

A Timeline of Women's Legal History in the United States by Professor Cunnea

This webpage contains a history of significant events for women in the United States regarding their experience with the law: using it, making it, practicing it as a profession, profiting or suffering from it. It ranges from 1619 to the present, covering jury rights, voting rights, marriage rights, the right of a woman to pass on the status of free or slave to her children, the right of a woman to control her own body, the right of a woman to choose her own profession -- particularly the profession of law or lawmaker.

The version placed on this site in March, 1998, is based on a timeline specialized to show key events in the history of the Women's Law and Public Policy Fellowship at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. To see the current Georgetown version, click [here](#). Thanks are due to the Fellowship Program for making this project possible and enjoyable!

The page is new and still evolving. Anyone with corrections or suggestions should [write to Professor Cunnea](#) (who is not at Georgetown!) This timeline is [copyrighted](#). Anyone intending to publish more than 100 words needs to get permission, and students quoting from it should provide appropriate [attribution](#). Webmistresses or webmasters from **non-commercial** sites may link to it freely without prior permission. Commercial sites **must** request permission!

Planned additions: more on the founding of significant women's organizations; bibliography of sources, links to other timelines affecting women; links to biography sites; links to relevant cases. Someday. Not now. But Real Soon Now!

The Centuries: [17th](#) [18th](#) [19th](#) [20th](#)

The Seventeenth Century

1619 A proposal to give women an equal portion in colonial lands is rejected by the Virginia House of Burgesses.

1638 Margaret Brent, the first woman lawyer in America, arrives in the Colony of Maryland. She was involved in over 100 court cases in Maryland and Virginia, and was a major landowner as well. Governor Calvert chooses her as the executor of his Will. As such, and separately on her own behalf as a major landowner, in 1648 she formally demands a "vote and voyce" in the Maryland Assembly -- two votes, in fact. The new Governor, Thomas Green, denies her request.

1655 Elizabeth Key, a slave, sues for her freedom in Virginia based on the argument that her station in life should be determined by her father, a free white, rather than her mother, a slave. Her attorney, William Greensted, wins the case and marries her. Virginia reacts in 1662 by legislating that children's status is determined by the mother's condition, slave or free.

1692 In Salem, Massachusetts, fourteen women and six men are executed during the witch panic. Several others, including children, die in prison while awaiting trial on witchcraft charges. The panic spreads until a female relative of a colonial governor is accused, at which point the elite of the colonies begin to reconsider the wisdom of the prosecutions.

The Eighteenth Century

1745 In Pennsylvania, frontierswoman and poet Susanna Wright becomes a prothonotary of the colony, enhancing her stature as a legal counselor to her mostly illiterate neighbors, for whom she prepares wills, deeds, indentures and other contracts. She also serves as an arbitrator in property disputes.

1764 American patriot pamphleteer James Otis compares the submission of the modern citizenry to the colonial agreements made by previous generations to the legal submission of women to men, and argues that both classes ought have the right to make their own compacts: "Are not women born as free as men? Would it not be infamous to assert that the ladies are all slaves by nature?"

1765 Jenny Slew, a mixed-race woman about 46 years old, sues as a spinster in Massachusetts after being kidnapped and enslaved in 1762. Through counsel, she argues that because her mother was white, she is not subject to enslavement. She loses at trial and wins on appeal, despite her opponent's claim that her past marriages to slave men make her a *femme covert* with no right to sue in her own name at all, whether slave or free. Ironically, she may have escaped the civil oblivion common to married women at that time due to a 1706 anti-miscegenation statute forbidding interracial marriages. Future president John Adams observes one of the proceedings and notes it in his diary.

1775 Prior to publishing his famed pamphlet "Common Sense," Thomas Paine proposes women's rights in an article for *Pennsylvania Magazine*.

1776 Abigail Adams, wife of future U.S. President John Adams, writes him an impassioned note: "[I]n the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice, or Representation." After a mocking response in which John calls her "saucy" and claims "[w]e know better

than to repeal our Masculine systems," Abigail answers, "I can not say that I think you very generous to the Ladies, for whilst you are proclaiming peace and good will to Men, Emancipating all Nations, you insist upon retaining an absolute power over Wives."

