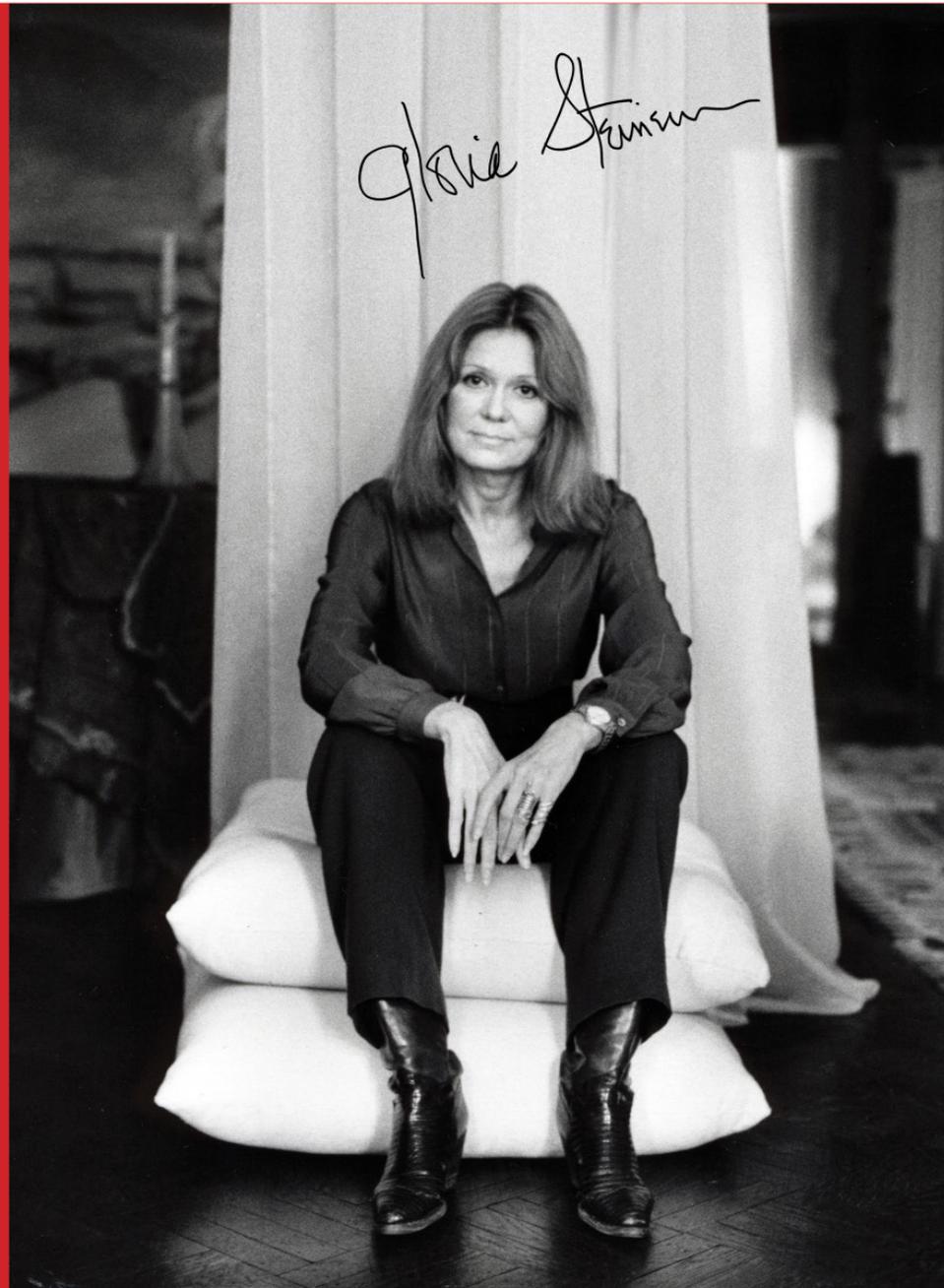


# GLORIA

In Her Own Words



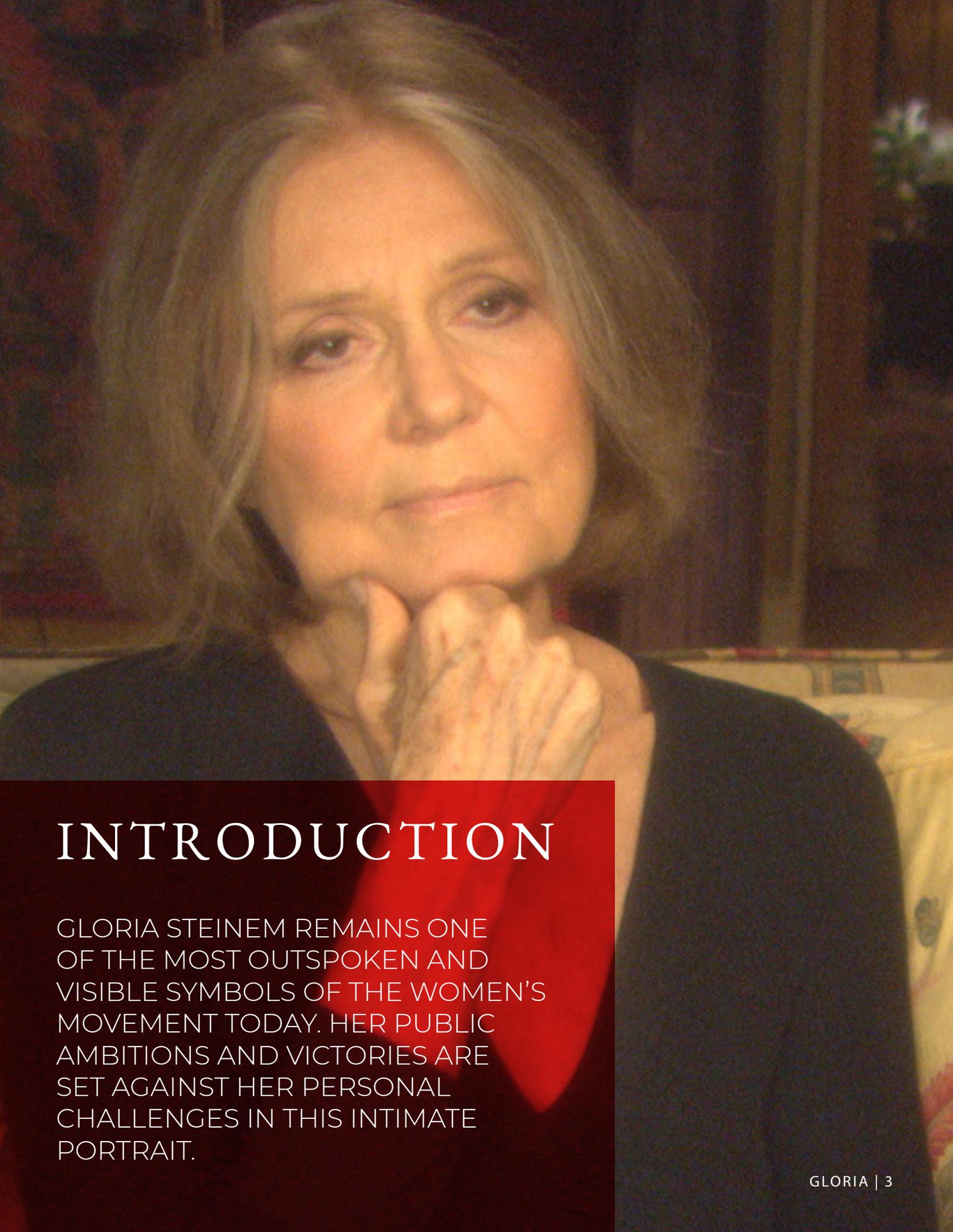
ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

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# INTRODUCTION

GLORIA STEINEM REMAINS ONE OF THE MOST OUTSPOKEN AND VISIBLE SYMBOLS OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT TODAY. HER PUBLIC AMBITIONS AND VICTORIES ARE SET AGAINST HER PERSONAL CHALLENGES IN THIS INTIMATE PORTRAIT.

## USING THIS GUIDE

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This engagement guide is designed as a tool for classroom teachers and facilitators to incorporate excerpts of *Gloria: In Her Own Words* and over four hours of additional footage of conversation with Gloria Steinem in the Interview Archive on the Kunhardt Film Foundation website. These materials are a moving and meaningful complement to many themes and topics of study, including the history of social movements; gender studies; the history of reproductive rights; self image; civil rights; and the media. The guide contains background information on key figures of the women's movement and some political context, as well as suggested pre- and post-viewing discussion questions and activities.



