



University and College Union

CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

8 MARCH

Why we should celebrate International Women's Day

INTRODUCTION BY SALLY HUNT, UCU GENERAL SECRETARY

International Women's Day is a powerful symbol of the fight for equality. It is rooted in the struggle for rights in the workplace and the demand for women for a better deal.

In the twenty first century, while this magnificent wall chart shows how far women have come in one hundred years we have to reflect on how far there is to go. There remain many places where the lack of political and economic rights mean women continue to be second class citizens while even here in the UK to be female in the twenty first century means you are likely to be paid less and have a higher chance of facing discrimination.

International Women's Day reminds us both to celebrate our journey so far and redouble our efforts to achieve equality and justice for all in the next century of struggle.

If you have any comments or suggestions please go to www.ucu.org.uk

What is International Women's Day?

Marked March 8 every year

Celebrates women's achievements in all spheres

First observed in 1910

It is an official holiday in over 20 countries

In Armenia and the United States they spend a month celebrating women's achievements, not just a day

The UN designated 1975 the year of women. The same year it sponsored the celebration of the day in the United Kingdom.

Influential writers & thinkers (1945-)

The number of influential women writers is as long as it is fascinating. Here are some, but not all, of the most important writers since 1945, their most important works, and the year they were published.

Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (1947); Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (1963); Germaine Greer, The Female Eunch (1970); Shulamith Firestone, The Politics of Sex (1970); Kate Millet, Sexual Politics (1970); Ann Oakley, Women's Work (1974); Susan Brownmiller, Against Our Will (1975); Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born (1976); Dorothy Dinnerstein, The Mermaid and the Minotaur (1976); Susie Orbach, Fat is a feminist issue (1978); Mary Daly Gyn/Ecology (1978); Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering (1978); bell hooks, Ain't I a Woman (1981); Andrea Dworkin, Pornography - Men Possessing Women (1981); Alice Walker, In Search of Our Mothers Garden: womanist prose (1981); Angela Davis, Women Race & Class (1981); Catherine MacKinnon, Feminism Unmodified (1987); Carole Pateman, The Sexual Contract (1988); Naomi Wolf, The Beauty Myth (1990); Susan Faludi, Backlash (1991); Ariel Levy, Female Chauvinist Pig (2005); Nina Power, One Dimensional Woman (2009); Natasha Walter, Living Dolls (2010); Kat Banyard, The Equality Illusion (2010).



From top to bottom, left to right: Kat Banyard, Germaine Greer, Angela Davis, Susie Orbach, Adrienne Rich, Betty Friedan, Cristobel Pankhurst, Maya Angelou, Margaret Bondfield.

Mary Macarthur (1880-1921)

Champion of women's rights (1880-1921)



Born in Glasgow, Mary Macarthur (pictured here) decided from a very early age that she wanted to be a full time worker. After observing a shop assistants union meeting she was convinced of the central role of trade unionism. She became the secretary of the Women's Trade Union League helping to organise significant victories. A tireless fighter for equality a contemporary said of her, "She has left all working women...and the community as a whole, forever in her debt."

Margaret Bondfield (1873-1953)

Scientific Pioneer Pension Pioneer (1873-1953)



Margaret Bondfield was instrumental in making sure that working people received a pension in their old age in Britain. She was a member of the National Persons Committee executive that organised a national campaign. Her success led to the world's first Old Age Pension (the 1908 Old Age Pension Act).

Marie Curie (1867-1934)

Scientific Pioneer (1867-1934)



The first woman to hold a Professorship in General Physics at the University of Sorbonne, Paris. Born in Warsaw she received scientific training from her father. After her involvement in radical politics she decided to leave as a career choice for her. She studied in Paris and went on to win the Nobel Prize a number of times for her work with radium. She is acknowledged as one of the greatest scientists of all time.

Eleanor Davies-Colley (1874-1934)

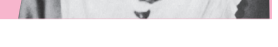
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Marie Stopes (1880-1958)

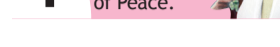
Pioneer (1880-1958)



Marie Stopes (pictured here) set up the first birth control clinic in the UK and her seminal book Married Love (1918) was very influential.