1781 Mum Bett, a slave 37 years old, wins her freedom based on the argument that the 1780 Massachusetts constitution declares "all men are born free and equal." Although she does not represent herself in court, she provides her counsel with the legal theory, the first time a state constitution is used to challenge slavery. After her success, she changes her name to Elizabeth Freeman. Except for her co-petitioner, a man known as Brom, other Massachusetts slaves are not freed until 1783.

1787 Women, initially permitted to vote in some areas during the colonial period and early statehood, are systematically disenfranchised in every state but one through a series of legislative acts beginning in 1777. New Jersey completes the ban when woman suffrage is revoked there in 1807.

1797 Lucy Terry Prince of Vermont, born in Africa, enslaved in the U.S., and freed via purchase by her husband, appears in a property dispute before the U.S. Supreme Court regarding some farmland. The future governor of Vermont, Isaac Tichnor, is her attorney, but Prince presents the oral argument herself. She wins, and Justice Samuel Chase compliments her skill. She is best known to modern historians as a poet rather than as the first woman and possibly the first African-American to argue before the Supreme Court.

The Nineteenth Century

1831 Maria W. Miller Stewart, an African-American, is the first woman to become a professional orator, a career she is compelled to give up after a single year-long tour due to public disapproval of women speaking in public. Her topics are abolition, the education and history of women, and civil rights for African-Americans. Foreshadowing Sojourner Truth, one of Stewart's speeches asks, "What if I am a woman?"

1839 Mississippi passes the first Married Woman's Property Act, followed by New York in 1848. Many similar acts are passed in the next two decades, providing women in some states with a measure of security in their own property. The Mississippi Act is inspired by a state Supreme Court ruling in 1837, which held that Betsy Allen, a Chickasaw, could protect her property from her white husband's creditors because Chickasaw tradition granted married women independent property rights.

1848 Politicized by their work in the abolition movement, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott organize the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, publishing a Declaration of Sentiments which echoes the Declaration of Independence.

1848 The Supreme Court renders the first of several decisions in the case of Myra Clark Gaines and her attempts to inherit her father's property despite a suspicion of illegitimate birth. This is the first of four times the case will be heard by the Supreme

Court during the 56 years it was litigated -- it came up again in 1851, 1861, and 1867. In at least one of these arguments, Gaines herself gives the oral argument against Daniel Webster, and wins.

1851 Abolitionist, feminist, and former slave Sojourner Truth delivers her famous "And Ain't I A Woman" speech at a women's rights convention in Akron, Ohio. Now revered as a classic of American oratory, her address exposes the hypocrisy of the 'woman on a pedestal' argument used by conservatives to deny women civil rights.

1868 Myra Bradwell establishes the *Chicago Legal News*, the foremost legal publishing house and legal newspaper in "the West," as everything west of the eastern seaboard was then called. As early as the second issue, she begins a column on "Law Relating to Women," calling for suffrage and reporting on women attorneys even before such women sought formal admission to the bar.

1869 *The Chicago Legal News* notes in February that one Mary E. Magoon has her own law office in the town of North English, Iowa. Although Magoon is not a member of that state's formal bar, such admission was often not needed for practice at the county level. There are no records of how many women practiced under these circumstances.

1869 Belle A. Mansfield becomes the first attorney to join the licensed bar in the United States after she successfully passes the state examinations in Iowa after informal study. Myra Bradwell applies to the Illinois Bar three months later, but is rejected on grounds of her sex.

1869 Emma Barkaloo becomes the first woman law student in the nation. She does not complete her degree at the Law Department of Washington University in St. Louis, but chooses to take the Missouri bar after one year of study. She passes, and begins practicing in 1870, just months before her death at approximately age 22 of typhoid fever.

1869 Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony found the National Woman Suffrage Association. Lucy Stone forms the American Woman Suffrage Association.

1869 The Wyoming Territory grants suffrage to women, followed in 1870 by the Utah Territory. Colorado, in 1893, and Idaho, in 1896, were the next jurisdictions to grant women the vote. No other states would do so until a flurry of five Western states enacted woman suffrage between 1910 -- 1912.

1870 Ada Kepley, the first woman to earn a formal law degree in the U.S., graduates with an LL.B. from Union College of Law in Chicago, now known as Northwestern University.

