

# Moving Into a New Era: An Overview on the Contemporary American Women's Movement

TENG Yong-qing

Shanghai Jiguang Polytechnic College, Shanghai, China

This paper intends to give an overview on the contemporary American women's movement since the 1990s till now. Contemporary American women's movement, which covered different aspects of women's rights and interests, has exceeded all the former women's movements as to the purpose and range. After a survey of the American women's movement before the 1990s, the paper will elaborate on the background, the development, and achievement as well as the new features of the contemporary American women's movement: being more academic and diversified in theoretical guidance, being broader and deeper in pursuing objectives, and professional organization in a broader scope.

**Keywords:** American women's movement, background, development, achievement, new features

## Introduction

Nowadays, more and more academic attention has been paid to American women's movement and women historical studies. In American history, there were two large-scale women's movements. The first one happened between the mid-1800s and early 1900s in pursuit of women's suffrage. The second one raged in America from the 1960s to 1980s, involving a wide range of women's rights, far larger than the first wave in scale. From the mid-1800s, American women warriors have achieved a lot through their persistent fight for their equal rights and emancipation. Their glorious accomplishments have greatly promoted the world women's movements. Therefore, exploring the contemporary American women's movements can be of great help to understand American history and enlightening guidance to promote China's women studies.

The Reform and Opening-Up Policy has greatly improved Chinese women's status and propelled the development of women studies in China. To some extent, women studies in China has witnessed some achievements, with a lot of foreign literature being translated into Chinese, such as *The Feminine Mystique* (2011) by Betty Friedan, *The Second Sex* (1953) by Simone de Beauvoir, and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by Mary Wollstonecraft, etc.. In addition, many Chinese scholars have published some books or essays on foreign women studies. However, Chinese scholars' studies on American women's movements were undertaken after an interval of nearly 30 years. During these years, especially at the end of the 1960s, American women's moment had undergone a radical development and transformation. In China, compared to the studies on American women philosophy, psychology, and demography, etc., American women studies have not been acclaimed by Chinese

intellectuals as a subject of urgent importance. This lack of foresight and open mind to the world despairs greatly the indigenous efforts into foreign women studies. Therefore, examining the historical origins, social background, and realistic factors of American women's movements, as well as their characteristics, achievements, and impact will be the gist of this thesis.

This thesis takes the contemporary American women's movement as the object of the exploration and puts it in the definite historical surrounding for further exploration. This paper not only observes that the definite cultural background and cultural characteristics are indispensable elements of contemporary American women's movement, but also recognizes that the social and economic factors and the change of political atmosphere have made significant influence on women's movement. In addition, this paper also explores the contents and characteristics of this movement, as well as the existing issues and its profound influence.

### **American Women's Movement (Before the 1990s)**

#### **The First Wave of the Women's Movement**

American Women's Movement marked its beginning as the First Women Rights Convention was organized and led by the early famous women activists Susan Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton in Seneca Falls, New York in July 1848. Inspired by the shared ideal of improving the new republic, those women unanimously passed the *Declaration of Sentiments* (1848) and 12 resolutions, based on the *Declaration of Independence* (1776). Elizabeth Cady Stanton stressed that "we hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness".<sup>1</sup>

The convention also produced a Women's Suffrage Resolution that stated, "it is the duty of the women of this country to secure to themselves their sacred right to the franchise".<sup>2</sup> Eventually, winning the right to vote emerged as a central issue for the women activists, since the vote provided the means to achieve reforms. After 72 years' arduous and persistent efforts, the Congress finally passed the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920, which guaranteed women's suffrage in the Constitution. After achieving this goal, the first wave receded after 1920; however, it survived on a smaller scale as suffragists founded new organizations, which played a vital role in the resurgence of feminism, since social movements are not formed by isolated individuals who somehow find one another or band together; they almost develop out of networks already in place. The existing women's rights movement, limited though it was, served as the launching pad for the liberal wing of feminism in the mid-sixties.

#### **The Second Wave of the Women's Movement**

Four decades later, the entire American society was in a free, open, and reformative era where people from the government to common family were inclined to conduct reforms to address prevalent social defects including racial discrimination and social poverty. Under such circumstances, the Civil Rights Movement for abolishing racial discrimination, the Students' Movement for anti-Vietnam war, the New Left Movement, and other types of social progressive movement took place across the country. A large number of American women, especially educated white young women, took an active part in the above progressive moments; however, they found

---

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.legacy98.org/move-hist.html>

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAsuffrage.htm>

themselves widely prejudiced even they had already obtained the right to vote. Therefore, the women activists decided to launch another movement for women's equal rights at other aspects of social life.