Valentina Tereshkova (1937-)

First woman in space (1937-)



Valentina Tereshkova was the first woman ever to go into space. Born in Maslennikovo in Russia she started school at 10 and gained her education at attending night school after a full day work. In June 1963 she was on board the Vostok 6 that made 38 orbits of the earth. She later received the Gold Medal of Peace.

Amelia Earhart (1897-1937)

Flying pioneer (1897-1937)



Amelia Earhart (pictured here) was the first woman ever to fly solo over the Atlantic Ocean in 1932. She fought for more women in aviation. In 1937 she attempted to fly around the world but disappeared. Her body was never found but her strength and determination has lived on to inspire many.

Rosa Parks (1913-2005)

Civil Rights Activist (1913-2005)



Rosa Parks (pictured here) helped to end the civil rights in America. She refused to give her seat to a white passenger in 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama. Her action led to a lengthy boycott that amongst other things brought Martin Luther King to national prominence. One of the many beneficiaries of her actions, and the thousands of people that fought for civil rights, is Barack Obama.

Maya Angelou (1928-)

Poet and civil rights writer (1928-)



Poet and civil rights writer Maya Angelou began her career in the theatre. She has been a nominee for a Tony, an Emmy, and a Pulitzer Prize. She wrote her first play to raise money for the leading civil rights organisation led by Martin Luther King, Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Her most well known work is I know why the caged bird sings.

Phoolan Devi (1968-2001)

Bandit Queen (1968-2001)



Married at age eleven to a man three times her age Phoolan Devi (pictured here) found herself the victim of numerous sexual assaults. She eventually escaped and led a gang of robbers in North and Central India. She became a hero amongst the poor and dispossessed in India - especially when it was discovered she had gotten revenge on some of the men who raped her. She surrendered to the police in 1983 after a huge manhunt. She was later elected to Parliament but was later gunned down. An internationally successful film, Bandit Queen, was made of her life.

Indira Gandhi (1917-1984)

First female Indian Premier (1917-1984)



Indira Gandhi became the first female Prime Minister in one of the largest countries in the world. In 1938 she joined the National Congress party and was active in gaining India's independence. She was first elected in 1966 and served four terms. In a controversial election she won an army attack on Sikh holy site, the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Five months later her Sikh bodyguards killed her.

Billie Holiday (1915-1959)

Jazz singer (1915-1959)



Billie Holiday (born Eleanor Fagan) grew up in Baltimore. She developed her distinctive singing style in Harlem nightclubs during the 1920s in spite of a tragic life blighted by racism, sexism, and drug addiction. Her songs like Strange Fruit, about the lynchings of black men in the American South, were powerful.

Bernadette Devlin (McAliskey) (1947-)

Radical Irish activist (1947-)



Born in Northern Ireland of a Catholic family, Bernadette Devlin (pictured) took a central role in the Civil Rights movement in Northern Ireland. In 1969 she became the youngest member of the House of Commons. Always a controversial figure she survived an attempt to synthesise socialist and feminist ideas. In 2008 her involuntary retirement led to a campaign amongst students to save her job that won her the Nobel Prize in 1981.

Sheila Rowbotham (1915-2005)

Progressive theorist/thinker (1915-2005)



Sheila Rowbotham's work has been translated into many languages including Chinese, Arabic, and Hebrew. She was born in Leeds and studied at St Hilda's College, Oxford. In 1969 she published the very influential book, Women's Liberation and the New Politics. Her other important works include Women, Resistance and Revolution and Riddles of Power. She also gained greater prominence later for her work on Beyond the Fragments - a conference book that attempted to synthesise socialist and feminist ideas. In 2008 her involuntary retirement led to a campaign amongst students to save her job that won her the Nobel Prize in 1981.

Shirin Ebadi (1931-)

Human rights activist (1931-)



Shirin Ebadi (pictured) was born in Iran and trained as a lawyer at Tehran University. She became a judge in 1969. After the 1979 Iranian revolution she (along with other women) was demoted. She protested and finally succeeded in setting up her own law practice. Controversial cases gave her national prominence. She was the first Muslim woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize in 2003.