1870 Esther McQuigg Morris becomes the first woman judge in the country when she is appointed justice of the peace in a mining town in Wyoming. Her predecessor there

resigned his position to protest woman suffrage in Wyoming, which Morris had helped secure.

1871 Belva Ann Lockwood matriculates at the new National University Law School after being rejected during the past three years by the law schools at Georgetown University, Howard University, and Columbian College. The latter school becomes George Washington University in 1904 by an Act of Congress, and absorbs National fifty years later. George Washington University now honors the alumna its earliest incarnation rejected, putting Lockwood's statue on prominent display in the law library since at least the 1970's to the present.

1872 Victoria Claflin Woodhull is the first woman to declare for the United States Presidency. She founds the Equal Rights Party, with a platform based on principles of socialism and sexual and racial equality drafted in part by Belva Lockwood. In addition to being female, Woodhull is only 34 at the time, and would not be the Constitutionally-required 35 until September of 1873. Due to the age issue, she and her running mate, Frederick Douglass, are denied placement on the ballot.

1872 Arguing that the Fourteenth Amendment permits it, Susan B. Anthony attempts to vote in the presidential election in Rochester, New York. She is arrested, convicted, and fined. Sojourner Truth attempts to vote in Grand Rapids, Michigan, but is refused a ballot and sent away from the polling place. Victoria Woodhull had attempted to vote in a lesser election in 1871, also without success.

1872 Charlotte Ray becomes the first woman admitted to the Bar in the District of Columbia, as well as the first African-American woman to be a member of the formal bar anywhere in the U.S. She opens a solo practice in Washington specializing in real estate law, but according to Kate Kane Rossi, another early woman attorney, "although a lawyer of decided ability, on account of prejudice [Ray] was not able to obtain sufficient legal business and had to give up . . . active practice." Ray remains involved in the suffrage cause and returns to her first career, teaching, in New York in 1879.

1873 In *Bradwell v. Illinois*, the U.S. Supreme Court holds that states may statutorily deny women the right to practice law. In 1872, while the *Bradwell* case is pending, Illinois passes a bill drafted by Alta M. Hulett which provides that no person can be excluded from any occupation, profession, or employment because of sex. Hulett, only 19, becomes Illinois' first woman lawyer. *Bradwell*, still waiting on the U.S. Supreme Court decision, does not re-apply and is deeply disappointed when the Court's decision comes down upholding the discriminatory interpretation of Illinois' previous law. *Bradwell* is finally licensed in 1890, when the state supreme court, on its own motion, reconsiders her 1869 application and grants the license *nunc pro tunc*, backdating its effect to the original date. The U.S. Supreme Court, acting on the motion of the U.S. Attorney General, follows suit in 1892. *Bradwell*, already mortally ill with cancer at the time of these gestures, dies in 1894.

1874 Journalist and suffragist Lillie Devereux Blake publishes *Fettered For Life*, a novel dramatizing the legal disadvantages of American women. She lobbies Congress and state legislatures for woman suffrage, education, and property rights.

1875 In *Minor v. Happersett*, the U.S. Supreme Court rules definitively that the Fourteenth Amendment's privileges and immunities clause does not have the effect of extending suffrage to women.

1878 Known as the "Anthony Amendment," the Women's Suffrage Amendment is introduced in Congress, beginning four decades of intense federal lobbying and conflict.

1879 The U.S. Supreme Court is compelled to admit Belva Ann Lockwood to its bar, after rejecting her 1876 application on the grounds of "custom." Lockwood, who held the requisite lower court license from the District of Columbia, DC., obtained Congressional legislation early in 1879 establishing that women who practice law must have access to even the highest court.

1879 In *Strauder v. West Virginia*, the U.S. Supreme Court holds that the Fourteenth Amendment forbids a state to bar men from jury pools based on race or color, but "[i]t may confine the selection to males, to freeholders, to citizens, to persons within certain ages, or to persons having educational qualifications. We do not believe the Fourteenth Amendment was ever intended to prohibit this." In 1961, the Court still relies on this case to continue denying women the right to serve on juries.

