

Throughout the first three waves of feminism, feminists have used a variety of methods to raise awareness about feminism. In order to understand how feminists used media to bring awareness to feminist issues throughout the three feminist waves, this comparative paper will look at how feminists like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, The Chicago Women's Liberation Union, specifically the Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band (CWLRB), and the Riot Grrrl movement all used different forms of media, mainly the newspaper and music/music groups to address issues concerning women's rights throughout the three feminist waves.

To give context, after Congress ratified the 14th Amendment in 1868, Susan B. Anthony shifted her attention away from both civil rights and women's suffrage to only women's suffrage. To further their agenda, both Stanton and Anthony allied themselves with millionaire George Francis Train.¹ On January 8, 1868, *The Revolutionary* first was published, and ten thousand copies were sent out across the country. The newspaper covered educated suffrage without regard for gender or color, equal pay for equal work for women, practical education for both girls and boys, 8-hour workdays, labor problems, and other social issues.² Anthony's goal for this newspaper was 100,000 subscribers. During the paper's first year, Anthony traveled to Washington D.C., where she managed to receive subscriptions from a few members from politicians, including Benjamin Wade from Ohio, who supported her work, and the President of the U.S. at the time, President Andrew Johnson.³ Although *The Revolution* was successful, it lasted until 1871.

Unlike the First Feminist Wave, which mainly focused on women's rights and suffrage,

¹ Rory Dicker, *A History of U.S. Feminisms* (New York: Seal Press, January 26, 2016): 40.

² Alma Lutz, *Susan B. Anthony: Rebel. Crusader, Humanitarian*, (Beacon Hill Boston: Beacon Press, 1959): 138.

³ Lutz, *Susan B. Anthony*: 140.

the Second Feminist Wave focused on women's legal rights. During the second wave, many new women and organizations surged to fight for women's rights. One of these organizations was the Chicago Women's Liberation Union (CWLC) which was founded in 1969 in Chicago, Illinois. The Chicago Women's Liberation Union was comprised of 300 members, and several work groups in charge of developing programs. One of the programs was the Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band (CWLRB). The Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band was a feminist-only rock group that toured nationwide between 1970-1973.

The CWLRB was founded by Naomi Weinstein, who was the leader of the band and its keyboardist. The other members of the band were Susan Abad, the lead vocalist, and one of the two bass players, Pot Matthews, the rhythm guitarist, Sherry Jenkins, lead guitarist and second bass player, Fanya Montalvo, and Suzanne Prescott, both on percussion, and finally, Linda Mitchell, the band very own "womanager" (manager).⁴ The main purpose of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union was to compose and perform songs about the struggles that women confront daily. The CWLRB would primarily play in feminist activist-created communities such as university ballrooms, church basements, and other leftist communal locations.⁵ While most of the band members were not performing to become renowned in the neighborhood, none of them cared if they performed well or not. This was because the women desired to make a difference in the feminist movement.⁶ Although the organization didn't last for long, it managed to inspire many women to fight for better rights for women and even helped pave the way for the eventual Third Wave of feminism.

⁴ Kate Grover, "Rocking the Revolution: The Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band and the Politics of Feminist Rock and Roll," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 46, no. 2 (2021): 489.

⁵ Grover, "Rocking the Revolution," 490.

⁶ Grover, "Rocking the Revolution," 490.

Similarly to the Second Wave, the Third Wave of Feminism also utilized music to promote feminist ideals. During the Third Wave, The Riot Grrrl movement was founded by punk rock performers from Olympia, Washington State, and Washington, D.C.⁷ Riot Grrrl was a well-known underground movement aimed at girls and young women in their twenties. Riot Grrrl was an icon during this time. It was a compiled underground movement in which Riot Grrrl players established punk rock bands such as Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, Huggy Bear, Heavens to Betsy, and so on.⁸ Riot Grrrl was used as a new way of thinking about ideas and possibilities for young women by challenging the sexism of North American punk scenes. Bikini Kill's song "Double Dare Ya". The song was such a success in the community that it resulted in it being a rallying cry. Along with this, Riot Grrrl bands played aggressive punk rock addressing a political agenda at the forefront. Riot Grrrl Songs primarily focused on critical issues like rape, domestic abuse, women's health, and most importantly, female empowerment.⁹ Although they were getting so much attention, primarily from women, this popularity resulted in their downfall in the mid to late 1990s. Throughout its lifetime, the Riot Grrrl movement had an important impact on the Third Wave. It inspired young girls to fight for their rights and express their ideas through punk rock songs. Through this movement, young women were able to address problems like sexual and domestic abuse, as well as show the world that although the media may discredit the work they put into the movement, young women are still willing to fight for what they believe in.

Overall, feminists throughout the first three waves of feminism have always strived to bring awareness about women's rights and issues through media. Whether it's creating your

⁷ Dicker, *A History of U.S. Feminisms*, 119.

⁸ Dicker, *A History of U.S. Feminisms*, 119.

⁹ Kevin Dunn, and May S. Farnsworth, "'We ARE the Revolution': Riot Grrrl Press, Girl Empowerment, and DIY Self-Publishing," *Women's Studies* 41, no. 2, (2012): 140.

newspaper to promote women's suffrage like Anthony and Stanton or using the power of music to create a rock band to promote the struggles that women confront daily or to inspire young girls to fight for their rights and express their ideas through punk rock songs like the Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band and Riot Grrrl Bands, media will always be a powerful tool feminists will continue to use for future feminists waves to come.

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