**“We are the women our mothers warned us about.” - GLORIA**



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The materials and documentary excerpts in this guide will help students understand the personal story behind one of the most public figures of the women's movement—past and present. Students who view the excerpts of *Gloria: In Her Own Words* and materials in the Interview Archive and Photo Archive and then engage with the discussion questions will be able to:

- > Identify the goals, tactics, and strategies of the burgeoning women's movement of the 1970s
- > Understand how Steinem's relationship with her family both complicated and inspired her passions and ambitions
- > Connect contemporary social and political issues for women with the past half century of struggle for gender equity

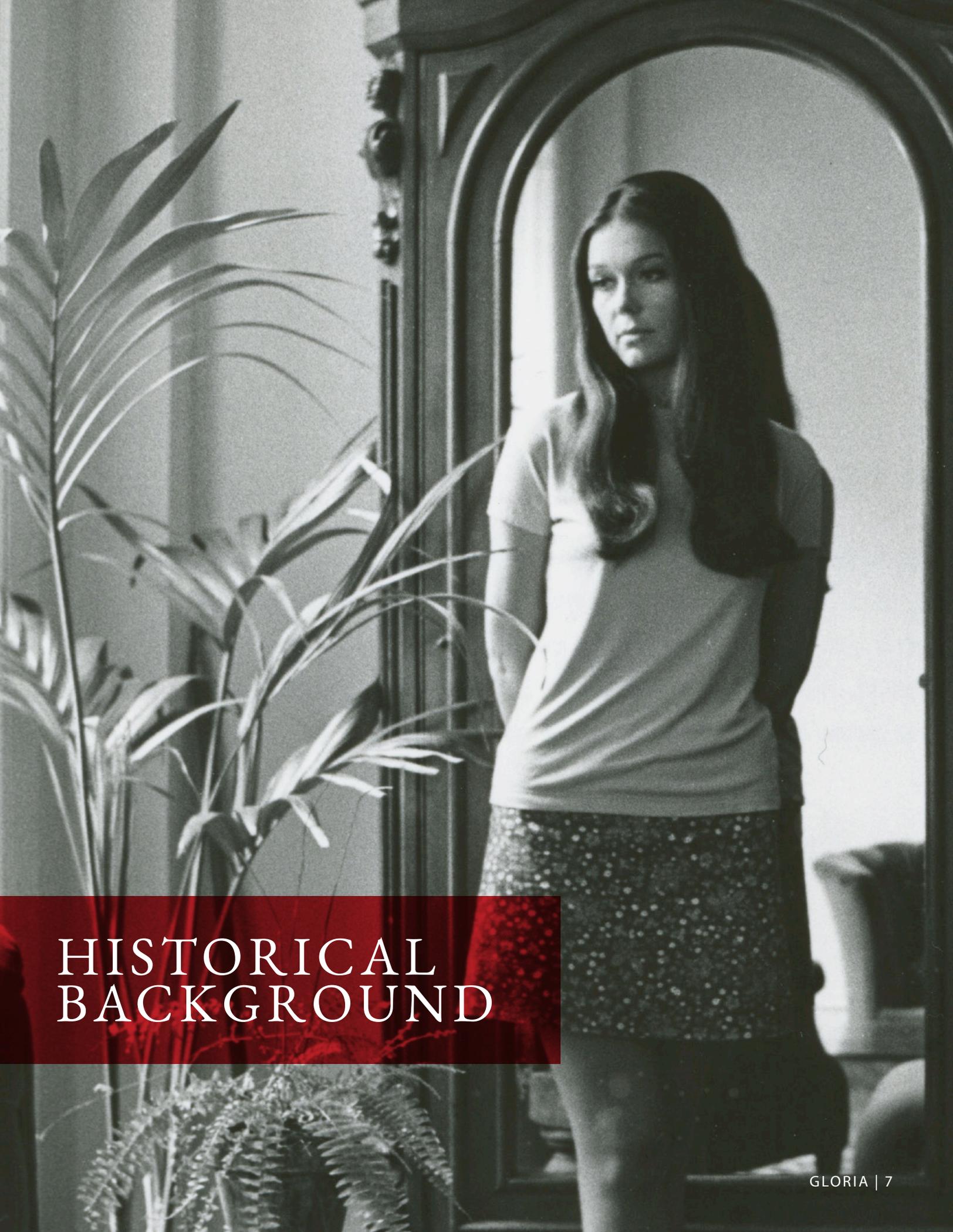


## FILM SUMMARY

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*Gloria: In Her Own Words* blends recent interviews of Steinem in her Manhattan apartment, archival footage, photographs from throughout her life, and clips from press interviews over the years. The documentary also features archival footage of such prominent women's movement figures as National Organization for Women (NOW) co-founder Betty Friedan, groundbreaking congresswoman Bella Abzug, and civil rights advocate Flo Kennedy. *Gloria: In Her Own Words* chronicles Steinem's emergence as a driving force in the modern women's liberation movement. The film explores her early days in Toledo, Ohio, her complicated relationship with her parents, and how those formative years may have been a motivation in her activism. The film also shares how a cancer diagnosis in her 50s marked a new phase of Steinem's consciousness.





