

MOVEMENTS FOR LIBERATION: WE DID NOT MAKE OURSELVES [1.5 HOURS]

OVERVIEW

This is a movement timeline exercise to explore different tendencies inside movements for liberation and self-determination, and to untangle our individual and collective relationship to a variety of feminisms.

GOALS

- To collectively ground ourselves in various movement lineages
- To explore how history informs our current reality
- To engage in dialogue around our different understandings and experiences with feminism

TIME NEEDED

1.5 hours

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Flip chart, tape, markers to write up prompts and capture key report-backs, writing materials for participants
- Handouts: **Timeline** (pp. 30-31) copied at expanded scale on ledger-sized paper & **Timeline Worksheet** (p. 29)

READINGS/RESOURCES

Project South's toolkits all have incredible historical timelines; see their *Timeline of Scientific Racism*, as well as the *Timeline of the Medical Industrial Complex* from Changing Frequencies (due out in 2020)

FRAMING

This is a timeline activity to connect contemporary work to different feminist organizing legacies, and to explore **both the power and limitations** of different waves of work. Ruby Sales talks about the importance of engaging our **hindsight, insight, and foresight**. We practice hindsight by studying history and engaging collective memory; we practice insight by honestly taking stock of our current work in light of that historical context in order to have foresight for what lies ahead. Our mandate is not just to appreciate what has been made possible by those who've come before us but to build on this legacy and leave something behind for those who will come after.

Through practice, we believe in the possibility of creating a feminist framework by confronting current systems of oppression (such as white supremacy, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy) and building a new world with a **vision of liberation for all**. We know that feminism – as a framework and practice – can and must be rooted in ending domination in all its forms, including gender-based oppression and violence stemming from patriarchy.

These poison all of us, from those of us who are read as masculine or feminine women, to those of us who are “gender outlaws,” to straight cis men, to those of us who are trans. **Our focus is more about politics and practice and less about identity**; all people can and could (and should!) be feminists, and women are by no means the only ones with a stake in the fight to end patriarchy. At the same time, we know that while those who have experienced oppression hold many of the solutions and antidotes we need most to transform it, we are simultaneously denied access to shaping strategy or solutions because of ongoing racism, classism, and elitism. This is one of the ways feminism has been distorted and flattened. It is therefore completely understandable that so many of us have **baggage associated with the word feminism** because of how it has been commodified, white-washed, and de-fanged. Questions of race, class, and gender are the fault lines along which the majority of the social movements in this country have fractured and faltered, and feminism is no different. It is also important to note that Black, Indigenous, lesbian, queer, trans, working class Chicanx and Latinx feminists, and feminists across the Global South continue to stake claim to feminism and **hold a crucial political counterweight** to the ‘pop feminism’ of this time.

WE GOT BAGGAGE

Discussion questions for pairs or full group:

- What is your relationship to the word ‘feminist’? Who is the first person you thought of as a feminist?
- Read together the definition from bell hooks: “**Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression. This includes political, social, and ideological methods and work.**”
- How is your relationship to the word different than the actual definition? Do you understand yourself to be a feminist, and has that changed over time?

Next, discuss as a full group:

- What makes you a feminist, or not?
- Where is there discord or alignment between our associations with feminism and the definition above?
- What’s the current legacy and what legacy are we trying to create?

Key places people get stuck:

- Folks have understandable pain and rage about **white women’s domination**, shrillness, and co-optation of feminism.
- The narrow notion within privileged feminisms that gender oppression is “the only oppression that really matters” denies the experience of the majority of the world’s women who navigate a daily reality shaped by their gender, race, class, **and** sexuality. This legacy of **misunderstanding the reality of interlocking oppressions** is damaging to everyone.
- When feminism is focused on a set of principles rather than on a set of practices or issues, it can feel abstract and irrelevant to people’s lives.
- Folks can get stuck around **not feeling connected to womannness** (as queers, dykes, fags, sissies, gender nonconforming folks, femmes, etc).
- **Often, the core of our fraughtness about feminism is that we are stuck on individual identities rather than targeting patriarchy and misogyny as systems of domination that harm all people across gender** (while targeting all feminized bodies and specific bodies that are deviant or outside normative gender roles). In addition, those that benefit from sexism and are conferred power in patriarchy can and should fight against it and demand its downfall!

