

Women's Rights

In the Contemporary Period

c. 1900

- Enlightenment ideals of equality and natural rights.
 - Women's rights activism
 - Seneca Falls
- Yet women were still subjugated throughout the world.
 - Lacked voting rights, property rights, educational opportunity, legal equality

Women's Suffrage

- Western Movements (W. Europe and U.S.)
 - Women fight hard for the right to vote.
 - Hunger strikes, rallies, marches, etc.
 - Some successes (new state constitutions in U.S. give women voting rights)
- World Wars
 - WWI – Women take a very active role, especially on the home fronts.
 - Women given voting rights throughout the Western world.
 - Eg. U.S. = 1919

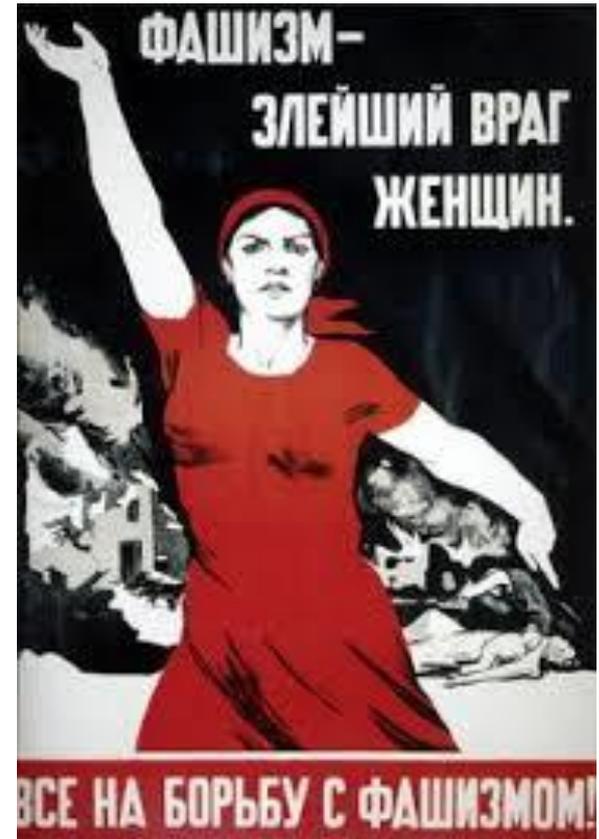


Women's Suffrage expands beyond the West

- Women gained the right to vote in most regions by the 1930's.
 - Latin America
 - India
 - Japan
- Why? Women's rights movements in the regions.
 - In some cases influenced by independence movements.
 - Influence of the West.

Women and communism

- Communist ideology = Everybody is equal.
 - USSR, China, and Cuba
 - Eg. Chinese communists: “Women hold up half the heavens.”
 - Greater opportunities for women beyond suffrage
 - Promotion of education.
 - Career opportunities
 - Access to high level jobs (eg. medicine in USSR).
 - Legal equality (eg. inheritance and divorce).
 - However – Highest leadership positions in communist party still held by women.
 - Post communism = More opportunities for men.



Second Wave Feminism

- Western Europe and the U.S. = 1950's – 1970's
- Shift from fight for suffrage to a fight for:
 - Equality in the workplace
 - Equal pay
 - Fight against the glass ceiling
 - Reproductive rights
 - Birth control access
 - Abortion access (choice over own bodies).



Challenges in non-Western nations

- Legal equality in theory
- In reality, most societies remained patriarchal
 - Men dominated most political positions
 - Prominent female leaders were often related to powerful men
 - Indira Gandhi, Corazon Aquino
 - Arranged marriages, early marriage ages, and large families
 - Female infanticide is common in many places
 - China, India, East Africa
 - Religious revivalism erodes women's rights
 - Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, India, the Sudan



Big Picture

- Major shifts in Contemporary Period
 - Voting rights
 - Educational access
 - Workplace acceptance
 - Legal Equality
- Challenges
 - Continue subjugation, most notably in decolonized/poor regions.
 - Pay differences