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Feminism Divided:
Feminists for Life of America and the National Organization for Women

by

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Introduction

This thesis project examines the relationship between the National Organization for Women and Feminists for Life of America; NOW's rejection of FFLA ultimately hurt the women's movement and feminism as a whole.

Feminism cannot be defined in one specific way. The term feminism came into use while women were fighting for suffrage, amongst many other reforms in 1910. Feminism, however, developed to encompass more than just suffrage; it encompassed a wide variety of fundamental changes, "resulting in a revolution of the sexes."¹ Though there is no one correct way to define feminism, most descriptions do contain some common elements. The most common characteristic is a call for radical change of this "man's world," calling women to "claim what is rightfully theirs."² Though this seems to be a fundamental characteristic in most descriptions of feminism, feminist's views on how this social change should occur vary. Different types of feminism include social, liberal, radical, and now cultural feminism.³ Within these types of feminism are individual ideologies. Though they may differ from one another, together they created the diversity that allowed second wave feminism to flourish.

Second wave feminism was a revolution that developed in the 1960's. Many women were motivated by their work in the civil rights movement. Betty Friedan's Feminist Mystique also opened many women's eyes to face a despair and discontent that consumed their lives, which Friedan called, "the problem that has no name." As the roots

¹ Jane Sherron De Hart and Linda K. Kerber, "Introduction: gender and the New Women's History," in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, eds. Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 16.

² Myra Marx Ferree and Beth B. Hess, *Controversy and Coalition: The New Feminist Movement* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985), 28.

³ Jane Sherron de Hart, "Second-Wave Feminists and the Dynamics of Social Change," in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, eds. Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 599.

of the organization evolved, feminists coined the phrase “the personal is political.”

Women formed consciousness-raising groups in which they learned that many of their own personal problems were actually problems within the larger society.

As the modern feminist movement formed, the National Organization for Women became its face. NOW formed in 1966 by people attending the Third National Conference of the Commission on the Status of Women, and it soon dedicated itself “to take the actions needed to bring women into the mainstream American society, assuming all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in true partnership with men.”⁴ In 1967 it adopted a Bill of Rights that added many other important issues to its platform, including the two issues that would gather the most positive and negative publicity for the organization. These two issues were the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion. Immediately opposition was felt within the movement against these two issues.

Many NOW members did not agree with NOW’s stand on abortion. These women continually tried to express their pro-life opinion within NOW; however, they were repeatedly silenced. Because of this silencing, these self-proclaimed pro-life feminists created their own organization in 1973, Feminists for Life of America. FFLA’s founding members Pat Goltz and Catherine Callahan were eventually dismissed from their NOW Columbus chapter in 1974 on the basis that they were taking a public stand against abortion while claiming NOW membership. The ties were broken between NOW members and their fellow sisters.

FFLA members believed that abortion was a contradiction of what was true feminism. FFLA members believed that when feminists denied the personhood of the unborn, “they borrowed the very same justification that the patriarchs used so

⁴ Freeman, 55.

successfully throughout history to deny full recognition as persons to women.”⁵ For them, the feminist movement was to fight the oppression of women, and these women saw abortion as another means in which women were oppressed.⁶ With abortion, the male chauvinist image of women as sex objects was reaffirmed, and this insulted women’s dignity.⁷ FFLA worked hard to find solutions to the reasons women sought abortions which they saw as welfare inequalities and job discrimination. They quickly organized themselves and began their work as both feminists and pro-life advocates. They fought discrimination in the workforce while also participating in the annual March for Life. They published a quarterly newsletter called *Sisterlife*, to inform members of FFLA’s nation and local efforts. Though FFLA was disregarded by most of their fellow feminists, they were not disregarded by the right-to-life movement, and FFLA participated in many of their events.

The split between FFLA and NOW created negative repercussions within the feminist movement. NOW’s claim of being a diverse organization was brought into question when it would not allow diversity opinion on abortion. NOW and FFLA attempted to dialogue a few times; however, they still could not agree to work together. FFLA also took many different approaches to try to communicate with NOW, but few resulted in any specific results. Fundamental to their differences was that they both represented a different face of feminism. NOW members were radical feminists who believed that male supremacy oppressed all women. FFLA members claimed to be radical feminists, yet they also portrayed characteristics of cultural feminism. Cultural

⁵ Rosemary Bottcher, “Abortion Threatens Women’s Equality,” in *Prolife Feminism: Yesterday and Today*, eds. Rachel MacNair, Mare Krane Derr, and Linda Naranjo-Huebl (New York: Sulzburger & Graham Publishing, Inc., 1995), 177.

⁶ Sarah Campbell, “Pro-life feminists try to Redefine the Movement,” *The Hill*, 24 January 1986.

⁷ “New ‘Lib’ Group says ‘Abortion insults women’s dignity,” FFLA archives, WHS.

feminists believed in the basic differences of women from men and the superiority of that difference. “Women focused on their lifestyles and their own personal liberation, rather than the on the need to create a mass movement to overthrow male supremacy.”⁸

Though these organizations overlapped in many areas this fundamental difference did hinder dialogue between the two.

One issue they did agree on, however, was the Equal Rights Amendment. FFLA and NOW were active supporters of the ERA and dedicated a great deal of time and energy in fighting for its approval. They both publicly agreed with this issue, yet FFLA was still rejected by NOW. One reason was that FFLA worked for the ERA as well as the Human Life Amendment. However, FFLA was able to mobilize many pro-life activists who were against the ERA. The organizations never worked together, and the ERA never received the support from enough states to achieve ratification.

It is clear that FFLA would have created a great deal of diversity within NOW. Author Maren Carden noted that “the proliferation of differentiated groups within feminism encourages a flexibility in ideas, activities, and organizational forms that reflects the movement’s dual emphasis on autonomy and sisterhood, on cooperation and achievement.”⁹ A unification of NOW and FFLA would have allowed for a “broadened vision of feminism.”¹⁰ However this could never be reached. Though they would ultimately agree to disagree on the issue of abortion, they never worked together for the ERA or for fighting other problems within society that lead to the unequal treatment of women. FFLA’s growing friendship with the right-to-life movement also could have served as the perfect buffer between these two opposing movements; however, this failed.

⁸ Flora Davis, *Moving the Mountain* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 146-147.

⁹ Ferree and Hess, 103.

¹⁰ Ferree and Hess, 90.

No doubt that FFLA's presence within NOW would have created pain and conflict; however, the growth of the movement as a result of this unification would have outweighed this. Past president of FFLA, Rachel Macnair writes, "Every large movement has internal disagreements. Hostile outsiders call these factions. If the movement accepts this designation, the opposition succeeds in making it a divided movement. If they are regarded as schools of thought rather than factions, the movement is strengthened by diversity."¹¹ True to Macnair's observation, the split between FFLA and NOW in 1974 limited the women's movement and feminism as a whole.

This thesis will closely examine the relationship between NOW and FFLA, and the negative effect their split had on the women's movement. The first chapter describes both NOW and FFLA in terms of their foundings, goals, and the actions they took to achieve their goals. Though they differed in regards to abortion, they did share some common goals in fighting inequality. The second chapter more closely examines NOW's expulsion of pro-life feminists, and the strained relationship between the two groups that followed the split. Finally, the third chapter discusses the main point that both organizations agreed on: ratification of the ERA. Though they could have worked together in fighting for the ERA, NOW continued to reject FFLA and both groups remained distant.

Important to writing this thesis were the Feminists for Life of America Archival materials found at the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison, Wisconsin. It is important to note that the FFLA archival material played a dominant role in the analysis

¹¹ Rachel MacNair, "Schools of Thought," in *Pro-life Feminism: Yesterday and Today*, eds. Rachel MacNair, Mare Krane Derr, and Linda Naranjo-Huebl (New York: Sulzburger & Graham Publishing, Inc., 1995), 248.

of the relationship between NOW and FFLA, while official NOW records are missing in the analysis.

Chapter One

NOW and FFLA

Second-wave feminism, a revolution, grew out of the civil rights movement. Predominantly white and middle class women campaigned ardently to acquire civil rights, yet lacked the equal respect and authority in different sectors of society. As additional women mobilized in their fight for equality, they formed an organization to take the necessary action to obtain justice. The National Organization for Women (NOW), created by people attending the Third National Conference of the Commission on the Status of Women in 1966, became the face of the women's movement. When the organization added abortion to its platform in 1967, many women adamantly disagreed with the position. Some women left the organization; however, many stayed and hoped to change the organization's opinion on abortion. These women came to form Feminists for Life of America, a pro-life feminist grassroots organization. Members of FFLA tried to remain part of NOW, but were eventually dismissed from the organization. Time passed and the division between the two groups grew. The division between the two seriously hurt the women's movement.

NOW's Founding

The National Organization for Women was the main organization representing the women's movement. In the 1960's as women challenged traditional roles, they became increasingly aware of the inequalities they experienced in daily life. Several significant events mobilized women to create NOW.

Among the first events to significantly influence NOW's creation was the formation of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, started by President

Kennedy in 1961. Although it was politically cautious, the national commission and 50 states' commissions garnered a myriad of politically active women, who possessed the skills and motivation to work for women's justice. The commission provided a forum in which they could share their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. In addition, the commission made women further aware of women's inequalities in economic and political situations. Women were given hope that something could and would be done to increase other's awareness and fix the economic and political inequalities women faced. The commission substantially contributed to the beginning of the NOW by mobilizing many of its early members.¹²

Another significant event that influenced NOW's creation was the participation in other social movements. A great deal of white and middle class women actively participated in the civil rights and peace movements of the time aiding in organizations such as NAACP, SDS, and SNCC. Participation in the organizations provided the motivation needed as activists of women's rights.¹³ It allowed for opportunities that they never experienced before. They participated in protests and went door-to-door in an effort to talk to impoverished women. The women active in SNCC and SDS gained the skills they needed to run an organization like NOW. Women's work in these organizations also caused problems that motivated women even more to work for women's rights. Though men working in SNCC and SDS believed in racial equality, they did not always believe in women's equality. Many men within the movement treated the women participants as

¹² Jo Freeman, *The Politics of Women's Liberation: A Case Study of an Emerging Social Movement and Its Relation to the Policy Process* (New York: David McKay, Inc., 1975), 52-53.

¹³ Maryann Barakso, *Governing NOW: Grassroots Activism in the National Organization for Women* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 15.

housemaids or sex objects. Eventually by 1967 most women left these movements, but not without the skills and drive to achieve full equality for women.¹⁴

In 1963, Betty Friedan released the instant bestseller, The Feminine Mystique. Betty Friedan was a housewife, mother, and former labor union journalist. For the book, Friedan interviewed numerous housewives who were all deeply despaired by the lives they were leading.¹⁵ Many women throughout the country felt the same way, and after reading the book, they left with a sense of community that they were not alone in this thinking.¹⁶ Friedan challenged women to live the life they dreamed of living, and with that many women mobilized to take action to ensure that their rights would be protected.

In 1964, Title VII added “sex” to the list of protective categories in the Civil Rights Act, to fight sex discrimination in employment. It sparked a debate that led to the direct creation of NOW. The bill, heavily debated in Congress, passed after considerable support from female members of Congress, including Representative Martha Griffiths of Michigan.¹⁷ However, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission quickly opposed the bill. Executive director of the EEOC, Herman Edelsberg, stated, “The provision was a fluke that was conceived out of wedlock.” He felt “men were entitled to female secretaries.”¹⁸ Conversely, Edelsberg did not represent the opinion of all those in the EEOC. Many in the organization supported the bill and believed women needed an organization that would encumbrance the government to take the bill seriously. Those in

¹⁴ Jane Sherron de Hart, “Second-Wave Feminists and the Dynamics of Social Change,” in *Women’s America: Refocusing the Past*, eds. Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 606.

¹⁵ Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women’s Movement Changed America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 6.

¹⁶ Freeman, 53.

¹⁷ Freeman, 53.