HINDSIGHT ACTIVITY

- Break people out into groups to analyze and assess five different eras of history. Depending on your group size, you may have two groups discussing the same era.
- After people are in their groups, reveal their assignment. **They will discuss, scribe, then write a slogan.**
 1. **Discuss:**
 - *What were the key strengths of your era?*
 - *What were the key weaknesses (or contradictions) of your era?*
 - *What can we take forward? (For report-back)*
 - *What should be left behind?*
 2. **Scribe:** Each group should write key moments from their era – either liberatory or limiting – on big paper (or a worksheet), to be shared with the full group in a gallery walk.
 3. **Write a slogan:** Ask each group to prepare a report-back focused on what we can take from this era moving forward. Top it off by giving their era a slogan or motto that captures its core themes.

GALLERY WALK AND FINAL DISCUSSION

- Have the groups present their slogans and very brief reportbacks. As they share, each group can put their written work on the wall.
- Give everyone five minutes to walk around and review the work, then bring folks back for a **final discussion**.

Consider:

- *What do we want to keep, fortify, or embody from our history? What do we want to leave behind?*
- *When you look back at this timeline and collective body of work, how does it change how you think about feminism or understand feminism, if at all?*
- *Where do you find inspiration and possibility, and where is your heart broken? What do you grieve?*
- *What does our feminist legacy teach us as we shape and embody this work together? What is our mandate? What insight or foresight does this provide us?*
- Name the pushes and pulls we can see inside freedom movements: for assimilation, for reform, for complete and utter transformation.
- See how movements have grappled over the decades: *Do we want to obtain what cis white men have inside this current structure or transform the whole?*
- Take a stand. We want to pull from the best traditions of feminism for the many: militant, radical, embodied for transformation (reform or assimilation), and requiring personal and collective work!
- One manifestation of Black feminists creating space for themselves and their communities was and is through reproductive justice.

JOURNAL ACTIVITY

Close with an opportunity for participants to take the collective reflections of the group as a foundation for personal reflection and writing (see worksheet opposite).

TIMELINE

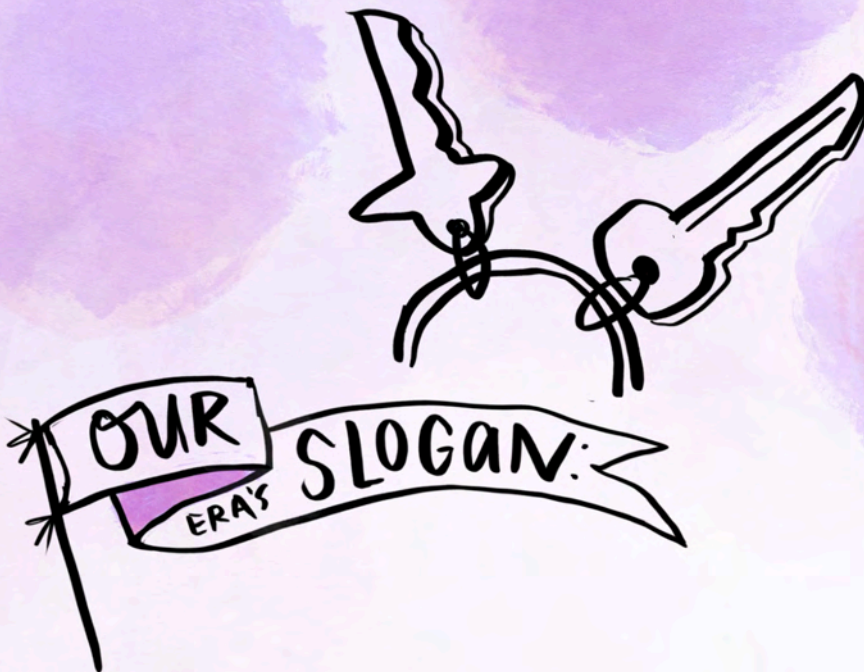
Worksheet

Our
ERA:

HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND THE TIME PERIOD? WHAT WERE THE KEY STRENGTHS?
WHAT WERE THE KEY WEAKNESSES OR CONTRADICTIONS?
WHAT CAN WE TAKE FORWARD, AND WHAT SHOULD BE LEFT BEHIND?

WHAT ARE THREE KEY
MOMENTS THAT EITHER...

...MOVED THIS ERA TOWARDS
LIBERATION OR HELD IT BACK?