Aung San Suu Kyi (1945-)

Democracy campaigner (1945-)



Aung San Suu Kyi has been one of the foremost campaigners for democracy in Burma. She was born into a political family and signalled her opposition to the dictatorship in Burma in the late 1980's. She won the Nobel peace prize in 1991. Cut off from the outside world she has lived under effective house arrest for a number of years. Her persistence in opposing the military dictatorship in Burma has won her admirers the world over.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (1938-)

Africa's first female elected head of state (1938-)



The Nobel Peace Prize 2011 was awarded jointly to Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkol Karman "for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work."

Tawakkol Karman (1979-)

Nobel peace prize winner (1979-)



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1909191019131914191719191920192219231929193919461947194819511955195719601959196819701971197519771991199419952001200220042005200620072012 & beyond

1909 The detonator
Start of the biggest strike amongst female garment workers in New York. This strike inspires the women's movement across the world.

1910 International Women's Day observed for the first time
March 8th is designated as the day to honour women who have led struggles to improve the lives of women. Clara Zetkin (see box B below) and others in the radical, progressive movement are instrumental in making sure this date is marked.

1913 South African women come to forefront
Women's organisations like Manyo (a saving club for poor women) would play an important role in fighting racial inequality in South Africa. As the struggle against Apartheid becomes more intense in the latter part of the twentieth century, women take on leading roles e.g. Winnie Mandela.

1914 Women start the revolution
Women in a bread queue in Russia start the Russian revolution. The revolution in its early stages demanded the right to vote, education, and the removal of the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children, made marriage a voluntary union, and attempted to introduce Women's universal paid maternity leave.

1919 America
Women in America get the vote. African American women are still excluded from the franchise until the civil rights movement (see Rosa Parks box above).

1920 Ireland - creation of the Irish State
Women gain the vote in the newly created Republic.

1922 Japan
Women gain the right to vote in Japan.

1923 Egyptian equality fight
Doria Shafik organises an invasion of the Egyptian Parliament by women. In 1948 she had formed the Daughters of the Nile Union. She goes on to form a women's political party in Egypt that is later suppressed.

1929 Contraception
First contraceptive pill approved for use by US scientists. The pill would revolutionise sex as the fear of pregnancy, and the social stigma that entailed, could now be avoided where the pill was available.

1939 Nigerian women protest
2,000 women in Eastern Nigeria protest the fall in their status by occupying and burning down a market. However, in negotiations they agree to the removal of all foreign courts and schools as well as the expulsion of foreigners.

1939 Women and Indian Independence
The newly independent state of India decrees that there should be no discrimination against women on the basis of their sex.

1946 China and Argentina
Women win the right to vote in China and Argentina.

1947 Human Rights includes women
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is adopted by the United Nations. It is actively promoted by Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of the then American president Franklin D Roosevelt. It explicitly states that men and women should be treated equally.

1948 Italian Divorce
Italian women are granted the right to divorce by law under certain conditions. The issue of divorce was (and is) a controversial issue in a country which contains the capital of Catholicism.

1951 Switzerland
Women vote in Federal elections. In 1990 Swiss women vote in all Swiss cantons.

1955 UN women's conference
The UN holds a conference to mark the start of the UN decade for women. This conference is followed by conferences in Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), and Beijing (1995).

1957 The first conference in Mexico City
has 6,000 women from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's). Ten years later in Nairobi, Kenya there are 15,000 NGO female representatives. At these conferences there is an attempt to discuss the problems of women across the world.

1959 Disappeared
The mothers of people who have disappeared under the rule of the Argentinean military demonstrate in silence in the central square in Buenos Aires. Their actions help to open a space for opposition to the dictatorships that dominated Latin America at that time, opening the road to greater democracy.

1959 Against violence
16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence is launched. Running from 25 November (International Day of Violence Against Women) to 10 December (International Human Rights Day) the aim is to show how violence against women violates human rights. Over 1,700 organisations in 130 countries have participated.

1960 White ribbon campaign
The white ribbon campaign starts in Canada. A group of men encourage other men to wear a white ribbon to show their opposition to violence against women. Within six weeks 100,000 men in Canada wear the white ribbon. Men in 47 countries participate today.

1968 Brazil
Laws are passed in Brazil that mean women have equal rights in marriage and divorce.

1968 More rights for Iranian women
Iranian Parliament grants women the right to seek divorce.

1991 Lithuania
Government repeals a requirement that meant before qualifying for a driving licence women have to have a gynaecological examination.