¹⁸ Herman Edelsberg in Freeman, 54.

the committee could not organize anything because they worked for the government. Nevertheless, they began to mobilize women they knew who could do it.¹⁹

The Third National Conference of the Commission on the Status of Women in 1966 set the beginning foundations of NOW. Women at the conference proposed a resolution insisting the EEOC treat sex discrimination as a serious matter. Conference officials, however, refused to consider passing the resolution because the women were not elected delegates of the EEOC.²⁰ Subsequent to the rejection of the resolution, women gathered in Betty Friedan's room to discuss forming an organization to take action in the fight for women's equality. Many were hesitant and suspicious of such an organization. Many questioned their trust in other women at the meeting. Well past midnight the women continued their discussion; however, at the end of the meeting the women still did not agree on whether an organization should exist.²¹ Betty Friedan went to bed "feeling a bitter taste of defeat."²²

The next day, the women continued to fight for the resolution; however, Esther Peterson, executive vice chairman of the commission and assistant Secretary of Labor, put an end to the resolution noting the purpose of the convention was discussion not action.²³ The women met at lunch eager to see that something was accomplished quickly since many had to get back to their families. After a great deal of whispering and passing notes, NOW was finally created on June 30, 1966.²⁴ The purpose of the organization as stated in NOW's Statement of Purpose was "to take the actions needed to bring women

¹⁹ Freeman, 54.

²⁰ Freeman, 54-55.

²¹ Rosen, 74.

²² Betty Friedan in Rosen, 74.

²³ Barakso, 22.

²⁴ Rosen, 75.

into the mainstream American society, assuming all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in true partnership with men.”²⁵ By the end of the conference 28 women joined NOW and paid their five-dollar membership dues.²⁶

The new members met on October 29, 1966, at NOW’s first conference in Washington, D.C. By this time, there were approximately 300 charter members of NOW with Betty Friedan leading as the first president. The two vice presidents were both former EEOC commissioners, and the secretary-treasurer was a member of the United Auto Workers Women’s Committee. Most of NOW’s early members held jobs within government and labor organizations. Early members depended greatly on their knowledge of the media and politics, and this allowed for growth. The earliest NOW members created the necessary publicity to inform others of their organization, and this worked in recruiting new members.²⁷

Thirty of the 300 members in 1966 participated in establishing a Statement of Purpose for the group at NOW’s first conference.²⁸ The Statement of Purpose addressed issues essential to the equality of all women including equal opportunity in the workforce, higher education opportunities, and solutions to the problem of women’s poverty. It pledged to gain women’s equal rights in society.²⁹ The Statement of Purpose illustrated the principles NOW relied on to succeed in the early years. Success depended on member’s representation in Congress, the work place, party leadership, and in academic settings.³⁰ As Barakso noted, NOW wanted its members to be active in the

²⁵ Freeman, 55.

²⁶ Freeman, 55.

²⁷ Freeman, 46.

²⁸ “Founding of NOW: A New Civil Rights Organization is Born,” (*The National Organization for Women, 1995-2007*), http://www.now.org/history/the_founding.html (accessed February 26, 2007).

²⁹ Barakso, 40

³⁰ Barakso, 24.

“decision making mainstream of American political, economic, and social life.”³¹

Members saw a revolution underway.³²

NOW's Challenges

The organization developed and faced several challenges in trying to be the face of the women's movement. One early struggle was NOW's inability to meet the needs of many members. Funds were low, but nothing was done to remedy the problem. The problem grew with the development of new local chapters and the national chapter's inability to fully unite with them.³³ Because of this, the organization did not respond to the needs of many of its members. The national office had no up-to-date membership lists and no organized records of donors from the local chapters.³⁴ Local chapters would write to the national office of NOW, and many times their letters went unanswered. Also local chapter presidents did not receive the National Task Force Reports; therefore, they could not unite their chapter's efforts with the national office's efforts.³⁵ The lack of organized leadership on the national and local levels contributed to these problems. Many of the officers lived in different states, and it grew difficult for them to meet and decide what needed to be done.³⁶ Because of NOW's lack of regional chapters and only a national

³¹ Barakso, 24 as in Statement of Purpose.

³² Barakso, 26.

³³ Freeman, 87.

³⁴ Barakso, 33.

³⁵ Freeman, 87.

³⁶ Freeman, 83-84.

structure, members could not address their personal concerns on a local level. They had to convince the entire organization to support them, and this created friction.³⁷

Another problem NOW faced was the division between its older, liberal founders and the growing number of younger, “radical” women, who joined the movement a few years later. Many of the founding women’s active participation in other social movement organizations gave them the essential skills needed to run a new organization.³⁸ Many of the older women were well experienced with the media, which allowed the organization to get the early attention needed to succeed.³⁹ The older women held a variety of careers including journalists, lawyers, religious leaders, and some union leaders. This allowed them to focus mainly on the legal and economic problems of working women.⁴⁰

The younger “radical” women came into the movement with a different mind set. Most were less focused on women’s role in the workforce because they were not part of the paid workforce. They were housewives unsatisfied with their lives. They had not identified themselves as feminists, and many were confused about feminism. Because of their situation, they lacked the enthusiasm to focus on employment and instead wanted to relate feminism to their own personal experiences.⁴¹ Thus, consciousness-raising groups developed. The consciousness- raising groups helped women realize that housework, childcare, and beauty standards, which felt like personal problems, were actual political problems created within the larger society. The older members were cautious of such an

³⁷ Freeman, 80.

³⁸ Barakso, 15.

³⁹ Freeman, 73.

⁴⁰ Freeman, 50.

⁴¹ Freeman, 85.

idea since NOW was an action organization; however, after seeing the benefits of the groups, the older women were more than accepting of them.⁴²

When the two groups of women settled the differences, it allowed for tremendous growth in the feminists movement. From 1967 to 1974, the number of NOW chapters increased from 14 to more than 700 and membership increased from 1,000 members to 40,000. Both branches of the movement contributed significantly to the growth.⁴³ After the first Congress to Unite Women in 1969, both branches of NOW saw the urgent need to cooperate. NOW organized the first Congress to Unite Women. It was held in New York City in November 1969. The purpose of the congress attempted “to gather disparate groups from the mushrooming women’s movement.” NOW hoped that the different branches within the movement could work together to strengthen the fight for women’s equality. Over 500 women for three days discussed important feminist issues.⁴⁴ At the meeting, NOW members realized working together would bear more fruit than working against one another. Each group brought something unique to the movement, which allowed it to grow. They realized that unification might cause tension, but having a diverse group would reach more, which could make it easy to meet the needs of more women. More women could relate to the movement in a way relevant to their own lives.⁴⁵ By 1974 Jo Freeman described NOW as an “umbrella group for all kinds of feminist, even those whose primary loyalties lie elsewhere.”⁴⁶

Freeman’s statement reflected the majority opinion at the time, but deeper division lurked within NOW. The abortion debate would be the turning point. Women

⁴² Freeman, 86.

⁴³ Rosen, 87.

⁴⁴ Rosen, 86.

⁴⁵ Freeman, 83-84.

⁴⁶ Freeman, 93.

began to waver on NOW's stand on abortion. Pro-life feminists would soon find their differing opinion shunned.

Early Schisms

By 1967 abortion became one of the two issues focused on by NOW. Ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment became the other issue. Both issues caused the most controversy among members of NOW. Both were adopted at NOW's second national conference in November 1967. At the conference, NOW members created a "Bill of Rights for Women" that demanded federal support of day-care centers, equal employment opportunity laws, and money and housing for impoverished women. Members supported these demands. Problems arose when Betty Freidan encouraged NOW members to support the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion.⁴⁷ Though many women did support these issues, many other women threatened to leave the organization if one or even both of these issues were added.⁴⁸ NOW members who participated in labor unions saw the ERA as threat to the protective labor laws that Florence Kelley, a social reform activist in the 1920's, established. If ratification of the ERA occurred, the protective labor laws would no longer be valid to protect women and children.⁴⁹ Because of this, NOW lost the support of many labor unions such as the United Auto Workers, who generously aided NOW in its early years.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Barakso, 41.

⁴⁸ Freeman, 80.

⁴⁹ Nancy F. Cott "Equal Rights and Economic Roles: The Conflict over the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1920's" in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past*, eds. Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 380.

⁵⁰ Barakso, 41.

The issue of abortion created more difficulties. As a young organization several members grew hesitant to take on the controversial issue. Many women did not see NOW's logic in arguing that abortion was a women's rights issue. In the nineteenth century, abortion came to be considered a medical issue. Medical professionals called for a stop to abortions. They argued that women, unaware of scientific evidence, lacked the knowledge to recognize a fetus as a living being. They held the responsibility, as medical professionals, to keep women from having abortions. Here the origins of the first "right-to-life movement" were found.⁵¹ Though these physicians lacked the accurate evidence to fully prove their argument, they established the first case for the protection of the unborn fetus.⁵² At any rate, with this claim they also claimed to have the right when to decide if an abortion was necessary.⁵³ These claims silenced the issue of abortion for almost a century later.⁵⁴ For this reason, women were skeptical of taking such a public stand against abortion since it had not been a public issue for so long. However, "control of one's body" still became an argument that NOW would spend the next years tirelessly developing.⁵⁵

The adoption of these two controversial issues created numerous repercussions. New women joined the organization, but NOW also lost older members.⁵⁶ Many women broke off and formed a new organization called the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL). WEAL members wanted equal employment opportunities for women and saw

⁵¹ Kristin Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 21.

⁵² Luker, 25.

⁵³ Luker, 32.

⁵⁴ Luker, 40.

⁵⁵ Freeman, 81.

⁵⁶ Flora Davis, *Moving the Mountain* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 67.

NOW's support of abortion as a hindrance.⁵⁷ Dr. Elizabeth Boyer, founder of WEAL, focused the organization's work on legal and economic problems.⁵⁸ Though this opposition arose, it did not stop Betty Friedan and other members of NOW from fully embracing these two new platform issues. Betty Friedan summed up the conference that year stating, " ... the ERA and abortion were and are the two gut issues of the women's movement essential to real security—an equality and human dignity—for all women."⁵⁹ The ERA and abortion became not only the primary platform of NOW, but also the primary issues that split the women's movement.⁶⁰

As feminists became more involved in the abortion debate, it grew and changed tremendously. Many NOW members fought not just for the reform of abortion laws, but also for the repeal of all abortion laws. NOW members argued that the government did not and should not have a say in a women's choice to have an abortion.⁶¹ Radical feminists began to take public action, which drew the attention of the media. In 1969, they interrupted a New York State hearing on an abortion reform bill and following the meeting spoke publicly in favor of the repeal of all abortion laws.⁶² Feminists also referred women to abortion doctors and held abortion counseling sessions. Abortion historian Rosalind Petchesky said these feminist activists were the "shock troops" of the abortion rights movement.⁶³

NOW members fought for repeal of all abortion laws, and women across the country began to support their actions. According to Kristin Luker, increased support for

⁵⁷ Barakso, 42.

⁵⁸ Freeman, 81.

⁵⁹ Betty Friedan in Davis, 68.

⁶⁰ Davis, 68.

⁶¹ Davis, 168.

⁶² Davis, 165.

⁶³ Davis, 118.

the repeal of abortion laws was a result of the changes in women's roles over time. Before the 1960's and 1970's, men's traditional role was in the paid workforce while women stayed at home to care for the family and house.⁶⁴ However, this traditional pattern broke when an increased number of women entered the paid workforce.⁶⁵ Women began to realize they were treated unfairly because they were mothers.⁶⁶ As it became the norm for women to have careers outside of the home, an unexpected pregnancy could ruin their chances of pursuing that career. Abortion became another means of control they could have over their lives.⁶⁷

Abortion came to dominate NOW's platform, and they took immediate legal action in the fight to legalize abortion. Abortion was legalized in 1973 with the Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade*. It was NOW's activism as well as the activism of many others that enabled the issue to reach the Supreme Court. The court saw more support for the repeal of all abortion laws than they saw opposition to it. In addition to this, many other states battled with the issue, and the court had to eventually deal with those states. Thanks to NOW's activity that promoted legislation on the abortion issue, the Supreme Court heard the case and ruled in favor of legal abortion based on the right to privacy.⁶⁸

Yet NOW did not rest in its fight since the right-to-life movement quickly mobilized to overturn the Supreme Court decision. As noted before, the original "right-to-life" movement dates back to the second part of the nineteenth century when physicians argued that the embryo was a child. However in the 1950's and 1960's as abortion moved away from being a medical matter and became a moral issue debated

⁶⁴ Luker, 111.

