



## When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present

*Gail Collins*

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Gail Collins, *New York Times* columnist and bestselling author, recounts the astounding revolution in women's lives over the past 50 years, with her usual "sly wit and unfussy style" (*People*).

*When Everything Changed* begins in 1960, when most American women had to get their husbands' permission to apply for a credit card. It ends in 2008 with Hillary Clinton's historic presidential campaign. This was a time of cataclysmic change, when, after four hundred years, expectations about the lives of American women were smashed in just a generation.

A comprehensive mix of oral history and Gail Collins's keen research--covering politics, popular culture, economics, sex, families, and work--*When Everything Changed* is the definitive book on five crucial decades of progress. The enormous strides made since 1960 include the advent of the birth control pill, the end of "Help Wanted--Male" and "Help Wanted--Female" ads, and the lifting of quotas for women in admission to medical and law schools. Gail Collins describes what has happened in every realm of women's lives, partly through the testimonies of both those who made history and those who simply made their way.

Picking up where her highly lauded book *America's Women* left off, *When Everything Changed* is a dynamic story, told with the down-to-earth, amusing, and agenda-free tone for which this beloved *New York Times* columnist is known. Older readers, men and women alike, will be startled as they are reminded of what their lives once were--*Father Knows Best* and *My Little Margie* on TV; daily weigh-ins for stewardesses; few female professors; no women in the Boston marathon, in combat zones, or in the police department. Younger readers will see their history in a rich new way. It has been an era packed with drama and dreams--some dashed and others realized beyond anyone's imagining.

## When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present Details

Date : Published October 14th 2009 by Little, Brown and Company

ISBN : 9780316059541

Author : Gail Collins

Format : Hardcover 480 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, History, Feminism, Womens, Politics



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## **From Reader Review When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present for online ebook**

### **Megan says**

This is a personable, insightful look at "the women's movement". Really she covers more than from 1960, in order to compare the later half of the century to the times before it. Collins does a nice job of putting efforts for gender equality into historical context; in particular, I enjoyed her writing on how it interacted with the civil rights movement. While not perfectly universal in her approach, Collins also does a decent job of bringing in the experience of not only middle- or upper-class East Coast women, but women of different classes, education levels, and from other parts of the country. It was also interesting to hear how women who started working in women's issues in the 50s and 60s see the fruits of their labors fifty years later. A reasonably fair assessment of successes and failures in the women's movement and also a decent look at the diversity of the women's movement itself are provided, along with the long-term effects on politics and pop culture. There's also some fascinating court cases - I'm kind of a judicial branch geek. A very approachable and valuable look at women's history in America for the last 60 years.

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### **Alan Cook says**

I was going to give this book four stars instead of five because I thought the author was cherry-picking her examples, but the more I got into the book the more I saw that she was doing in-depth research and trying to remain objective, which is difficult to do with a subject like this. My wife and I both lived and worked through the time period covered in the book, and of course we each have our own take on what happened, but the book brought back many memories.

I read the book because I am currently collaborating with my wife on writing a book about her career, in which she went from being a school teacher to a vice president of Xerox, so the background provided by Gail Collins' book is very relevant.

It's a must-read for young women who take today's world for granted, because the women who paved the way for the current generation should be honored, and everybody should study history so as not to repeat its mistakes.

There is necessarily a lot of talk about politics in the book, but I thought the last story was particularly revealing. After women became a majority in the New Hampshire state senate and were all set to do great things, they found they were facing a \$200 million budget gap. So apparently electing women to government office isn't an immediate cure for government overspending. In fact, many of the women quoted in the book wanted government to do more, not less, which would lead to a bigger welfare state on the road to socialism.

I'll end this review with three quotations about socialism:

From Margaret Thatcher (paraphrasing): "The problem with socialism is that eventually you run out of other people's money."

From Winston Churchill: "(Socialism's) inherent virtue is the equal sharing of misery."

From my son, a successful financial advisor: "Under socialism I'd goof off."

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### **Jarrah says**

I'd bought this book when it first came out, being a big fan of Collins' New York Times columns, but I'd put off reading it after reading Collins' subsequent open letter to young American women, which basically laid the decline of popular feminism at the feet of young women. I argued it was insulting to young feminists and showed a complete lack of accountability for any problems in the second wave feminist movement.