The immediate stimuli for this movement were the 1961 President's Commission on the Status of Women and its 1963 report and the publication of Betty Friedan's best-selling book *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 when she documented the emotional and intellectual oppression that middle-class educated women were experiencing due to limited options to choose in life. Additional stimuli were the retreat of women in the professions and the addition of "sex" to the 1964 Civil Rights' Act's Title VII, dealing with discrimination in employment. Given the generation and social-economic background of the Movement, its main concerns were the gaining of professional and economic redress by legal means, the liberalization of traditional marriage and an escape from the bonds of the 1950s suburbia (J. Evans, 1981, p. 37).

Due to the conservative attitude of governmental agencies towards gender discrimination, American women activists deviating from Commissions on the Status of Women at the state level united and founded the National Organization for Women (NOW). It was the largest and most prominent women's organization which was conceived of as a national organization. It aimed to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society, assuming all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men (Hole & Levine, 1971, p. 84). Under the leadership of the NOW, American women activists took a variety of means such as sit-on, public demonstration, litigation, and lobbying and achieved considerable progress in a multitude of political activities. For instance, President Lyndon Johnson issued Order 11275 in 1967, effective on 13th October, 1968, expanding his affirmative action policy of 1965 to cover discrimination based on gender. Therefore, federal agencies and contractors must take effective measures to ensure that women as well as minorities should enjoy the same educational and employment opportunities as white males.<sup>3</sup> Also, in 1972, the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution passed the U.S. Senate, then the House of Representatives and was sent to the States for ratification. And in 1973, as a result of *Roe V. Wade*, the Supreme Court ruled that American women had abortion right and the States were not permitted to enact laws that restricted abortion before the third trimester of pregnancy. In 1974, the women's Educational Equity Act Program was established to provide funding for action projects promoting equality of women's educational opportunities.

Although during the development of the Movement, some women activists, unsatisfied with the mild strategy taken by the NOW, became more radical. They divorced the NOW, and launched the American Women's Liberation Movement. The two wings finally joined hands in pursuing their rights, which was symbolized by the Convention of the International Women's Year Congress in Houston. At this convention, women representatives from the 50 states and five jurisdictions passed 25 resolutions covering wide aspects of women's rights and interests, including education, employment, reproduction, homosexuality, welfare, child care, and power distribution, demonstrating that the American Women's Movement was gradually reaching its maturity and moving toward pursuing the overall equality and freedom in such aspects as politics, economy, social life, culture, etc.

Since the 1960s, the American Women's movement had not only gained rapid development but also

---

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/womenstimelinel.html>

generated explicit and far-reaching impact on American women. American women had gradually enhanced their awareness of being active, confident, and independent. They changed the traditional notion that women should stay at home, and began to walk out of the house performing their roles on a broader social arena. Meanwhile, it also fundamentally changed the attitude of the entire society towards women.

### **The Contemporary American Women's Movement (1990s-Present)**

In the 1980s, after experiencing the peak of the second wave in the late 1960s and 1970s, the contemporary American women's movement fell to a low level. The American conservative forces marked by the establishment of the Reagan Administration including the conventional right wing, religious activists and those who worried about American cultural changes caused by the American Women's Movement in the late 1960s came back to the American society. All these forces triggered massive attacks against the women activists failed to lash efficient and powerful counterattacks. Moreover, American women failed to unite together in the fight for their equal rights and interests, which weakened the power of the movement. However, since entering the 1990s, the American Women's Movement has gained a little rising momentum, which was partly attributed to the special international and domestic background in the 1990s.

#### **Background**

Since the early 1990s, globalization has been developing very rapidly. Politically, countries across the globe have held high banner of pursuing democracy, freedom, and reform; peace and development serve as the mainstream of the world politics. Economically, the market economy has become a universally applied economic pattern and the integration of market, capital, technology, and consumer behavior has formed. At the same time, information technology represented by the Internet has transcended the barrier of national border to provide digitalized information without any limit to the whole world with an unprecedented speed and frequency, thus not only creating a kind of universally used language but also producing a thinking mode under the control of such language. Under such a global situation, people across the world have become closer and to a larger extent face some common issues to solve.

