Economist, 2006). She furthered continued her fight for women's rights, and in 1969 she helped launch the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws later named ANURAL Pro-Choice America.

Friedman continued her advocacy for women throughout the sixties and seventies, and one of her biggest accomplishments yet happened at the conclusion of the strike that she led to fight for equality of women – “The Women's Strike for Equality”. Here over fifty thousand people flocked the streets of New York City (The Economist, 2006). The only one of her children that watched her speech at “The Women's Strike for Equality” was her son Jonathan. He was seventeen at the time, and really unaware of whom his mother really was.

He was astounded at her success. He almost could not believe that it was his mother who was standing at the podium that he could not even get to because of the abundance of people that were present. Jonathan traveled with his mother to New York City in 1969 to an apartment on West 93rd Street (Bazillion, 2006). One day Jonathan came home while his mother was planning the final stage of her march down Fifth Avenue, he was completely

oblivious as to what was really going on. He knew her as mom, not as the Betty Friedman everyone else knew her as.

This was something that Betty was planning since the previous spring because she knew that August 26, 1970 would be the 50th anniversary of the constitutional ratification of the women's right to vote, and she wanted to mark the significance of this event. The purpose of this event was that even though women did have the right to vote now, he wanted to show that women's equality still was not there in all perspectives and there were still many improvements that needed to be made. She first presented this idea of "The Women's Strike for Equality" at the fourth annual meeting of the National Organization for Women (Bazillion, 2006).

This organization was just one of the many organizations that she helped found. But of course as always, her ideas were not always welcomed with open arms because of the radical individual she was for her time. Many doubted her success of these events, but of course Betty roared supreme to everyone's surprise. In June of 1970, only about thirty women showed up for the first strategy session, which was not very many, but Betty knew her purpose and decided to prevail. They concluded in the first session that it was important to host this strike at the end of the working day because there would be more participants (Bazillion, 2006).

Even with the tabloids and magazine against her success, she knew it was all or nothing. The New York Magazine reported three days before the event that, "... Friedman's way of doing things are 'hopelessly bourgeois' (Bazillion, 2006). " To everyone's surprise, Fifth Avenue was loaded with

people, and when the march ended at Bryant Park there was over tens of thousands of people in attendance. She made such an impact with her strike that “ The Women’s Strike for Equality’ became a household name. It was the first feminist event to actually make the television, news, and to the front pages of newspapers.

Even the president, Richard Nixon, got directly involved by issuing a proclamation commemorating the anniversary of women’s suffrage (Bazillion, 2006). The governor Nelson Rockefeller actually declared August 26th a holiday due to Betty’s momentous event. Ultimately, the end result of “ The Women’s Strike for Equality’ was an extraordinary exhibit of equality. This strike led to a range of liberal and radical women’s groups signed on to a pragmatic agenda of equal opportunities in the workforce and education, medical help with abortions, and free 24-hour child care (Bazillion, 2006).

Due to the success of her first publication, she published several follow up books to continue her fight and awareness of the equality of women. In 1976, she published *It Changed My Life: Writings on the Women’s Movement*, which reported on the startling impact of *The Feminine Mystique* (Parry, 2010; Lewis, 2000). In 1981, she published *The Second Stage*, which revolved around the analysis of what she saw as the extremes in the feminist movement (Sale, 1998). In 1993, she published *The Fountain of Age*, which took on the trials of living longer (Lewis, 2000).

In 1998, she published *Beyond Gender: The New Politics of Family and Work*, in which she turned her attention to the new dynamics of work and family (Parry, 2010). In 2000, she published *Life So Far*, in which she recounts how

she coordinated the nationwide “ Women’s Strike for Equality’ (Lewis, 2000). At this point she was 79 years old and decided to write a long-awaited memoir, but with the same flair she put into her first book that gained her the stellar recognition she is known for today.

She never felt the need to write an autobiography or a memoir, but since other authors decided to write a biography on her she felt that it was time to write one about her because she is the only one that could tell the “ real” truth about the trials, tribulations, and successes she’s endured in her lifetime. Some of the authors who wrote her biographies were Daniel Horopito, Betty Friedman and the Making of the Feminine Mystique, and Judith Hennessey, Betty Friedman. This book can be known as her autobiography to some because of the personal truths she revealed in this book.

She led this book with the same intellect, feisty spirit, and unflinching candor as in her other books (Lewis, 2000). The purpose of this book was to set the record straight and say what she was really doing and feeling, unlike reading other authors who have written about her, but can only imagine how she was feeling, she wanted to have people know really how she feeling (Lewis, 2000). In this book, she transcends us from miserable stay-at-home mother and unhappy childhood to the beginning of her arrears in Journalism and psychology.

