



Documenting Women's Activism and Leadership in the Chicago Area 1945 - 2000

The Chicago Area Women's History Council was founded in 1971 to support research, writing, teaching, preservation, and dissemination of women's history in Chicago. The oldest continuing non-profit women's history organization in the nation, CAWHC has carried out its mission through public programs, academic seminars and workshops, curriculum development, support of elementary, secondary, college and university educators, walking and bus tours, and publications. In 1990 CAWHC embarked on a major research and writing project that resulted in publication of the award-winning *Women Building Chicago, A Biographical Dictionary 1790-1990* by Indiana University Press in 2001.

"Documenting Women's Activism and Leadership in the Chicago Area, 1945-2000,"

CAWHC's new project, builds on our previous work with a focus on women's participation in the second-wave movements of the 1960s - 80s. The goals of this project are to identify, preserve and share the basic archival resources necessary for a full understanding of Chicago women's activism and leadership during this period. Chicago women were local and national leaders in many areas, but their contributions are overlooked and/or ignored in most historical accounts. It is critical that this project be undertaken now while precious historical materials and memories are still available.

The resources created by this project will be used by future scholars, teachers, students, filmmakers, new media professionals and those interested in researching Chicago and women's history. The process of doing this project, and the products it produces, will help restore Chicago women's rightful place in the history of social activism. In addition, the project will empower future generations of women and girls, men and boys, as they use it to trace their activist roots and learn from and be inspired by the vital work of Chicago women.

Project Components Major components of the project include an online database, accessible to all; a survey of relevant resources currently available in archival repositories; outreach to activists and organizations, encouraging and facilitating deposit of their archives into permanent repositories; and an oral history component wherein activists and leaders, and those influenced by the movement, will be interviewed and their memories preserved and shared.

Our project is currently identifying significant personalities, issues, actions, organizations, institutions, legislative initiatives, cultural innovations and other elements that contributed to social, cultural, political and legal change for women during this period.

Project Scope The project takes a long view of Chicago women's activism including women's participation in the labor movement, community organizing, neighborhood initiatives, the peace movement and religious groups agitating for change. In addition, the project embraces feminism in all of its diversity and contradictions including advocates of equal rights, equal opportunity, women's liberation, social feminism, lesbian feminism, radical, socialist and liberal feminism, and the work of feminist theologians and women religious. It takes a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-racial approach to movement issues and will consider conservative aspects of the movement that contributed to a backlash against women's activism during certain periods.

We Need Your Help If you would like to participate in this project, or you know of resources that we should consider, please get in touch with us through our website www.cawhc.org or contact us at majohn44@gmail.com