In the 1990s, emerging industries such as computer, communication, and network across the whole America, realize the shift from the conventional industry to high-technology-content industry. However, technology-related jobs were still considered nontraditional for women and tended to offer higher wages than many of the occupations where women were in the majority. American women who constituted almost half of the American labor force filled only 12% of the nation's lucrative jobs in science, engineering, and technology. Also, a woman in science and technology earned less than a male counterpart, an average of 92 cents to every man's dollar.<sup>4</sup> Thus, equal job opportunity and equal pay for equal work for women in those new industries became one of the objectives in the Contemporary American Women's Movement.

Thanks to the affirmative Action and the impact of the Second Wave, and increasing number of American women regardless of color, class, religion and national origin went to school. Since the US administration eased the condition for loans for university tuition since 1992, the median- and low-income families could obtain the loan for the education of their children including girls. In 1997, the government further proposed that families

---

<sup>4</sup> See [http:// articles.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m2872/is\\_2\\_28/ai\\_86049669](http://articles.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2872/is_2_28/ai_86049669)

with many children accepting education loans such as families with an annual income of \$100,000 could enjoy the treatment of reduced tax. These measures helped poor girls obtain education and skills. In 1992, there were 32.3 million female students in all kinds of schools, compared to more than 32.2 million male students.<sup>5</sup>

### **Development and Achievement**

**Battle at home and abroad.** Under such circumstances, the American Women's Movement has started to become more active since the early 1990s. Although American women won many rights in political, economic, educational, family and marriage and social life during the second wave, they failed to enjoy the completely same rights as men had in those fields. Therefore, since the 1990s, they have still been making great efforts in obtaining the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), equal political participation, equal employment opportunity and equal pay, abortion rights, homosexual marriage, etc.. Under the organization and leadership of many American women's organizations such as the NOW, the National Women's political Caucus, the Feminist Majority Foundation, the American Association of University Woman, American women have united and conducted many activities.

They have continued with the endeavor to lobby Congress for passing the ERA to the Constitution which will legally empower women in America and even will embolden and contribute to empowering women everywhere. Since the Equal Pay Act was passed in 1973, women are still behind men when it comes to payment. Moreover, the jobs woman commonly took became defined as "women's work", with low wages, few opportunities for promotion and a far smaller range of occupation than for male workers. To address the problem of unequal payment, women's organizations asked members of Congress to support the Paycheck Fairness Act and Fair Pay Act which require employers to provide equal pay for work of equal value whether or not the jobs are the same. Furthermore, if the skills required for a job could be measured and compared with skills needed for other jobs, it might be possible to arrive at a reliable standard that would lead to people with comparable skills being paid comparable wages (Cott, 2004). In order to eliminate job segregation and expand women's employment opportunities, women's organizations have set up job training and consulting centers for woman's technique training and information provision.

American woman activists won the victory of reproductive rights in the court system, but by 1978 Congress had prohibited federal funds from being used to pay for abortions. Then additional restrictions were enacted to circumscribe women's abortion rights, including a 24-hour waiting period and the requirement that teenagers notify their parents and get their permission. Because of threats to their funding and security, abortion providers dwindled in number. Moreover, the US Supreme Court decision of *Weber V. Reproductive Health Services* stated greater leeway to regulate abortion. Under such a situation, American women in Congress formed allies and introduced the Freedom of Choice Act which would guarantee legality of abortion before viability of the fetus through federal law. Under the pressure of American women's activists, President Clinton vetoed twice the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act introduced by pro-life advocates in 1996 and 1997. The Act sought to introduce a new definition of abortion regulation into the public debate, portray the procedure and doctor's use of it as an attack on the lives of the nearly born and thereby change the dominant definition of the issue of abortion regulation to eliminate reference to women's rights. Furthermore, American women took use of their political influence to maintain their hard-won achievements. The Office of Women's Initiatives and Outreach in the White

---

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/womenstimeline1.html>

House began as a campaign organization for the president in the 1996 elections and remained to develop support from female constituencies for the President's policy proposals until the end of his term in office. By the above means, contemporary American women activists have succeeded in countering the attack of conservative forces against abortion rights.

Beyond the issue of the above unachieved equal rights, contemporary American women activists have focused much of the discussion on territory that is controversial even among women activists including women's enrollment in military academics and service in active combat, women in leadership roles in religious worship, pornography, sexual harassment, Social Security benefits and violence against women.

