

## TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

### *Lesson Title – NOW Statement of Purpose (1966)*

Grade - 11

Length of class period – 45 minutes (assign reading for homework prior to class)

Inquiry – (What essential question are students answering, what problem are they solving, or what decision are they making?)

***What social, political, and economic issues concerning the status of women in the mid-1960s were identified in the NOW Statement of Purpose?***

Objectives (What content and skills do you expect students to learn from this lesson?)

- students will analyze (primary document) the NOW Statement of Purpose (1966)
- students will interpret the document to discern social, political, and economic issues

Materials (What primary sources or local resources are the basis for this lesson?) – (please attach)

**See Page 2:** Background for Teacher

**See Page 3-5:** NOW Statement of Purpose (1966)

<http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/facts/democrac/69.htm>

**See Page 6:** Analysis Chart

Activities (What will you and your students do during the lesson to promote learning?)

Working in pairs, students will complete the chart to identify social, political, and economic issues contained in the document.

As an entire class, the identified issues will be discussed to discern the social, political, and economic status of women in the mid-1960s.

Students will then compare and contrast the status of women of the 1960s to the status of women today.

**NOTE: When linked with the lesson involving the Seneca Falls Declaration 1848, students can compare the social, political, and economic status of women from the mid-1800s, the 1960s, and today.**

**How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?**

Students will complete an analysis chart of the Now Statement of Purpose.

Informal assessment will be conducted throughout the class discussion.

**NOTE: When linked with the lesson involving the Seneca Falls Declaration 1848, students will respond to the following essay prompt:**  
**Defend or refute: *If the signers of the Seneca Falls Declaration were to view the status of women in America today, they would be satisfied with their legacy.***

**Connecticut Framework Performance Standards –**

\*Students will use primary source documents to analyze multiple perspectives.

\*Students will develop historical thinking skills, including chronological thinking and recognizing change over time

**Background for Teacher:**

***NOW STATEMENT OF PURPOSE (1966)***

American women in the 1960s were hardly a minority, and in fact constituted 51 percent of the population. But they began to identify with members of smaller, oppressed groups and to demand liberation and equality. Sexual discrimination was so subtle and so embedded in the fabric of American society that when the new feminists began to argue for greater equality, they triggered a great deal of hostility and anger. Yet within a fairly short time, the new women's movement had made significant strides, winning legislation that guaranteed equal pay for equal work, forbidding employment discrimination on the basis of gender and securing court victories that struck down generations-old forms of discrimination.

Undoubtedly a key element in this awakening was the entry or return to the job market of millions of women. There they not only secured a measure of economic independence, but came face to face with deeply ingrained patterns of sexual discrimination. Women were barred -- informally but nonetheless effectively -- from certain types of jobs, often ones that paid better or had greater promotional opportunities. They discovered that even when they were working, society expected them also to meet certain stereotypical obligations in the home, while excusing men from sharing in childcare and household work.

A key event was the 1963 publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, in which she detailed the ways society kept women in an inferior status. The book did not so much cause feminism as give voice to a movement already under way. By that time John Kennedy had already established the President's Commission on the Status of Women, and later in the year secured passage of the Equal Pay Act. In 1964, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act extended to women significant protections against discrimination.

Against this backdrop Friedan and other feminists -- including some men -- joined together in 1966 to create NOW, the National Organization for Women. In the beginning, NOW directed most of its resources toward the needs of working women. It denounced the exclusion of women from professions, politics and other areas of society because of antiquated male views about women. It exposed and attacked legal and economic discrimination, such as bank practices that denied married women credit in their own names. By the end of the decade, NOW claimed more than 15,000 members.

The NOW Statement of Purpose defined the mainstream of the modern feminist movement, and even while many women -- and men -- decried the label, they noted that they agreed with NOW's basic demand, that women in the workforce be treated equally with men, receiving equal pay for equal work and enjoying access to jobs and promotions to which their talents entitled them.

For further reading: Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963); Susan M. Hartman, *From Margin to Mainstream: Women and American Politics Since 1960* (1989); Winifred Wandersee, *On the Move: American Women in the 1970s* (1988); Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (1987).

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## Student Document:

### NOW STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

We, men and women who hereby constitute ourselves as the National Organization for Women, believe that the time has come for a new movement toward true equality for all women in America, and toward a fully equal partnership of the sexes, as part of the world-wide revolution of human rights now taking place within and beyond our national borders.

The purpose of NOW is to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men.

We believe the time has come to move beyond the abstract argument, discussion and symposia over the status and special nature of women which has raged in America in recent years; the time has come to confront, with concrete action, the conditions that now prevent women from enjoying the equality of opportunity and freedom of choice which is their right as individual Americans, and as human beings.

NOW is dedicated to the proposition that women first and foremost are human beings, who, like all other people in our society, must have the chance to develop their fullest human potential. We believe that women can achieve such equality only by accepting to the full the challenges and responsibilities they share with all other people in our society, as part of the decision-making mainstream of American political, economic and social life.

We organize to initiate or support action, nationally or in any part of this nation, by individuals or organizations, to break through the silken curtain of prejudice and discrimination against women in government, industry, the professions, the churches, the political parties, the judiciary, the labor unions, in education, science, medicine, law, religion and every other field of importance in American society....