⁶⁵ Luker, 116.

⁶⁶ Luker, 117-118.

⁶⁷ Luker, 118.

⁶⁸ Luker, 142-143.

by the public, many people began to mobilize in order to protect the lives of the unborn and fight for their right to live.⁶⁹ The Catholic Church played a dominate role in the emerging “pro-life” movement of the 1960’s and 1970’s. It quickly mobilized church members to fight for the life of the unborn, believing that a fetus is a child from conception.⁷⁰ They proved to be a serious threat to NOW and others who supported abortion.

Pro-life members of NOW became an internal issue NOW faced. Many women were not in agreement with the group’s adoption of abortion as the central issue, but did not want to leave NOW like members of WEAL. These women described themselves as feminists, but they were also pro-life. Pro-life feminists expected NOW to be open to their diverse opinion as they had been when accepting the younger more radical branch. They soon began to realize that the women’s movement would not accept the difference of opinion regarding abortion. In *Feminism is Not the Story of My Life* Elizabeth Fox-Genovese writes, “Many feminists encourage the belief that their movement speaks for all women, but for them that is more likely to mean that all women must support their positions than they should respect the positions of others.”⁷¹ It was this fact that led to the creation of Feminists for Life in 1973.

Feminists for Life of America Founding

Pat Goltz and Catherine Callahan were both members of the National Organization for Women in the 1970s. After meeting in a Judo class in Columbus, Ohio in 1971, they realized they were indeed a minority in their NOW chapter. Pat Goltz and

⁶⁹ Luker, 127.

⁷⁰ Luker, 256.

⁷¹ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Feminism is Not the Story of My Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 11-12.

Cindy Callahan, pro-life advocates and radical feminists, believed abortion to be in direct opposition to feminism. These women were pro-life because they fought against the killing of the unborn. Yet they were also radical feminists. Radical feminists “argued that male supremacy, not class or race, was the more fundamental and universal form of oppression and that women as a group constituted an oppressed state.”⁷² As radical, pro-life feminists, they believed that males continually oppressed women through abortion. The feminist movement for them was a movement to fight the oppression of women, and these women saw abortion as another means in which women were oppressed.⁷³

In addition to this belief both women believed that the movement focused too much on the single issue of abortion and not on issues such as equal pay for equal work and helping impoverished women.⁷⁴ They continued to be active in their NOW chapters as to be the voice for other pro-life feminists, and they specifically worked at removing abortion as the focus of the organization. Their voices were quickly silenced by their NOW chapter, and they were prohibited from discussing the issue further. The NOW chapter eventually expelled Goltz in 1974 for refusing to surrender her opinion.⁷⁵

Cindy Osborn stated that Goltz and Callaghan decided they needed a “forum of their own to express their views.”⁷⁶ On April 9, 1973, the international organization Feminists for Life was created. Feminists for Life focuses mainly on two equally important issues: full equality for women in all areas and the right for every baby to be

⁷² Sherron De Hart, 608.

⁷³ Sarah Campbell, “Pro-life feminists try to Redefine the Movement,” *The Hill*, 24 January 1986.

⁷⁴ Cindy Osborn, “Pat Goltz, Catherine Callaghan and the Founding of Feminists for Life,” in *Prolife Feminism: Yesterday and Today*, eds. Rachel MacNair, Mare Krane Derr, and Linda Naranjo-Huebl (New York: Sulzburger & Graham Publishing, Inc., 1995), 151.

⁷⁵ Osborn, 151-152.

⁷⁶ Osborn, 151.

born.⁷⁷ Though many feminists saw these goals as contradictory, FFLA members did not. Women would not reach full equality if they were continually oppressed by abortions. Pro-life feminists want society to embrace women's role as mothers. The organization started off slow in getting its message known, but by 1975 it had over 5000 members in 42 different states. A year after formation in the United States, the organization went international forming in Mexico, Canada, and England.⁷⁸

Goltz, Callahan, and the many women who were pro-life feminists supported a majority of all the other issues that NOW supported. "Most of us were feminists first. We were also pro-life, but our main identification was with the feminist movement," said Mary Ledbetter, President of FFLA from 1983-1984.⁷⁹ The founders and the first members of FFLA were not activists in the right-to-life movement. As members of FFLA, these women continually fought to secure the ratification of the ERA; however, they also fought for the Human Life Amendment. The HLA would overturn *Roe v. Wade* and allow Congress and states to work together on abortion laws.⁸⁰

Goltz joined NOW with hope that she could change the organization's belief that abortion leads to sexual and economic freedom.⁸¹ Goltz expected to remain a part of NOW. Goltz knew she would face opposition, but she did not want or expect to be expelled. Goltz agreed with NOW's platform except abortion. Goltz could have created her own organization from the beginning; however, she only created FFLA after being repeatedly silenced by her NOW chapter. Goltz became unable to express her opinion

⁷⁷ "Feminists for Life Statement of Purpose," 1975, Feminists for Life of America Archives, Wisconsin Historical Society.

⁷⁸ "Pat Goltz- Pro-life Feminist," *Our Sunday Visitor*, May 1975.

⁷⁹ "Pro-life feminists: Misfits in the Woman's movement," FFLA Archives, WHS.

⁸⁰ "Feminists for Life of America Endorse hatch Human Life Amendment," Feminists for Life of America, Inc., FFLA archives, WHS.

⁸¹ Osborn, 151.

when it opposed the movement's majority. The movement rejected Goltz, even though she thought the movement would be open to diverse opinion. Goltz knew that many other pro-life feminists felt as rejected as she and knew something had to be done.⁸² Pat felt isolated by her fellow advocates and because of NOW's rejection, a new organization formed.

FFLA members committed themselves to serving women and their unborn children. Upon its founding, they set numerous goals for the organization. They pledged to work in encouraging women to become informed on childbearing and birth. They worked toward eliminating the problems that led women to choose abortion such as discrimination in the workforce against pregnant women. They wanted women to know who they were, be proud of that, and use those strengths for gaining equality. They did not want women to have to reject their biological makeup in order to achieve equal rights. It was natural for women to reproduce, and FFLA wanted women to be proud of that. Finally, they worked so women who chose to stay home as mothers and wives were treated equally.⁸³

FFLA did not think abortion would solve the inequalities women faced, but added to the discrimination.⁸⁴ FFLA believed that abortion violated three main tenets of feminism: non-discrimination, justice, and non-violence.⁸⁵ Founding FFLA member Cindy Callaghan said, "Abortion fits into the male chauvinist image of women as a sexual object."⁸⁶ FFLA argued that abortion insulted women's dignity. FFLA also

⁸² "Pat Goltz-Pro-Life Feminists," in *Our Sunday Visitor*, May 1975.

⁸³ "Feminists for Life Flyer," 1978, FFLA archives, WHS.

⁸⁴ "Feminists for Life Statement of Purpose," in *Pro-life Feminism: Different Voices*, ed. Gail Grenier Sweet (Toronto: Life Cycle Books, 1985), 226.

⁸⁵ Rosemary Borgert, "Feminists for Life of America are Pro-life, Pro-women," *Saint Cloud Visitor*, 1 October 1987.

⁸⁶ "New 'Lib' Group says 'Abortion insults Woman's Dignity,'" FFLA archives, WHS.

argued that abortion allows men to burden women with full control over fertility; however, this should be a shared responsibility according to past president of Minnesota FFLA, Judy Shea. Shea and FFLA members instead provided solutions to those problems by “reconstructing society not women.”⁸⁷ FFLA actively sought to find solutions to the reasons women wanted abortion. They organized counseling sessions and fought hard for legislation to protect impoverished women. They also worked to ensure protection and guidance for rape victims and victims of incest.

Among many of FFLA’s founding goals, FFLA vowed to “cooperate with other feminist and pro-life groups for realization of mutual goals.”⁸⁸ The group encouraged its members to join the feminist movement so as to imitate the actions of founding member, Pat Goltz. FFLA’s Statement of Purpose states, “We hope to see an end to pro-abortion stands in other feminists.”⁸⁹ FFLA members cite the preamble to the FFLA Articles of Incorporation to sum up what FFLA is: “We, as pro-life feminists, offer a return to the roots of feminism in this country, a feminism which is a loving, nurturing response to any human suffering...be it the suffering of a women, a man, or an unborn child...we reject the violence...we proclaim that we are homemakers—that the world is our home and we make it—loving, nurturing, and pro-life.”⁹⁰ This part of the preamble reveals a great deal about the underlining differences between the feminists of FFLA and those in NOW. Though FFLA claimed to be radical feminists, they also represented another type of feminism. That was cultural feminism. They did not see the necessity in “treating women like men.” Cultural feminists saw how this oppressed women instead of helping them.

⁸⁷ N.M. Malo, “Feminists Still Split over Abortion Question,” *Minnesota Daily*, 15 July 1981.

⁸⁸ “Feminists for Life flyer,” 1978, FFLA archives, WHS.

⁸⁹ “Feminists for Life Statement of Purpose,” in *Pro-life Feminism: Different Voices*, ed. Gail Grenier Sweet (Toronto: Life Cycle Books, 1985), 226.

⁹⁰ “Articles of Incorporation,” 1978, FFLA archives, WHS.

Cultural feminists as did FFLA members wanted women to embrace their biological and emotional differences from men and use that as a means to reach equality.⁹¹ This difference is also visible in FFLA's recent campaign that links first-wave feminists and themselves as true feminism. First Wave feminists were more cultural feminists than radical. Though cultural feminists did have some things in common with radical feminism, the underlining differences may have been a major reason that dialogue between NOW and FFLA proved to be so difficult.

FFLA continued to grow. The organization's national office, first housed in Columbus, Ohio, moved to Wisconsin, Nebraska, Missouri, and finally Washington, D.C. When the organization first formed, there were national officer positions of president, vice-president, and secretary-treasurer. Ten years later the number of officers expanded and a board of directors was established.⁹² This addition revealed the growing membership and expanding support FFLA received over time. The beginning members paid annual dues of either \$2.50 or \$5 and with that came a yearlong subscription to *Sisterlife*, official newsletter of the organization. It reported projects that FFLA was actively involved in and also gave local chapter updates. It provided a means for members to remain united in their actions against abortion. All these features of the organization show not only FFLA's growing popularity, but also its ability to function as a newly formed organization. The organization lacked generous funding and struggled with expenses, but the organization carried on its purpose.

⁹¹ Myra Marx Ferree, William Anthony Gamson, Jurgen Gerhards, and Dieter Rucht, *Shaping Abortion Discourse: Democracy and the Public Sphere in Germany and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 71-72.

⁹² *Sisterlife*, August 1986, FFLA archives, WHS.

Feminists for Life Networks

FFLA, a grass roots organization, depended a great deal on the creation and continuation of state and local chapters. As the years passed, members expanded as more women learned and related to FFLA's platform. By the winter of 1985, there were members in all 50 states and organized chapters in at least 10 states.⁹³ They took time to grow, and they used whatever means necessary to get their message out. They presented their pro-life message on radio talk shows, news articles, and local festivals and schools.⁹⁴ Important to their organization was the newsletter, *Sisterlife*. *Sisterlife* provided a way to unite all members.

FFLA tried to use available media sources to spread their message. The June '83 publication of *Sisterlife* notes the Kansas City chapters attempted to raise money and gather signatures in order to place an ad about pro-life feminism in the *Kansas City Star*.⁹⁵ Feminists for Life placed an ad in *Progressive* magazine that gathered a great deal of media attention. The ad pictured a baby in the mother's womb with the title "The Little Girl Deserves Protection...So Does Her Mother." The attention received from the ad included increased membership as well as bomb threats sent by an undocumented individual to the home of the then FFLA president Rachel MacNair. FFLA continued the project in other magazines.⁹⁶

Over the years FFLA created different networks that put their goals into action. The January 1974 issue of *Sisterlife* notes a group in Feminists for Life called

⁹³ "There's (probably) an FFL group near you," *Sisterlife*, Winter 1985, 4, FFLA archives, WHS.

