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PHOTOGRAPH

Women's Lib

What's "women's lib"?

GRADES

12+

SUBJECTS

Social Studies, Civics, U.S. History

CONTENTS

1 Image

For the complete photos with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/media/second-wave-feminism/>

The so-called "women's liberation movement" (women's lib) is sometimes called "second-wave feminism," recognizing the second major women's-rights movement in the West.

First-wave feminism focused mostly on voting rights and property rights for women. Second-wave feminism, emerging during World War II, embraced a broader set of civil rights.

Civil rights supported by second-wave feminism included securing professional opportunities and economic equality for women in the workplace, protection for victims of domestic violence, and improving academic opportunities for women in schools and universities. More controversial issues supported by second-wave feminism included ensuring access to safe and affordable family planning; greater recognition and opportunities for women of color; greater recognition and opportunities for lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender women; and diversifying images of women in popular culture.

1972, the year this photo was taken, was a watershed year for second-wave feminism. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was approved by both houses of Congress and endorsed by President Richard Nixon. Congress passed Title IX, which aimed to end sex discrimination in

high-school and college sports. The first shelter for battered women opened. Shirley Chisholm became the first woman (and first African American) to win presidential primaries.

Elements in this photograph also call attention to criticism of second-wave feminism. Media attention to the movement mostly focused on white women, many of whom came from the sort of privileged background associated with elite private schools like Smith College.

"Third-wave feminism" emerged in the 1980s. This movement includes greater leadership from people of color, lesbians, and transgendered women. It focuses much more on individual achievement; support for survivors of domestic violence; representation in and production of popular culture; and sexual expression.

Instructional Ideas

Discuss "women's lib" with students using information above. (This information does not appear in the "Student" version of this media spotlight.)

- Discuss the first two questions in the "Questions" tab, which use the photograph to investigate goals and critiques of "second-wave feminism."

"We've come a long way, baby. From Adam's rib to Women's Lib" reads the sign carried by one of the graduates. Using questions 3-5 in the "Questions" tab, help students understand the references used in the sign.

Questions

- These women, students and graduates of Smith College, Massachusetts, in 1972, are supporting the "women's liberation movement." What ideas do students associate with "women's lib"? Why?

Women's liberation supports **civil rights for women**. This includes greater recognition for individual independence, expanded voting rights and property rights, equal opportunities in the workplace, equal opportunities in school, and more diverse representation in popular culture.

Women's liberation is often associated with more controversial issues, such as family planning and recognition of queer identities.

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Have students study the photograph above. What assumptions do they make about the school and its students?

Smith College is one of the "Seven Sisters," elite private universities on the East Coast. Although they were all women-only colleges, two (Vassar and the Radcliffe) now accept male students.

The majority of women who attended Smith in 1972 were white. This continues to be true today, although women of color make up about 30% of the school's student body (according to a 2009 study from Smith).

Most students at Smith receive financial aid, although it continues to have the reputation of economic privilege shared by its affiliated schools, Amherst College and Yale University.

- "We've come a long way, baby." What does this phrase refer to?

"You've come a long way, baby" was **the popular slogan for Virginia Slims**, a cigarette brand marketed at women. The slogan, used throughout the 1970s and 1980s, hinted at women's social progress and independence.

- What do you think "Adam's rib" refers to?

It's a reference to **a well-known story in the Bible**. According to Genesis 2:21-22, God created the first woman, Eve, from a rib of the first man, Adam.

- "Women's lib" is short for "women's liberation." Why do students think the sign-holders say "women's lib" is a "long way" from "Adam's rib"?

Women's liberation was a civil-rights movement (often called "second-wave feminism") that supported **greater independence for women**. In the story of Adam's rib, the woman is dependent on a man—she was fashioned from his rib.

Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
academic	<i>adjective</i>	person or thing having to do with school, particularly college or university education.

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
civil rights	<i>plural noun</i>	set of fundamental freedoms guaranteed to all individuals, such as participation in the political system, ability to own property, and due process and equal protection under the law.
Congress	<i>noun</i>	legislative branch of the government, responsible for making laws. The U.S. Congress has two bodies, the House of Representatives and the Senate.
controversial	<i>noun</i>	questionable or leading to argument.
domestic violence	<i>noun</i>	abuse directed toward someone living in the same home or household.
economic	<i>adjective</i>	having to do with money.
Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)	<i>noun</i>	(1923-1982) failed amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would prohibit legal discrimination based on sex.
family planning	<i>noun</i>	control of the number of children in a family and the intervals between them.
first-wave feminism	<i>noun</i>	(~1800--~1939) civil rights movement focused on securing voting rights and property rights for women.
lesbian	<i>adjective, noun</i>	woman who is attracted to other women.
popular culture	<i>noun</i>	goods, services, ideas, and patterns of their use in a population.
privilege	<i>noun</i>	benefit or special right.
property	<i>noun</i>	goods or materials (including land) owned by someone.
second-wave feminism	<i>noun</i>	(~1939--~1989) civil rights movement focusing on securing economic, political, social, and academic rights for women and girls. Also called "women's lib" or the "women's liberation movement."
Shirley Chisholm	<i>noun</i>	(1924-2005) American civil rights leader and politician.
third-wave feminism	<i>noun</i>	(~1989-present) civil-rights movement focused on combating inequalities women face as a result of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, economic status, or level of education.
Title IX	<i>adjective, noun</i>	(Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972) American legislation prohibiting discrimination in all educational programs receiving federal funds. Also called Title 9 and the Patsy T. Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act.

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
transgender	<i>adjective,</i> <i>noun</i>	person whose gender identity does not match their physical sex.
voting rights	<i>noun</i>	issues surrounding the legal right and ability to campaign and cast a vote in political elections.
West	<i>noun</i>	having to do with the developed nations of Europe and North America.

Audio & Video

- [Dr. Jason J. Campbell: What is Feminism?](#)