TAKE THE LESSONS OF HISTORY AND THE TIMELINES YOU'VE BEEN OFFERED TO HEART, AND THINK ABOUT A MOMENT
OF HINDSIGHT AND INSIGHT FROM YOUR OWN MORE RECENT FEMINIST ORGANIZING.
WHAT FORESIGHT MIGHT COME OF THIS?

HEGEMONIC FORCES

1600-1847	1848-1949	1950-1975	1976-1995	1995-2019
<p>THE AMERICAN COLONIES</p> <p>Cultural: Systems of control were designed to advance the larger colonial project that relied on increased white presence and the subjugation, assimilation, or massacre of Indigenous people, enslaved Black people, and anyone seen as non-white. These systems require regulation of the body and of masses of bodies for the function of hard.</p> <p>Political: Displacement and genocide of Indigenous people's beliefs with first colony slavery is legalized, women are the legal property of their husbands or fathers; abortion is a common medical practice and legal in British colonies.</p> <p>Economic: Mercantile economy.</p>	<p>CIVIL WAR</p> <p>Cultural: 1861 - 1865 the Civil War, the South seceded from the Union when the white supremacy of Southern society was threatened by calls to end slavery.</p> <p>Political: 1863 the Emancipation Proclamation declared that all persons held as slaves within the rebellious states are, and henceforward shall be free.</p> <p>Economic: The Civil War radically shifted the economic power of the US. By ending slavery the enormous wealth of the South no longer existed; this and the rise of industrialization made the North the economic power.</p>	<p>RED SCARE</p> <p>Cultural: Anti-Communist ideas rise after WWII, anything counter hegemonic culture is labeled as potentially Communist. Cultural shift from the New Deal common good to conformism and consumer capitalism.</p> <p>Political: McCarthyism, the hearings and culture of fear that encouraged accusations of Communism and ended the careers and lives of many, from actors to activists.</p> <p>Economic: Consumer capitalism is a response to the US empire established after WWII, superpower status, and advances in technology that create cheaper goods, as well as the economic boom from WWII and increased purchasing power of men and women.</p>	<p>CULTURE WARS</p> <p>Cultural: Right-wing backlash to movements for liberation, includes the founding of Family Values and Evangelical political movements, both racialized and gendered to reinforce hetero white patriarchy. Advent of new anti-Black, women, LGBTQ, immigrant, etc rhetoric in the public sphere through media and political campaigns. Works to dismantle the gains of liberation movements.</p> <p>Political: Political work to shrink democracy and limit economic and political power of women, Black folks, immigrants, and workers. Consolidation of think tanks, media, churches, politics, and resources to advance right wing agendas.</p> <p>Economic: Consumer capitalism is a response to the U.S. empire established after WWII, superpower status, and advances in technology that create cheaper goods, as well as the economic boom from WWII and increased purchasing power of men and women.</p>	<p>CULTURE WARS</p> <p>Cultural: The last phase of the Reagan-era culture wars, the right wing has learned that their target audience has to include not just their base; shift in recruiting strategies and language to make their base the majority of Americans.</p> <p>Political: The anti-choice movement attacks reproductive rights and the ability to make informed choices about one's own sexual practices through incrementally dismantling advances in reproductive rights laws. Right-wing government obstructionism begins and grows from Gingrich to McConnell. The Tea Party movement ultimately delivers Trump the White House, embracing white nationalism as its core political philosophy.</p> <p>Economic: US economy weathers several serious recessions, including the 2008 recession fueled by the housing crisis. The right wing positions these recessions and the dismantling of the white working class not as the result of their policies but as the result of immigration from the Global South and the shift from a majority white nation to an increasingly Black and Brown nation.</p>
<p>THE PURITANS</p> <p>Cultural: The Puritans enacted strict legal and cultural codes that still influence our notion. These codes were heavily gendered.</p> <p>Political: Laws about gender and sexuality were strictly enforced, including sodomy and dress code laws. Women were subject to greater social penalties than men; Biblical ideas of race and gender made the witch moral panic and persecution possible.</p> <p>Economic: Agriculture and small-scale craftsman production.</p>	<p>THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION</p> <p>Cultural: Cementing of racial and gender hierarchies through citizenship/enfranchisement. Only humans are rich Christian white men, women exist to serve men, Black people exist to serve white men.</p> <p>Political: Founding of the United States and Revolutionary War 1775-1791</p> <p>Economic: Pursuit of Happiness, in founding philosophies is understood as right to own property.