HISTORICAL  
BACKGROUND

## EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)<sup>1</sup> is a proposed amendment to the United States Constitution designed to guarantee equal legal rights for all American citizens regardless of sex. The first version was introduced in 1923 at the 75th anniversary celebration of the 1848 Woman’s Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York. Called the “Lucretia Mott Amendment” (after the pioneering activist), it stated: “Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction.” The amendment was introduced in Congress the same year.

In the early 1940s, both the Republican and Democratic parties added support of the ERA to their political platforms but factions of social conservatives were threatened by equal rights for women and did not support it.

Over a century after the fight to end slavery helped spur the women’s rights movement, the civil rights battles of the 1960s provided a fresh impetus. Women organized to demand their birthright as citizens and persons, and the ERA became the central symbol of the struggle. Steinem was a vocal and outspoken advocate for the ERA and spoke at a 1970 Senate hearing arguing persuasively for its passage. The ERA passed the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives in 1972 with an initial seven-year deadline to acquire ratification by three-fourths (38) of the state legislatures.

Although pro-ERA activities increased—with massive lobbying, petitioning, countdown rallies, walkathons, fundraisers, and even the radical suffragist tactics of hunger strikes, White House picketing, and civil disobedience—the Equal Rights Amendment did not succeed in getting the required number of state ratifications before the deadline.

Three states shy of ratification, it was reintroduced in Congress on July 14, 1982, as it has before every session of Congress since. With the fight for women’s rights, specifically equal pay for equal work and freedom from sexual harassment, gaining momentum in the 2000s, support for ratification grew.

In 2017 Nevada became the 36th state—the first since 1977, and 35 years after the original deadline in 1982—to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. Illinois quickly followed in 2018 and Virginia in 2020.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.equalrightsamendment.org>



**“There’s been a lot of effort to demonize the word ‘feminist.’ I think that being a feminist means that you see the world whole instead of half. It shouldn’t need a name. And one day it won’t.” - GLORIA**



## NOW

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The National Organization for Women<sup>2</sup> is the largest organization of feminist grassroots activists in the United States. NOW has hundreds of chapters and hundreds of thousands of members in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

NOW was founded in 1966, aiming to enact change through intersectional grassroots activism to promote feminist ideals, lead societal change, eliminate discrimination, and achieve and protect the equal rights of all women and girls in all aspects of social, political, and economic life. Its vision is rooted in the suffragist movement of the late 1800s, whose goals regained support with the rise of the civil rights movement as feminists once again established their place in the political arena. As the Civil Rights Act of 1964 came to Congress, feminists lobbied for the inclusion of an amendment prohibiting sex discrimination in employment. Title VII was added to the act, including the prohibition, though with relatively superficial protection for women in the workforce.

By 1966, 300 women and men were charter members of NOW, and they hosted an organizing conference in Washington, DC. Betty Friedan was the first president, guiding the adoption of a statement of purpose, addressing all women and all aspects of women's lives. You can read it [here](#). While Steinem believed in many of the same goals as NOW, she argued for broader inclusivity across social class and race.

