

## Week 8 – Reading Guide – Revolutions I: Civil Rights, The Pill, and The Emergence of Second Wave Feminism

Today we begin the fourth unit of the course, “The Flood: Breaking Barriers, c. 1960-1980.” For the next two weeks we will examine one of the most tumultuous and revolutionary eras in American history. Following a period of boundary-policing and tightening of regulations placed on sexual and gender identities between the 1920s and the 1950s, the 1960s and 1970s witnessed an explosion of political and social activism – much of which revolved around sexuality and gender. This week, we will examine the beginnings of this period, focusing on civil rights activism, the so-called “the sexual revolution” of the 1960s, and the emergence of a new wave of American feminist activism.

### Assigned Materials

- Rickie Solinger, “The Population Bomb and Sexual Revolution,” in Reiss, *American Sexual Histories*, second ed. (2012) 320-335.
- Betty Friedan, “The Problem that Has No Name,” from *The Feminine Mystique* [1963] 57-78.
- Casey Hayden and Mary King, “Sex and Caste: A Kind of Memo” [1965], in *Takin’ It to the Streets: A Sixties Reader*, Bloom and Brienens, eds. (1995) 133-136.
- NY Radical Women, “No More Miss America!” [1968] *Redstockings Online Archive*, 1-2.
- Carol Hanisch, “The Personal is Political” [1969], and forward from author (2009) 1-5.
- Black Unity Party, “Birth Control and Black Children” and “Response from Black Sisters” [1968], from *The Chicago Women’s’ Liberation Union Herstory Archive*, 1-2.
- WATCH FILM BEFORE CLASS: *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin* (2003), 83 min.

### Questions to Consider

*Civil Rights:* As you watch the documentary about the life of Bayard Rustin, consider how gender and sexuality mattered in the long Black Freedom struggle in the US. How does a focus on Rustin complicate what you have learned about the Civil Rights Movement in other venues (for example, in high school classes or mainstream movies)? Why is it important to know about Rustin, and what can his life teach us?

*Population and the Pill:* Read Solinger’s essay on the “population bomb” alongside the document from the Black Unity Party and the response from Black Sisters. How do these documents fit into what we already know from class, about the history and politics of reproduction in the United States? How did the ways Americans understood the politics of reproduction change over the course of the twentieth century?

*Emergence of Second Wave Feminism:* Casey Hayden and Mary King were activists who participated extensively in the Civil Rights Movement (what they simply call “the movement”). As you read their “kind of memo,” pay close attention to tone and style. What are they asking for? How are they asking for it? Betty Friedan was a journalist and labor activist before founding the National Organization for Women (NOW) and becoming a central figure of the Women’s Movement. As you read Friedan, try to think back to our last class session – in what ways did the social and cultural atmosphere of the 1950s lead to the emergence of a new feminist consciousness in the 1960s? Compare Hayden and King’s “Memo” to Friedan’s take on the challenges faced by mid-century housewives. Both documents are credited with “launching” the “second wave” of American feminism. In what ways do these sources differ from or complement each other? Finally, read “No More Miss America!” and Hanisch’s classic essay “The Personal is Political” closely. Are the goals and motivations of these documents the same as those of Friedan, Hayden, and King?

If we read these documents in chronological order from 1963 to 1969, what kind of picture emerges? How would you characterize the development of feminism in the US from the early to the late 1960s?

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