⁹⁴ "Feminists for Life informational page," FFLA archives, WHS.

⁹⁵ *Sisterlife*, June 1983, 1, in FFLA archives, WHS.

⁹⁶ "FFL Goes Madison Avenue—Ads Pay Off," in *Sisterlife*, April 1985, 2.

Inadvertent. Inadvertent aided businesspeople in removing sexist advertising, especially in terms of employment.⁹⁷ The project developed because women in FFLA agreed with other feminists that sexism needed to be stopped. Feminists defined sexism as “the preference, conscious and unconscious, for whatever society regards as “masculine” that is so persistent and so objectable.” Feminists recognized the power sexism had mostly in women who regarded happiness as submission to men as well as the men who used their power to keep women dependent on them. Because sexism was present in social institutions as well as the individual, change had to occur at all social and cultural levels.⁹⁸ FFLA recognized this need to eliminate sexism and attempted to by the establishment of Inadvertent. These issues brought more women into the movement. Also in 1976, a post abortion counseling service was in the process of being formed. The service, a 24-hour hotline, for women, who suffer after having an abortion, provided emotional support.⁹⁹

FFLA created a Pro-Life feminism booklet and published two books *Pro-life Feminism: Different Voices* and *Pro-life Feminism: Yesterday and Today*. *Pro-life Feminism: Different Voices* is divided into five different sections about FFLA and abortion. The book addresses the ERA, HLA, abortion and its aftermath, and rape prevention among many other topics. *Pro-life Feminism: Yesterday and Today* approached the issue a little differently. The book emphasized first wave feminist’s anti-abortion views with contributing essays by many early feminists. The second half of the book shows modern day feminists continuation of these anti-abortion beliefs.

⁹⁷ “Sexism in Advertising,” *Sisterlife*, 1974, 9, FFLA archives, WHS.

⁹⁸ Sherron De Hart, 610.

⁹⁹ *Feminists for Life Newsletter*, February 1976. FFLA archives, WHS.

Another work by the Feminists for Life was the HOPE network. The HOPE network, in addition to work of FFLA, trained sponsors to later be placed with a single mother. The sponsor and mother formed a friendship, and the sponsor aided the client in the areas of Holistic/Opportunities/Parenting/Education (HOPE). The goals of the organization hoped “the single mother will find friendship; feel a part of the community; and learn to use the wonderful free and inexpensive resources in her neighborhood.”¹⁰⁰ Members also adopted more goals as the group expanded. In 1986, the group voted on two specific goals. The first-- developing a pro-life feminist position on pornography. The second--“a long-range educational project that would focus on teen pregnancy and fertility awareness.”¹⁰¹ FFLA “affirmed a women’s right to non-harmful methods of contraception control.” FFLA did not support any contraception that was abortifacitive. FFLA though was very persistent throughout the *Sisterlife* publications in addressing Natural Family Planning. NFP is a method of abstaining from sexual intercourse during the fertile phases of a woman’s cycle. Though FFLA did stress NFP, it left the decision up to its members as to which form of non-harmful contraception worked best for them.¹⁰²

FFLA members were feminist first and right-to-life activists second; they had an advantage that other right-to-life groups did not. Jane Thomas Bailey wrote to pro-lifers that they could not afford to ignore the ideas and thoughts of feminists because to communicate with feminists, pro-lifers must understand “the highest moral values of

¹⁰⁰ Gail Grenier Sweet, “HOPE Network- Belief into Action” in *Pro-Life Feminism: Different Voices*, ed. Gail Grenier Sweet (Toronto: Life Cycle Books, 1985), 201-202.

¹⁰¹ *Sisterlife*, August 1986, 2, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹⁰² “Comments on Contraception,” *Sisterlife*, Spring 1991, 12, FFLA archives, WHS.

feminism itself.”¹⁰³ Pro-lifer activists needed to understand that NOW’s motivation in fighting for abortion was equality for women, and they were not going to waver on this with any issue, including abortion. However, they could work together on eliminating the need for abortion. Bailey knew there needed to be communication between the pro-life movement and feminists, and FFLA members were the perfect candidates for this job. Not only did they know what feminism was, but they also understood it. If an opportunity for communication became present, FFLA women could have aided both the feminist movement and the right-to-life movement with this. Instead they were shunned by NOW and had to work in opposition to the group that they were once a part.

NOW wanted to insure women’s equality, as did FFLA. As noted NOW realized in 1969 that diversity would aid them more than hurt them. NOW believed an organization could meet the personal needs of all its members and that was important. However, abortion came to dominate NOW’s fight for equality, and they lost sight of meeting the personal needs of all its members. They did not see how diverse opinion aided them. For NOW, the issue of abortion became a prime tenet in fighting for women’s equality. Women deserved the right to control their own reproductive matters, and this could not be argued. This would allow for the equality that NOW members strived for everyday. They could not waver on such an issue. However, abortion really resulted in a struggle that significantly hurt the women’s movement by creating friction and disunity.

¹⁰³ Jane Thomas Bailey, “Feminism 101: A Primer for Pro-life Person,” in *Prolife Feminism: Yesterday and Today*, eds. Rachel MacNair, Mare Krane Derr, and Linda Naranjo-Huebl (New York: Sulzburger & Graham Publishing, Inc., 1995), 159-161.

Chapter Two

The Split between FFLA and NOW

Following the Supreme Court decision of *Roe v. Wade*, the pro-life movement immediately sprang into action. More people joined the pro-life movement in 1973 than any other year, and most became active on the day of the decision.¹⁰⁴ As the pro-life movement began to grow, those fighting in support of abortion also increased. Though many were satisfied with the Supreme Court's decision, they knew there was no time to rest. From the mid 1970's till today, NOW has been fighting a battle against the pro-life movement, and the pro-life movement has been fighting a battle against NOW. FFLA, who originally staked claims in both organizations, became a perfect bridge between both sides. Following the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973, the right-to-life movement quickly accepted FFLA while NOW did not accept FFLA. This ultimately hurt the larger women's movement by widening the growing gap between these feminists and hindering diversity within the movement.

NOW Ohio and Pat Goltz

The tension between NOW and pro-life feminists first became apparent in the Columbus Chapter of NOW. Throughout the early 70's Pat Goltz, an active member of four years in the NOW chapter in Columbus, Ohio, worked tirelessly to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. Goltz not only wrote to the Ohio legislature in support of the ERA, but participated in public demonstrations for the ERA and worked on the NOW ERA project.¹⁰⁵ However, many NOW members became aware of Goltz's pro-life stance and became nervous. Though many members within the group were pro-life, Goltz was one

¹⁰⁴ Luker, 137.

¹⁰⁵ Feminists for Life, Inc., "NOW Curtails Freedom Of Speech," December 7, 1974, Feminists for Life of America archives, Wisconsin Historical Society.

of the few to renounce abortion publicly. Aware of this, the NOW leaders slowly began to limit Goltz's ability to participate in the organization. Goltz noted that they first limited her ability to express her pro-life opinion in the organization's newsletter and at meetings. They also prohibited Goltz from discussing abortion with other NOW members.¹⁰⁶

Following Goltz's silencing, she decided to create FFLA, which fueled further discrimination from NOW members. Pro-life feminists were not allowed to publicly advertise their position within NOW, and FFLA members were not given the ability to defend themselves in the NOW newsletter.¹⁰⁷ In addition, the Columbus chapter of NOW forbade Goltz or any other pro-life feminists to claim membership to NOW when discussing an anti-abortion stance in public. However, according to the Columbus chapter of NOW and President Erica Scurr, Goltz disobeyed these orders, and therefore she needed to be removed from the organization.¹⁰⁸

Scurr and other NOW members decided Goltz had to be stopped immediately. On November 25, 1974, NOW notified Goltz by mail that a meeting would be held to determine her status as a member of NOW. The letter to Goltz written by Erica Scurr stated that abortion and the right to choose were "prime tenets" of NOW, and Goltz had no right to publicly disagree. At the meeting, members of NOW would review any evidence they had concerning her work in FFLA since she claimed a NOW membership.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ "Pat Goltz—Pro-Life Feminist," *Our Sunday Visitor*, 18 May 1975, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹⁰⁷ "Now Curtails Freedom of Speech."

¹⁰⁸ "Pat Goltz--Pro-Life Feminist," *Our Sunday Visitor*, 18 May 1975, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹⁰⁹ "Letter to Pat Goltz from Erica Scurr, President Columbus NOW," 25 November 1974, FFLA archives, WHS.

Goltz did not defend herself at the hearing, believing she did not do anything wrong. Instead Goltz used the opportunity to warn the other NOW members of the risk they took in expelling her and also the harm they caused to feminism by supporting abortion. Goltz did not think that her membership in NOW involved giving up her first amendment right to free speech. Goltz believed that if NOW was working for the rights of all women it should be “responsive to women—all women.” Furthermore, if Goltz could be publicly persecuted and tried for opposition, then it could be done to any other women in the organization. Goltz recognized that NOW’s close-mindedness would only allow for the organization to become “stagnant.”¹¹⁰ NOW members, however, did not see this expulsion as a threat to their organization. Even when abortion was a very large focus of the organization in the 1980’s, NOW still had large support for its campaign for reproductive rights as well as its campaigns for other issues. The NOW 1992 national conference reported passing several resolutions including the endorsement of NOW’s “Elect Women for a Change” campaign and “a strategy to set up non-violent civil disobedience actions in support of legal abortion.”¹¹¹ NOW would not describe this as stagnant.

Goltz, who believed in the diversity of feminism, saw her expulsion as a threat to feminism. Goltz saw NOW’s position on abortion as working against women’s equality and believed that as a dedicated NOW member she had the duty to express this difference in opinion; however, she was never allowed. Goltz finally used the time at the expulsion meeting to address what she believed were the negative effects abortion had on

¹¹⁰ Pat Goltz, “Statement before Columbus Chapter, National Organization for Women,” 18 December 1974, 1, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹¹¹ Barakso, 118.

feminism.¹¹² NOW members, however, did not view this expulsion as a threat to feminism. Without freedom to control reproductive rights, they would not receive the equality that they were fighting for.¹¹³ They felt very threatened by the possibility that these feminists could limit this freedom.¹¹⁴

At the end of the meeting, the group expelled Goltz with a vote of 35 to 5 with one person not voting. Other feminists across the country, when interviewed by the Catholic Newspaper, *Our Sunday Visitor*, expressed their shocked over the treatment that Goltz received considering that this was what they were working against as women's rights activists.¹¹⁵ Goltz was also perplexed by the removal. Goltz could not understand why an open debate about the subject couldn't occur rather than her expulsion. If NOW members were afraid of such a debate, Goltz believed that they were not as confident in their position as they thought. Scurr reminded her that her membership to the national NOW chapter was not canceled. Goltz angry at NOW for their actions wanted to continue to work with NOW; however, she did not see how that could be possible at the time.¹¹⁶

Bill Kinney, Goltz's representative during this situation, became active in Goltz's campaign because he felt guilty. As an active NOW member Kinney became aware a few years prior that Goltz used NOW's newcomer nights to tell others about FFLA. Kinney told his fellow NOW members about this incident, and as a result many women within the organization became suspicious of Pat Goltz. Many began to see Goltz as an

¹¹² Pat Goltz, "Statement before Columbus Chapter, National Organization for Women," 18 December 1974, 1, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹¹³ Rosen, 158.

¹¹⁴ Richard Willing, "Findings protest NOW member's dismissal: Heresy Hound dogs local feminist chapter," *The Lantern*, 17 March 1975, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹¹⁵ "Pat Goltz—Pro-Life Feminist," *Our Sunday Visitor*, 18 May 1975, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹¹⁶ Feminists for Life, Inc., "NOW Curtails Freedom of Speech," December 7, 1974, FFLA archives, WHS.

