



# HISTORY

## A Feminist Approach

History is a male subject. History, the word itself, connotes just that. One has only to look through the library or at the books children are being taught from in school today (e.g. *Man and Civilization*) to see that historians write as if half the human race did not exist. Women have been considered minor additions or exceptions in history. If one is to believe the historians, the only contributions women have made to the world have been in the fields of nursing and just generally keeping the home fires burning. Which in itself is no small feat. Women who are recognized and written about have gained their identity through men, such as presidents' wives, or are subsumed into a class under a neutral category such as factory workers, textile workers, without being given credit for their individual struggle which in more cases than not are impressive.

Women were extremely active in the years immediately preceding the American Revolutionary War. In the revolt against tea taxes there were a number of instances where women organized anti-tea leagues and popularized the use of such substitutes as raspberry, sage and birch brews. By spinning and weaving and pledging to buy only domestic goods, they aided the general boycott of British goods.

Martha Washington spent every harsh winter freezing with her husband's army from 1776 until the end of the war. Many wives who traveled with the army took up battle positions when their husbands were killed or wounded. Abigail Adams recorded first-hand the details of the Battle of Bunker Hill. Still other women such as Deborah Sampson, simply posed as men and joined the army themselves. Women were also indispensable as spies and accomplished great feats of espionage due to their ability to move easily through the lines. But despite their fortitude and daring, male accounts of the war mention almost no women at all.

The Civil War presented women with many of the same problems they had faced in 1776. With the men at war, thousands of women were forced into factories and took over the entire burden of heavy farmwork. Also it is estimated that over 400 women disguised themselves and enlisted in the Union Army alone.

Harriet Tubman, a Black woman and escaped slave, was the conductor of the Underground Railroad which, in the 1850's made nineteen trips through slave country and transported many slaves to the north and freedom never losing one person in the process. During the war, Tubman organized the Combahee River campaign which cost the Confederacy millions of dollars in crop loss and freed more than 750 slaves. This was the only campaign in American history to be planned and led by a woman.

Loretta Velazquez, a young Southern woman, raised and equipped a company of cavalry in Arkansas at her own expense. She dressed as a man and took part in the First Manassas. She served many months under Col. Dreux before it was discovered that she was a woman. Ordered home, she instead went to Kentucky and fought under Gen. Polk. She was wounded twice in this campaign. Later she became a spy and courier and was involved in the unsuccessful "Northwest Conspiracy" which was an attempt to free Confederate officers imprisoned on Johnson's Island in Sandusky Bay.

In the 1830's and 40's, thousands of women were drawn into the anti-slavery movement. Two sisters from the

South, Angelina and Sarah Grimke freed the slaves they had inherited and moved to the North determined to arouse people against slavery. They were the first to link the issues of slavery and the position of women.

Many Black women like Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Frances E. W. Harper and Sarah Redmond played an active role in the early women's rights struggles. Although their primary interest lay in the anti-slavery movement and in fighting racism, they constantly pointed out the relationship between freedom for the slave and equality for women of any color. Sojourner Truth was born a slave in New York, escaped and worked the rest of her life for the abolition of Black slavery and women's rights. At a Women's Rights convention in Akron, Ohio, in 1851, she stated: *That man over there say that a woman needs to be helped into carriages and lifted over ditches and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helped me into carriages or over mud puddles, or gives me a best place. . . And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns and no man could head me. . . And ain't I a woman? I could drink as much and eat as much as a man when I could get it, and bear the lash as well. . . And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children and seen most all sold off into slavery. And when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard. . . And ain't I a woman?*

For years following the Civil War, women worked for the right to vote. The National Woman Suffrage Associa-

tion was formed in 1869 by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, two leaders in the women's rights movement. Women weren't finally granted suffrage until 1920.

During the period of struggle for legal equality and the vote following the war, the country was headed into a period of heavy industrialization. Women began to enter into work outside the home and to participate in the union movement. This wasn't easy for women who put in 12 to 14 hours a day in a factory and still had homes to run.