Eventually I came back to the book, having just read Rebecca Traister's *Big Girls Don't Cry*. While Traister's book focused on the 2008 Presidential campaign, it alluded to the history of the women's movement Collins' book discussed. Traister's book also did a great job talking about the divides in the present-day feminist movement due to race, class, and age. I was curious to see if Collins' book could deal with any of these subjects with the same sensitivity.

It couldn't. While Collins' book went very in-depth describing the lives of everyday women from 1960 to now, she glossed over conflicts in the women's movement and whitewashed its history. Her chapter on the civil rights movement seemed to focus more on the handful of white women who put themselves in danger for the cause than the black women and men who'd faced danger day after day just for being black.

*When Everything Changed* wasn't a complete loss: the sections on the beginning of the movement for reproductive rights are informative, richly detailed, and inspiring. However, I think it's biggest problem is reinforcing an idea of feminism as monolithic: white, straight, and middle-class, thereby limiting its potential in the present day.

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### **Patty says**

It has taken me awhile to finish this book, but that was only because other reading had to come first. When I had time, I was immersed in the story that Collins tells in this book. I think Collins has done an excellent job of recording American women's history. Since the period she covers (1960-2008) is the better part of my life, I had experienced much of what she records here. However, I had not looked back at women's journey in any organized way.

I am grateful to Collins for all the work she put into compiling this history and I am even more grateful to all the women who contributed their stories to her work. Collins acknowledges that she could not include every woman that she interviewed – I hope that those interviews would be available to other scholars. I am sure they are fascinating.

I spent a lot of my reading time remembering the first time I heard about feminism, or the ERA, or Gloria and Phyllis or that women earned less money than men at the same job. The rest of the time I was learning background for women's history that I did not know. Collins made connections for me that I did not make at the time for myself.

If you lived through the 1960's through 1990's, you will be glad for the reminder of how all our lives changed. If you weren't born until the 1980's, I encourage you to read this wonderful history. You will have a better understanding of how women (and men) have come a long way. No matter what your age, reading

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Collins' book will help you understand how important feminism is to all Americans.

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### **Julie Ekkers says**

I like Gail Collins' columns so I picked this up, but did not expect to learn much that was new only because I've read a lot of post-WWII history and women's history. But I learned a lot! Collins weaves interviews she did with regular folks who lived through these times with reporting on the events of those years. I thought this approach gave the reader the best of both worlds--the broader picture, and the individual people moving through it. The sections on the 1960s and 70s were especially well done, I thought. I particularly liked her exploration of the civil rights movement as a precursor to the women's movement, as well as the roles of black women in it and the tensions that existed with black men and white women. I also loved reading about various legislative and court cases of the 70s, especially the bill that passed both houses of Congress in 1972 allowing for national, comprehensive early (pre-K) childcare for any parent who wanted it--!!!! I had no idea that something like that had ever been considered! (It was vetoed by President Nixon.) The story of its creation and demise was fascinating. I thought the sections on the 1980s and 1990s were less cohesive, but thought this made sense in that the issues that came to the fore then (i.e. work-life balance and child care for parents working outside of the home) are still playing out. This is a very accessible account of recent history that I think one would enjoy with or without a working knowledge of the time period she is covering.

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### **Bonny Robinson Cook says**

I like this book because it covers the time period of my working career and talks about many of the issues of the "women's movement" that affected me. Women were discriminated against in a multitude of areas, one of them being the workplace. Younger women should read this book for an understanding of changing relationships between the sexes (and to give proper thanks to those who paved the way for them and made it easier for them to rise in the business world as well as government). Gail Collins has done extensive research and interviewed hundreds of women, and she has pretty much gotten it right. Of course, there were variations in how women were treated in business, depending on where one lived and who one worked for. Some companies were more forward-thinking than others, including Xerox where I spent most of my career. I also credit this book for giving me insight and background material that helped me write my memoirs ("Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling, Traveling the World, and Other Adventures").

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### **Jrumrill says**

I thought this was a pretty balanced portrayal of the journey of the women's movement and what became of it. I was very hopeful when I started the book that it would not be an "Amazing Journey of [white, middle-class, college-educated feminine mystique] American Women, and I was not disappointed. Collins wove together the experiences of women from all social classes, racial backgrounds, levels of education, wealth, etc.

I was most excited to read the section about my generation of women, but that was the only part that disappointed me. I understand that we are not a 'movement' like in the 60s, but I still think that much more could be said about the subtle every day fights we have, the real work we do in the field (because we have

that opportunity), and how our portrayal in the media has changed for better or worse. The commentary about Hilary Clinton's campaign and about the mere existence of a Sarah Palin figure was very interesting, though.