“infiltrator” within the NOW organization.¹¹⁷ The event occurred three years prior, and Kinney and Erica Scurr both noted that Goltz had stopped such actions for quite some time. Scurr stated she didn’t have any current evidence on the claims made against Goltz.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, for Kinney, a supporter of abortion, the issue at stake was Goltz’s right to free speech: his views was, while the feminist movement prides itself on the ability of women to be able to choose, why can’t members choose to actively support the pro-life movement?¹¹⁹

When the national office of NOW was questioned in an interview by journalist John Lofton Jr. about the hearing, they emphasized that it was the Columbus chapter’s own issue; however, the bylaws of the organization do permit expulsion to any member who “expresses views contrary to the goals of NOW.”¹²⁰ However, Scurr admitted to not even knowing the specific bylaws that were in accord with the national office of NOW. Finally in the newspaper interview, Scurr gave her own reasoning for expelling Goltz. “This is understood in belonging to an organization. If you’re going to belong to them, you’re going to have to support a policy and if you don’t support them, you’re going to pretty much have to keep your mouth shut.”¹²¹

However, Goltz believed a deeper reasoning lay behind the denial of pro-life feminists. NOW promotes women’s control over their bodies and views abortion as a means to reach equality. An effect of this conviction makes many NOW members assume they can hold no feelings of guilt over an abortion. It’s what they are fighting for so how

¹¹⁷ Willing, “Findings protest NOW member’s dismissal: Heresy Hound dogs local feminist chapter.”

¹¹⁸ John D. Lofton, Jr., “Pro-Lifer Unwanted by Women’s Group,” *The Dispatch*, 6 January 1975, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹¹⁹ Willing, “Findings protest NOW member’s dismissal: Heresy Hound dogs local feminist chapter.”

¹²⁰ Lofton, “Pro-Lifer Unwanted by Women’s Group.”

¹²¹ Lofton, “Pro-Lifer Unwanted by Women’s Group.”

could they feel guilty, yet the truth shows many women suffer depression. Goltz pointed out that many of those most strongly opposed to FFLA were women who had an abortion or aided others in having one. They didn't want it to show that the abortion had a negative affect on them and tried to mask their guilt in any way possible. Many dealt with this guilt by fighting even harder for abortion. Part of what FFLA members were fighting for was that these women acknowledge their feelings of guilt. Even if women still accept abortion, at least those who are suffering from the guilt can face their feelings honestly.¹²²

There are many debatable reasons as to why NOW ousted Goltz. Though FFLA sources were primarily used in the reasons noted before, it should not go unsaid that NOW had its own argument for expulsion of pro-life feminists. It would be easy to assume that NOW rejected these members because NOW supported abortion and any anti-abortion stance posed a threat to their position. Yet again, they did allow pro-life members in their organization. Through the research done for this paper, NOW's reasons for ousting pro-life feminists cannot be determined.

The initial split between FFLA and NOW revealed a great deal about the women's movement. Again, the issue of diversity was brought into question. Though women were allowed to be pro-life and be a part of NOW, they weren't allowed to let others know about the difference in opinion. When NOW prohibited members to take an active pro-life stance, they violated their own belief that women have the right to choose.¹²³ Women could not publicly choose to oppose abortion if they were members of

¹²² Doris Cornwell, "Abortion Issue Splits Women's Lib Movement," 21 February 1975, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹²³ Pat Goltz, "Statement before Columbus Chapter, National Organization for Women," 18 December 1974, FFLA archives, WHS.

NOW. If they could limit women on this point what else could they do? Again if NOW was open to the diversity that they claimed, members on both sides of the issue could only work together at solving the main issues of women's equality.

After Goltz's expulsion NOW made a few attempts to ease tensions with pro-life feminists. NOW held local and national meetings and debates to resolve their issues. NOW sponsored a debate in Brookfield, Wisconsin, entitled "Abortion: To choose or not to choose." In January 1979 FFLA as well as many other pro-life organizations including the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Right to Life Committee, March for Life, and the Christian Action Council were invited to meet with NOW on February 15, 1979, in Washington D.C. to discuss ways to solve the issues surrounding women's need for abortion.¹²⁴ Pro-life and pro-choice groups met for five hours with few results; nevertheless, the meeting allowed the groups to work respectfully among one another. They did not discuss the dividing issue of abortion because they both realized that they would never agree on whether abortion should be legalized or not. They agreed to disagree on that topic but concurred that there needed to be more awareness on the reproductive process. They agreed to meet again in April. With over 10 pro-life groups present and 20 pro-choice groups, Eleanor Smeal, NOW's president at the time, thought that the meeting was a "giant step forward."¹²⁵

However, as the event ended and a news conference was being held, two pro-life activists interrupted the conference by holding up two aborted females in front of the crowds. The act upset many, including Elizabeth Moore, a FFLA representative at the meeting. She believed that both sides were there for a civil meeting, and this only

¹²⁴ Eleanor Smeal, President National Organization for Women, "Mailgram to Feminists for Life of America," 22 January 1979, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹²⁵ "Protest Mars Abortion Dialog," *The Milwaukee Journal*, 16 February 1979, FFLA archives, WHS.

endangered the growing respect each side had for one another.¹²⁶ FFLA member, Mary Bea Stout, believed that the action added to negative issues feminists and pro-choice activists associated with the pro-life movement.¹²⁷ Though Eleanor Smeal was not discouraged, the act did not provide needed growth and respect between the two sides.¹²⁸

It is also important to note the two largest pro-life organizations were not present at the meeting even though they were invited. Both the National Right to Life Committee and the March for Life did not participate in the event. Nellie Gray of the March for Life very strongly stated, when asked about the event, “I do not negotiate with baby killers.” Ann O’Donnell of the National Right to Life Committee believed the event was held as a publicity stunt. She also added that before anything else could be done, abortion had to be ended.¹²⁹

FFLA members, still active in NOW, could have served as the perfect buffers. They were not in agreement with the other pro-life member’s actions at the conference and represented a different tactic in working toward the end of abortion. They were, though, active participants in these organizations, who were not present at the meeting. Members from the right-to-life organizations did not see the need to dialogue with feminists. FFLA did see the need and could have dialogued with both sides. FFLA wanted NOW to see that things could be done together to work toward ending reasons women choose abortion. NOW held a great deal of power in working for women’s rights, and FFLA recognized this power and the change that could occur because of it. NOW’s openness to this event did allow for some growth. If members of FFLA were widely

¹²⁶ “Protest Mars Abortion Dialog.”

¹²⁷ “Now Dialogues,” *Sisterlife*, May/June 1979, 1-2, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹²⁸ “Protest Mars Abortion Dialog,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, 16 February 1979, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹²⁹ “Anti-Abortionists Turn Down Debate,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, 22 February 1979, FFLA archives, WHS.

accepted by NOW, it would have showed other Pro-Life organizations that a middle ground could be met.

The next meeting on April 19th was not a success. Most of the discussions focused on reproductive matters. “We spent the entire day writing two sentences, which will continue to be the pace of our progress as long as we stay in the reproductive/contraceptive area, since one side will be concerned about not excluding abortion and the other side will be concerned about not including it,” said FFLA member Mary Bea Stout. She did not see the fruits of this discussion. The groups had arranged a meeting to dialogue on issues they could work together on such as “welfare inequalities, job and housing discrimination, and the adoption morass.” FFLA’s mission held members to actively seek solutions to such issues.¹³⁰ Together with NOW’s help, they could have worked toward successfully eliminating the issues behind women’s choice to abort.

While NOW rejected FFLA, the pro-life movement immediately accepted them. Chairperson of the Right-to-life group in Cincinnati, Barbara Willke, said Goltz’s diverse background made FFLA members appealing to the pro-life movement - appealing because they were different from the typical pro-life activist yet agreed that abortion was wrong. By January 1974 FFLA feminists were invited to speak at the first annual National Right to Life convention in Washington D.C. Although many were suspicious of pro-life feminists, the workshop was successful and many pro-life activists’ idea of feminism changed.¹³¹ FFLA feminists continued their participation in the Right-to -Life

¹³⁰ “NOW Dialogues,” *Sisterlife*, May/June 1979, 1-2, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹³¹ Cindy Osborn, “Pat Goltz and Catherine Callaghan and the Founding Feminists for Life,” in *Prolife Feminism: Yesterday and Today*, eds. Rachel MacNair, Mary Krane Derr, and Linda Naranjo-Huebl (New York: Sulzburger & Graham Publishing, Inc., 1995), 153.

conventions, and by the '83 convention, they not only presented a workshop on Pro-life Feminism, but they also sponsored a booth and held a caucus.¹³² FFLA members educated women on what they believed true feminism entailed. FFLA worked with the right-to-life movement in fighting abortion. FFLA's participation in the right-to-life movement continued to grow throughout the years, but many pro-choice feminists saw their involvement as a threat to the feminist movement.

As FFLA members became active in pro-life causes, they often were questioned about the significance of religion in their debate. According to Kristin Luker, 80 percent of the women in the pro-life movement were Catholic while 63 percent of the pro-choice women activists did not associate themselves with a religion.¹³³ While 80 percent of pro-choice activists were not attending a type of religious service, only 2 percent of the pro-life population did not. Of pro-life women activists, 69 percent noted that religion played a significant part in their lives and 22 percent said it was very important to them.¹³⁴

At the NOW vs. FFLA debate in Brookfield, Wisconsin, in 1979, NOW members questioned the presence of Catholic theology in the pro-life feminist's argument. The secretary-treasurer of FFLA at the time, Sharon Richardson, argued FFLA's stance regarding abortion had nothing to do with the Church's stance on abortion. FFLA based their argument solely on biology and did not affiliate FFLA with a certain religious canon. "Biology teaches even the youngest children that life begins when egg and sperm unite and divide into 2 cells," Richardson said. When NOW asked about FFLA's member's religion, the Feminists for Life representatives did not see the relevance of the question. Though they were all Catholic, they claimed the question was irrelevant based

¹³² "National Right to Life Convention '83," *Sisterlife*, June 1983, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹³³ Luker, 196.

¹³⁴ Luker, 197.

on their arguments against abortion. They claimed that religious affiliation was not brought up when discussing other women issues and did not see the significance of bringing it up there.¹³⁵

NOW members were very critical of the Catholic Church's involvement in the pro-life movement. They took note of the Catholic Church's financial and political help in organizing the pro-life movement. An article in *Ms. Magazine* made it a point to tell readers that the national right-to-life office was housed in the same building as the U.S. Catholic Conference and that the Church was planning on spending 5-10 million dollars on an anti-abortion campaign.¹³⁶

Using pro-life feminists' religious association, many pro-choice feminists argued that FFLA members were a part of the religious right, a group that pro-choice feminists viewed as stemming women's rights.¹³⁷ If this was the case, NOW could not trust FFLA as "feminists." Whether FFLA members or pro-life feminists based their judgments of abortion on religion is irrelevant. It would be hard not to assume that their religious and moral values did not influence their case decision against abortion. However, this does not matter. The salient issue was whether FFLA formed their organization based on the back of a particular religious doctrine. FFLA did not affiliate their foundation with a particular doctrine. They did base their decision on science. Though the church also recognized the biological factor behind abortion, FFLA claimed this had nothing to do with religion. However, NOW members and other pro-choice activists could not dismiss the relationship between FFLA and religion.

¹³⁵ "NOW and Feminists for Life Face Off in Debate," Brookfield News, 1 February 1979, 2, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹³⁶ Bea Blair, "Abortion: Can We Lose Our Right to Choose?," *Ms. Magazine*, October 1973.

¹³⁷ "NOW and Feminists for Life Face Off in Debate," Brookfield News, 1 February 1979, 2, FFLA archives, WHS.