1995 Back pay ruling
A European court ruling says that if women are suffering from pay inequality they can backdate their claim to 5 years. This puts the pressure on employers to make sure they pay women equally or otherwise face huge payouts.

2001 UN representative
Betty Popeny from Uganda is chosen by Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict, Olara Otunnu. She is one of eight people chosen because of her work in establishing Juja for Action that helps young girls. She says, "Girls in my country keep to themselves and are quiet... I now have the confidence to talk to policy makers about girls' rights. I want to help other girls gain the same confidence".

2002 Women & the Arab revolutions
Women play an important role in the revolutions that sweep the Middle East toppling regimes in Egypt and Tunisia.

2005 Madam President
Ellen Johnson Sirleaf takes office as President of Liberia, becoming Africa's first female elected head of state.

2006 UN Millennium goals
Two years earlier the United Nations holds a Millennium Development Goals conference to discuss progress towards reaching 8 aims for 2015 - the third of which is to promote gender equality and empower women.

2007 Women lead and join resistance
As cuts reduce the welfare state and public services across Europe and elsewhere women are an integral part of the resistance. Women's movements in Spain, Greece, Portugal and student leader Camila Vallejo in Chile).

1917 First World War
During the First World War women became drivers, electricians, engineers and undertakers. By 1917 700,000 German women worked in heavy industry - six times more than 1913.

1919 Canada
Vote extended to all women. Over ninety percent of soldiers had been given the vote in recognition of their service. However, as elsewhere, once the vote had been given to one group of women it became untenable to keep it from all women.

1929 .then Germany
Women in Germany vote for the first time. Over ninety percent of women vote and ten percent of those elected are women. Women in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Sweden also gain the right to vote.

1939 Chinese women fight
Chinese women play an important part in the May Fourth movement that opposes the Japanese occupation of China territory. There are demands for the right to vote, to education, equal pay and against foot binding (female children's feet were bound to conform to social ideals of beauty).

1946 Women join the fight
Huda Sha'r Rawafi forms the Egyptian Feminists Union. Women play an important role in the fight for independence from the British.

1947 Ecuador
Women win the right to vote in Ecuador.

Other important UK dates

1919 **First female MP** - Nancy Astor becomes the first female to take her seat in Parliament. (Constance Markievicz had previously won a seat but refused to take it).

1919 **New laws** - The Sex Discrimination (Removal) Act rules that women can no longer be barred from any profession (except the church) because of sex or marital status.

1944 **Recommendation** - Equal pay for teachers and civil servants is recommended by a Royal commission. It will take ten years before it is implemented.

1950 **Legal Aid** - provision for divorce.

1961 **Unmarried women too** - The Marie Stopes clinic (which was dedicated to birth control) opens services for unmarried mothers, something that has been previously taboo.

1969 **No marital fault required** - Breakdown of marriage made grounds for divorce.

1971 **Divorce reformed** - The Divorce Reform Act is passed. This law helps to remove some of the inequalities in previous legislation that often left women in financial straits after a divorce.

1997 **Election** - The Labour party wins the general election. One in four new MPs are women, an historic first. One hundred and one of them are photographed with Tony Blair.

UK women facts & figures at a glance

The literacy gap between girls and boys is 26% in favour of girls.

The pay gap between men and women in full time work is 15%.

Women in the public sector only get 62% of the average pension for men.

Full time working women earn 16.4% less than full time working men in their 40's.

Of reported rapes less than 6% result in a conviction.

Making up two thirds of the public sector workforce it is highly likely women will be disproportionately hit by spending cuts.

Working mothers put in twice as many hours into housework as their working partners.

Women worldwide - facts & figures at a glance

Better...
 ♀ More women working - more women have joined the workforce than men since 1980 (except in Africa).
 ♀ By 2005 63% of countries had equal numbers of boys and girls of primary school age (37 had secondary).
 ♀ In developed countries women have overtaken men in many spheres of education according to an OECD report in 2003.
 ♀ Women live longer. In 30 countries the female life expectancy is over 80 years.
 ♀ More women are involved in politics both on everyday and governmental level. Sixteen women are presidents.
 ♀ There is more legislation that recognises the need for more equality between men and women.
 ♀ Women, from poor to rich countries, are more aware of their rights.

