

THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT: DEBATING A MORE PERFECT UNION

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GUIDING QUESTION:

To what extent has the debate over the Equal Rights Amendment contributed to a more perfect union?

OVERVIEW

Using primary sources, students will consider why different groups of women have held opposing views of their place within the formation of a more perfect union. They will consider the opposing viewpoints and commonalities of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the Eagle Forum before evaluating how debates regarding women and women's rights factor into building a more perfect union.

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to

- > Identify the tenets of the National Organization for Women and the Eagle Forum;
- > Compare and contrast those tenets to understand their differences and commonalities;
- > Create an audio, visual, or multimedia tool to recruit members to join one of these organizations (or propose a third option); and
- > Evaluate how these two organizations contributed ideas to a more perfect union.

STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

CONNECTIONS TO COMMON CORE

- > CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) to address a question or solve a problem.
- > CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8 Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

CONNECTIONS TO C3 FRAMEWORK

- > D2.Civ.2.9-12. Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to various theories of democracy, changes in Americans' participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present.
- > D2.Civ.5.9-12. Evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.

DOCUMENTS USED

PRIMARY SOURCES

Audio File, Radio Station KUOM, "Gloria Steinem Says...Part 1," November 10, 1980 (excerpts)
University of Minnesota Archives Audio Collection
<https://umedia.lib.umn.edu/item/p16022coll171:2525>

Audio File, Radio Station KUOM, "Gloria Steinem Says...Part 2," November 17, 1980 (excerpts)
University of Minnesota Archives Audio Collection
<https://umedia.lib.umn.edu/item/p16022coll171:2654>

Audio File, Radio Station KUOM, "Phyllis Schlafly Says...," October 29, 1979 (excerpts)
University of Minnesota Archives Audio Collection
<https://umedia.lib.umn.edu/item/p16022coll171:2408>

Eagle Forum, "Eagle Forum Brochure," 2018
<https://eagleforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Brochure2018.pdf>

"Joint Resolution of March 22, 1972, 86 STAT 1523, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of the United States Relative to Equal Rights for Men and Women," March 22, 1972
National Archives and Records Administration (7455549)
<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/7455549>

National Organization for Women, "Statement of Purpose," 1966
<http://now.org/about/history/statement-of-purpose>

New England Public Radio, "Women's Forum; Debate between Martha Griffiths and Phyllis Schlafly on the E.R.A.," July 10, 1974 (excerpts)
American Archive of Public Broadcasting, WGBH, and the Library of Congress
<http://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip-305-1615dx01>

SECONDARY SOURCES

"Equal Rights Amendment"
National Archives and Records Administration
<https://www.archives.gov/women/era>

Laine Kaplan-Levenson, "The Women Who Fought For and Against the ERA: Part I," April 20, 2017
WWNO New Orleans
<https://www.wwno.org/post/women-who-fought-and-against-era-part-i>

"The Long Road to Equality: What Women Won from the ERA Ratification Effort"
Library of Congress
<https://guides.loc.gov/american-women-essays/era-ratification-effort>

TEACHER-CREATED MATERIALS

- > Exploring Women's Voices of the Left and Right
- > Exploring Women's Voices Quotation Set
- > Quotation Set Answer Key
- > Recruitment Plan Handout

ACTIVITY PREPARATION

- > Organize students into groups of two or three students each.
- > Make one copy of Exploring Women's Voices of the Left and Right, Quotation Set, and Recruitment Plan Handout for each student.
- > Print several copies of the Exploring Women's Voices Quotation Set Answer Key to circulate among the groups when complete.

CONNECTIONS

American women have been involved in social, political, and economic movements since the American Revolution, and played key roles in the temperance, abolition, and suffrage movements. However, movements are often more nuanced than students originally believe. Lessons in this book help show women's roles in these movements and the various ways they helped to build a more perfect union.

PROCEDURE

ACTIVITY ONE (15 MINUTES)

- > Arrange students into groups.
- > Review with students the two major groups of the women's movement, the National Organization of Women (NOW) and the Eagle Forum. Introduce Gloria Steinem and Phyllis Schlafly as the leaders of the movement.
- > Distribute one copy of the Women's Voices of the Left and Right handout and review as a class.
- > Explain that students need to apply what they know about each side of the movement to make an educated guess, supported by a reason, as to who they think made the statement. Circulate and help students create specific reasons to support their predictions. Ask students to create a list of questions that this activity generates in their minds based on the sources they analyze.
- > Circulate the Quotation Set Answer Key for students to review and correct their answers. Ask students to generate additional questions based on their assumptions about the debate.