Due to frequent happenings of violence against American women, women organizations worked out and sponsored the Violence Against Women Act, Domestic Violence Offender Gun Ban and Domestic Violence and Welfare Resolution for protecting women and address the need to maintain the economic escape route from domestic violence. In 1994, congress passed the Violence Against Women Act which tightened federal penalties for sex offenders, funded services for victims of rape and domestic violence, and provided for special training of police officers. Also, the government set up the National 24-Hour Domestic Violence Hotline in order to provide immediate crisis intervention, counseling and referrals to local source of help for callers. Currently, American women have faced an increasingly severe problem of sexual harassment in working places. Women's organizations by every means have rendered great help to women victims who sought legal means to protect their interests.

Apart from trying to solve domestic women issues, the contemporary American women activists have closely cooperated with women activists of other countries on the world through international organizations for the progress of the global women's movement. In 1995, the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing where many women's organizations and governmental officials gathered to talk about education, domestic violence, grass-roots economics, employment, health care and political participation, etc.. The American women's organizations actively participated and shared their success and experience with others. Moreover, President Clinton announced the formation of an interagency "Women's Council" which was charged with implementing the US commitment announced at the Beijing Conference and with developing related initiatives to further women's progress.<sup>6</sup>

**Full-fledged in theoretical development.** The theoretical guidance for the Movement has also gained notable development. Women studies prospered in the 1990s in America's universities and colleges, which sought to redefine students and scholars and the world through their academic life. The long-range objective of women studies was to transform the academy. The tremendous outpouring of research and scholarly writing on women completely reshaped many discipline with history, literature, and sociology in particular. Research on women from its early inception was committed to crossing the barriers of disciplines in order to address the complex reality of women's situation. The courses on women studies in institutions of higher learning of America challenged basic self-concepts and sex-role beliefs and encouraged women to adopt more positive attitudes toward themselves and other women. Moreover, the US established thousands of women's centers and women's studies courses and programs that sprang up on nearly every campus across the country.

---

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.feminist.com/resources/artspeech/wword/ww12.htm>

Taking the curricula of women studies of 2000-2001 in Stanford University as an example, there are Asian languages, classic reading, comparative literature, dancing, drama, English language and literature, studies on France and Italy and Germany, philosophy, religious study, culture and social anthropology, race and culture, health study and politics, psychology, social sciences and others in the curriculum. As long as women oppression and gender discrimination exist in a corner of the society, women studies enter and develop. With the furthering of women studies in America's colleges and universities, feminism has developed rapidly as a kind of political thought, become one of the most influential schools of thought in the 20th century and adopted the structure of other philosophical thoughts. Apart from the former schools of feminism including liberal feminism, radical feminism, and socialist/Marxist feminism, there have emerged many other new schools of feminism in contemporary American society, including psychological feminism, ecological feminism, post-modernism feminism, black feminism, cultural feminism, lesbian feminism, separatism feminism, internet feminism, the Third World feminism, etc.

### **Influences of the Contemporary Movement**

Since the 1990s, the Contemporary American Women's Movement has gained further development on the basis of the achievements during the Second Wave. It has had and is bringing deeper impact on contemporary American women in ideological, political, economic, and social life.

The prosperous development of women studies has greatly enhanced the voluntary awareness of women's equal rights and interests of both women and men regardless of class, religion, race, sexual orientation, and national origin in all social aspects. Contemporary American women have regarded personal freedoms as their entitled right and expanded opportunities in all social aspects women have won in the former women's movements. They believe that all girls and women have the opportunity to develop their unique skills and talents and pursue their dreams in the US society and the world at large.

A greater number of American women have entered the high-level governing bodies as the Senate and the House. Therefore, they affect the policy-making procedure to a certain extent in obtaining more equal rights and interests for American women. In 1997, there were 60 women in Congress—14 of them were women of color, 82 statewide executive officials, 1,597 state legislators, and 203 mayors of cities with population over 30,000. There were two women on the Supreme Court, 30 female circuit court judges and 107 female district court judges.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, American women have become a more powerful political force in presidential elections and sometimes determined the final result. For instance, when Bill Clinton ran for the president, a large number of women cast their votes to him, thus helped him win the election.

