



## LESSON PLAN

# WOMEN ON THE MOVE

## Social Studies, Grade 7, and U.S. Government, 9–12

### OBJECTIVE

In November, 1977, women from across the United States descended on Houston, Texas for the National Women's Conference where they hoped to draft a national “plan of action” to promote gender equality. The goal for such a plan was to assist the president and federal legislature in establishing policies that would shape the rights and protections of women throughout the United States and its territories. Conference delegates organized to create resolutions which addressed often contentious issues impacting the lives of women.

Importantly, delegates also worked to ensure that these resolutions addressed the needs of all American women – not just the wealthy or those of a particular ethnic background. Texas women, in particular, played a significant role in the proceedings and key figures in Texas politics were involved by organizing and often speaking at the conference.

This lesson plan centers on the Texas Archive of the Moving Image’s interactive web exhibit, “Women on the Move: Texas and the Fight for Women’s Rights,”

<https://www.womenonthemovetx.com> which combines local television coverage with newsreels, government films, commercials and home movies to examine the historical impact of the National Women’s Conference, the ongoing debate it provoked, and the opposition movement the conference inspired. Studying the history of the National Women’s Conference can support student understanding of the development of political platforms, the process of civic debate, and the mechanisms by which interests groups attempt to change laws and regulations.

Using “Women on the Move: Texas and the Fight for Women’s Rights” exhibit as an organizing framework, middle grade and high school students of Texas history and United States government will demonstrate an understanding of individual rights, political participation, and the impact that individuals and interests groups can have on shaping public policy.

*Please note: Some of the videos and descriptions in the exhibit “Women on the Move: Texas and the Fight for Women’s Rights” mention sensitive topics such as reproductive rights and sexual identity. The focus of the exhibit is on political participation and discussion of these topics is limited, but we recommend that you review all material before presenting it if you feel these topics may not be appropriate for your students.*



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### PROCESS

#### **Prior Knowledge**

The following lesson assumes that students:

Have a general understanding of legal rights and of the civil protections in the United States, such as the right to petition the government, granted by the Constitution.

Have some familiarity with the women's rights movement and the civil rights movement in the United States, as well as familiarity with the issues addressed by these groups.

Understand that laws and policies can be changed and that there is an established process to undertake these changes.

Are capable of making and recording observations on lesson material independently or in groups.

Know that historical sources can be biased and may represent a particular perspective. Students should be able to take an analytical view of the materials presented.

Should have the skills to conduct independent research and create a basic presentation on the subject matter.

Have access to technology that allows them to view streaming video individually or in a group setting.

#### **Hook**

Explain to students that you will be discussing how members of the women's rights movement of the 1970s worked to develop a platform which tried to address the needs of all women and to build on recent legislation and policy changes that attempted to further equal rights. Explain that you will be discussing the events that took place leading up to the 1977 National Women's Conference, what happened during the event, and the changes that were enacted (or that failed to be enacted) following the conference.

Using the timeline on the history tab of the exhibit, talk about some of the major events that preceded the conference and what historical conditions may have existed to necessitate them. Brainstorm with students what issues women were facing leading up to the National Women's Conference.

Students can either call out answers or write their ideas on paper that is collected. You can make suggestions or ask leading questions, such as asking why Title IX may have been important: Were women not receiving equal educational opportunities?; Was limited federal funding of sports programs impacting the involvement of women? Take time to have students consider why someone might be opposed to extending these opportunities.



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When you have gathered the students' ideas, write them on the board. Tell students that they should think about how these issues were addressed as they proceed through the lesson.

### Lesson

Tell your students that they will be watching a video that documented the National Women's Conference of 1977 and the events that surrounded it. Explain that this video focuses on the conference itself and that a lot of work was completed prior to the conference.

Hand out a worksheet with questions about the video. This worksheet will highlight some of the events mentioned in the video, as well as require critical thinking at the end where students must analyze what they have seen and draw conclusions based on the information.

Show students the video entitled 1977 National Women's Conference: A Question of Choices. Have students complete the worksheet as they watch the video.



#### **1977 National Women's Conference: A Question of Choices**

[https://texasarchive.org/2013\\_02597](https://texasarchive.org/2013_02597)

After students complete the worksheet, ask if they were surprised by any of the arguments presented and why? Were they surprised at the process that was undertaken to develop the National Plan of Action? Have students complete the portion of the worksheet that asks them to reflect over the material presented.

### Independent Practice

The National Plan of Action created at the National Women's Conference contained 26 "planks," or descriptions of the position that the conference was putting forward on certain political topics or issues. Each of the planks had to be carefully thought out and was finally constructed through discussion and debate between the conference members.