ACTIVITY TWO (45 MINUTES)

- > Reorganize groups to maximize student discussion. Explain that both of these organizations (NOW and Eagle Forum) are active in the debates over women's rights today.
- > Distribute Recruitment Plan Handout. Direct students to use the resources to develop an audio, visual, or multimedia tool to entice modern-day Americans to join the cause for women's rights.
- > Allow students time to present the media components they developed.
- > Lead a group synthesis discussion. Discussion questions:
 - » *What are the primary issues that divided the two groups? Why did they disagree?*
 - » *How are both organizations active in political movements today?*
 - » *The ERA did not receive the necessary 38 state ratifications to make it an amendment to the U.S. Constitution. While it did not become an amendment, 21 states have versions of the ERA embedded in their state constitutions.¹ The ERA continues to be introduced into each session of Congress. Should states ratify the ERA today?*
 - » *To what extent did those involved in the debate over women's rights and the ERA contribute to the formation of a more perfect union?*

¹ On January 15, 2020, Virginia's General Assembly ratified the ERA, making it the thirty-eighth state to approve the ERA. However, its decision came too late. It is unclear if Virginia's approval will revive the ERA.

- » *Are these two leaders representative of all American women? How are more moderate ideas reflected in the debate?*
- » *What questions did you generate in this activity? How might you go about answering those questions?*

ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

- > Students can present the recruitment tools to the class and engage in a class critique. Students can present rebuttals from one group to the other.
- > Students can research additional voices in the debate over the ERA and engage in a class discussion from a variety of perspectives.
- > Students can compare and contrast the two organization's platforms.

STUDENTS INTERESTED IN THIS TOPIC MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN RESEARCHING THE FOLLOWING FOR AN NHD PROJECT

- > Alice Paul and the Equal Rights Amendment (1923)
- > Women's Liberation
- > Third-wave feminism
- > Women in the Civil Rights Movement, Chicano Movement, and Red Power Movement
- > Title IX
- > Women on the front lines of combat

To access a PDF containing all of the sources and materials to complete this lesson plan, go to:

WWW.NHD.ORG/250

EDSITEment!

RELATED RESOURCES

Lesson Plan: Building Suburbia: Highways and Housing in Postwar America

<https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/building-suburbia-highways-and-housing-postwar-america>

Lesson Plan: Women's Equality: Changing Attitudes and Beliefs

<https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/womens-equality-changing-attitudes-and-beliefs>

Humanities Statement: Super Role Model

<https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2013/julyaugust/statement/super-role-model>

Media Resource: BackStory: Shattering the Glass Ceiling

<https://edsitement.neh.gov/media-resources/backstory-shattering-glass-ceiling>

EXPLORING WOMEN'S VOICES OF THE LEFT AND RIGHT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

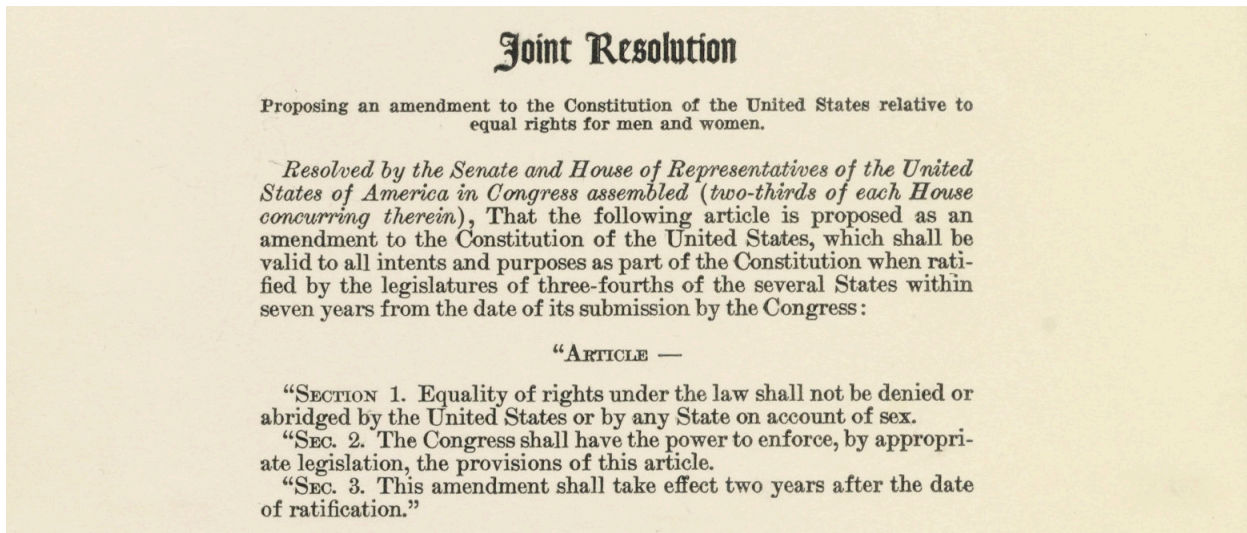
The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) has been debated since the 1920s. Originally introduced into Congress by the National Woman's Party in 1923, the amendment proposed to guarantee equal rights under the law for all American citizens, regardless of sex. It would have ended legal distinctions on the basis of sex, in cases of divorce, property, and employment.

