

# Women's Path of Hope: What Women Can Achieve

Since biblical times, women have created or taken part in nonviolent actions and movements. Whether they sought change for women or their broader community, they show us what women can achieve, especially working together. They grappled with issues of their day --and often succeeded in making social change happen!

Our hope is to encourage peace and justice efforts in our spheres of life today. It's easy to regard the heroines on this path as distant, honorary figures. Yet pondering their lives and words, choices and actions can inspire us to stretch and grow in our own journeys.

So join us in a "virtual walk" along the Women's Path of Hope. Let us deepen our vision of social change...explore unknown paths...share our learnings with others!

## Women's Path of Hope

1350 B.C.E. **Hebrew midwives**, in the first recorded act of civil disobedience, refuse to obey Pharaoh's order to kill all male Hebrew babies. After years of slavery in Egypt, the Hebrew people leave in the **Exodus**, an experience of liberation central to both Jewish and Christian views of God acting in history.

388 B.C.E. Aristophanes' play **Lysistrata** depicts women stopping a war by withholding sex from their soldier-husbands. This tactic was successfully used later by women of the Iroquois nation, Colombia, Southern Rhodesia, Kenya, Togo, Liberia, and elsewhere.

1200s Thousands of women join **Beguines**, women's communities with cooperative economic forms and leadership opportunities.

1840s The **Underground Railroad** helps slaves escape to the northern U.S. or Canada led by "conductors" such as **Harriet Tubman** who led 19 groups to safety, despite her epilepsy and her vulnerability as an escaped slave.

1848 **Lucretia Mott**, along with **Elizabeth Cady Stanton**, organize the first women's rights convention.

1871 **A thousand women in Paris** block cannons, stand between Prussian and Parisian troops, and prevent war.

1873 Women celebrate the first "**Mother's Day**," originally a peace holiday as proposed by **Julia Ward Howe**.

1891 **Ida B. Wells** starts a lifelong anti-lynching campaign by setting up the *Memphis Free Speech* newspaper to draw attention to brutal lynch mob murders of African Americans.

Lutheran Peace Fellowship, 1710 Eleventh Avenue, Seattle, WA 98122  
[lpf@ecunet.org](mailto:lpf@ecunet.org) ♦ 206.349.2501 ♦ [www.lutheranpeace.org](http://www.lutheranpeace.org)  
<https://www.facebook.com/lutheranpeace>

1909 The  
**National**

**Association for the Advancement of Colored People** (NAACP) is formed to fight prejudice and discrimination; W.E.B. du Bois, **Ida B. Wells**, and **Mary Terrell** are among the founding members.

1913 The first International Training Course for the Montessori educational method is held in Rome. **Maria Montessori** developed the core of her pedagogy in 1907 at a children's school. By 1912 it had become a worldwide phenomenon. She has been called the original peace educator because of her deep respect for children and their freedom to learn.

1915 The **Women's International League for Peace and Freedom** (WILPF) is established in the United States. The group works to achieve world disarmament, full rights for **women**, racial and economic justice, and an end to all forms of violence.

1920 After 75 years of struggle, the **women's suffrage movement** led by **Elizabeth Cady Stanton**, **Susan B. Anthony**, **Lucy Stone**, and others achieves a constitutional amendment guaranteeing women the right to vote.

1923 20,000 **women workers** in the silk spinning industry in Shanghai, China go on strike demanding a 10-hour work day and wage increases.

1931 The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded to **Jane Addams**. She co-founded Hull House, offering social and educational opportunities for working class people including many immigrants. She significantly advanced social welfare and legislative reform in the U.S., and was a leader in the pacifist and woman's suffrage movements.

1933 The **Catholic Worker** is founded in NY by **Dorothy Day**, a reporter, and **Peter Maurin**, a self-taught French peasant. The movement and the *Catholic Worker* newspaper emphasize hospitality to the poor, pacifism, and voluntary poverty. Catholic Worker houses are established in dozens of cities in the U.S., and several farms are organized as well.

1946 The United Nations establishes its Human Rights Commission to help prevent another WWII and model how human beings and nations should treat one another. **Eleanor Roosevelt** – wife of U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt – chairs the drafting of this Declaration of Human Rights (adopted in 1948). She also becomes an advocate for women, civil rights, and refugee issues.

1955 **500,000 women in Indonesia** demonstrate for women's rights on International Women's Day.

1955 **Rosa Parks** is arrested after refusing to give up her seat and move to the back of the bus where blacks were required to ride. The black community launches the **Montgomery bus boycott**, led by **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** After a year of creativity in coping with the hardship that ensues, the boycott succeeds, revitalizing the U.S. civil rights struggle.