FFLA and NOW –Growing Tensions

As time passed and the world entered the 1980's the rise of conservatism was underway. President Reagan's election made many wonder about the fate of the abortion debate. For feminists, abortion continued as a focus in women's fight for equality.¹³⁸ As tensions grew between the right and left, tensions grew between the pro-life and pro-choice movements. Throughout the 80's and early 90's anti-abortion activists began to attack abortion clinics. A NOW official expressed her fear in the growing power of pro-life extremists. "They're getting stronger and more sophisticated. Its' really scary, we're definitely worried about it."¹³⁹ Extreme members in the pro-life movement took part in protests and bombings.¹⁴⁰ In 1984 it was documented that "there were 24 bombings and arson attacks on abortion and birth control facilities, and eighteen clinic directors received death threats."¹⁴¹

NOW quickly mobilized to take action against the atrocious events. NOW held large demonstrations and made sure those involved in illegal activity were prosecuted. NOW worked with local chapters to ensure that clinics remained open. Judy Goldsmith, the president of NOW at the time, organized a vigil at 24 clinics.¹⁴² During NOW's convention in New Orleans, Judy Goldsmith noted their future campaign goals which included letter writing, college recruiting, and rallies at the U.S. Supreme Court. In addition, a campaign was underway entitled, "Campaign to Save Women's Lives: One Million Strong." After one million signatures were gathered in support of abortion rights, NOW would present them to government officials on the 13th anniversary of *Roe v.*

¹³⁸ Barakso, 74.

¹³⁹ Barakso, 74-75.

¹⁴⁰ Barakso, 75.

¹⁴¹ Davis, 460.

¹⁴² Barakso, 115.

Wade.¹⁴³ Subsequent to Goldsmith's resignation, Eleanor Smeal took the office of presidency for NOW. One of her first orders of business was organizing a March on Washington for reproductive rights. It occurred in April 1986 and approximately 100,000 people attended. Following the march, similar events were held in Washington in April 1989, November 1989, and April 1992.¹⁴⁴

Clear that NOW was on the defensive against the pro-life movement, relations between NOW and FFLA remained inconsistent. Because of FFLA's growing relationship with the pro-life movement, it could have been a bridge between the pro-life movement and NOW; however, it was not.

In FFLA's publication, *Sisterlife*, it is clear that NOW and FFLA remained distant. The Illinois chapter of FFLA recognized growing tensions between the groups and prepared a one-act play to inform the public. FFLA hoped the play would solve the problems that women faced with the division between the pro-life movement and feminists. The goal was to establish a clear communication between the two groups. FFLA felt that their failure to bind the division and defend themselves would make many regard feminism as an "abortion-marketing conglomerate and the pro-life movement will be deemed anti-woman."¹⁴⁵

FFLA hoped to dialogue with NOW members about the abortion issue and in many instances it seemed possible. Many FFLA members were encouraged by the FFLA hierarchy to attend NOW conventions as to present an image atypical of the stereotypes held by NOW members. Rachael MaCnair, the president of FFLA at the time, attended a NOW convention in Missouri. At the convention, MaCnair learned a great deal about the

¹⁴³ Judy Klemesrud, "NOW Plans Drive to Uphold Abortion Rights," *New York Times*, 21 July 1985.

¹⁴⁴ Barakso, 115-116.

¹⁴⁵ "Illinois Chapter Dramatizes Pro-life Feminism," *Sisterlife*, January 1985, FFLA archives, WHS.

need for pro-life feminists to be active at NOW gatherings. First of all, it allowed feminist speakers to recognize their held stereotypes of FFLA and pro-life members. “I mentioned that to one woman, saying that while she had criticized the unfair stereotypes of feminists, I thought she had made some unfair stereotypes of right-wingers, a group I don’t sympathize with but which should still be characterized fairly,” said Macnair. After Macnair made the woman aware, she agreed with her that she did do that and it should be fixed.¹⁴⁶ In addition, most of the convention’s speakers were aware of Macnair’s presence and of her pro-life feminist stance. “Because the speakers knew a pro-lifer was present, a pro-lifer they couldn’t dismiss as crazy and unreasonable, they either avoided or immediately modified their statements that otherwise would have gone unchallenged.” The involvement of pro-life feminists at NOW conventions and gatherings allowed for a more honest discussion of issues on both sides of the argument.¹⁴⁷

While Macnair realized the need for pro-life feminist’s presence, it was still not a widely accepted need by NOW standards. Also FFLA members did not always approach the attempt to dialogue in the same way as Macnair. Some members, like Dr. Elise Rose, choose to take a more direct stand, addressing NOW members at large NOW gatherings on why they should not support abortion. When Dr. Elise Rose attended the NOW National Convention in New Orleans in 1984, she tried her hardest to make members aware of the pro-life feminists purpose. Some women showed some interest; however, efforts at dialogue were quickly ruined. During the convention, there was an opportunity for attendees to openly discuss any topical issues that differed with NOW’s stance. Dr. Rose participated in this open forum, addressing her belief that NOW should not support

¹⁴⁶ “FFLA President Dialogues with Missouri NOW or- Judy Goldsmith Holding Rachel Macnair’s baby?,” *Sisterlife*, Fall 1985, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹⁴⁷ “FFLA President Dialogues with Missouri NOW or- Judy Goldsmith Holding Rachel Macnair’s baby?”

abortion. Soon after she was “booed, heckled, and a vote was quickly taken that she not be allowed to speak.” Outraged, Dr. Rose wrote and distributed a flyer to the attendees of the convention. In the flyer, Rose emphasized NOW’s need to stop focusing on abortion and to focus on the true feminist issues. Rose concluded that FFLA did not demand abortion but demanded true justice.¹⁴⁸ This way of approaching NOW proved to be much less effective. According to *Sisterlife* many women who voted for Dr. Rose’s silence did not think pro-life feminism even existed. They believed the stance was a ploy created by the pro-life movement and was the reason to ostracize her from the forum.¹⁴⁹ FFLA needed to find the best way of interacting with NOW, and this technique did not prove to work. Telling NOW that they were wrong in supporting abortion was much different than working to find a common ground.

In Denver 1986, the National Right to Life Committee and NOW held conventions simultaneously. As expected, FFLA was openly welcomed to participate in the Right-to-Life convention, and members served as guest speakers, ran workshops, and sponsored tables that distributed information.¹⁵⁰ However, they were told there was not enough space for FFLA to set up a table at the NOW convention. FFLA rented a hotel room at the location and used it as a hospitality suite. FFLA hoped to use the opportunity to allow for increased communication between the two groups. FFLA members suggested a panel discussion with all three groups present to discuss issues they could work together

¹⁴⁸ “FFL Member Silenced at NOW National Convention,” *Sisterlife*, Fall 1985, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹⁴⁹ “FFL Member Silenced at NOW National Convention.”

¹⁵⁰ “Consider the Possibilities: NOW and NRLC to meet simultaneously in Denver,” *Sisterlife*, Fall 1985, FFLA archives, WHS.

on. Though this did not occur, FFLA members did have NOW members visit them in the hospitality suite.¹⁵¹

Nonetheless, NOW continued to silence FFLA members well into the 1990's. The chapter of FFLA in western New York planned to participate a second time in the "take back the night" march and rally. The year before, NOW threatened to boycott the event if the Women Acting Against Violence Committee, organizing the event, did not take a pro-abortion position. This year WAAV agreed to "avoid any pro-abortion expressions as a courtesy to FFL of Western New York... But pressure from Now caused the position in favor of abortion to be resumed, and our (FFLA) chapter was told we could not be a sponsor in the month long program nor could we be promised that abortion would not be promoted at the rally," said FFLA member Carol Nan Feldman Crossed. The *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* responded to such actions by stating, "the campaign to eliminate violence against women needs all the support it can get. It doesn't need Ideological litmus tests that only weaken the effort."¹⁵²

FFLA members decided to still remain active in the protest. Sixty women silently joined the other protesters realizing that their pro-life stance was the basis of their anti-violence drive. Following the march, FFLA members followed the crowd inside for the continuation of the rally. With only the front row empty, FFLA members took their seats, but when the issue of abortion was raised, the members decided they needed to go. However, before they were out the door, Ester Ostertah, founder of a safe house for prostitutes and the guest speaker of the night, stopped the FFLA members, and she asked

¹⁵¹ "FFLA does Denver," *Sisterlife*, Summer 1986, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹⁵² Carl Nan Feldman Crossed, "FFL Chapter Declines to be Silenced," in *Prolife Feminism: Yesterday and Today*, eds. Rachel MacNair, Mare Krane Derr, and Linda Naranjo-Huebl (New York: Sulzburger & Graham Publishing, Inc., 1995), 278

them to stay. During her speech she pleaded that both groups stay focused on unification. “We need their vision of what violence is. We need to be united”¹⁵³ After she finished her speech she joined the FFLA members in the front row. FFLA’s participation in this event showed that their philosophy shaped issues other than abortion. They wanted to end all violence against women and would do what was necessary to achieve that.¹⁵⁴ Though NOW still tried to prevent FFLA members from sharing their message, more and more women were becoming aware of the need for unification.

FFLA members were also accountable for the failing relationship with NOW members. In 1983 the Minnesota FFLA newsletter presented cartoons mocking NOW. In one such cartoon, there is a “revised” version of a NOW membership form. Next to religion it had in parenthesis: Catholics, Mormons, fundamentalist need not apply. The political party option stated, “No republicans please.” At the end of the application the following statement had to be signed: “I support the right of all abortionists to make a decent living and I promise to work toward the goal with other organizations that agree, including *Playboy*.”¹⁵⁵ It is clear that FFLA contributed to stunting growth.

As pro-life feminists became more accepted by the right-to-life movement, many within the FFLA questioned their personal loyalties to the feminist cause. In a letter to the editor of *Sisterlife*, one unknown subscriber believed that though FFLA was doing a great job, many members seemed to be more pro-life than they were feminists. “There seems to be a marked imbalance between the uniformly negative treatment of mainstream feminism and the almost hands-off treatment of the mainstream right to life movement...

¹⁵³ Crossed, 279.

¹⁵⁴ Crossed, 279.

¹⁵⁵ “Wondering Woman Cartoon,” *Minnesota Feminists for Life, Inc. Newsletter*, 1 February 1983, FFLA archives, WHS.

why doesn't Phyllis Schlafly come in for the same criticism as Gloria Steinman?" Phyllis Schlafly headed the STOP ERA campaign. She attributed this to the pro-life movement's acceptance of FFLA. However, she really wanted to see FFLA be a "vestibule" where all organizations could meet to "strengthen a women's right to choose, and the new life's rights to live at the same time." Though she recognized that FFLA had been rejected by mainstream feminists, the author of this letter saw no possibility of reconciliation between the two groups until FFLA learned to be "more gentle" with NOW.¹⁵⁶

NOW was continually criticized throughout the late 80's for taking too radical a stand on the abortion issue. Betty Friedan argued for the organization to take a more family and child-oriented strategy for the movement. By 1987, many more women and political analysts realized that abortion needs were not the immediate concern of women by the late 80's. Instead the main concern was "economic, family, and childcare issues." Many were critical of NOW's inability to compromise or reduce its effort to seek abortion rights. When Patricia Ireland became president of NOW in 1991, she addressed the criticism of NOW's radicalism. Ireland emphasized that NOW, a leader of opinion, did not base their opinion on anyone else.¹⁵⁷

FFLA and NOW continued to grow apart. Both sides recognized that they were going to have to agree to disagree on the right or wrong behind abortion. Neither group was going to compromise their beliefs. Though they differed one hundred percent on this issue, both groups still had the same goal of achieving equality for women even if their approaches to this differed. With that, they should have instead realized the significance they could make in working together to eliminate the issues that seemed to be causing

¹⁵⁶ "Letter to Editor," *Sisterlife*, Fall 1985, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹⁵⁷ Barakso, 119-120.

abortion. Women were still facing inequalities in the workforce, and these groups together could have worked together to develop a plan to fight it.

Chapter Three

The ERA, NOW, and FFLA

Feminists for Life of America members were often questioned in interviews as to why they were not just members of the pro-life movement. Why did they have to have their own organization? FFLA's response to this question was that they were feminists first and out of their feminist beliefs rose their pro-life stance.¹⁵⁸ These women were feminists first, and this became clear in their support and work toward the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. One major goal of both FFLA and NOW throughout the 70's and 80's was ratification of the ERA. Though the ERA and abortion became dividing forces within the feminist's movement and NOW, the ERA and abortion were not dividing forces for FFLA members; for FFLA members the ERA and ending abortion went hand in hand. Alongside the ERA, they also strove for the ratification of the Human Life Amendment. With this common bond of support for the ERA, both groups of feminists could have worked together toward its ratification; however, instead again they had to work in opposition. Neither group was happy when the ERA was not passed by enough states. Compromise between both organizations could have allowed for the passage of this amendment.