1884 Belva Ann Lockwood leads a revival of the dormant Equal Rights Party as part of her candidacy for U.S. President. With running mate Marietta Snow, editor of *The Women's Herald of Industry*, Lockwood wins over 4,000 votes in six states. Indiana unsuccessfully tries to switch its votes from Grover Cleveland to Lockwood, but is barred by a technicality. The party flags again after Lockwood's 1888 run.

1886 The Equity Club is founded at the University of Michigan by Lettie Burlingame for women law students and law alumnae, later expanding to include women attorneys from other schools. It is the first professional organization for women lawyers, and circulates its newsletters to members nationwide. Burlingame, a suffragist, goes into private practice and "so successful was she that she won every case entrusted to her" prior to her death from "la grippe" in 1890.

1892 Feminist economist Charlotte Perkins Gilman publishes the novella *The Yellow Wall-Paper*, a horrifying depiction of how the medical and legal systems worked together to institutionalize or otherwise isolate ambitious women simply by spousal fiat. Such women were often treated for "mental exhaustion" by being deprived of any "unwomanly" intellectual stimulation whatsoever, including basic writing materials or the right to hear news or speak to friends.

1893 Belva Lockwood, grudgingly admitted to the Supreme Court bar in 1879, is denied the right to join the state bar of Virginia. The U.S. Supreme Court, relying on the 1873 Bradwell decision, reaffirms that state bars may discriminate on the basis of sex.

1893 The Queen Isabella Association is formed by women to promote women's accomplishments at the World's Fair in Chicago. They select their name to reflect that Europeans would not have settled America without Isabella's sponsorship of Columbus. As part of the Fair, its legal committee organizes the first nationwide meeting of women lawyers.

1897 Lutie A. Lytle, an African-American attorney, becomes the first woman law professor in the nation when she joins the faculty of the Central Tennessee College of Law.

1898 Women found a law school to accommodate female students rejected from established schools due to their gender. Ellen Spencer Mussey and Emma Gillett found the Washington College of Law in the District of Columbia, now the law school of the American University.

The Twentieth Century

1908 The Portia Law School in Boston is created for women to attend classes in the evening. It does so well that a day program is added in 1922. The program continues to flourish even after other area law schools begin admitting women, and becomes the New England School of Law in 1969.

1911 American mountain climber Annie Smith Peck ascends Mount Coropuna in Peru at the age of 61, and unfurls a banner reading "Votes for Women" at the summit.

1914 Margaret Sanger is indicted on obscenity charges for sending birth control information through the U.S. mails. She flees the country, but returns in 1915. The charges are dropped, and in 1916 she founds the first U.S. birth control clinic in Brooklyn, New York.

1916 Jeanette Pickering Rankin of Montana is elected the first woman member of the United States House of Representatives.

1919 Barbara Armstrong becomes the first woman appointed to a tenure-track position at an accredited law school when she joins the staff of the University of California at Berkeley.

1920 The Nineteenth Amendment is passed, guaranteeing women the right to vote in federal elections. It reads, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

1922 Florence Ellinwood Allen of Ohio becomes the first woman elected to a state supreme court.

1923 The Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is introduced. Drafted by Alice Paul, the ERA is initially an affirmative statement: "Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction." The version Congress passes in 1972 was a 1943 revision: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." It falls three states short of ratification in 1982, and is reintroduced in subsequent Congresses without passage.

1924 Federal suffrage is extended to Native Americans of both sexes by an act of Congress. For the first time, all women in the United States except for the residents of the District of Columbia are guaranteed the right to vote in federal elections. Women in Puerto Rico win suffrage in 1928.

1925 Two wives of former governors became the first women governors. Nellie Tayloe Ross of Wyoming serves a single two-year term. Miriam A. Ferguson of Texas serves twice, 1925-27 and 1933-35.

1928 Genevieve Rose Cline of Ohio becomes the first woman to be a federal judge when she is appointed to the U.S. Customs Court, where she goes on to serve for 25 years.

1932 Hattie Wyatt Caraway of Arkansas is appointed to the U.S. Senate in 1932, and in 1933 becomes the first woman elected to that office.

1933 Frances Perkins becomes the first female Cabinet member in U.S. history, selected by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to be Secretary of Labor.

1934 Florence Ellinwood Allen, formerly of the Ohio Supreme Court, is appointed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to be the first woman on the federal appellate bench. She is chosen to sit on the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals.

