



In 1967, in a celebrated incident arising from the new feminism, a race official tried to eject Kathrine Switzer from the Boston Marathon, only to be pushed aside by other runners. Considered too fragile for the marathon (whose course covers more than twenty-six miles), women were prohibited from running. Switzer completed the race, and today hundreds of thousands of women around the world compete in marathons each year.

cooking, and cleaning for male coworkers. Some were pressured to engage in sexual liaisons. Echoing the words of Abby Kelley a century earlier, a group of female SNCC activists concluded in a 1965 memorandum that “there seem to be many parallels that can be drawn between the treatment of Negroes and the treatment of women in our society as a whole.” What bothered them most was the status of women within the movement, where assumptions of male supremacy seemed as deeply rooted as in society at large.

The same complaints arose in SDS. “The Movement is supposed to be for human liberation,” wrote one student leader. “How come the condition of women inside it is no better than outside?” The rapidly growing number of women in college provided a ready-made constituency for the

new feminism. By 1967, women throughout the country were establishing “consciousness-raising” groups to discuss the sources of their discontent. The time, many concluded, had come to establish a movement of their own, more radical than NOW. The new feminism burst onto the national scene at the Miss America beauty pageant of 1968, when protesters filled a “freedom trash can” with objects of “oppression”—girdles, brassieres, high-heeled shoes, and copies of *Playboy* and *Cosmopolitan*. (Contrary to legend, they did not set the contents on fire, which would have been highly dangerous on the wooden boardwalk. But the media quickly invented a new label for radical women—“bra burners.”) Inside the hall, demonstrators unfurled banners carrying the slogans “Freedom for Women” and “Women’s Liberation.”

Personal Freedom

The women’s liberation movement inspired a major expansion of the idea of freedom by insisting that it should be applied to the most intimate realms of life. Introducing the terms “sexism” and “sexual politics” and the phrase “the personal is political” into public debate, it insisted that sexual relations, conditions of marriage, and standards of beauty were as much “political” questions