Over all, I love Collins' writing and I think her research and presentation are very solid. This was a fantastic, maddening, fascinating, and inspiring book which I would recommend to everyone, male and female, of course.

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### **Elizabeth Hall says**

Holy smokin moley. Please, please, pretty please with freedom on top, read *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present*, by Gail Collins. Read it and remember your foremothers—your great-grandmother, your grandmother, your mother. Read it and weep. Read it and sing. And then tell your friends to read it. This book will make you want to finish history, because it will tell you what history is—and remind you, in the skin of your own life, why history needs now: so she can finish herself, and rest. If you were alive for the women's rights movement, *When Everything Changed* will stand as a testimony to your experience; if you weren't, you will be able to place your own life in context like never before.

The book is divided into three parts: 1960, *When Everything Changed*, and *Following Through*. Ms. Collins does a wonderful job of interweaving the many social factors at play—the civil rights movement, the sexual revolution, key pieces of legislation, the legal battles that made the laws stick, and the gaps in equality that still exist. Each chapter is divided into brief sections headed by a quotation from a particular woman's experience, which provides a rich context for the astounding social changes that were occurring. Sometimes, the quotations are from women who are widely recognized for their accomplishments—women who have shaped history. The book includes the stories of all the major players, including Margaret Sanger, Alice Paul, Ella Baker, Rosa Parks, Betty Friedan, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Gloria Steinem. In telling the story of Loretta Weeks, who spent years fighting workplace discrimination after civil rights legislation had been passed, Ms. Collins quotes Ms. Weeks as saying, "...I knew women worked and needed a place in the world."

But this isn't just the story of well-known women fighting public battles for equality. Just as often, Ms. Collins quotes women whose trials and accomplishments were behind the scenes, women whose lives were affected by social change but didn't necessarily become a catalyst for it. This narrative technique allows the reader to place herself in history; oh, you think. Here is where my story would fit.

I found this book extremely enlightening, as I was born in 1971, smack in the middle of the movement. By the time I was old enough to understand a bit of the world, I took for granted freedoms that were mere fantasies in the two decades before my birth, including a college education, an ability to see myself as a career woman first and a mother second, and the luxury of choosing any career I set my sights on.

The struggles of my generation, and those who have come after me, are charted in the last part of the book: the difficulty of balancing work and childcare for mothers, the continued, and expanded, emphasis on beauty as a woman's most important asset. After reading this book, I understand both the blessings and the difficulties of my own time in a new way. Ms. Collins describes the legislation that changed women's lives as well as the legislation, such as the Child and Family Services Bill of 1975, that never went anywhere. In doing so, she fills in the blanks for those of us who are familiar with the broad strokes of women's history but fuzzy on the details.

Because women's history isn't taught as—well, you know, history—most of the women who fought to change our lives aren't household names. When Everything Changed, by chronicling these lives, begins to right that wrong. This book should be required reading in high school and college history courses—it is both accessible and straightforward, and provides a window into our own lives. This book, in short, is essential; by reading it, we gain a deeper understanding of where we have been, and a fuller understanding of where we need to go.

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### **Diana Band says**

I consider myself a pretty voracious reader, and I've read a lot of great books -- fiction and nonfiction -- over the years. But, it is rare that I read a book that is so life-changing...I'm looking at the world differently after this read, and am encouraging everyone I know to read it. A quoted review inside calls "When Everything Changed" "compulsively readable" -- and it is. I was shocked to find myself unable to put this book down, dying to know "what happened next" even as I got into the decades I've lived through. I understand the generations of women before me even better now and I appreciate all the more what the women before me have fought for. What a dazzling, informative, empowering and, at times, heartbreakingly read. Women, we have come a long way but have so much more to go.

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### **Grady McCallie says**

Born in 1969, I found this history of women in American society, from 1960 to the present, especially illuminating for the years before 1990. It's certainly not academic. Gail Collins' writing is lively but in this book, in contrast to her newspaper columns, only rarely facetious. Using anecdotes more than statistics, Collins paints a compelling picture of the conventions and social expectations that shaped women's lives before and during the 1960s and 1970s, and of the struggles for women's rights. When the book reached periods I know from experience, it seemed more superficial and less emotionally powerful. I can't tell whether the book itself changed, or simply seemed thinner against the more detailed memories I have of public policy debates (and passing news stories) of the last two decades. At any rate, this book has helped fill in my understanding of liberated boomer colleagues - no surprises, really, but I kept reading passages and thinking, well of course, no wonder my friend X reacted in the way she did in a recent conversation; if I had grown up with experiences at all like those described here, I think I'd feel the same way. I'm not sure of Collins' purpose in writing the book, but broadening a reader's empathy and understanding of other peoples' life experiences is no small achievement.