1945 The United Nations Charter is signed, and provides that "the peoples of the United Nations . . . reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women"

1946 In *U.S. v. Ballard*, the U.S. Supreme Court holds that "[t]he systematic and intentional exclusion of women, like the exclusion of a racial group, or an economic or social class, deprives the jury system of the broad base it was designed by Congress to have in our democratic society The injury is not limited to the defendant -- there is injury to the jury system, to the law as an institution, to the community at large, and to the democratic ideal reflected in the processes of our courts." However, the Court limits this holding to gender bias in the selection of federal jurors from whatever pool of jurors

are qualified by state law; a state's right to keep women out of the pool entirely is not disturbed.

1946 The United Nations establishes the Commission on the Status of Women to protect women's rights and monitor their status world-wide.

1948 Eleanor Roosevelt heads the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and obtains passage of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which provides that everyone is entitled to the Declaration's rights and freedoms without "distinction of any kind, such as race [and] . . . sex. . . ." The Declaration also explicitly provides for the equality of women and men in marriage: "Men and women of full age . . . are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage, and at its dissolution."

1949 Margaret Chase Smith becomes the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate without previously being appointed to the office.

1949 Burnita Shelton Matthews becomes the first woman on the federal trial bench when President Harry S. Truman appoints her a district court judge.

1953 Playwright and journalist Clare Booth Luce becomes the first woman to be a U.S. Ambassador to a major posting, Italy.

1955 The arrest of Rosa Parks fuels a new wave of civil rights activism when she refuses to give up her seat on a public bus to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama. Echoing the origin of the first wave of feminism in the abolition movement of the Nineteenth Century, the modern civil rights movement for racial equality spurs the second wave of feminism to seek broader gender equality.

1961 In *Hoyt v. Florida*, the U.S. Supreme Court holds that state laws which effectively exclude women from jury pools are not invidious discrimination, but rather, are an "inoffensive" attempt to accommodate the "special responsibilities" of women, and that women tried before the resulting all-male juries have no valid claims under the equal protection clause.

1963 The Equal Pay Act passes, requiring equal wages for women and men doing equal work. It is the first federal law prohibiting sex discrimination.

1963 Betty Friedan publishes "The Feminine Mystique," a keystone of the modern women's rights movement.

1964 The Federal Civil Rights Act passes, including Title VII, which guarantees equal opportunity in employment. Title VII is the statutory basis not only for equal opportunity and sex discrimination cases, but, as a subset of the latter, sexual harassment cases as well. The Civil Rights Act creates the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to enforce workplace equality.

1965 In the U.S. Supreme Court case *Griswold v. Connecticut*, married couples are assured nationwide access to contraception.

1966 The National Organization for Women is founded, and publishes a [charter](#) detailing women's grievances and demanding change.

1967 In *Loving v. Virginia*, the U.S. Supreme Court strikes down state anti-miscegenation statutes, guaranteeing the liberty to form traditional marriages without regard to race.

1969 The first Women and the Law courses in the country are taught at NYU Law School in the fall of 1969, and at Yale the following spring. Georgetown Law's first Women and the Law class is taught by Barbara Allen Babcock in 1970. George Washington University's National Law Center initiates its Women and the Law class in the fall of 1970, simultaneous with Georgetown, taught by Gladys Kessler and Susan Deller Ross. In 1971, Eleanor Holmes Norton teaches the course at NYU, and Ann E. Freedman joins Babcock in teaching the course at Georgetown. In 1972, Judy Lyons Wolf and Nancy Stanley teach it at George Washington University, and in 1973, Marna Tucker and Brooksley Born do so at Georgetown.

1971 The Women's Legal Defense Fund is founded to advance women's rights, initially litigating through a network of volunteer lawyers. With a grant from the Junior League of Washington to fund paid staff, Judith L. Lichtman becomes the first executive director in 1974.

1972 The Women's Rights Project of the Center for Law and Social Policy is established under the direction of Marcia D. Greenberger. Its mission is to provide legal representation on women's issues in the courts, in Congress, and through public education.

1972 *Eisenstadt v. Baird* assures nationwide access to contraception regardless of marital status, fifty-six years after the first birth control clinic is opened.