</p>	<p>RISE OF THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX</p> <p>Cultural: Including CONTELPRO the response to liberation movements, the systematic dismantling of Civil Rights and liberation movements through surveillance and infiltration by the FBI, the Vietnam War, and the backlash against the peace movement.</p> <p>Political: The government illegally to conducted CONTELPRO operations and to continue the Vietnam war so that private corporations could financially benefit. JFK, MLK, Malcolm X, and other movement leaders. Political, police, and vigilante violence as force of repression.</p> <p>Economic: Massive economic gains from militarization and private corporate support of that militarization.</p>	<p>US IMPERIALISM</p> <p>Cultural: Punishment of anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, and socialist experiments through coups, sanctions, and media.</p> <p>Political: The US government disrupts the Global South through political interventions and illegal wars. The School of the Americas aids in the training of freedom fighters who align with an imperialist agenda.</p> <p>Economic: Massive economic gains from militarization and private corporate support of that militarization. Organized crime is able to grab power in the the power vacuums left by the US.</p>	<p>9/11</p> <p>Cultural: Massive political shift toward authoritarianism and nationalism. Reinforcing traditional modes like the family, the church, and the country as the backbone of the nation. These are even embraced by some elements of the LGBTQ, immigrant, and feminist movements. Movements splinter into pro-nationalism and anti-war groups.</p> <p>Political: Resurgence of law and order agenda, new wave of anti-immigrant laws with SB 1070, and the establishment of a nearly absolute surveillance culture through the Patriot Act. Anti-war factions fight to make visible the US role in the creation of modern-day terrorism globally.</p> <p>Economic: Massive economic disruption as anti-immigrant policies weaken many of the nation's industries and the constant drain on the US economy of foreign wars. Work to dismantle the military-industrial complex on many fronts.</p>
<p>CHARTERED SLAVERY</p> <p>Cultural: By the time of the Civil War, enslaved Black people had reached 4 million in population generating money wealth for the US state that exceeded \$3.5 billion before legal emancipation.</p> <p>Political: 1619 Transatlantic Slave Trade Begins with first Dutch ship to Jamestown, 1808 Congress outlaws the African Slave trade, but does not abolish chattel slavery; cementing of racial hierarchy of whiteness.</p> <p>Economic: Slavery is 200% and 300% of the nation's income.</p>	<p>JIM CROW</p> <p>Cultural: Racial caste still enforced, these laws were the criminalization of behaviors and people. The expansion of the US further west in the mid to late 1800s buttressed the upturning in of the century of segregation, known as Jim Crow.</p> <p>Political: KKK, mobs, militia form and use the protection of white womanhood by white men, from Black men as justification.</p> <p>Economic: Black people in the South are forced to work in subjugated positions to white people, do not have economic autonomy.</p>	<p>MODERN RIGHT-WING MOVEMENT</p> <p>Cultural: Racial caste still enforced, these laws were the criminalization of behaviors and people. The expansion of the US further west in the mid to late 1800s buttressed the upturning in of the century of segregation, known as Jim Crow.</p> <p>Political: KKK, mobs, militia form and use the protection of white womanhood by white men, from Black men as justification.</p> <p>Economic: Black people in the South are forced to work in subjugated positions to white people, do not have economic autonomy.</p>	<p>MEALIEBERISM</p> <p>Cultural: Displacement of the values of economic liberalism, which emphasized common good economy, for an economy and society based on free markets and decoupling government from markets.</p> <p>Political: Economic policy shifts subjugated Carter's presidency and made possible the rise of Reaganism as backlash to failed economic policies of liberalism (that were actually neoliberalism).</p> <p>Economic: Consumer capitalism combined with the opening of global free markets and the devaluing of government and union checks and balances on corporate power.</p>	<p>ANTI-IMPERIALIST, ANTI-WOFPORN, AND ANTI-BLACK MOVEMENTS</p> <p>Cultural: People of color are scapegoated by conservatives for everything from social to economic moral panics of white Americans of every class - a full realization of the Southern strategy. Consumerism co-opts what it can from these movements, robbing the mainstream of the powerful critique of the movements. White Nationalism comes out of hiding, using the digital space to radicalize people, to take actions like the rally in Charlottesville.</p> <p>Political: Criminalization policies spread throughout the US to the present-day concentration camps at our borders. Police murders of Black folks persist at endemic rates. The murder and persecution of trans women persists at endemic rates.</p>

