

## CHAPTER 15

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# Collective Action

**B**y the time the 1970s arrived, woman journalists

had been grumbling out loud for a hundred years about workplace discrimination, but until then the only widespread collective response had been to create a parallel universe of women-only clubs and awards. Three developments encouraged the adoption of more confrontational tactics: women apprehended that the fortuitous changes in American civil rights law of the mid-1960s applied to them; they

embraced the light, heat, and oxygen of the women's liberation movement; and thanks to the Vietnam-induced increase in their numbers, they reached critical mass as full-time staff members throughout the media. Only then did the "good girls" at major news outlets, in Lynn Povich's apt characterization, group together, hire lawyers, gather evidence, and challenge their employers head-on.

In the vanguard of these efforts were the women at *Newsweek*, who, in the early months of 1970, planned in secret to file a discrimination complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in Washington, D.C. A list they compiled to buttress their case symbolized their plight. On it were the names of nineteen young men with no prior journalism experience whom the magazine hired at the

rank of reporter or writer. Women with similar or sometimes better credentials started and stayed on the bottom rungs of a company ladder with broken steps.

Across the country, women's liberation advocates in other occupations filed lawsuits and court briefs. Nonprofit centers opened for research and public advocacy, providing up-to-date statistics and relevant industry news, and universities

established programs in women's studies that excavated long-buried history either decades out of print or never in books. At *Newsweek*, the timing of the women's job action could not have been more exquisite. It coincided with the publication of the magazine's March 23, 1970, cover story, a report on the country's "women in revolt," the words in red and blue against a bright yellow background, emblazoned with a