Now American women are working in literally thousands of occupations such as dentist, bus driver, veterinarian, airline pilot, phone installer, playing greater role and making bigger contributions to the economic development of American society. More than three million women now work in occupations considered "nontraditional" until very recently. According to the 2002 statistics of the Women's Bureau of the US Department of Labor, women represented 60.2% of the total labor with an employment rate of 96.05%.<sup>8</sup>

Generally speaking, compared to the Second Wave, the American Women's Movement since the 1990s has

---

<sup>7</sup> See [http:// www. Legacy98.org/move-hist.html](http://www.Legacy98.org/move-hist.html)

<sup>8</sup> See [http:// www. Legacy98.org/move-hist.html](http://www.Legacy98.org/move-hist.html)

developed quietly and slowly on surface but further in depth and extent.

### **New Features**

Moving into the new era, the contemporary American women's movement has shown some unique features, different from the first two waves of American women's movement, which mainly manifest at the following aspects.

**Being more academic and diversified in theoretical guidance.** The contemporary movement is undergoing under the research results of women studies, while the contemporary movement was influenced mainly by liberalism, radicalism, and socialism. Women studies offer the root causes for women's oppression from various perspectives, thus enabling men and women to have a better and deeper understanding of women's subordinate position in America. It has been characterized with wider scope of diversification, which places women in a wide range of fields in society including state, region, race, class, religion, sexual orientation and others for studying women issues which involves almost all of the existing disciplines including history, sociology, psychology, literature, political science, law, anthropology and even theology, ethics, philosophy and music. Thus, it is featured by interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary. Moreover, it has integrated with the research on class, race, and religion.

The contemporary studies on women are mainly conducted in the US institutions of higher learning from various theoretical sources rather than practical experience. Women's Studies have now become an independent and systematized discipline in colleges and universities across the United States. Some have offered the degree of Master and Doctor and conducted research programs on women. There are more than 400 institutions of higher learning which have granted the Degree of Doctor of Women Studies. Moreover, colleges and universities in the US have established their own Center of Women Studies with an equal footing to other disciplines in terms of organization and finance. It has transformed the scholarship, teaching, and practices of these academic disciplines and professions in manifold ways. There are some special and professional women who are conducting women studies. Their research theories and results greatly put forward and promote the practical activities women conduct for the independence and liberation in the movement. Moreover, feminist scholars and teachers have challenged their fields to rethink what should be studied and valued. Also, some feminist scholars question those basic assumptions, beliefs, and objectives of their own fields. In addition to changing their discipline's research approaches and questions, some women activists have sought new ways to speak and write about their subjects.

**Being broader and deeper in pursuing objectives.** While women activists in the first wave concentrated their attention on fighting for suffrage, and in the second wave for gender equality in workplace, abortion rights, and economic parity, today's activists are looking at a wider range of topics through the feminist lens.

As time passed and American society developed over the past years, new problems concerning women have surfaced in the society and attracted great attention from contemporary women activists. They mainly include violence and hate crimes against women, women trafficking, poverty and prostitution, selection and training of new generation of feminist leaders, national health care and women's role and contribution to world peace and development, etc.

In the contemporary American society, thanks to great endeavor of American women activists, American women have won many relatively equal rights and interests in almost all social public areas. However, women's



status in private areas has failed to change. Therefore, women activists have started to pay more attention to the unequal status in their personal areas. They mainly strive to obtain abortion rights and lesbian and gay rights, eliminate violence, hate crime and sex harassment against women and establish health and child care for women in the contemporary American society.

Moreover, the beneficiaries of these objectives have also become more of variety, no longer limited to the white middle-class women as in the first two waves. American women activists in the contemporary movement have fought against not only gender discrimination but also other forms of discrimination because of race, ethnic origin, marital status, sexual orientation and parenthood prevailing across American society. Thus, women activists have concerned not only white and well-educated women but also those of color, different religion, class, sexual orientation, and national origin. A variety of women's organizations in the contemporary movement have been established in order to serve different groups of American women. Most of the time, American women have set aside differences and united for the common aim in the women's movement.

**Professional organization in a broader scope.** Besides the existing women's organizations such as the NOW, which has still served as the largest and most prominent women's civil rights organization, there are many special and profession women's organization in fields of education, politics and law, health, religion, with different major goals but the same purpose of winning more equal rights for American women. For instance, in education, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) believes that quality public education is the foundation of a democratic society. It advocates equality, academic freedom, protection from censorship, bias-free education, and responsible funding for all levels of education. It advocates increased access to higher education, especially for women in poverty.