For this independent practice, students will create a poster focusing on a particular issue or need to be addressed at the conference and suggesting what position should be taken on a certain plank. Students should watch the videos associated with the plank they have selected to understand better the issues on which the women at the conference focused. The poster can be constructed on paper or digitally, but should contain pictures and illustrations representing their chosen issue.

Students should prepare to present their posters by explaining what the issues of the time necessitated the plank, what their proposed position on this plank is, and how they think that position would play out in real life. Instruct students to think about what opponents might say in opposition to their plan.



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Web Exhibit

**Women on the Move: Texas and the Fight for Women's Rights**

<https://www.womenonthemovetx.com/>

### **Plank 3 – Business**

Plank 3 called for greater federal support of women entrepreneurs and inclusion of women in the group of underutilized business owners which are granted advantages in federal contracts and regulations.

<https://www.womenonthemovetx.com/business/>

### **Plank 8 – Education**

Plank 8 sought to eliminate discrimination in school curricula and for the president to enforce anti-discrimination laws regarding funding programs for athletics and scholarships.

<https://www.womenonthemovetx.com/education/>

### **Plank 9 – Elective and Appointive Office**

Plank 9 of the National Plan of Action outlined ways to increase political participation of women in all levels of government and policy making.

<https://www.womenonthemovetx.com/elective-and-appointive-office/>

### **Plank 10 – Employment**

Plank 10 proposed increasing employment opportunities for women and for the enforcement of all laws, executive orders and regulations that prohibited sex discrimination.

<https://www.womenonthemovetx.com/employment/>

### **Plank 11 – Equal Rights Amendment**

Plank 11 of the National Plan of Action called for the Equal Rights Amendment to be ratified. The Equal Rights Amendment needed the support of three additional states to amend the Constitution to guarantee the equal rights of all citizens, regardless of sex.

<https://www.womenonthemovetx.com/equal-rights-amendment/>

### **Plank 12 and 14 – Health**

Plank 12 advocated for expanding health services available to women, including mental and reproductive health. Plank 14 called for the establishment of regulations which would call for insurance companies to stop charging higher rates on policies held by women, to allow women to purchase insurance as individuals, and to prohibit the denial of coverage for pregnant women, newborns, and single mothers.

<https://www.womenonthemovetx.com/health/>



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### Plank 13 – Marital Property and Inheritance

Plank 13 recommended social security coverage be extended to homemakers and that marriage should be viewed as an equal partnership.

<https://www.womenonthemovetx.com/homemakers/>

### Plank 16 – Media and Communications

Plank 16 sought to increase the number of women employed in the media, as well as to encourage a more complex representation of women in the media and popular culture that would include a more diverse range of roles and lifestyles.

<https://www.womenonthemovetx.com/media/>

### Plank 23 – Issues Faced by Minority Women

Changed during the conference through the collaboration of several minority caucuses, Plank 23 addressed discrimination issues that specific minority groups faced, as well as the issues faced by all minority women – the double hit of sexism and racism.

<https://www.womenonthemovetx.com/minority-women/>

## Extended Learning

Have students develop a committee that seeks to further student rights. What issues are students facing today? What recent changes to the law or school policy have been enacted and how did that impact student life? Students should collaborate in small groups and create a platform that identifies 4-6 key issues and explains how students feel these issues should be addressed. After collaborating on issues, students should create their own presentation using images, narratives, and links to videos on the Texas Archive of the Moving Image website. Student should document and properly cite research. Links to other resources are available under the 'Resources' tab.

## Worksheets

[Worksheet - Women on the Move - Grades 7 and 9 to 12](#)

[Worksheet Teacher Key - Women on the Move - Grades 7 and 9 to 12](#)

## RESOURCES

### **“Marjorie Randal National Women’s Conference Collection, 1974-1982” - University of Houston Libraries**

Selections from the Marjorie Randal collection that have been digitized. This collection contains numerous primary source documents, including the conference program, notes from the caucuses, and literature in support of, or in opposition to, the platforms adopted by the conference.

[https://digital.lib.uh.edu/collection/1996\\_007](https://digital.lib.uh.edu/collection/1996_007)



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### **“National Women’s Conference 1977” – TSHA entry**

The Handbook of Texas article describing the events of the National Women’s Conference, the events that preceded the conference, key participants, and the impact the conference had. The article contains many hyperlinks to key figures at the event, as well as topics that had a direct impact on Texans.

<https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pwngg>

### **“Sisters of ‘77” – PBS Independent Lens**

This website provides an overview of the conference, as well as the events leading up to the conference and the legacy of the conference. Several key terms are defined on this landing page that was originally designed around an Independent Lens documentary focused on the conference.