The *Autobiography of Mother Jones* tells the story of an incredible woman who spent her life working in various struggles that involved mine-workers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She tells of how she led troops of women armed with mops and brooms to fight off anyone who broke a strike or crossed a picket line. "No strike," she wrote, "was ever won that did not have the support of womenfolk."

In 1936 and 1937 a very violent strike was held against General Motors in Flint, Michigan, in which women played an important role. The women got up an actual military organization 500 strong and called it the Women's Emergency Brigade which fought with clubs on the picket line.

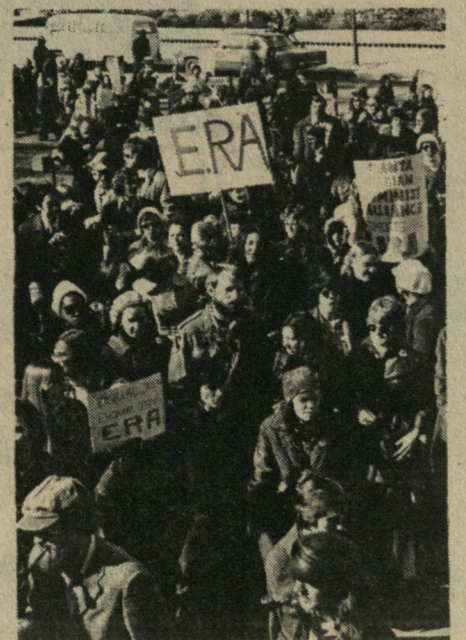
Throughout the early 1800's, women in many cities formed labor reform associations. In 1903 the National Women's Trade Union League was formed in Boston. In the early 1900's Elizabeth Gurley Flynn worked with what may have been the first male and female union in the country, the IWW. Throughout this country in the labor movement men and women have fought side by side for their freedom, dignity and ultimately their humanity.

Women were active both in and against World War I and World War II. Jeanette Rankin, suffragist, lobbyist

continued on p. 15



SOJOURNER TRUTH, "THE LIBYAN SIBYL"



# HISTORY

continued from p. 5

and pacifist was the first female member of the House of Representatives (Montana). She was the only member of Congress to vote against entry into both the world wars. In her eighties she publicly came out against the war in Vietnam.

Amelia Earhart, aviation pioneer also worked as a military nurse. There is speculation that her mysterious disappearance took place during a spy mission and that she was executed by

the Japanese as a spy.

In 1942 the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps was established. In 1943 it was made a component of the US Army and was renamed the WAC. More than 650 members of the WAC were decorated for meritorious service during World War II. Ten received the Soldiers Medal. Sixteen received purple hearts. Sixty-two Legions of Merit and 565 Bronze Star medals were received by individual WACs.

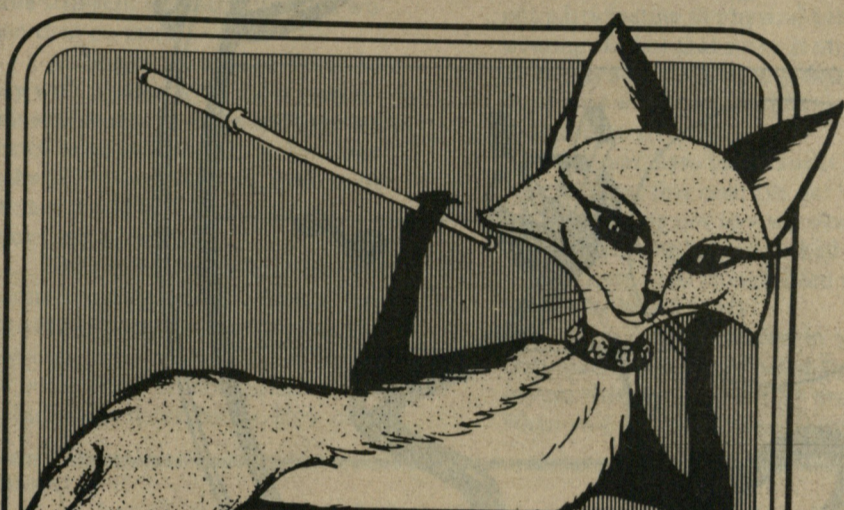
Following the Korean War in the US came the Civil Rights Movement of the 60's. Black women occupied an indispensable position both behind the scenes and on the front lines of this battle for equal rights. Mrs. Rosa Parks of Montgomery, Alabama, was jailed when she refused to move to the back of a bus where "colored" passengers were required to ride. When asked to move to the back, Mrs. Parks replied, "I've a mind to stay here." Her arrest led to the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Many people went to jail due to this incident and brought to the courts a test of the laws regarding the use of public facilities. As a result, laws were passed barring segregation of washrooms, drinking fountains, waiting rooms and restaurants. In great numbers, Black women joined the vanguard of the civil rights movement. Many went to jail for taking part in freedom rides to integrate public transportation, the restaurant sit-ins and the voter registration movement in the South.