1972 Title IX of the Education Amendments Act passes, guaranteeing equal access to academic and athletic resources regardless of gender.

1972 Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, a candidate for president in the Democratic primary, becomes the first woman and the first African-American to run for a place on the presidential ticket of a major party.

1973 *Roe v. Wade* establishes a nationwide right to abortion, with restrictions permissible at late stages of pregnancy.

1974 *Sex-Based Discrimination*, coauthored by Kenneth M. Davidson, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Herma Hill Kaye, is published as the first law school casebook addressing the topic.

1974 The first shelter in the U.S. for battered women opens in St. Paul, Minnesota. By the mid-1990's, there are over 1,000 such shelters nationwide, but with very limited bedspace and funding. Facilities located in large cities report that they may have to turn away as many as 70% of the women who seek temporary respite from violence in their own homes.

1974 Ella T. Grasso of Connecticut becomes the first woman to win a governorship without being the spouse of an earlier governor.

1975 In *Taylor v. Louisiana*, the Supreme Court reverses its 1961 position about the Sixth Amendment rights of criminal defendants, and now holds that exclusion of women from juries is impermissible. Women are a "distinctive group" and "sufficiently numerous and distinct from men" that jury pools without them are a violation of a defendant's right to be tried before a true cross-section of the community. "If it was ever the case that women were unqualified to sit on juries or were so situated that none of them should be required to perform jury service, that time has long since passed."

1975 *Sex Discrimination and the Law*, co-authored by Barbara Allen Babcock, Ann E. Freedman, Eleanor Holmes Norton, and Susan Deller Ross, is published, providing a second casebook on the subject. The book evolved from materials the authors used for the first Women and the Law classes at Georgetown, George Washington University, and Yale.

1978 Wendy Webster Williams authors a comprehensive *1978 Supplement to Sex Discrimination and the Law* textbook to augment and update the earlier work.

1978 The Pregnancy Discrimination Act becomes federal law, recognizing that discrimination on the basis of pregnancy is discrimination on the basis of sex. The PDA guarantees pregnant women who are capable of working the right to do so, identical to employees with other, but similar, medical conditions. The Act also mandates that employers provide the same benefits to women at any stage of pregnancy, delivery, or recovery from delivery when they are medically unable to work as to all other employees with temporarily disabling conditions. It also forbids workplace discrimination against women based on the mere possibility of pregnancy.

1979 The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is adopted by the U.N. General Assembly, becoming effective in 1981. By 1998, 161 nations have joined CEDAW; the United States is not among them.

1980 After lobbying by women students for a clinic focused on women's rights, the Georgetown University Law Center begins its Employment Discrimination Clinic. Initially headed by Wendy Williams and Catherine Cronin, and then in the spring semester by Wendy Williams and Laura Rayburn, the Clinic's initial caseload is comprised of federal

agency employment discrimination hearings. In 1982, it is renamed the Sex Discrimination Clinic, and is taught by Laura Rayburn.

1981 In *Rostker v. Goldberg*, the U.S. Supreme Court holds that single-sex registration for the military draft is constitutional. In the dissent, Justice Thurgood Marshall notes that the decision relies upon "ancient canards about the proper role of women" and "categorically excludes women from a fundamental civil obligation."

1981 Sandra Day O'Connor, nominated by President Ronald Reagan, becomes the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court.

1981 The Women's Rights Project of the Center for Law and Social Policy becomes the National Women's Law Center, with Marcia D. Greenberger and Nancy Duff Campbell as co-presidents.

1982 *Mississippi University for Women v. Hogan* establishes that, under the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, public schools may not discriminate on the basis of sex without "exceedingly persuasive justification."

1983 The Women's Law and Public Policy Fellowship Program is founded at Georgetown University Law Center.

1984 Congresswoman Geraldine Ferraro of New York is chosen as the vice-presidential candidate on the Democratic slate by presidential candidate Walter M. Mondale. She is the first woman in U.S. history to be on the presidential ticket of a major party.

1986 The U.S. Supreme Court holds in *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson* that sexual harassment creating a hostile or abusive work environment, even without economic loss for the person being harassed, is in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

1989 Judith Areen becomes Dean of the Georgetown University Law Center, the first female Dean in its history and one of only a handful of women law school deans in the nation.

