

Tutorial 9 – the 1960s

1. For the set of readings on American women, please trace the different aspirations and tone used by the various authors.
2. For the set of readings on Martin Luther King and the blacks, we will concentrate on Reverend King's speech.
3. For the Bruce Schulman reading, please concentrate on the section, subtitled, Cracks in the Consensus, pp 8-13

① Political Activism and Feminism in the 1960s and early 1970s.

- years of extraordinary political and cultural unrest, especially from young adults of baby boom generation.
- eg. misuse of military power in Vietnam, indifference to oppression and inequality
- women of various backgrounds devoting tremendous energy to political movements, eg. civil rights, blacks, anti-war, anti-poverty, labour movements.
- development of feminist movements
- <Betty Friedan on "The Problem that has no name", 1963> p. 439.
Aspiration: to do more than doing the house work being the house wife → confined to domestic role
- women taught to be housewives/fatful role in the home, not to have dreams of becoming poets/physicists/higher careers/education/political rights → which are positions held by men.
- the housewife as "true feminine fulfillment", p. 440, who was free to consume goods she wanted.
- "she did not readily understand herself"; did not know their dissatisfaction was problem/did not acknowledge
- problem is universal regardless of class, race
- dissatisfaction and yearning to do more a salient issue that cannot be ignored.
- consumerism empowered women when purchasing goods
- eventual fading of mass consumerism
- aspiration to do something more whilst keeping their existing roles.
- <Corey Haden and Mary King, "A Kind of Memo" to women in the peace and freedom movements> p. 443 (1965)
- existence of hierarchical, caste system
- dictates roles assigned to women
- women experimenting within existing institutions (eg. marriage)
- inability of men to understand the problem, to see it as an important/serious issue → placing blame on men
- lack of community for discussion; no easy way to talk about issues.
- Aspiration: to create a "community of support" for each other, to talk about issues openly; building ~~a~~ a society which would see private troubles as public problems; shaping institutions to meet human needs (p. 444)
- <NOW's statement of purpose> p. 445 (1966)
- = National Organisation for Women
- Aspiration: true equality for all women, equal partnership of all sexes, bringing women into full participation in mainstream of American society
- belief that constitution should be applied to ensure enforcement of civil rights for all and equality of opportunity
- belief that women should not be forced to choose between motherhood and a serious profession/occupation
- equality of education via affirmative action, especially higher education.
- rejecting assumption that men are sole breadwinners; advocating partnership of the sexes → sharing of responsibilities
- women have to exercise political rights
- partnership with men which is self-respecting to determine conditions of their lives.
- forceful, somewhat aggressive tone
- assertive tone; blames systems/institutions/social conventions
- cf. Jim Crow laws.

- <Redstockings Manifesto> p.447, 1969.

- building unity of women to achieve "final liberation" from male supremacy.
- women oppressed; and personal suffering not seen as political condition due to isolation
- men the agents of oppression; most basic form of domination which extends to other forms of exploitation eg. racism/capitalism
- all men have oppressed women → bold claim? evidently extremely anti-male, unlike previous.
- condemn men shifting blame from themselves to institutions; reject claim that women consent to oppression
- reject unquestioning generalisations and existing norms as they are products of men p.448
- accept none confirmed by their experience
- developing female class consciousness by sharing experiences
- disregards race/ethnic status of all women → collective female whole
- tone: confrontational, radical, anti-charismatic.

- Frances Beale, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black & Female" p.448 p.449, 1970.

- system of capitalism where black men find it difficult to find employment, but women can → sole breadwinner
- psychological problems turmoil of black family structure.
- women believed men were unemployed due to laziness
- the domestic woman is a parasite and a "legalized prostitute" p.451
- black women are not like white women who can afford to stay home and care for their children; they have to work → different family dynamics
- blames capitalism for the state they are in, as "daughters of slaves"; as the cause of racist exploitation
- criticises anti-male movements as being not in line with black women's struggle
- white movements are also largely female middle-class → don't have to deal with specific black struggles
- those who only criticise role of males and not capitalism/racism have no relevance to black struggle (p.453)
- minority within the minority of minority within the minority

② Martin Luther King's speech. p.361

- blacks still not free even after emancipation; still living in poverty and isolated in American society.
- mentions blacks are still not granted inalienable rights laid down in constitution
- "must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline" p.362 → reminder for peaceful demonstrations
- have the support of several whites, cannot distrust all of them as they provide support; demonstration has to be biracial
- analogy of a cheque → pointing towards upper/middle class who have savings/bank accounts
- references to deep southern states
- as opposed to other radical black movements

③ Cracks in the Consensus p.8 (by 1970)

- voters growing disaffected with national liberalism
- liberals view war in Vietnam as fight for freedom against tyranny (ideological conflict); radicals saw war as imperialist domination and repression → differing views
- younger generations disrespect of authority; gap between generations
- radical protest movements which can confront authority/establishment directly (composed of students)
- students fighting for reforms and struggling against established order.
- change in societal norms: legal restrictions on personal behaviour relaxed; relaxation of obscenity laws/abortion restrictions/regulations on sale of contraceptives (p.11)
- reflected broader shifts in sexual mores, living arrangements, sex roles
- some seeking reconstruction of institutions along non-patriarchal lines (radical feminists)
- do not agree with universities' positions on salient issues, but have to remain in universities to escape from conscription.
- * power of media changing perceptions in American history.
- of Vietnam war heavily televised
- of Civil War heavily photographed.