She furthers her descent into motherhood, her failed marriage, political infighting, and the realities of aging (Lewis, 2000). She makes it a point to say that one cannot write anything good unless it’s from personal truths. She

emphasizes that it has to come from somewhere deep inside as well as it has to be proven by social observation (Lewis, 2000). All of these elements must be present to write a book with the dimensions and realism that her books entail.

Even though would think it would not take that long to write a book about oneself, it took re roughly three years to write her autobiography. Due to her success, she was needed in other arenas besides in her own home. She was continually teaching college, public speaking, ass well as still fighting a wide array of good causes. The first half of her memoir she wrote in the classic form with a pen and paper; it was not until the second half that she decided to tape record it and hire a transcriber Linda Bird France to write it (Lewis, 2000).

One particular chapter that is important to highlight is the chapter titled, “Triumph and Treachery Within the Sisterhood” in which directly addresses the giggly publicized rift that developed in the sass between Friedman and other leaders during the movement (Lewis, 2000). Even though Friedman is a feminist, she still believes that this society still benefits from the idea of equality meaning that both sexes must team up for a values revolution that would radically change the mainstream of society by minimizing the idea now of material wealth and status (Lewis, 2000).

She does agree that now women have earned their place in the workforce, but we are a country of workaholics and need some time to breathe. She now wants to push for shorter work days and a shorter work week. She would call this movement not solely for women, but for both women and

men and she would call it, “ Get A Life! (Lewis, 2000). ” Even after her good ole days of being the mother of feminism, Betty Friedman did not stop.

She continued to be a visiting professor at the University of Southern California, Queens College, Yale University, Columbia University, Cornell University, New York University, George Mason University, Florida International University, and Mount Vernon College (Sale, 1998; Parry, 2010). In addition, to her professorships and her honorability as an author, she served as a legate to the United Nation’s Decade for Women conferences in Mexico City in 1975, in Copenhagen in 1980, and in Nairobi in 1985 (Parry, 2010). Friedman’s dedication and hard work paid off considerably.

Her words meant something. She was honored multiple times for being the voice that women were trying to find for many years. Friedman became the voice of millions of women. She received the Eleanor Roosevelt Leadership Award in 1989 and honorary degrees by The State University of New York and Columbia University (Parry, 2010). Betty Friedman was a household name and women everywhere honored her bravery to speak what was trickling in the minds of women everywhere, whose condition could not be diagnosed, in which it was “ the problem with no name”.

Friedman’s critics often took her the wrong way. Yes she was a feminist, but not to the extent that woman are above men, but rather she wanted to be seen as equality. Therefore, the problem is not such that woman should reign supreme, but it is an economic battle. She believed that the downfall to our economy and the way in which it would be solved would be to have equal work, worth, and incomes from our men and women (The Economist,

2006). Friedman unlike those who when they went in for a fight thought over their heads and dishonored other people to be successful.

This was not her case at all; she despised political correctness, gender politics, and gender studies (The Economist, 2006). Rather she believed that men and women shall be equal since they are created equal. She actually approved of marriage (even though she did get divorced due to domestic violence abuse) and she never wanted to people to think that she hated men. She believed that men were just as much victims as women were. She believed that men were victims to women's frustrations (The Economist, 2006).

People are still in awe of her contribution to society so much so that now Norton is republishing her first book, *The Feminine Mystique*, with a new introduction by Gail Collins and an afterword by Anna Quintile (Sitter, 2013). In the epilogue, Friedman recalls how in the sass before she wrote her masterpiece those women magazine editors tried to force her to rewrite her articles to cater to their advertisers pro-housewife line or they simply rejected the work. Her articles were rejected actually by virtually every woman's magazine she targeted (Sitter, 2013).

Thankfully, she was granted a book advanced and this book still remains avid for today. Within this book, Friedman walks into women's lives painting a picture of how myriad forces created feminine mystique. In this book, she makes us believe that the vortex is sucking women under. Friedman does not start off slow and then goes out with a bang. Instead, she starts out with a bang and continues to end with bang. In the opening pages she goes into

statistics of birthrates, education, India, kitchen design, and diets. She wanted women to read on.

She wanted to educate American about the realities of what was really happening and not sugar coat it. She even has a chapter where she talks about women using sex as a substitute for their larger frustration. Friedman regards sex as something that can take many forms and have many functions (Sitter, 2013). She continually stood up for herself throughout the course of book and she exploited the numerous obstacles women were facing. She wrote about standing up for oneself, fashioning an identity, finding love, and work one cares about.