There is no civil rights movement to speak for women, as there has been for Negroes and other victims of discrimination. The National Organization for Women must therefore begin to speak.

We believe that the power of American law, and the protection guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution to the civil rights of all individuals, must be effectively applied and enforced to isolate and remove patterns of sex discrimination, to ensure equality of opportunity in employment and education, and equality of civil and political rights and responsibilities on behalf of women, as well as for Negroes and other deprived groups.

We realize that women's problems are linked to many broader questions of social justice; their solution will require concerted action by many groups. Therefore, convinced that human rights for all are indivisible, we expect to give active support to the common cause of equal rights for all those who suffer discrimination and deprivation, and we call upon other organizations committed to such goals to support our efforts toward equality for women.

We do not accept the token appointment of a few women to high-level positions in government and industry as a substitute for a serious continuing effort to recruit and advance women according to their individual abilities. To this end, we urge American government and industry to mobilize the same resources of ingenuity and command with which they have solved problems of far greater difficulty than those now impeding the progress of women.

We believe that this nation has a capacity at least as great as other nations, to innovate new social institutions which will enable women to enjoy true equality of opportunity and responsibility in society, without conflict with their responsibilities as mothers and

homemakers. In such innovations, America does not lead the Western world, but lags by decades behind many European countries. We do not accept the traditional assumption that a woman has to choose between marriage and motherhood, on the one hand, and serious participation in industry or the professions on the other. We question the present expectation that all normal women will retire from job or profession for ten or fifteen years, to devote their full time to raising children, only to reenter the job market at a relatively minor level. This in itself is a deterrent to the aspirations of women, to their acceptance into management or professional training courses, and to the very possibility of equality of opportunity or real choice, for all but a few women. Above all, we reject the assumption that these problems are the unique responsibility of each individual woman, rather than a basic social dilemma which society must solve. True equality of opportunity and freedom of choice for women requires such practical and possible innovations as a nationwide network of child-care centers, which will make it unnecessary for women to retire completely from society until their children are grown, and national programs to provide retraining for women who have chosen to care for their own children full time.

We believe that it is as essential for every girl to be educated to her full potential of human ability as it is for every boy -- with the knowledge that such education is the key to effective participation in today's economy and that, for a girl as for a boy, education can only be serious where there is expectation that it will be used in society. We believe that American educators are capable of devising means of imparting such expectations to girl students. Moreover, we consider the decline in the proportion of women receiving higher and professional education to be evidence of discrimination. This discrimination may take the form of quotas against the admission of women to colleges and professional schools; lack of encouragement by parents, counselors and educators; denial of loans or fellowships; or the traditional or arbitrary procedures in graduate and professional training geared in terms of men, which inadvertently discriminate against women. We believe that the same serious attention must be given to high school dropouts who are girls as to boys.

We reject the current assumptions that a man must carry the sole burden of supporting himself, his wife, and family, and that a woman is automatically entitled to lifelong support by a man upon her marriage, or that marriage, home and family are primarily woman's world and responsibility -- hers, to dominate, his to support. We believe that a true partnership between the sexes demands a different concept of marriage, an equitable sharing of the responsibilities of home and children and of the economic burdens of their support. We believe that proper recognition should be given to the economic and social value of homemaking and child care. To these ends, we will seek to open a reexamination of laws and mores governing marriage and divorce, for we believe that the current state of "half-equality" between the sexes discriminates against both men and women, and is the cause of much unnecessary hostility between the sexes.

We believe that women must now exercise their political rights and responsibilities as American citizens. They must refuse to be segregated on the basis of sex into separate-and-not-equal ladies' auxiliaries in the political parties, and they must demand representation according to their numbers in the regularly constituted party committees -- at local, state, and national levels -- and in the informal power structure, participating fully in the selection of candidates and political decision-making, and running for office themselves.

In the interests of the human dignity of women, we will protest and endeavor to change the false image of women now prevalent in the mass media, and in the texts, ceremonies, laws, and practices of our major social institutions. Such images perpetuate contempt for women by society and by women for themselves. We are similarly opposed to all policies and practices -- in church, state, college, factory, or office -- which, in the guise of protectiveness, not only deny opportunities but also foster in women self-denigration, dependence, and evasion of responsibility, undermine their confidence in their own abilities and foster contempt for women.

NOW will hold itself independent of any political party in order to mobilize the political power of all women and men intent on our goals. We will strive to ensure that no party, candidate,

President, senator, governor, congressman, or any public official who betrays or ignores the principle of full equality between the sexes is elected or appointed to office. If it is necessary to mobilize the votes of men and women who believe in our cause, in order to win for women the final right to be fully free and equal human beings, we so commit ourselves.

We believe that women will do most to create a new image of women by acting now, and by speaking out in behalf of their own equality, freedom, and human dignity -- not in pleas for special privilege, nor in enmity toward men, who are also victims of the current half-equality between the sexes -- but in an active, self-respecting partnership with men. By so doing, women will develop confidence in their own ability to determine actively, in partnership with men, the conditions of their life, their choices, their future and their society.

Source: *Mary Beth Norton, ed., Major Problems in American Women's History (1989), 397-400.*

# NOW Statement of Purpose (1966)

Social Issues

Political Issues

Economic Issues