To add an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, two-thirds of the House of Representatives and the Senate need to approve. Then it is sent to the states, where three-quarters of them need to ratify.

On March 22, 1972, the ERA was passed by the U.S. Congress and sent to the states for their consideration. This sparked a debate. Supporters of the amendment were led by Gloria Steinem, leader of National Organization for Women (NOW). Phyllis Schlafly, leader of the Eagle Forum, led the opposition.

The two groups had differing views on women's place in American society, but both groups believed they were going to make lives better for the American woman. NOW strove for full and equal participation by women in society. Members of the Eagle Forum believed in protecting the institution of marriage and the role of the full-time homemaker.

The proposed amendment reads:¹



¹ "Joint Resolution of March 22, 1972, 86 STAT 1523, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of the United States Relative to Equal Rights for Men and Women," National Archives and Records Administration (7455549). <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/7455549>.

EXPLORING WOMEN'S VOICES QUOTATION SET

Read the quotations below with your group and decide who you believe said each quote. Explain the reasoning for your decision. When finished, check your work against the answer key and add questions to the final section.

"We're not radicals; the system is radically wrong."

Who said it?

Phyllis Schlafly

Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

"Social Security is one of the most pro-women, profamily institutions we have ever had."

Who said it?

Phyllis Schlafly

Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

"Children have two parents, not just one."

Who said it?

Phyllis Schlafly

Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

"Women of all races and groups and Third World men also have social and legal equality."

Who said it?

Phyllis Schlafly

Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

"The right of a woman is to be exempt from the draft."

Who said it?

Phyllis Schlafly

Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

EXPLORING WOMEN'S VOICES QUOTATION SET (CON'T)

"We need all of you. It doesn't take everybody in the country, but it takes the kind of dedication and leadership that I see here today. Nothing is so badly needed as the leadership at the national and the state and the local levels. You've got the talent and the capability to be a tremendous factor in saving our country. Please, persevere."

Who said it? Phyllis Schlafly Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

"You don't want to be loved for your paycheck or your wall-to-wall carpeting."

Who said it? Phyllis Schlafly Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

"But I can't complain that Fred ever interferes with any of my civil liberties. Every time we have an argument, he always assures me of my constitutional right to be silent."

Who said it? Phyllis Schlafly Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

"We are beginning instead to realize that progress and success lies for each of us in the completion of ourselves."

Who said it? Phyllis Schlafly Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

"It is less important what we choose than that each of us has the power to choose."

Who said it? Phyllis Schlafly Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

"The fight is not about equality. It's about power."

Who said it? Phyllis Schlafly Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

EXPLORING WOMEN'S VOICES QUOTATION SET (CON'T)

"We have a great mix of people of religious and political persuasions. Among our state chairmans we have a couple of Catholics, we have Protestants of every faith; we have a couple of Jews. We have Republicans and Democrats, we have married and single, we have old and young. We have them all over the political spectrum."

Who said it? Phyllis Schlafly Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

"I'd also like to thank my husband, Fred, for letting me come."

Who said it? Phyllis Schlafly Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

"All productive human work is valuable work and must be rewarded."

Who said it? Phyllis Schlafly Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

"Culture is just successful politics."

Who said it? Phyllis Schlafly Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

"I think that women should have the freedom of choice to serve in the military or not serve in the military."

Who said it? Phyllis Schlafly Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

"Planning ahead is a reliable, and in some ways the most reliable, measure of class. Rich people plan for two or three generations forward; poor people plan for Saturday night."

Who said it? Phyllis Schlafly Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

EXPLORING WOMEN'S VOICES QUOTATION SET (CON'T)

"Homemakers in this country, by all definitions of the Department of Labor and so on compared to any other category of worker, work longer hours, longer weeks for less pay, for less job security, with the high accident rate at the workplace, more violence in the workplace. As we know, statistically, the most dangerous place for a woman is not in the street; it's in her own home."

Who said it? Phyllis Schlafly Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

"I believe that the horizon is unlimited for American women today."