<sup>2</sup> <https://now.org>

## U.S. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

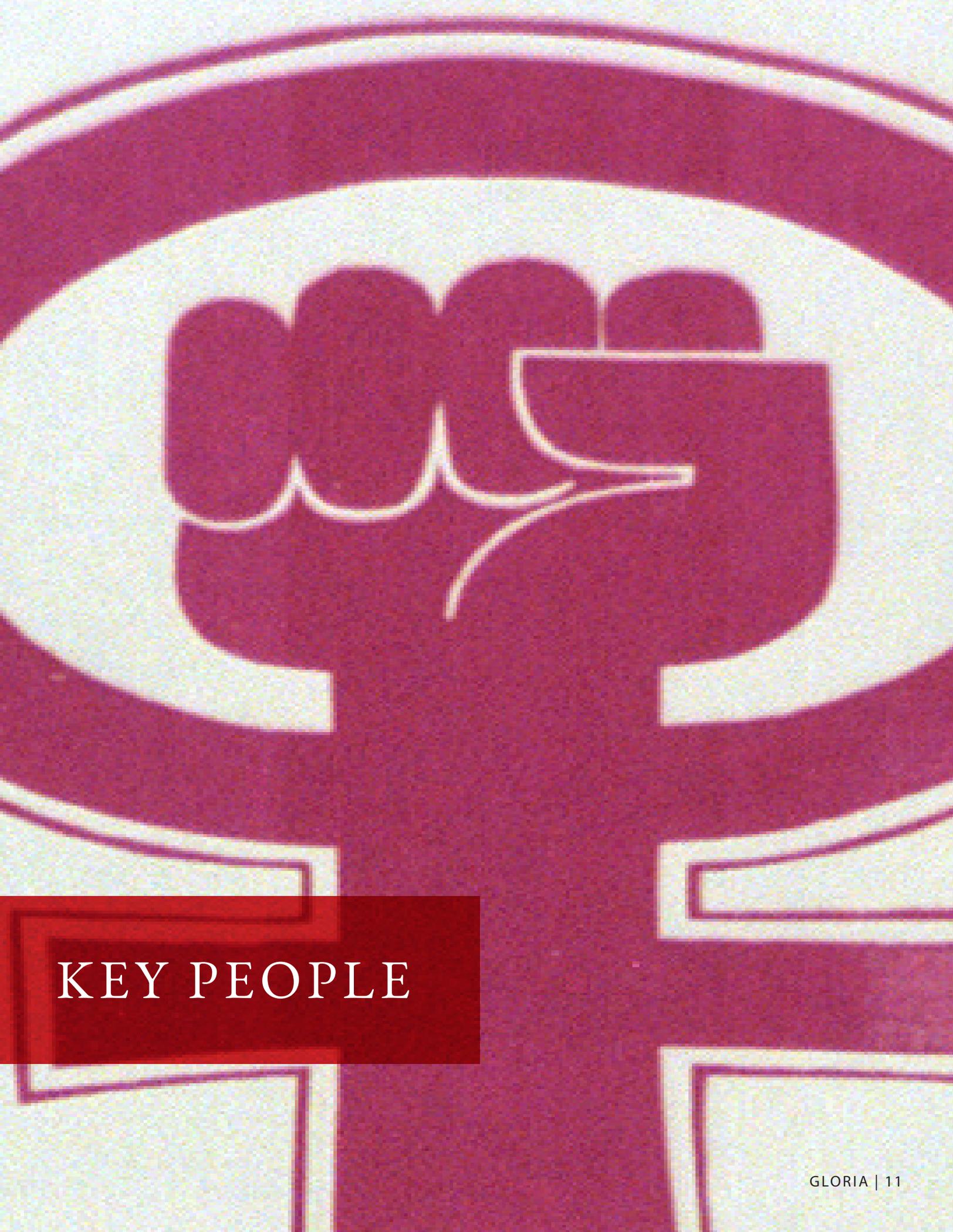
The EEOC<sup>3</sup> was formed in 1965 to oversee implementation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. But change was slow in coming, and women's rights leaders found the September 1965 EEOC decision permitting sex segregation in job advertising to be especially frustrating.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was landmark legislation in the U.S. that outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. In addition, it prohibits unequal application of voter registration requirements, and racial segregation in schools, employment, and public accommodations. Title VII is the portion of the bill that focuses on protecting against employment discrimination. The EEOC was formed in 1965 to strengthen the enforcement and implementation of Title VII. Women's rights leaders were important advocates in advocating for the necessity of the EEOC, particularly to combat sex segregation in job advertising.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.eeoc.gov>



**“I think feminism starts out being very simple, as the instinct of a little child who says, ‘It’s not fair.’ And ‘You are not the boss of me.’ It’s something in us who knows that, right? And it ends up being a worldview that questions hierarchy altogether.” - GLORIA**



KEY PEOPLE



## BELLA ABZUG

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Abzug<sup>4</sup>, born Bella Savitsky in 1920 in New York City, studied labor law at Columbia University Law School. She focused her law practice on civil rights and labor law and on cases involving peace and disarmament. She founded Women Strike for Peace in 1961 and grew deeply involved in public protest of the Vietnam War. Elected to the House of Representatives for NYC's 19th district in 1971, Abzug was an instrumental supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment. She was named co-chairman of the National Advisory Committee on Women by President Carter in 1977 but was dismissed a short time later for openly criticizing the administration. Abzug continued her activism through her private law practice, contributing to *Ms. Magazine*, and working as a news commentator. Abzug and Steinem were close allies and friends, and Steinem credits Abzug with being a mother figure and her best defender.



## BETTY FRIEDAN

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Friedan<sup>5</sup>, born Bettye Naomi Goldstein in 1921 in Peoria, Illinois, was an American feminist writer, activist, and leading figure in the women's movement. Friedan was one of the hundreds of representatives at the organizing conference of NOW in Washington, and its first president. She called for a resolution demanding that the EEOC carry out its legal mandate to end sex discrimination in employment. She wrote the 1963 bestselling book *The Feminine Mystique*, which gave voice to millions of American women's frustrations with the narrow perception of their gender and was pivotal in inspiring a national movement for women's equality. Like Steinem, Friedan attended Smith College and wrote for women's magazines.