The ERA

The Complete Text of the ERA reads as follows:

1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.
2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.
3. This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Cecilia Voss Koch, "Reflecting as FFLS Celebrates its Tenth Birthday," in *Pro-Life Feminism* (Lewiston: Life Cycle Books, 1985), 19.

¹⁵⁹ "Complete Text of ERA," in Jane J. Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 3.

The first establishment of the ERA dates all the way back to the first wave of feminism in the 1920's. After women's activists ensured the vote for women with the 19th amendment, they began to work on this constitutional amendment. Proposed to Congress by the National Women's Party in 1923, the original amendment said, "Men and Women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and in every place subject to its jurisdiction. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."¹⁶⁰ This amendment, though, like many other issues within the feminist movement caused division, even among these early feminists.

As the National Women's Party began to develop and grow in its support for the ERA, another group of feminists worked even harder to oppose it. This group was headed by Florence Kelley, a social reform activist throughout the early 1900's. She served as Secretary of the National Consumer's League in New York City from 1889 to 1932.¹⁶¹ While serving as secretary, she worked tirelessly for protective labor laws for women and children. With the ratification of the ERA, all of these protective labor laws and regulations would be dismissed since with the ERA women and men would be equal before the law.¹⁶² Women in the National Women's Party had to consider this when deciding the route it would take in support of such an amendment.¹⁶³ While the National Women's Party wanted to preserve these laws in the beginning, eventually Alice Paul, leader of the NWP, decided that to continue to support these laws only hurt women.

¹⁶⁰ Mansbridge, 8.

¹⁶¹ Kathryn Kish Sklar, "Florence Kelley and Women's Activism in the Progressive Era," in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past 6th ed.*, eds. Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 328.

¹⁶² Nancy F. Cott, "Equal Rights and Economic Roles: The Conflict over the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1920's," in *Women's America: Refocusing the Past 6th ed.*, eds. Linda Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 380.

¹⁶³ Cott, 381.

Women in the movement said, “a maximum hour law or a minimum wage law which applied to women but not to men was bound to hurt women more than it could possibly help them.”¹⁶⁴

Both groups of feminists sought a compromise at a meeting in December 1921. Alice Paul, Florence Kelley, and many others from different women’s organizations met to discuss the ERA. Every other group present, other than the NWP, opposed its ratification; however, Alice Paul would not back down.¹⁶⁵ By 1923 the NWP decided to fully back the amendment, and on December 10, 1923, it was brought to Congress. With this, immediate opposition disabled the amendment from every being passed by Congress. Though the amendment was regarded by the NWP as something that could unite all women, this proved untrue in many instances, especially when it came to working-class women¹⁶⁶ The continued lack of support by many feminists as well as progressive organizations and labor unions allowed the amendment to remain unpassed.¹⁶⁷

Throughout the 1930’s and 1940’s the ERA continued to be supported by such organizations as the National Association of Women Lawyers and the National Federation of Business and Professional Women’s clubs. The ERA passed the Senate in both 1950 and 1953 but only an amended version; however, those fighting for the ERA greatly opposed such a version. This amended version, known as the “Hayden rider,” named for Senator Carl T. Hayden a democrat from Arizona, stated that the amendment “shall not be construed to impair any rights, benefits, or exemptions now or hereafter

¹⁶⁴ Mansbridge, 8.

¹⁶⁵ Cott, 382.

¹⁶⁶ Cott, 382.

¹⁶⁷ Mansbridge, 9.

conferred by law, upon persons of the female sex.”¹⁶⁸ Labor and social Feminist’s opposition, though, to this amendment to the ERA enabled it from being ratified.¹⁶⁹ Those for the ERA saw some improvement in people’s opinion on the ERA with Eisenhower as President. However, when JFK’s Commission on the Status of Women stated the ERA did not need to exist, feminists experienced another setback in their fight for the ERA.¹⁷⁰

Finally in the 1960’s those fighting for the ERA got a chance like never before. This turning point came with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. With Title VII, sex was added as a characteristic that employers could not discriminate against when hiring employees. Women began winning court cases against their employers, and with that came the much needed support of union organizations that was vital to the passage of the amendment.¹⁷¹ This increased support, aided by House Representative Martha Griffiths, allowed for the eventual approval of the amendment by the House Judiciary Committee on August 10, 1970. Though the task seemed easy, the job wasn’t finished yet. The next step was a vote from the full house. However, this vote required more effort by the supporters of the ERA. They faced new problems when the issue of women being drafted was brought up. After much debate an unamended version was voted on by the full house and passed with a vote of 354 to 23.¹⁷²

The ERA was then sent to the Senate. Immediately it faced opposition by Senator Sam Ervin of North Carolina, chairman of the Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments, who hoped to again amend the ERA; however, the majority of the

¹⁶⁸ Freeman, 211.

¹⁶⁹ Mansbridge, 9.

¹⁷⁰ Mansbridge, 10.

¹⁷¹ Freeman, 212.

¹⁷² Freeman, 219.

committee of the Judiciary voted against this, and the amendment continued on to the full Senate for a vote. He later attempted to add eight more amendments to the ERA. This proved unfruitful also, and the ERA was finally voted on in the Senate with a vote of 84 to 4 in favor of it. With passage from both the House and Senate, the next step was ratification from individual states. Hawaii ratified the amendment that same day followed by Delaware, Nebraska, and New Hampshire the next day. Many more followed soon after.¹⁷³ The necessary number of states for complete ratification was 38; however, by 1977 only 35 had ratified it. An extension was filed for 1982, but the number was never met. The amendment failed.¹⁷⁴

NOW and the ERA

When looking at the history of the ERA, one important aspect to analyze is the involvement of organizations in support of the amendment because they publicly shaped the arguments and fights for the ERA. Feminist organizations played a significant role in the fight for the ERA. Leading among those groups was the National Organization for Women. NOW began its support for the ERA in 1967 when it added it to its Bill of Rights.¹⁷⁵ Since that time NOW played a significant role in attempting to get the ERA ratified by both the House and the Senate, and they organized numerous campaigns in all states to ensure that they also ratified the amendment.

In the fall of 1974, NOW sent a memo to all members and also potential NOW members. The letter stressed the importance of the campaign for the ERA and asked for a contribution to fund their fight. They saw 1975 as a perfect year for complete ratification

¹⁷³ Mansbridge, 12.

¹⁷⁴ Mansbridge, 13.

¹⁷⁵ Freeman, 80.

of the ERA. One reason was that 1975 was selected as the International Women's Year by the United Nations. NOW noted their establishment of organized teams in all the states where the constitution was not ratified. In those states local leaders were also being trained by NOW members. The NOW ERA fund also produced flyers, newspaper ads, bumper stickers, and other mailings to convince voters of the need for the amendment. In addition to a monetary contribution, NOW urged recipients of this letter to join the organization, stressing NOW's life-changing impact.¹⁷⁶ NOW's support for the ERA eventually mobilize many more women to join the organization.¹⁷⁷

By 1978 NOW President Eleanor Smeal stressed the urgency needed in fighting for the ERA and deemed it a "state of emergency." With this the organization devoted most of its recourses to the fight for ratification. Two million dollars would be spent as well as 100,000 members mobilized. By the annual NOW convention of 1980, NOW decided to devote total attention to the effort of ratification. According to Barakso, "the organization voted for total ERA mobilization, which called for increasing the size, diversity, and range of the ERA ratification campaign." With this campaign, NOW committed itself to developing new techniques to gain support of the ERA.¹⁷⁸ By the time the ERA died, one fourth of NOW's total budget was focused on it.¹⁷⁹ With this increase in the budget, NOW was able to take more public action in its campaign. They held marches and also vigils in front of the White House.¹⁸⁰ They relied heavily on the media and placed many ads in national media to gain attention for their cause.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ Karen DeCrow, President NOW, ERA Membership Letter, Fall 1974, Wisconsin NOW archives, WHS.

¹⁷⁷ Barakso, 79.

¹⁷⁸ Barakso, 71.

¹⁷⁹ Barakso, 81.

¹⁸⁰ Barakso, 80.

¹⁸¹ Mansbridge, 165.

When considering the work that NOW undertook, it's important to note that advocates of the ERA were fighting for this because they strongly believed in its necessity. This alone was their motivation.¹⁸² NOW members saw the ERA as another step in the never ending battle for women's rights. NOW gained strength by attracting new members to this cause. Moreover it also held the responsibility of letting the older members see the benefits of the ratification campaign; NOW made these women feel that they were part of a national organization that made a significant impact in history and this improved their fight for the ERA.¹⁸³

As NOW increased its support for the ERA, opponents to the ERA also increased. There were numerous groups and organization that mobilized themselves against the ERA in a STOP ERA campaign. The most prominent and outspoken opponent of the ERA was Phyllis Schlafly. Schlafly argued that the ERA would have a negative impact on women in many different ways. A popular argument was that it would destroy the family. Most of the women who opposed the ERA opposed it because they were happy with their lives and did not want to be "liberated." Schlafly ultimately made the campaign an issue of the sexual differences between men and women. To her, the ERA movement in the end tried to make women the same as men.¹⁸⁴

As STOP ERA activists gained strength, they did whatever they could to fight the passage of the ERA. Though there were many issues that they argued about, one main topic often discussed was abortion. Abortion and the ERA were not directly related. If the ERA was ratified, it did not mean that legal abortions could no longer be overturned. The ERA was based on sex discrimination; however, such things as pregnancy were only

¹⁸² Mansbridge, 3

¹⁸³ Mansbridge, 173.

¹⁸⁴ De Hart, 615-616.

related to women and therefore couldn't be an argument in discrimination between men and women.¹⁸⁵ Pregnancy and abortion therefore were unrelated. However, since abortion and the ERA were both the main issues that NOW fought for, it was hard to separate the two. Many conservatives and pro-life supporters thought that since NOW fought so hard for abortion that the ERA was just another means of ensuring that the *Roe v. Wade* decision remain in the future.¹⁸⁶

NOW recognized the large public opinion that abortion and the ERA were somehow linked and tried hard to convince others that they weren't. When the campaign for the ERA was in full swing in Illinois in 1980, the NOW ERA project set up their office several blocks away from the local NOW headquarters. They did not want any NOW campaigns unrelated to the ERA associated with their ERA fight. If people were coming into contact with ERA information while seeing abortion rights information at the same time, they wouldn't doubt that the two were connected.¹⁸⁷ This did cause some difficulty within NOW, especially among some of its older members. Many were discouraged by NOW's deep stake in the ERA since it was taking money and support away from abortion and other feminist issues.¹⁸⁸

It was not an easy task to keep the two disconnected. Many feminist lawyers struggled with the issue of publicly funded abortions and the ERA. To secure publicly funded abortions, many feminists' lawyers had to inadvertently link abortion and the ERA. Smeal tried desperately to convince these lawyers not to make the argument, but the STOP ERA campaign was quick to pick up on it and used it in their attack against the

¹⁸⁵ Gail Grenier Sweet and Nancy Randolph Pearcey, "HLA and ERA- Inedible Alphabet Soup," in *Pro-Life Feminism* (Lewiston: Life Cycle Books, 1985), 37.

¹⁸⁶ Mansbridge, 13.

¹⁸⁷ Mansbridge, 170.

¹⁸⁸ Mansbridge, 170-171.

ERA.¹⁸⁹ Their efforts prevailed since many people in the country who supported the ERA at the time also opposed legal abortions.¹⁹⁰ The link between the ERA and abortion played a significant role in the death of the ERA.