The contemporary women's organizations not only place much emphasis on the struggle for equal civil rights but also attach great importance to the cultivation and development of young women activists. They have drawn severe lessons from the disintegration of the second wave by training a new generation of strong and powerful young women activists to maintain the continuous progress of the women's movement. For instance, over recent years, the NOW has encouraged young female students in middle school to join its Young Feminist Program for further feminism education. During the three-day 1997 NOW Foundation Young Feminist Summit, an estimated 1,200 young women activists gathered in Washington, D.C. to empower themselves with the skills necessary to shape their futures and effect change in their lives and communities.<sup>9</sup>

Women's organizations have made great efforts in training young women activists who have now become backbones in the contemporary American women's movement. New NOW chapters and Young Feminist Task Forces have continued to spring up nationwide. And student interns come from every state to the National NOW Action Center.

**Employment of the Internet.** Since the 1990s, with the rapid development of the Internet technology, contemporary American women activists have furthered the women's movements by means of Internet. Internet has provided unprecedented space for free information and precious opportunity for development.

Thanks to the development of advanced communication technology, especially computer and Internet, all of these contemporary women's organizations have established their own websites where they post their own

---

<sup>9</sup> See [http:// www. Now.org/nnt/05-97/yfs.html](http://www.Now.org/nnt/05-97/yfs.html)

purposes, objectives, development history, most updated actions and campaigns, strategies, etc.. American women across the country or even the world can log on the Internet to get the most recent issues and pursuits and even to send emails to the organizations expressing opinions and suggestions, thus connecting the organization with American women at grassroots level.

**Cooperation beyond borders.** The contemporary American women activists have conducted close cooperation with women activists from other countries over the world for global women's rights and interests.

At international women's conference, the American women activists actively cooperated with women of other countries. To draft the document adopted at Beijing's Conference on Women in 1995, the American women activists frequently held talk with women from Russia, Brazil, India, Spain, Japan, Africa, and others at the UN preparatory conference in New York. The document contained every possible item of women's unfinished business of equality, the elimination of all forms of violence against women, from wife beating and the dowry system to genital mutilation, from the measurement of women's unpaid work, to new arrangements of work that would permit more of a partnership of men with women in nurturing children.<sup>10</sup>

The NOW took the leading role for the US action of the World March of Women 2000, a coordinated series of actions around the globe calling for an end to poverty and violence against women.

Over 4,6000 organizations from more than 150 countries took part in the World March of Women. Thousands of women worldwide rallied to send an unmistakable message: We will not rest until justice is done. We will show the nation and the world that supporters of women's rights are the overwhelming majority. While each of the marches called for an end to violence and poverty, issues of local significance would also be addressed. Worldwide events around the World March of Women began on International Women's Day, March 8th and culminated on October 17, the United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, when women representing every participating country met at the UN in New York City to demand improved programs to eradicate poverty and violence against women.<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

The American women's movement started from the mid-1800s and underwent the first wave and the second wave, and now is still advancing forward. During this process, American women have conquered great difficulties and become more and more mature in the endeavor of winning their equal rights and interests in society. Meanwhile they have transformed American society and made great contributions to the social development.

Compared with the contemporary American women's movement, there are now more women organizations which have launched more activities and exerted more influence on American women and society. Though it is not characterized by massive scale, radical means, obvious influence, it has permeated into all corners of American society and women's life. Such potential and subtle influence is continuously shaping American society and even creating a potential revolutionary force for social reform. With the rapid progress of globalization, countries share closer and closer relations. Without doubt, American women's movement since the early 1990s has marched into a new era, and will continue to serve as an irresistible force in both America and the world.

---

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.feminist.com/beyond.htm>

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.now.org/campaigns.htm>

### References

- Beauvoir, S. de. (1953). *The second sex*. H. M. Parshley (Ed. & Trans.). New York: Knopf.
- Cott, N. F. (2004). *No small courage: A history of women in the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Davis, F. (1991). *Moving the mountain: The women's movement in America since 1960*. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo, Singapore: Simon & Schuster.
- Evans, J. (1981). *The politics of the second electorate: Women and public participation*. J. Lovenduski & J. Hills (Eds.). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Evans, S. M. (2001). American women in the twentieth century. In H. Sitkoff (Ed.), *Perspectives on modern America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Friedan, B. (2011). *The feminine mystique*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Hole, J., & Levine, E. (1971). *Rebirth of feminism*. New York: Quadrangle Books.
- Ryan, M. P. (1975). *Womanhood in America: From colonial times to the present* (2nd ed.). New York/London: Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Date.
- Wollstonecraft, M. (1996). *A vindication of the rights of woman*. New York: Dover Publications.