This republishing was due to the fact that 2013 is its 50th anniversary since it was published in 1963. Therefore, it is to honor the honorable Betty Friedman for her addict ways that even women nowadays do not take the challenge or stand. Friedman writes in the foreword, “ There would be no sense in my writing this book at all if I did not believe that women can affect society as well as be affected by it: that, in the end, a woman, as a man, has the power to choose, and to make her own heaven or hell (Sitter, 2013). Ultimately, Friedman’s force carried through to not only women of her day, but also women of today (Sitter, 2013). Most people are settlers in that they have conformed to the ways of society and they merely exists rather than trying to change hat they do not like. Unlike Friedman who started the organization called the National Organization of Women (NOW), this new generation of women that exists today is often referred to Works on Women (WOW). Women are not like they use to be they are not going to settle with

the first guy they meet, they do not want a good enough spouse rather than want a great spouse.

Not surprise, why the number of single women as well as the divorce rate has soared. However, even with this said, women are still not in the mind frame of Friedman. Friedman was ambition and expansive, whereas today's WOW are either too narcissistically self- help or too winningly impersonal (Sitter, 2013). This meaner that even though women have taken a stand and they do believe they have a voice and equal rights, rather than taking a stand to change America and benefit others in society. Women of today live in a me, me, and me world.

Therefore, their primary focus is merely themselves and how individually they can excel. Friedman was concerned with how all women can excel in this male dominated world. In general, the generation of works on women tries too hard to cram messy human lives into ending theories. Even though they want to believe that these times are different because political realities and social conditions appear to be different on the surface, in reality at the bottom of it it is still similar to the Stafford - wifelier or the suburban housewife back in the sass (Sitter, 2013).

Nowadays, the norm is a little elite college, a little Washington, a little Midwestern manufacturing town, and a little Wall Street. The American society of today is just as predictable as it was in Friedman's day, just that there are different roles. In Friedman's day, the women were the mothers and wives, and the men were the workers. Nowadays, most people fall into one of the roles just mentioned and the cast of characters are even more

predictable. Unfortunately, there are no new radicals stepping out of their comfort zone.

Where are the writers, artists, scholars of literature, private eyes, or women who have climbed the Himalayas (Sitter, 2013)? Women are still just trickling along in what society has come to today. There are still many male dominated areas that women are still hesitant to touch. With the generation, we still see women living under the curtain in that they still are not doing what they love and not taking risks for what they believe in. In reality, what one loves and what one believes in is not even remotely relevant in this day and age. We have entered into a generation of reality shows and superficial revelation.

The cliché that states, “It only takes one man to change the world” is irrelevant to how society appears today. No one is seeking change, rather we are just immersing ourselves in the changes people have created fifty years ago, and still accept them as the norm. Obviously, what happened fifty years ago was definitively something worth noting, but doesn't one believe that some fifty years later more change needs to come? Betty Friedman was lively, astute, and ferocious. Her successes were unparalleled. Friedman was feminist, but it was more of equal rights.

She did not fight for color or ethnicity rather it was to have men and women at the same caliber. She believes that, “People's priorities – men's and women's alike – should be affirming life, enhancing life, not greed (Sale, 1998).” She states, “The way the women's movement has looked at men is how the Nazis looked at the Jews: that they had all the power, the money,

etc... But now the answer is not women against men. Instead, we have to have alternatives to downsizing. We need a broader definition of success, both in personal career terms and corporate terms.

In reality, we have to move toward a new kind of family, a new kind of partnership (Sell, 1998). " Betty Friedman is referred to as the mother of feminism (Bazillion, 2006). Sadly, even with all of Betty Friedman's success, her children did not view her success as mother as adequately. Even though Friedman referred to her children as her undeserved bonus, her daughter believed that her energy and drive as a mother was not nearly as equal to that of her fight and drive of being a radical woman leader (Bazillion, 2006). Each of her children soared to respectable meaner.

Daniel became a physicist and Emily became a pediatrician. Due to her fame and honorability, her obituaries that were published even left people speechless seeing a woman be this bold and radical at that day and age was a taboo. It was something virtually unheard of. Those who knew her would describe her as a housewife and freelance writer, but also most popularly as a feminist. She wanted those to remember her as the woman who helped make women feel better about being a women, and also to make women feel fully in love with men, not just because that is their societal role (Cones, 2006).