...but not good enough
 ♀ Women only make up 33 percent of managerial and administrative posts in the developed world. In Africa and Asia and the Pacific it is even less - 15 and 13 percent respectively.
 ♀ Women make up two thirds of the illiterate adults in the world.
 ♀ Of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty, the majority are female.
 ♀ Two-thirds of the children denied school are girls.
 ♀ A major cause of death for women between 15-44 is male violence.
 ♀ One woman dies every 90 seconds in a childbirth.
 ♀ 19 million abortions take place in unsafe conditions killing 68,000 women per year approximately.
 ♀ Of the world's 188 directly elected leaders only 16 are women.

References & Acknowledgements

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Author & creator: Gavene Bennett.

Designer: Sarah Edwards.

Milestones in women's progress in the UK

Suffragettes
Suffragettes began hunger strikes to win the vote for women. Mass resistance leads to the Public Meetings Act to control militant hunger strike in prison released so they can be put back inside. For years previously two women and 119 are injured in clashes between the police and suffragettes.

Cat & Mouse
The Prisoners' Temporary Discharge of Ill Health Act passed. Women on hunger strike in prison released so they can be put back inside. For years previously two women and 119 are injured in clashes between the police and suffragettes.

World War One
By 1915 The Munitions Act gave the government power over labour and women were drafted in their thousands to make cartridges and for general labour and cleaning duties.

Eligibility of Women Act
Women can now stand as MPs.

World War Two
During World War Two women were drawn into the workforce in large numbers. Nearly half of all women were in the military services or working. Women began to work in traditionally male preserves eg shipbuilding and munitions (in 1939 there were half a million women in munitions, by 1943 it was two million).

Outdated
Attempts are made by the then Labour government to reform outdated pay structures. For example, in engineering there are four categories: skilled, semi skilled, labourers and women.

Strike for equal pay
Women workers at Ford's Dagenham, Essex take strike action because they are being paid 15% less than men doing the same work. This strike highlights the need for equal pay legislation as well as starting a national debate on equal pay.

Equalised Equal Pay Act
Equal Pay Act was passed. Employers given five years to implement it.

Sex discrimination outlawed
The Sex Discrimination Act makes it illegal for employers to discriminate against a worker on the basis of sex or marital status. At the same time the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) is set up to deal with sex discrimination and gender inequality.

Abortion Act
An Abortion Act is passed. Legal abortion is allowed if the pregnancy will harm women in anyway (this required medical verification).

Pay equalised
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Adoption rights
The UK parliament passes a law that permits lesbian and unmarried couples to adopt children.

Greenham women
One woman organises a march from Wales to a proposed missile base in Berkshire. In spite of brutal treatment from military personnel a women's peace camp is established attracting thousands and gaining support from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and some MPs.

Mrs Thatcher
The Conservative party wins the General election. Mrs Thatcher, the party's leader, becomes the first female Prime Minister.

Miners strike
Women play a critical role in the Miners strike, the longest strike in British history. Miners' wives, mothers, and neighbours raised funds, distributed food supplies, picketed and appeared on television.

First female General Secretary
Brenda Dean becomes the first General Secretary of the large print union, SOGAT (Society of Graphical and Allied Trades).

Year later...
Two women took out a legal case after being refused service at a bar. Until they won their court case a bar could legally refuse to serve a woman at a bar simply because of her gender.

Abortion campaign
The National Abortion Campaign defeats a private members bill in Parliament that attempts to restrict the 1967 Abortion Act. 40,000 mail in London receiving backing from some all male workplaces.

Equal loans
Women gain the right to obtain credit without their husbands' signatures.

Domestic violence
The 1975 Sex Offences Act means public institutions must promote gender equality and eliminate sex discrimination.

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1909 Clara Lemlich
Life long activist (1886-1982)

1917 Clara Zetkin
Women's rights champion (1857-1933)

1919 Emmeline Pankhurst
Founder of the Suffragette movement (1858-1928)

1923

1939-1945

1964

1967-1968

1970

1975

1977

1979

1981

1984-1985

2001

2002

2003

2006

2011

2012 and beyond

The stand of the 30,000: the origin of International Women's Day

It was the stand of 30,000 women's garment female workers in New York in 1909 that led to the establishment