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### **Chris says**

I've always thought of myself as "moderate" on most political issues, but recent conversations with co-workers have helped me realize my views fall squarely in the "liberal" category. So, when *The New York Times* gave a rave review to this book, I decided it was time to educate myself about some true liberals (or "libbers", as the case may be) and added it to my library hold list.

My first impression was the one I get from so many columnists-turned-book-writers: It reads like a huge collection of newspaper articles. You literally cannot go two pages without getting to a new sub-heading and matching anecdote. Initially this annoyed me, as I had been fantasizing about an in-depth education on the

modern history of the women's movement. However, the style slowly won me over, especially as life went from the relative lull of the holiday season to full-time work/volunteering/etc. If you have 10 minutes to kill, this is a book you can pick up without worrying about having to abandon it mid-story.

Also, while this book does not have an academic level of depth by any means, it does provide a nice overview of key points in the women's movement, including Civil Rights, the formation of NOW, the fight for the ERA, and the mass entrance of women into higher education and the workplace throughout the 70s and 80s. Collins introduces you to hundreds of women--some famous, some not so--and recounts their personal stories in a way that helps make the human connection to major events that seem so much bigger than one person.

By the second half of the book, I was truly enjoying myself. I got especially interested when Collins hit the 1980s, as I was able to put the stories in the context of my own life. At one point, a 1980s executive jokes about how they wore "little bowties" to look as professional as men. I vividly remember the yellow paisley bowtie my HR executive mother wore to the office almost every day. At that point, I knew this book had struck a cord with me.

Ultimately, I appreciated this book for making me think. I've always held a small, secret bit of resentment toward my mother for what I felt was her choosing a career over me. Now, with the context this book provided, I can appreciate how tough that decision must have been for her, and how after being one of only 4 women in her MBA class, she must have felt that she HAD to prove women have a place in the business world. Now I am forced to reassess my own long-held plans of moving to part-time work whenever I have kids of my own. In trying to help my children, will I end up hurting my entire gender?

That's one of the many tough questions raised by this overall enjoyable book.

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### **Dana Stabenow says**

I was too young and also incredibly lucky to have been raised by a mother who never said "You can't do that, honey, you're a girl" to be paying enough attention to the women's rights movement. So it's lucky Collins wrote this definitive history, so I can read about Lois Rabinowitz getting thrown out of a NYC court in 1960 because she's wearing slacks, and about Tahita Jenkins, fired from her job as a New York City bus driver in 2007 because she wouldn't wear pants.

*The greatest irony of the celebration of forty years of suffrage was that it seemed that once women had gotten the right to vote, they never got anything else.*

writes Collins, and takes us into the lives of women like Lorena Weeks who after an interminable, impoverishing legal battle forced Southern Bell to stop being a company where the lowest-paid man made more than the highest-paid woman, and other women who were fired and laid off for working while female, or ignored because they were female and black. It was, of course, all about the money.

*After the war [WWII], the economy didn't just improve. It exploded. Americans were producing half the world's goods in the mid-'50s, even though they made up only 6 percent of the world's population...In the 1960s, as the economy was constantly creating employment, two-thirds of those new jobs went to women...That year [1966] President Johnson urged employers to consider hiring women (along with teenagers, the handicapped, and immigrants) to fill their openings. Large firms such as IBM and Texas*

*Instruments targeted stay-at-home moms in recruiting campaigns...The fact that the percentage of married women in the workforce kept quietly going up was really the key to women's liberation.*

and

*The nation's ability to direct most of its college-trained women into the single career of teaching was the foundation upon which the national public school system was built and a major reason American tax rates were kept low.*

I can say, wow, I didn't know that, and then I remember Laura Ingalls' first teaching job, which paid twenty dollars a month and board.

and

*Young unmarried women did not have widespread access to the Pill until the early 1970s--which not coincidentally was the same time they began to apply to medical, law, dental, and business schools in large numbers.*

And still are. The ability to have children in one's own time, or not to have them at all, is a hard-fought right of American women and one to be cherished and protected, and it's never more clearly explained than in this book.