Who said it? Phyllis Schlafly Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

"We have begun to become, for instance, the men we wanted to marry."

Who said it? Phyllis Schlafly Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

"Women have a very special and fine place in our country."

Who said it? Phyllis Schlafly Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

"I think that the Equal Rights Amendment is very much like trying to kill a fly with a sledgehammer. You won't kill a fly but you probably will break up some of the furniture."

Who said it? Phyllis Schlafly Gloria Steinem

Why do you think that?

Before you check your answers, what questions does this raise about the debate over the ERA?

After you check your answers, what additional questions do you have?

EXPLORING WOMEN'S VOICES QUOTATION SET (CON'T)

QUOTATION SET ANSWER KEY

"We're not radicals; the system is radically wrong." -**Gloria Steinem**

"Social Security is one of the most pro-women, profamily institutions we have ever had." -**Phyllis Schlafly**

"Children have two parents, not just one." -**Gloria Steinem**

"Women of all races and groups and Third World men also have social and legal equality." -**Gloria Steinem**

"The right of a woman is to be exempt from the draft." -**Phyllis Schlafly**

"We need all of you. It doesn't take everybody in the country, but it takes the kind of dedication and leadership that I see here today. Nothing is so badly needed as the leadership at the national and the state and the local levels. You've got the talent and the capability to be a tremendous factor in saving our country. Please, persevere." -**Phyllis Schlafly**

"You don't want to be loved for your paycheck or your wall-to-wall carpeting." -**Gloria Steinem**

"But I can't complain that Fred ever interferes with any of my civil liberties. Every time we have an argument, he always assures me of my constitutional right to be silent." -**Phyllis Schlafly**

"We are beginning instead to realize that progress and success lies for each of us in the completion of ourselves." -**Gloria Steinem**

"It is less important what we choose than that each of us has the power to choose." -**Gloria Steinem**

"The fight is not about equality. It's about power." -**Phyllis Schlafly**

"We have a great mix of people of religious and political persuasions. Among our state chairmen we have a couple of Catholics, we have Protestants of every faith; we have a couple of Jews. We have Republicans and Democrats, we have married and single, we have old and young. We have them all over the political spectrum." -**Phyllis Schlafly**

"I'd also like to thank my husband, Fred, for letting me come." -**Phyllis Schlafly**

"All productive human work is valuable work and must be rewarded." -**Gloria Steinem**

"Culture is just successful politics." -**Gloria Steinem**

"I think that women should have the freedom of choice to serve in the military or not serve in the military." -**Phyllis Schlafly**

"Planning ahead is a reliable, and in some ways the most reliable, measure of class. Rich people plan for two or three generations forward; poor people plan for Saturday night." -**Gloria Steinem**

"Homemakers in this country, by all definitions of the Department of Labor and so on compared to any other category of worker, work longer hours, longer weeks for less pay, for less job security, with the high accident rate at the workplace, more violence in the workplace. As we know, statistically, the most dangerous place for a woman is not in the street; it's in her own home." -**Gloria Steinem**

"I believe that the horizon is unlimited for American women today." -**Phyllis Schlafly**

"We have begun to become, for instance, the men we wanted to marry." -**Gloria Steinem**

"Women have a very special and fine place in our country." -**Phyllis Schlafly**

"I think that the Equal Rights Amendment is very much like trying to kill a fly with a sledgehammer. You won't kill a fly but you probably will break up some of the furniture." -**Phyllis Schlafly**

RECRUITMENT PLAN HANDOUT

You have been assigned to a recruiting committee to encourage citizens to join your cause relating to women's rights. Your job is to design an audio, visual, or multimedia recruitment tool for your organization. You may choose to design a piece for the National Organization for Women (NOW), Eagle Forum, or a third organization that takes a different approach to the issue of women's rights.

Begin with the quotations you have already identified and supplement with the research sources listed below. You may choose to create a recruitment tool from any year, 1972 to today.

Your final product should include:

- > The name of the organization and year this product would exist (1972–today).
- > Statements from your organization's purpose that would encourage someone to join.
- > Additional facts from research to support your cause.

Questions to consider when designing your recruitment tool:

- > Whom is your product meant to recruit?
- > Where or how do you plan to recruit?
- > What are the selling points for your group?
- > What are the major goals of this organization?
- > What cohesive message are you presenting to new members?