As part of her leadership at NOW, Friedan helped found the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws in 1969, recently renamed NARAL Pro-Choice America. She organized the Women's Strike for Equality on August 26, 1970, on the 50th anniversary of women's suffrage, to raise awareness about gender discrimination. In 1971, Friedan and Steinem co-founded the National Women's Political Caucus with Congresswoman Bella Abzug and Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm.

Friedan was criticized for focusing too narrowly on issues relevant to white, middle-class, educated, heterosexual women and advocated for maintaining the movement's mainstream focus for political expediency. These views alienated her from more radical and inclusive feminists such as Steinem, who sought to intentionally speak to issues of gay, black, and working-class women.



## DOROTHY PITMAN HUGHES

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Hughes<sup>6</sup> was born in Georgia in 1938. When she was a young child, her father was beaten and murdered in what her family believed was racially motivated violence. The incident informed Hughes's future activism. She moved to New York City in 1957 where she worked as a singer through the 1960s. Her activism began by raising bail money for civil rights protesters. In partnership with Gloria Steinem, she co-founded *Ms. Magazine* and the Women's Action Alliance, a national information center specializing in nonsexist, multiracial children's education. She and Steinem went on speaking tours together throughout the 1970s and posed for a 1971 portrait published in *Esquire Magazine* in a raised-fist salute first popularized by the Black Power movement. Later in her career, Hughes focused her work in Jacksonville, Florida, around issues of economic inequality and empowering small business ownership by African Americans.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Bella-Abzug>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/betty-friedan>

<sup>6</sup> <https://libguides.unf.edu/Conversations-with-Dorothy>



## FLORYNCE “FLO” KENNEDY

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Kennedy<sup>7</sup> was born in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1916. She received her undergraduate degree from Columbia University, but was refused admission to their law school. Asserting that she was rejected not because she was black, but because she was a woman, she sued the school and was ultimately admitted. This experience informed her perspective that women and racial minorities contended with similar prejudices and had equal rights battles to fight. Kennedy fought to end oppression of a society she saw as racist, sexist, and classist and promoted the formation of alliances. She was an early member of NOW, but left in 1970, and founded the Feminist Party in 1971. Kennedy wrote the essay “Institutionalized oppression vs. the female,” published in the 1970 anthology *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women’s Liberation Movement* and in 1976, she published an autobiography, *Color Me Flo: My Hard Life and Good Times*. In the 1970s, Kennedy and Steinem traveled the lecture circuit, sharing platforms on abortion rights, civil rights, and women’s liberation.



## PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY

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Born Phyllis Stewart in 1924 and raised in St. Louis, Missouri, Schlafly<sup>8</sup> studied political science at Washington University and received a master’s degree in government from Radcliffe College. She worked briefly as a research librarian and then got married and stayed home to raise six children. In 1952, she ran for the U.S. House of Representatives on a strongly anticommunist platform. She won the primary but lost in the general election. She gained national recognition for her self-published book *A Choice Not an Echo*, which made a case for the political potential of grassroots conservatives. She served as vice president of the National Federation of Republican Women, and after losing a run for the presidency of the Federation, began publishing “The Phyllis Schlafly Report.” In this monthly newsletter, she presented her stance on political issues and candidates, and in the 1972 issue announced her opposition to the ERA. Schlafly also established the lobbying organization Stop ERA, widely seen as creating barriers to its ratification. Schlafly was an outspoken critic of Steinem.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.notablebiographies.com/supp/Supplement-Ka-M/Kennedy-Florynce.html>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.phyllisschlafly.com>

**“I think that back then, I’m not sure I knew what feminism was. I’d had one sentence in my textbook saying that women had been given the vote. I thought it was all finished, it was all won, and that if I was having any difficulties, it must be my personal fault.”**

**- GLORIA**



BEFORE SCREENING



Here are some suggestions for engaging students with Gloria Steinem’s life, the women’s movement, and the images and information they will encounter in the film clips. Bring these ideas into the content and the classroom routines you already use. The strategies are a starting point for you to build from and adapt.

### Gathering Prior Knowledge

- > Have the students heard of Gloria Steinem?
- > What do they know about her?
- > Are there other people they associate with women’s rights?

### Exploring Terms

- > Ask the students to raise their hands if they identify as feminists.
- > Ask the students to raise their hands if they believe in equal rights for men and women.
- > Were the hands the same? Why or why not?
- > Does feminism have a negative or positive connotation? Why or why not?

### Current Connections

- > Do the students believe men and women have equal rights today?
- > If not, in what areas are they unequal?
- > What ongoing political, economic, and cultural issues are barriers to equity?