1957 Despite large protests by whites and threats to their lives, **Daisy Bates**, **Elizabeth Eckford**, and seven other young students become the first African Americans to attend the previously all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.

1959 The **Southern Christian Leadership Conference** (SCLC) is organized by **Martin Luther King, Jr.**, **Ella Baker** and other black leaders. It becomes the most influential African American civil rights organization.

1959 **Septima Clark** sets up Freedom Schools all over the South to teach black history and to train African Americans as voters and community leaders.

1963 Folksinger **Joan Baez** performs "We Shall Overcome" at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. A lifelong activist in anti-war, civil rights, environmental, and human rights causes, she also founded Humanitas International in the late 1970s.

1965 **United Farm Workers** union launches a grape boycott led by **Cesar Chavez** and **Dolores Huerta** to permit farmworkers to organize for decent pay and conditions. They had not been allowed to form unions like other workers. Many thousands of schools, groups, churches, and individuals support the boycott.

1965 Violence of the police against nonviolent civil rights marchers in **Selma**, AL alerts millions of whites to voting rights injustices. That and the enthusiasm and activism of many African Americans -- like **Fannie Lou Hamer**, a sharecropper who simply wanted to vote – push Congress to pass the **Voting Rights Act**.

1965 The growing **Liberation Theology** movement in Latin America emphasizes solidarity with the poor and oppressed. **Helder Camara**, **Gustavo Gutierrez**, **Juan Segundo**, **Jon Sobrino**, and later **Elsa Tamez** are among its leaders.

1968 **Dorothy Cotton** directed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) Citizenship Education Program (CEP) from 1960 to 1968. The highest-ranking woman in Martin Luther King Jr.'s inner circle, she was the engine behind CEP's crucial role in the civil

rights movement. She published a memoir in 2012 entitled *If Your Back's Not Bent*.

1971 At 90, **Jeanette Rankin** leads **8,000 women** on an anti-Vietnam War march to the Pentagon. **A thousand veterans** protest the war, many throwing their medals onto the Capitol steps.

1976 **Habitat for Humanity** is founded by Millard and Linda Fuller to build houses for low-income people with help from volunteers. Habitat has helped build or repair 600,000 houses and served more than 3 million people around the world.

1976 60,000 join **Peace People** demonstrations in Belfast and Dublin. **Mairead Corrigan** and **Betty Williams** receive the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts at non-violent reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

1977 The "**Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo**" begin to march in the central square in Buenos Aires in front of the presidential palace every week, seeking justice for their children who were taken by the terrorist government. It is estimated that during the military dictatorship, as many as 30,000 persons were among "the disappeared" – those kidnapped, tortured, and/or killed.

1977 The **Nestle boycott** leads to a UN World Health Organization agreement restricting promotion and sale of infant formula in poor countries. Infant formula is less healthy than breast-feeding due to its high cost and a lack of clean water in many parts of low-income countries.

1979 **Mother Teresa** is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Founder of Missionaries of Charity, she worked to improve the lives of orphans, lepers and the terminally ill in India.

1981 Protests against U.S. cruise missiles based at **Greenham Common** in England begin. At its peak, 8,000 women live in tents outside the base, demonstrating and committing civil disobedience. In one protest, over 30,000 women encircle the base.

1982 Diplomat **Alva Myrdal** of Sweden is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. As her government's minister for disarmament issues, she worked to persuade the super-powers to disarm, and fought for nuclear weapons-free zones in Europe.

1982 **Sister Helen Prejean** becomes a pen pal to a prisoner on death row. She becomes a leader in the movement to end the death penalty, and later writes a powerful and moving memoir, *Dead Man Walking*, which is made into an award-winning film.

1984 The book *I, Rigoberta Menchu* details the struggle of Guatemalan women in the face of the U.S.-supported military government that killed and tortured more than 100,000 people. She receives the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize.

1984 **Linda Stout**, a tenant farmer's daughter, creates **Piedmont Peace Project** to organize rural poor for jobs, services, peace, and low-income empowerment; she later writes *Bridging the Class Divide* about her experience.

1987 Mother's Day draws 3,000 to the **Nevada Test Site** to protest preparations for nuclear war; the U.S. exploded 1,000 nuclear devices from 1945-1990, more than all other nations combined.

1988 **Women in Black** – now a worldwide network opposing injustice, war and militarism – is organized in Jerusalem and holds weekly silent vigils of Israeli Jewish women standing in public places. 22 states in the U.S. now have Women in Black groups and vigils.

1995 The human rights activist in Burma, **Aung San Suu Kyi**, is released from six years of detention; her political party had won an overwhelming victory in 1989 but wasn't allowed to take office. She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 for her nonviolent struggle against military leaders in Burma (also known as Myanmar).