LIBERATION FORCES

1600-1847	1848-1949	1950-1975	1976-1995	1995-2019
<p>ABOLITION MOVEMENT Cultural: Black and white people fighting for abolition of slavery in the U.S. Female Anti-Slavery Society (Black women 1832 in MA), Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society (white women 1833). More conservative and more radical elements of the movement, from not slaves to full autonomy. Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman. Political: Out-lawing of the slave trade was a small win, but resulted in the creation of the peculiar institution, referring to the brutality of intergenerational slavery. Underground Railroad moves people out of slavery, but is such a threat that laws are enacted (culminating in Fugitive Slave Act of 1850) locally to return 'property to owners'. Economic: The economic interests of the South were threatened by abolition.</p> <p>LABOR MOVEMENT Cultural: First strike in U.S. 1768 when New York journeymen tailors went on strike; 1794 formation of Federal Society of Journeymen Cardmakers is first sustained trade union for U.S. workers. Political: Industrialized capitalism gives rise to working parties and unions tied to the Industrial Revolution (1830s). Subversion, sabotage, work stoppage, revolts, and more become tactics. Economic: Industrialized capitalism gives rise to the critique that there is an intention to create two separate classes of people, rich and poor.</p> <p>WOMEN'S MOVEMENT Cultural: Begins in the 1840's, many first wave feminists are also abolitionists and are fighting for citizenship for men of color and all women (in theory) Political: Focused on suffrage, property rights, which include right to a woman's children. Frederick Douglass becomes most prominent feminist.</p> <p>Retention and teaching of language, culture, religious and spiritual traditions - despite flogging, torture, mutilation, threat of death, and murder. Midnight Schools.</p>	<p>SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT Cultural: First wave shifts to white women's enfranchisement, rise of white supremacy in the movement. Political: White women prioritize their right to vote and it creates a split in a larger movement for equality. Many suffragettes also abolitionists. Won Right to Vote 1919. Middle- and upper-class women resist being property and 'standards of womanhood imported from Victorian era' (corsets, beauty standards, Christian uplift kind of stuff, no economic self-determination). 1848 1st US Woman's Rights Convention, first draft of the ERA is introduced. Economic: Women of all races are still the property of men, sexual violence reinforces compliance. Industrial capitalism requires a more rigorous notion of female inferiority, women at home not work.</p> <p>LABOR MOVEMENT Cultural: Rise of labor unions and organized labor: segregated and integrated working-class organizing. Labor becomes a real check to industrialized corporate power, but is weakened by the Great Depression and later the Red Scare. Political: Major wins include the 8-hour work day, minimum wage, and safety standards for the workplace. The Great Depression reassesses the need for more control and checks on corporate power and greed, as they grow not just through exploitation of labor but of the financial system. The New Deal shifts responsibility for the worker away from unions to the government in some ways by redistributing resources and increasing infrastructure. Working-class white and Black women still struggle and don't benefit greatly from these changes. Seeds for Second Wave of feminism begin, 'Make us [white women] more like you.' Economic: Women grow their presence in the workplace throughout the first half of the 20th century, with a large boom for white women during WWII.</p>	<p>BLACK POWER AND CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS Cultural: Movements for cultural power, personal power, and political power for Black people. Some focused on winning real access to rights and full citizenship, some focused on deconstructing the culture of white supremacy and elevating a culture where Blackness is valued and powerful. Political: End of Jim Crow laws that restricted access to voting, juries, and inclusion in political life for Black people with the Civil and Voting Rights Acts. Black Power movement shifts the public imagination for what the end goal of a liberation movement is and created a true alternative to white supremacy ideologically. Economic: Poverty was identified early on a major Civil Rights and Black Power issue. Civil Rights worked to gain more economic access for Black people while Black power included an anti-capitalist critique calling for an economic revolution and rejection of property and ownership.</p> <p>WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT Cultural: Second wave of feminism marked by emphasis on gender and sexual, emotional, and economic liberation. Focused on cisgender women, with white straight women leading the mainstream movement and lesbians and women of color leading other sections of the movement through anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, and lesbian separatist movements. Mainstream seeks for women to be part of power structures while radical feminism seeks to entirely dismantle heteropatriarchy. Political: 1973, Roe vs. Wade, but not the win it should have been due to being founded on the right to privacy. Women's health movements like the Jane Collective creating women's knowledge for women in reproductive care. 1972 ERA is passed and proposed as the 27th Amendment to the Constitution. Economic: Women have new visibility in the workforce, particularly white women. Economic and emotional power dynamics shift in households as cisgender men begin to feel threatened by the economic power of women.