**“There was no word for sexual harassment. It was just called life. So you had to find your own individual way around it. At a certain point I discovered that other women were saying this kind of thing too, and I finally knew that I wasn’t alone, that I wasn’t crazy. The system was crazy.” - GLORIA**



# INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION



The archival and interview footage can support a range of topics and themes. The activities and questions below are suggested starting points that may be implemented as group work, personal writing reflections, position papers, or class debate. In general, as a transition into any of these more focused questions, it's useful to gather responses from the students about what surprised them, or something new they learned. You can also hone in on emotional responses: What was a moment when they laughed? Was there a moment they felt sad, or angry? And, as a general strategy for closing, harvest students' curiosity: What might they like to ask Gloria Steinem if they had the opportunity? What more would they like to know about her or women's rights?

There are nine excerpts from the full-length documentary. View them all, or use pieces and the associated discussion questions for each clip.



### **Clip 1: Opening to *Gloria: In Her Own Words***

Watch these first few minutes of the film several times with your students. The archival footage of Steinem spans decades of her career, as well as centuries of the women's movement. Through the images, the viewer is introduced to her impassioned position as well as the opposition she faced from both men and women. The voice-over also presents a point of view about the women's movement. Spend some time analyzing and discussing this opening montage.

- > How does this excerpt establish Steinem as a leader, and what is at stake in her efforts?

Gloria Steinem alters the dictionary definition of a feminist of being someone who believes in the political equality of men and women by adding that a feminist is also "someone who acts on it."

- > Do you agree with her addition? Can one be a feminist just in thought, or does it require action?

She also asserts, "Feminism means seeing the world as whole instead of half. It shouldn't need a name. And one day it won't."

- > What does it mean to see the world as whole? Do we still need the term "feminism"?



### **Clip 2: Childhood**

Through family photos, interview footage, and Steinem's voice-over, we learn about her mother's mental health challenges and her parents' divorce. She was a caretaker at a young age and saw her mother make compromises for her family.

- > How might her childhood have influenced her ambitions and her journey?



### Clip 3: A Bunny's Tale

Steinem shares that her awakening to feminism “came late in life,” when she was 29. Her career ambition was to be a political journalist but she found no opportunities or support for women in this realm. For a time, out of financial necessity, she wrote stories on superficial and stereotypically female issues such as fashion and domestic life. And then her experience going undercover inside Hugh Hefner’s Playboy empire and the resulting exposé gave her the opportunity to take on exploitation and women’s issues directly.

- > How did the media undercut the success of the exposé ? Why did Steinem come to be glad she had written the story later in life?



### Clip 4: Joining the Movement

Though Steinem experienced gender discrimination in her work, her deeper understanding of the oppression of women did not occur until she came to see the secrecy and shame so many women shared about getting an abortion. She found community and compassion that inspired her leadership in a national movement.

- > Why are reproductive rights a woman's rights issue?
- > How does birth control threaten men's power?



### Clip 5: A Magazine for the Movement

Steinem’s journalistic ambitions did not seem achievable in a male-dominated publishing industry, leading her to start *Ms.* Magazine. Her successes exceeded all of her own—and her critics’ expectations.

- > How did Gloria’s role as an editor advance the message of feminism?



### Clip 6: Advancing the Movement and Its Legacy

There are interesting references in this excerpt to the relationship between the women’s movement and the civil rights movement that are important to consider, such as the sign Steinem holds reading “We SHALL Overcome.” While the two movements shared some chronological overlap and philosophical commonalities, there were also points of conflict. Some influential civil rights leaders felt their message needed to be kept separate, not risking being muddied by women’s issues. Likewise, NOW and Betty Friedan were criticized for prioritizing the rights of upper-class white women and did not allow room for the particular needs of minorities. In provocative articles such as “After Black Power, Women’s Liberation” (1969), Steinem argued that inclusiveness across racial and economic boundaries was fundamental to the campaign for gender equality. This clip also demonstrates the paradox of her attractive appearance and how it influenced her public image.

- > How do ideals of beauty and the women’s movement intersect or clash?
- > What was significant about Steinem breaking the stereotype of feminists as sexless and unattractive?



### **Clip 7: Women of the Year**

The connections among homosexuality, gender, and the women's movement can be seen through the embrace of lesbian rights at the historic National Women's Conference in 1977.

- > Why might some members of the women's movement been opposed to including gay rights in their platform?
- > Why might Steinem have celebrated the inclusion of lesbians? Are these issues connected today? How?



### **Clip 8: Public Attack**

This excerpt includes examples of the attacks Gloria Steinem endured, particularly from the media. It demonstrates the damaging effect of language and name calling.

- > What was, and continues to be, the role of the media in the struggle for women's rights?
- > Why might men have been threatened by her?