1996 Unmet needs of children is the focus of the **Stand for Children** march in Wash., DC led by **Marion Wright Edelman** of the Children's Defense Fund and local advocacy groups.

1997 The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded to **Jody Williams** and the coalition she led, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). By 1997, the campaign had 1,000 organizations from 60 countries as members.

1997 **Wangari Muta Maathai** of Kenya begins a women's "Green Belt" tree-planting movement when deforestation threatens survival of the rural population. It spread to other African countries; eventually more than 30 million trees were planted. In 2004, Maathai becomes the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. She also works for democracy, women's rights, and international solidarity.

2000 Brazilian women form **the Margaridas** (Daisies) to honor **Margarida Maria Alves**, a union leader advocate for women/rural workers who was assassinated in 1983. They pressure the government for wage equality and more. They sell/trade handcrafts for public support. In 2011, their march in Brasilia leads to government creation of forest-river health care facilities; health/safety centers;

and a national sustainable agriculture program.

2002 Protests escalate against the Israeli Wall, which separated Jewish and Palestinian areas and often put barriers between Palestinians and their land, jobs, relatives, and neighbors. **Rachel Corrie**, a 23-year-old U.S. peace activist, is killed by an American-made bulldozer in Gaza while nonviolently protesting the destruction of Palestinian homes.

2003 **Shirin Ebadi** receives the Nobel Peace Prize "for her efforts for democracy and human rights. She has focused especially on women and children's rights in Iran.

2003 Large numbers of **women in Liberia** led by Leymah Gbowee organize a series of nonviolent actions including "Lysistratic non-action," refusing sex with bellicose men until they stopped fighting in the country's 14-year brutal civil war. Featured in film, "Pray the Devil Back to Hell."

2007 In 1990, **47 prominent Saudi women** drove in a convoy down the main street of Riyadh (the capital city) to challenge the religious police (widely criticized for violence against women and girls) and taboos about women's freedom of movement. They inspired the founding in 2007 of the **Association for the Protection and Defense of Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia**. In Sept. 2017, King Mohammed bin Salman lifted the ban on female drivers. As of Summer 2018, licenses will be issued to women who apply for one.

2009 In Kabul, 200 **Afghan women** (Shia and not) protest a new law restricting Shiite Muslim personal life (e.g. wives requiring husband permission to leave the house; wives being forced to offer sex to husbands). 800 supporters join the protest; counter-protesters (men and women) throw stones at them. **Afghan policewomen** form a human chain to protect the protestors and walk with them.

2011 Three women laureates share the Nobel Peace Prize: Lutheran Liberian **Leymah Gbowee**, for her

**Karman**, first Arab woman and youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner to date.

2013 The gang-rape of a young woman in 2012 in New Delhi ignited public outrage across India and in the world. Despite police repression of protestors, **thousands marched** and millions more called for stricter anti-rape laws. In 2013 the president of India announced harsher laws, and a new 24/7 helpline in Karnataka for sex abuse complaints from women.

2017 Women's March, Jan 21. National co-chairs **Linda Sarsour, Tamika Mallory, Carmen Perez, and Bob Bland** lead the largest single-day protest in U.S. history: an estimated 4 million people, or 1 in 100 of U.S. Americans took part. 470,000+ marched on Washington to speak out on human rights legislation and policies. 650 U.S. Sister Marches (in 500+ cities) and 260+ marches globally (in 100 cities) totaled 7 million protestors on 7 continents. To follow up, the movement launched a campaign to contact members of Congress; formed 5,400+ "huddles" (small groups to organize local initiatives); organized "A Day Without a Woman" strike in March; and will convene a forum in Detroit in Oct 2018 to further convert organizing power into political power.

Compiled by Lily R. Wu  
with thanks to all who offered suggestions.  
Copyright © LPF 2013, revised 2017

## For Reflection and Discussion

Which of these stories **are new** to you? Which are familiar, perhaps in new ways? Which are especially encouraging?

What **will we add** to the story of justice and peace, of compassion and nonviolence in these challenging times?

What might **help us join** the long tradition of positive social change? How can we support one another in exploring and taking on meaningful involvement?

**Lutheran Peace Fellowship (LPF)** is a nationwide community of Lutherans responding to the gospel call to be peacemakers and justice-seekers. LPF offers adults, youth, and activist group a wide variety of leader training and informational tools; such as advocacy updates, blog posts, and a computer-based activity. A full Path of Hope is also available.

We welcome comments, ideas, and reports on your peace actions. **Join us** as we walk together, sharing the gifts of justice, peace, welcoming community!

campaign to end a bloody civil war; Liberian President **Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf**, first woman elected as a head of state in Africa; and Yemen's journalist-activist **Tawakul**

*Note: Many **activity ideas** from the original LPF Path of Hope may also be used with the Women's Path.*