One of the most eye-opening stories is that of Phyllis Schlafly, the anti-women's rights activist who nearly singlehandedly caused the failure of the Equal Rights Amendment. "I'd like to burn you at the stake," Betty Friedan told her to her face, I must say with some justification, because, Collins writes, quoting Robin Morgan, in private Schlafly

*readily admitted that without the doors opened by the women's movement, she would never have been able to achieve so much. "But she would never repeat that in public," Morgan said.*

Toward the end Collins illustrates where we are now with a matter-of-fact narrative of the 2008 election, using Hilary Clinton and Sarah Palin as her models, with the best defense of Palin's vice-presidential candidacy I've yet seen:

*...the failure of her candidacy [Palin's] was not a failure for women. At the very minimum, it was a triumph that voters did not seem to regard her floundering as a commentary on anything but Palin herself. On a more positive note, she won over many voters who had tended in the past to be hostile to the whole concept of a woman in the White House. She had a special affinity with younger working-class men. They liked the way she talked about hunting and hockey, and introduced her husband as first dude...Younger men with no college education were the people who had always been most threatened by women in the workplace and often the ones most resistant to any idea of being bossed by a woman anywhere. In a somewhat roundabout way, Palin made many of them converts to a new way of thinking. "They bear us children, they risk their lives to give us birth, so maybe it's time we let a woman lead us," a former truck driver told a reporter during a Palin rally in North Carolina.*

A book that should be required reading in every American high school history class, along with its prequel, Collins' America's Women. Both highly recommended.

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### **Meg - A Bookish Affair says**

"When Everything Changed" is a history of American women from 1960 the present and everything that they had to go through in order to get where we are today. It was a time of rapid change. You had women entering the workforce in higher levels than ever before. Their roles and the way that they saw themselves, and the ways that they wanted others to see them were changing as well. When you look at history, there is so much change that occurred for women in the 1960s. The 1960s were really the beginning of the feminist movement as women were moving out of their traditional roles and into more different roles than they'd ever had before. The following decades meant even more changes for women. As a woman who lives today, I'm definitely appreciative of those who came before me and paved the way for me to do what I want to do.

This book gave me an even greater appreciation for those that came before me. Gail Collins has written a lot about women and women's issues so she is definitely well versed in the subject, which shines through in her narrative. She pulls together so many poignant points of view in this book. She covers not only who made changes but what kind of changes were occurring in areas such as fashion and the workforce. This was a great read that not only showed me how far we've come by and many ways how far we still have to go in order to make things the best that they can be for women. I suggest this book to anyone who is looking for an engaging account of the many great strides that so many women have made over the past five decades or so.

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### **Darcy says**

I found this to be just a delight to read. All kinds of "I didn't know that!" and "Oooh, insightful!" and "[chuckle] Oh Gail, how droll!" moments. Lots I didn't know about famous women in a variety of fields, and great story after great story about non-famous women as well.

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### **Kristy Miller says**

I was reading this book in October of 2016. I could only read about 10 pages at a time before I could feel my blood pressure going up, and the rage reaching a boiling point. And then the election happened. I was too lost in despair to continue the book, and I set it aside. Well, the despair is gone, but the rage is still here. I don't know if that will ever really leave. But I am ready to channel the anger.

This book has 3 parts. The first part describes the 1950's and early 1960's, and the status quo for women. The 2nd part is the largest part, and it describes the 1960's and 1970's, when everything changed for women. The final part describes the 1980's to 2009, when the book was published, and the struggles that face the generations that followed the women's movement. Collins uses a lot of interviews with women, famous and not, to catch the important moments and movements of the time. She does a pretty good job of balancing the different struggles for black and white women, and the tensions between black and white women during the civil rights movement. Stories are also included from Hispanic and Latina women, and some Native American women.

This book is uplifting, because a lot improved for women in a relatively short period of time. My Mom always gets amused at my righteous anger, and asks if I think that any progress is good. I do. I guess my

frustration and anger comes from the fact that very little has changed since the 1980's and 1990's, and lately I feel like we're going backwards. Women are mostly still seen as being responsible for childcare and household chores. Pay equality is still a struggle. Many men still have issues with women in power, of which there are not enough. It's been 46 years since the ERA was passed by congress. I'm 36 and I doubt that it will ever be ratified in my lifetime. I just don't have faith in America anymore. I hope that changes. I hope that America proves me wrong. But I'm not holding my breath.

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