</p> <p>GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT Cultural: A queering of the cultural revolution (for anti-war and women's movements), sex for pleasure and not reproduction embraced by LGBTQ people. Pushback on cultural and legal discrimination and violence. Moments that sparked a cohesive movement include Compton's Cafeteria, Cooper's Donuts, and Stonewall, the Mattachine Society, and the Gay Liberation Front. LGBTQ people begin to come out. Political: 1969 Stonewall riot, 1970 Christopher Street Liberation Parade, 1975, first gay rights bill introduced in Congress. 1978, Harvey Milk wins supervisor seat, repealing of sodomy laws, gender-appropriate clothing laws, and laws on selling alcohol to queers. Economic: The LGBTQ begin to come out and exercise limited economic power as a group.</p> <p>OTHER LIBERATION MOVEMENTS Time of massive social change: Chicano@/Xicanismo, poor people's, back to land, and others movements.</p>	<p>GLOBAL ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT Cultural: South African and global movement and Apartheid in South Africa; spreads and informs other struggles like the Zapatistas and the First Intifada. Political: South African Apartheid ends in 1994. The African National Congress wins 63% of vote in first open election and Nelson Mandela elected President.</p> <p>ANTI-GLOBALIZATION MOVEMENT Cultural: Globalization as an outcrop of social and economic neoliberalism faces global opposition from the Zapatista Revolution in Chiapas to the beginning of resistance movements in the Global North. Economic: American workers begin to feel the impact of outsourcing, deregulation, and the dismantling of organized labor in their workplaces and paychecks.</p> <p>THIRD WAVE FEMINISM Cultural: The third wave included many more specific movements like the anti-domestic violence movement, anti-sexual violence movement, body positivity, reproductive rights, sex positivity, and rights in the workplace. These movements continued to be less than fully inclusive of lesbians and women of color. Political: Expansion of laws that were meant to 'protect' women from abusers and violence. Decades later it was clear these laws were frequently used to harm women, the victims of violence. Economic: 'Girl power' becomes a branded feminism like that does not include a critique of patriarchy, heteronormativity, white supremacy, or capitalism, but does serve as a potential entry point for a new generation of feminists.</p> <p>EXPANSION OF THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR Cultural: Movement groups become organizations, from informal - consciousness raising or radical activist groups, legal non-profit corporations in their modern-day form, form a new sector dedicated to charity and some justice work. This sector is limited by their legal standing as corporations and professionalization both help to create social and policy wins, but also takes the movements from the leadership of the people most impacted. Political: The non-profit sector uses advocacy to fight for policy wins, like the repeal of sodomy laws, reproductive rights, and affirmative action protections. Economic: The development of a new economic sector moves philanthropy into a powerful position as foundations and donors see a way to leverage and hide wealth.</p>	<p>THE MOVEMENT FOR BLACK LIVES Cultural: The endless murder of Black people by the state forces the community to mobilize; in addition to the persistent and disproportionate persecution of Black people in the criminal justice system and economic war waged against Black people. Political: The movement reinvigorates movements for liberation in the US, creating new ground in terms of a progressive agenda, and influencing the election of a wave of progressive candidates to all levels of office in 2016 and 2018, policy change, and the mass mobilization of Black and ally people in the US.</p> <p>QUEER AND TRANS LIBERATION MOVEMENT Cultural: After marriage, the queer and trans movement for liberation began to expand beyond homonormative standards for our lives and families, creating room for a new imagination for queer and trans liberation.</p> <p>REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE Cultural: The reproductive rights movement proved too narrowly focused to fight off the advances of the anti-choice Evangelical movement. The repro justice movement pushes against the repro rights movement and its emphasis on white middle-class cisgender straight women, by centering in Black feminism and queerness.</p> <p>IMMIGRATION MOVEMENT Cultural: The Latino civil rights and workers' rights movements have shifted focus to immigration - from the anti-crimmigration movement to the DREAMers. This movement has many goals, from abolishing ICE and borders to fair asylum processes for LGBTQ and other vulnerable immigrants, to in state college tuition for DREAMers. Political: DACA, defeat of Trump's immigration bans for Muslim countries, delay and exposure of the failure of Trump's border wall, defeat of Sheriff Joe Arpaio.</p>