Quality research sources to begin your work:

About Eagle Forum
<https://eagleforum.org/about/brochure.html>

"The Long Road to Equality: What Women Won from the ERA Ratification Effort," Library of Congress
<https://guides.loc.gov/american-women-essays/era-ratification-effort>

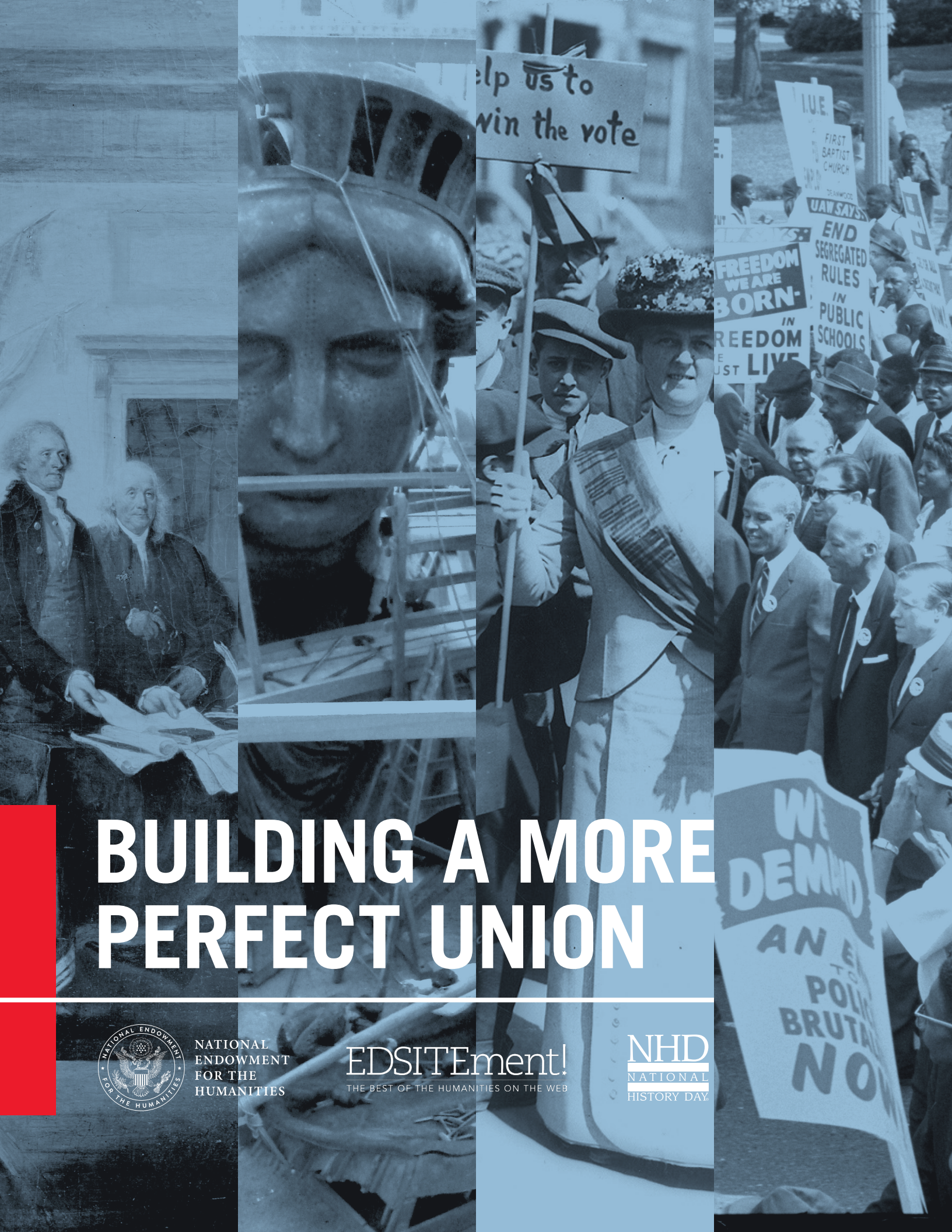
National Organization for Women Foundation Mission Statement
<https://now.org/now-foundation/about-now-foundation/mission-statement/>

Laine Kaplan-Levenson, "The Women Who Fought for and Against the ERA: Part 1," April 20, 2017, WWNO New Orleans
<https://www.wwno.org/post/women-who-fought-and-against-era-part-i>

"Equal Rights Amendment"
National Archives and Records Administration
<https://www.archives.gov/women/era>

Once you have finished designing your recruitment tool, be ready to explain the following to the class:

- > What is the goal of your recruitment plan?
- > What individuals and groups did you choose to target? Why?
- > What is the overall message of your organization?
- > What perspective did you use in your recruitment tool? Why?



BUILDING A MORE PERFECT UNION



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

EDSITEment!

THE BEST OF THE HUMANITIES ON THE WEB

NHD
NATIONAL
HISTORY DAY