<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/sistersof77/conference.html>

### **“The National Women’s Conference in Houston, 1977” – Jo Freeman**

A general description of the conference on a website about Jo Freeman, a feminist who was in attendance at the conference. The website contains a number of photographs that were captured at the event.

<https://www.jofreeman.com/photos/IWY1977.html>

### **“Remembering Houston’s National Women’s Conference Forty Years Later”**

by Michael Agresta, Texas Monthly Magazine

This article in Texas Monthly written to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the National Women’s Conference focuses on how the conference impacted, and was impacted by, the conference.

<https://www.texasmonthly.com/burka-blog/forty-years-ago-national-womens-conference/>

### **"Proposed Amendments Not Ratified by States" – US Government Printing Office.**

Contains the text of the Equal Rights Amendment, which was passed by the Senate and House of Representatives, but failed to be ratified by a sufficient number of states.

<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-CONAN-1992/pdf/GPO-CONAN-1992-8.pdf>

### **“Martha Griffiths and the Equal Rights Amendment” – The National Archives**

This website contains a brief discussion of how the Equal Rights Amendment was drafted and brought to Congress.

<https://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/griffiths>

### ***American Women on the Move: The Inside Story of the National Women’s Conference, 1977***

by Shelah Gilbert Leader and Patricia Rusch Hyatt

ISBN 978-1498535991



## LESSON PLAN

This book examines the history of the National Women’s conference using interviews with the participants, archival research, and historic media accounts.

### **TEKS**

#### **Social Studies, Grade 7**

7D - Describe and compare the civil rights and equal rights movements of various groups in Texas in the 20th century and identify key leaders in these movements.

7F – Analyze the political, economic, and social impact of major events in the latter half of the 20th and early 21st centuries such as major conflicts and political and economic controversies.

16A – Understand the rights and responsibilities of Texas citizens in a democratic society and identify rights of Texas citizens.

16B – Explain and analyze civic responsibilities of Texas citizens and the importance of civic participation.

17A - Understand the importance of the expression of different points of view in a democratic society and identify different points of view of political parties and interest groups on important Texas issues, past and present.

17B – Describe the importance of free speech and press in a democratic society.

17C – Express and defend a point of view on an issue of contemporary interest in Texas.

18B – Identify the contributions of Texas leaders, including Barbara Jordan.

21A - Differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about Texas.

21B - Analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions.

21D – Identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference that influenced the participants.

21E – Support a point of view on a social studies issue or event.

22A – Communicate in written, oral, and visual forms using social studies terminology correctly.

22B – Use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, and proper citation of sources.

22D – Create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.



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### United States Government (High School, One-Half Credit)

2A – Give examples of the processes used by individuals, political parties, interest groups, or the media to affect public policy.

2B - Analyze the impact of political changes brought about by individuals, political parties, interest groups, or the media, past and present.

7D – Evaluate constitutional provisions for limiting the role of government, including republicanism, checks and balances, federalism, separation of powers, popular sovereignty, and individual rights.

7E – Describe the constitutionally prescribed procedures by which the U.S. Constitution can be changed and analyze the role of the amendment process in a constitutional government.

13A - Understand the roles of limited government and the rule of law in the protection of individual rights.

13B – Identify and define the inalienable rights.

13D – Analyze U.S. Supreme Court interpretations of rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution in selected cases, including *Roe v. Wade*.

13E – Explain the importance of due process rights to the protection of individual rights and in limiting the powers of government.

13F – Recall the conditions that produced the 14th Amendment and describe subsequent efforts to selectively extend some of the Bill of Rights to the states, including the Blaine Amendment and U.S. Supreme Court rulings, and analyze the impact on the scope of fundamental rights and federalism.

15A – Analyze the effectiveness of various methods of participation in the political process at local, state, and national levels.

15B – Analyze historical and contemporary examples of citizen movements to bring about political change or to maintain continuity.

15C – Understand the factors that influence an individual's political attitudes and actions.

16A – Examine different points of view of political parties and interest groups such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the National Rifle Association (NRA), and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) on important contemporary issues.

16B - Analyze the importance of the First Amendment rights of petition, assembly, speech, and press and the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms.



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17A – Evaluate a U.S. government policy or court decision that has affected a particular racial, ethnic, or religious group.

17B - Explain changes in American culture brought about by government policies such as voting rights, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (GI Bill of Rights), the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, affirmative action, and racial integration.

20A – Analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions.

20B - Create a product on a contemporary government issue or topic using critical methods of inquiry.

20C – Analyze and defend a point of view on a current political issue.

21A - Use social studies terminology correctly.

21B – Use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation.

21C – Transfer information from one medium to another, including written to visual and statistical to written or visual, using computer software as appropriate.

21D – Create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.

22A – Use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.