1991 In *UAW v. Johnson Controls*, the U.S. Supreme Court holds that "fetal protection policies" such as mandatory sterilization for women or complete exclusion from certain jobs are illegal gender-based employment discrimination and forbidden under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

1992 In the aftermath of the contentious Clarence Thomas -- Anita Hill Supreme Court confirmation hearings of 1991, 1992 becomes known as the political "Year of the Woman," with women elected to federal, state, and local offices in unprecedented numbers.

1993 A woman attorney moves into the White House -- as First Lady, when Hillary Rodham Clinton moves to Washington at President Bill Clinton's inauguration.

1993 Janet Reno of Florida is appointed by President Bill Clinton to be the first woman U.S. Attorney General.

1993 Ruth Bader Ginsburg, nominated by President Bill Clinton, becomes the second woman appointed to the Supreme Court.

1993 The Family & Medical Leave Act becomes law, based on the research and policy initiatives prepared by the Women's Law and Public Policy Fellowship class of 1985-86. President Bill Clinton selects the FMLA to be the first legislation signed in his presidency. President George Bush had twice vetoed similar bills.

1993 Georgetown opens a day care center for the children of staff and students at the Law Center's new Sarah and Bernard Gewirz Student Center, 23 years after the women law students first requested this much-needed amenity. It may be the first such facility for law students in the country.

1993 U.S. v. Dixon is the first U.S. Supreme Court case to consider civil protection orders against domestic violence. Both private civil enforcement of such orders and public criminal prosecution of the underlying behavior are upheld.

1993 The Women's Law and Public Policy Fellowship at Georgetown begins the Leadership and Advocacy for Women in Africa program. African women attorneys and judges study and work in Washington for sixteen months. Each obtains an LL.M. degree focused on women's rights and provides six months of work to public interest organizations devoted to advocacy for women. The graduates return to advocate for women in their native countries and network with one another throughout the continent.

1994 In J.E.B. v. Alabama, the U.S. Supreme Court holds that even peremptory challenges are impermissible if their effect is to discriminate on the basis of gender when seating a jury panel. The Court at last affirms that the equal protection rights of the potential jurors to serve, rather than the Sixth Amendment rights of the defendant to a fair trial, are a sufficient justification for ending invidious discrimination against jurors due to gender: "When persons are excluded from participation in our democratic processes solely because of race or gender, this promise of equality [under the law] dims, and the integrity of our judicial system is jeopardized."

1994 Passage of the federal Violence Against Women Act creates penalties for interstate stalking and other gender-based crime.

1995 The American Bar Association, after 117 years, inaugurates its first woman president, Roberta Cooper Ramo. Martha Barnett is the chair of the ABA House of Delegates.

1996 U.S. women sweep the Olympics, competing and winning in more sports than ever before. Their success is widely attributed to the maturation of the promise of 1972's Title IX.

1996 In the "VMI case," U.S. v. Virginia, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that the Virginia Military Institute, a state-supported military academy previously limited to men, must admit women in order to cure its violation of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, or cease to operate from tax funds. Tightening the "exceedingly persuasive" standard of review, the Court holds that separate is not equal as regards the creation of a military program for women at another school, and that categorization by sex "may not be used . . . to create or perpetuate the legal, social, and economic inferiority of women." The Court explicitly holds that no government unit may "den[y] to women, simply because they are women, full citizenship stature -- equal opportunity to aspire, achieve, participate in and contribute to society based on their individual talents and capacities."

1998 In *Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Services*, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously decides that same-sex harassment in the workplace falls under the protection of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and holds the sexual orientation of the harasser irrelevant.

1998 The Women's Legal Defense Fund becomes the National Partnership for Women & Families, reflecting a new priority on consumer education, quality health care, and workplace issues affecting women. Judith L. Lichtman, who joined the Fund in 1974 as executive director and was named president in 1981, continues as president of the National Partnership.

1998 The Center for Legal Advocacy for Women's Rights is established at Georgetown University Law Center. The components are a domestic violence clinic, a clinic on international women's human rights, the domestic Women's Law and Public Policy Fellowship Program and the international Leadership and Advocacy for Women in Africa program.

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