## ACTIVITIES

### Ms. Magazine Today

Ask the students to predict the social and political issues that *Ms. Magazine* might be addressing today. Bring up the most recent issue online on your smart board. Compare and contrast with the students' predictions. *Teen Vogue* is another leading source of contemporary female issues. Where else in the media are students seeing the rights of girls and women championed? You can also ask students to imagine they are the editors of a website addressing current gender inequity—what would the homepage of this site look like? What would it be covering?

### Election 2020 and Beyond

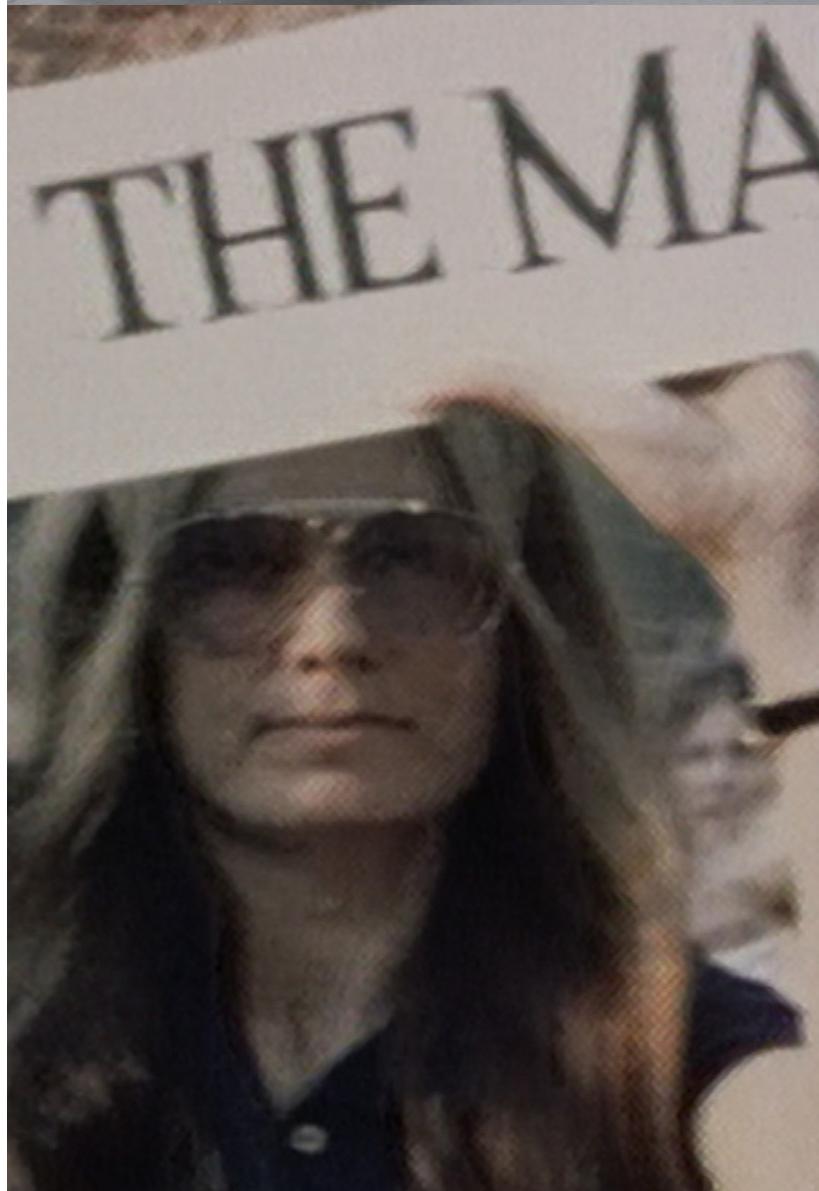
Research the issues and platforms pertinent to women's rights that are relevant to candidates in the upcoming primaries and general elections—on local, state, and national levels. Use this research to compare and contrast to the political gains Gloria was fighting for and reflect on the progress—or lack of—achieved since the 1970s.

### Gather More Voices

Ask the students to interview their mother, grandmother, friend, or neighbor about her personal experience reconciling gender norms and professional ambitions. What challenges did they encounter in pursuing their choices? What motivated them to persist? They can record the conversation with a phone, film their subject, or simply listen and take thoughtful notes.

### Take Action

Is there an issue in the school community involving gender inequity? Students may want to examine funding for athletic teams, gender disparity in advanced placement math and science classes, or access to menstruation products. If there are challenges in the school, what steps can students take to address them?





## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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Heilbrun, Carolyn, *Education of a Woman: The Life of Gloria Steinem*

Steinem, Gloria, *My Life on the Road*

Steinem, Gloria, *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*

# GLORIA

This Engagement Guide was developed and written by Kunhardt Film Foundation, 2020.

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[www.kunhardtfilmfoundation.org](http://www.kunhardtfilmfoundation.org)