Fannie Lou Hamer, a sharecropper from Ruleville, Mississippi, joined the movement and became the leader of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party which organized among rural

Blacks to gain electoral power and led to the confrontation at the Democratic Convention in 1964. The struggle continues.

I have concentrated here on the past because I feel that we are all working here and now and have some effect on the documentation of the present and the future. It is important for us and our children to learn what we have been and where and when. In 1971 there was a quote in the winter issue of *Up From Under* which to me kind of sums it up: "By knowing who we have been and what we have done, we will know who we are and what we must do."  
-barbara aiken

Source material from which I borrowed liberally: *Up From Under; The Call*, Sep. 1973; *Labor's Untold Story*, Boyer and Morais; *Women Out of History: A Herstory Anthology*, Ann Forfreedom; *Chronology of American Women Associated with the Military*, Georgie Markovich.



**Alex Cooley**  
presents  
**Midnight**  
at the  
**FOX THEATRE**  
starring  
**England's Finest**  
**Rock/Theatre Group**

# GENESIS

**Friday, March 8**  
at **Midnight**  
**\$5.00 6.00**  
advance day of show


ADVANCE TICKETS AVAILABLE AT ALL S.E.A.T.S. LOCATIONS. ALL RICH'S, JIM SALLE'S IN BUCKHEAD, ELLER'S IN FOREST PARK, LONDON BRIDGES IN WEST END AND BUFORD-CLAIRMONT MALL. COLONY SQUARE.

# KILL LICE

PLEASANT ODOR · NO STAIN

Head, body, "crab" lice and eggs killed with one shampoo. At drug stores without prescription.

## A-200 PYRINATE®





# ARICA

INSTITUTE, INC.  
1677 Tully Circle, N.E.  
(Near Executive Park)  
Atlanta, Georgia 30329  
(404) 321-6900  
A Non-Profit Organization

for a  
**unique high**  
JOIN US ON  
**WEDNESDAY NIGHTS**  
**8:00 PM**  
FOR OPEN HOUSE

**A SAMPLING OF ARICA  
METHODS AND THEORY**

**FIVE-DAY  
TRAINING  
beginning  
MARCH 20**

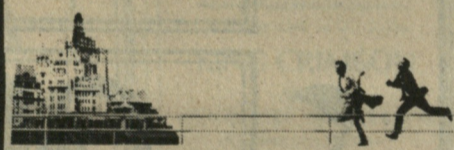


DAY OPENING MONDAY OPENING MONDAY  
STARTS MONDAY MARCH 11

Columbia Pictures presents a BBS Production


## The King of Marvin Gardens


Jack Nicholson  
Bruce Dern  
Ellen Burstyn



IT AND AT MIDNIGHT AND AT MIDNIGHT A

## FRANK ZAPPA'S "200 MOTELS"



COLOR  United Artists

MONDAY THRU THURSDAY  
AND ALL MIDNIGHT ONE DOLLAR  
FRIDAY THRU SUNDAY  
TWO DOLLARS

ANSLEY MALL  
PIEDMONT AT MONROE  
873 2274

# Film Forum