FFLA and the ERA

While NOW's ERA campaign faced a great deal of opposition from many groups, one group it didn't face opposition from was FFLA. FFLA fully supported ratification of the ERA. FFLA also stood firm in their belief that abortion and the ERA were unrelated. It was actually the ERA that brought many FFLA members into the organization. Not only did FFLA dismiss the claim that the ERA would keep abortion legal forever, but they also believed that the ERA was essential to protecting the rights of the unborn. A Wisconsin FFLA group saw abortion as "one result of the historic and deep exploitation of, and discrimination against, the female." It provides a "rational when pressuring for sexual favors." This makes women "perpetual sex-objects." If that discrimination ended, as it would with the ERA, then abortion would also end.¹⁹¹ Along those same lines, FFLA believed that because "women do not have reasonable control over their civil capabilities, they will continue to demand unreasonable control over their reproductive ones. The proper defense of the unborn is long over-due precisely because the proper equality of women is long over due."¹⁹² If women were given those basic rights then they wouldn't fight for things such as abortion. In addition, though everything should be done

¹⁸⁹ Mansbridge, 125.

¹⁹⁰ Mansbridge, 127.

¹⁹¹ Susan Maronek, "The Era and Clarifying Language," in *Pro-Life Feminism* (Lewiston: Life Cycle Books, 1985), 42.

¹⁹² "A Plea for Pro-life Support for the ERA," *Sisterlife*, December 1981, Feminists for Life of America Archives, Wisconsin Historical Society.

to protect women against discrimination that does not mean that the rights women were given should be allowed to infringe upon the rights of others. FFLA vowed to fight to protect both the women and the unborn.¹⁹³ FFLA would not support the ERA if they believed it would aid legal abortion in any way.

With this belief, FFLA began to take action in the fight for ratification of the ERA. Members were pushed by FFLA leaders to take part in ERA marches and protests. One *Sisterlife* publication noted a “National March for ERA Ratification” sponsored by NOW to be held in Illinois in 1980. It stressed that FFLA members be present in order to spread their beliefs surrounding the ERA.¹⁹⁴ FFLA also voiced their own rebuttals to attacks made on the ERA. FFLA supported family life and any women who wanted to stay home. Many, though, saw the ERA as a threat to family life. FFLA believed that to use the ERA as a reason for the breakdown in families was using it as a “scapegoat.”¹⁹⁵

As their message became clear at NOW events, it also became clear at pro-life events. FFLA members at the March for Life in 1980 proudly wore their ERA buttons to show other pro-lifers their support for the amendment.¹⁹⁶ This was an important role for FFLA to take part in. Many pro-lifers were part of the population that believed that abortion and the ERA were related. FFLA presented a picture to many pro-lifers that they never considered before. This mobilized many pro-life activists to reassess their decision about the ERA. FFLA saw a breakthrough in their fight to disconnect abortion and the ERA with the Massachusetts case *Moe vs. Secretary of Administration and*

¹⁹³ Donald A. Balasa, “Are the Anti-Abortion and feminists positions antiethical?,” in *Sisterlife*, September 1984, from the Journal of the American Dental Assistants Association, July/August 1984, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹⁹⁴ *Sisterlife*, Spring 1980, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹⁹⁵ “What’s up with the ERA?,” *Sisterlife*, January 1974, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹⁹⁶ “March for Life—January 22, 1980,” *Sisterlife*, March 1980, FFLA archives, WHS.

Finance. The Massachusetts Supreme Court decided that funding restrictions for abortions were considered unconstitutional under the due process clause of the Massachusetts Constitution and not the state ERA.¹⁹⁷ This case confirmed the fact that the ERA “was not an abortifacient.” FFLA believed that the ongoing battle within the pro-life movement over whether to support the ERA or not was ended with this decision. FFLA worked hard to encourage any other pro-lifer who hadn’t supported the ERA yet to now take action for it.¹⁹⁸

Though they were greeted with some hesitation at the right-to-life gatherings, they were also greeted with hesitation at many NOW events. Julie Loesch, FFLA member and founder of Pro-lifers for Survival, an organization opposed to abortion and the arms race, attend an ERA march sponsored by NOW. Loesch attempted to distribute leaflets with “Pro-God, Pro-life, Pro-ERA” written on them. She was first told she wasn’t allowed to pass the fliers out. She ignored these orders and instead continued to pass them out; however, many protestors took one look at the flyer and dismissed her as an infiltrator.¹⁹⁹ Though FFLA was not always publicly supported by either group during these instances, it could have served again as a bridge between the organizations. It was able to work with the right-to-life movement better than any other feminist organizations. Though the pro-life movement was not receptive all the time, they were open to what FFLA had to say. At the same time, increased support from NOW would have increased and aided in FFLA’s fight. Instead as with the abortion issue, FFLA and NOW remained disconnected, and the ERA eventually died.

¹⁹⁷ Mansbridge, 126.

¹⁹⁸ “Mass. Court Clears Way for Pro-Life Support of E.R.A.,” *Sisterlife*, July 1981, FFLA archives, WHS.

¹⁹⁹ Judi Loesch, “Pro-Life, Pro-E.R.A.,” in *Pro-Life Feminism* (Lewiston: Life Cycle Books, 1985), 32.

Alongside FFLA's debate for the ERA was FFLA's fight for the Human Life Amendment. This came to be an issue that divided NOW and FFLA. The Human Life Amendment states:

A right to abortion is not secured by this constitution. The Congress and the several States shall have the concurrent power to restrict and prohibit abortions: Provided, that a law of a state which is more restrictive than a law of Congress shall govern.

With the passage of the Hatch Human Life Amendment, not only would *Roe v. Wade* be overturned, but both Congress and states would have specific roles in protecting the rights of the unborn. Pam Circa endorsed the HLA in the name of FFLA while serving as President.²⁰⁰ FFLA believed that the ERA pinned alongside of the HLA strengthened both substantially. In FFLA's reasoning, the addition of the HLA to the ERA ensures that when women's dignity is protected, it doesn't negate the dignity of the unborn. Also, the HLA would not work without the ERA. FFLA believed that women were forced to choose abortion because of the pressures of society. The ERA needed to eliminate the pressures that society presents especially on unplanned pregnancies. Women worry over the possibility of losing their job, decreased income, and limited social involvement. If these needs aren't met then women will continue to turn toward abortion as a way to solve these problems. FFLA believes that "the ERA is a step toward ensuring, that, within the bounds of law, society will accommodate itself to women and not force them to choose between motherhood and participation in society."²⁰¹

The purpose of the HLA is often questioned because FFLA argued that abortion and the ERA were unrelated. It is important to remember, though, that laws and

²⁰⁰ "Feminists for Life of America Endorse Hatch Human Life Amendment," Feminists for Life of America, Inc., FFLA archives, WHS.

²⁰¹ Sweet and Pearcey, 138-139.

amendments are interpreted by courts. When those courts interpret them, they consider who supported and established such measures and what their intentions were. In doing so, the courts would find many who did argue that with the ERA, legalized abortion would remain intact. Because of this it was important to present an adjacent amendment, insuring the rights of the unborn.²⁰² In addition to the HLA, Wisconsin Representative James Sensenbrenner also prepared an amendment that would make the ERA abortion-neutral: “Nothing in this article (the ERA) shall be construed to grant or secure any right relating to abortion or the funding thereof.” Both were seen as potential options in securing the rights of the unborn and women.²⁰³

As the HLA began to be supported by many groups, NOW took immediate action to stop it. Like the other amendments to the ERA that they had fought against, the passage of this amendment in their eyes would put a stop to abortion and the reproductive freedoms that they have been continuously fighting for. The Wisconsin NOW organized a campaign that emphasized that the HLA would stop women’s use of low estrogen birth control and the IUD. Success of this campaign against the HLA headed by NOW’s reproductive rights task force was vital to NOW’s fight for the ERA and for abortion.²⁰⁴

NOW saw any amendment to the ERA as intolerable, even though such amendments seemed necessary to insure ratification. Feminists, though, stood strong in their disapproval. If NOW members had compromised for such an amendment as the HLA or even the Sensenbrenner amendment, the end result might have been different. Ratification might have occurred. FFLA, as a buffer between the pro-life movement and

²⁰² Balasa, “Are the Anti-Abortion and feminist’s positions antiethical?”

²⁰³ “Flunking Again: ERA lessons not learned,” *Sisterlife*, December 1983, FFLA archives, WHS.

²⁰⁴ Barbara Kommer, “Reproductive Rights Information/Action Packet,” 22 November 1980. Wisconsin National Organization for Women archives, WHS.

the feminist movement, could have helped legislate an ERA amendment that fit everyone's needs; however, NOW members only regarded their pro-life stance and not their stance as feminists. This ultimately hurt the women's movement and the ERA.

Following the death of the ERA, FFLA created the "Inclusive ERA" which was a formal combination of both the ERA and the HLA. FFLA had agreed with the Sensenbrenner amendment earlier on, but they now did not think that the Sensenbrenner Amendment was an adequate solution to the problems that women faced. To make the ERA "abortion neutral" would not solve women's problems. FFLA proposed that abortion be mentioned alongside the issues that "hurt, cheat, and exploit individual women and men." With the Inclusive ERA, women and the unborn would both be fully protected under the law.²⁰⁵ However, NOW members would never accept this option considering their position on reproductive rights

The battle for the ERA was an important part of the women's movement. For members of NOW, the passage of the ERA would ensure the rights that they had desperately fought for over the past years. However, opposition to the ERA proved to be greater than support for it. The ERA's relationship to abortion was often brought into question. FFLA members were able to meet on the middle ground between both the pro-life movement and women's movement: pro-ERA, yet pro-life. An effort between FFLA and NOW would have greatly increased the possibility of the ERA's ratification.

²⁰⁵ "The Inclusive Equal Rights Amendment," *Sisterlife*, Fall 1987, FFLA archives, WHS.

Conclusion

John McCarthy and Mayer Zald define social movements as “consisting of opinions and beliefs in favor of changing the structure of a society and its system of allocating scarce rewards.”²⁰⁶ Jo Freeman describes a successful social movement as one that “provides an intersection between personal and social change.”²⁰⁷ As social movements begin to develop, membership organizations become the structures created to work for the goals of that movement. Though second-wave feminism had many membership organizations, the National Organization for Women became the most well known social movement organization. With NOW’s role as the social movement’s organization, it took on a large responsibility. It held the responsibility of allowing for the diversity that was needed to create an organization that reflected the movement’s emphasis on “autonomy and sisterhood, cooperation and achievement.”²⁰⁸ The women’s movement of the 60’s and 70’s did not insist that its members support one specific ideology, and encouraged women to “take control of the institutions that affected their lives.”²⁰⁹ However, NOW struggled with accepting the diverse opinion of pro-life feminists. NOW only accepted pro-life feminists if they remained silent about their pro-life stand, yet this went against everything that feminism fought for.

Members of Feminists for Life of America saw feminism as protecting the rights of the oppressed and for them that also included the unborn. They believed that they had

²⁰⁶ Myra Marx Ferree and Beth B. Hess, *Controversy and Coalition: The New Feminist Movement* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985), 1.

²⁰⁷ Jo Freeman, *The Politics of Women’s Liberation: A Case Study of an Emerging Social Movement and Its Relation to the Policy Process* (New York: David McKay, Inc., 1975), 5.

²⁰⁸ Ferree and Hess, 103.

²⁰⁹ Ferree and Hess, 93.

the freedom within the feminist movement to take control of this issue that personally affected their lives; however, they were wrong in their belief.

The social movement was ultimately affected by NOW's rejection of FFLA. How could a social movement grow if it put limits on the diversity it was to thrive off of? To allow FFLA to actively participate in their organization would have displayed to others a philosophy that was not just dependent on reproductive rights. Both organizations could have worked together on the ERA and other women's issues. Though NOW greatly shaped the lives of many women today, the organization could have grown even more if it was open to the diversity of FFLA members.

Both FFLA and NOW are still active in their fight for women's equality today. NOW currently has over 500,000 members with more than 500 local chapters. NOW organizes campaigns for the protection of abortion rights as well as other legislation to protect women in the workforce. FFLA has grown tremendously over the years yet still has not reached NOW's magnitude. FFLA sponsors a college outreach program to fight the growing trend of abortion on college campuses and established a "Women Deserve Better Campaign." They organizations have yet to join forces, but neither organization has given up its fight for women's rights.

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