

Two Women Leaders of the Last Century

Imagine being a woman who was not able to stay healthy because of many pregnancies, exhausted by taking care of her many kids, and having no possibility to work outside the house to earn her own money. Her only job was to get recuperated so she could be pregnant again. This was an example of life for a majority of women before contraception became available to all women in the USA. Today, it is difficult to imagine how it really feels to live this way. A modern woman has a choice to use contraception methods, to study at colleges or universities, to have a high paying job, and, most importantly, to develop herself to her highest potential. The changes that occurred in women's lives during the last century were tremendous. Of course, the changes did not occur voluntarily. Millions of women are thankful to leaders who fought for women's rights and made those changes take place. Margaret Sanger, who fought for women to use contraception methods, and Eleanor Roosevelt, who fought for women to be able to work outside the house and have their own money, are revolutionaries who gradually but completely changed American women's lives and strongly influenced the lives of women all over the world. The contributions that they made to improve women's lives are priceless. Margaret Sanger and Eleanor Roosevelt were advocates of women's rights and civil rights.

Margaret Sanger was a leader who fought for women to have the right to use birth control. In the first decades of the last century, information about birth control was so prohibited by priests that it was an unwritten rule that doctors could not send the information by postal service. At the same time, people from high class society had an opportunity to gain the knowledge, and they used ruses to procure "French" goods, a euphemism for condoms, and other goods with the same effect of preventing sperm from getting to the vagina, and "feminine hygiene", a euphemism for vaginal contraceptive devices. Because of this inequality, Margaret Sanger decided to confront the priesthood and government. By having consecutive publications in her own periodical, "The Woman Rebel," and by having local medical facilities distribute "woman controlled forms of birth control (a phrase she coined)," Mrs. Sanger gave knowledge and strength to females of all the classes (Steinem 2). In my opinion, she was a brave and noble person, who found strength to resist accepted rules of society, who was not born with power in her hands, but who made significant changes in our lives. According to futurist and historian H. G. Wells, "When the history of our civilization is written, it will be biological history, and Margaret Sanger will be its heroine" (qtd in Steinem 1).

Like Margaret Sanger, Eleanor Roosevelt was an advocate of women's rights. Mrs. Roosevelt devoted her life to promote equal opportunities between the sexes and to help working women by opening childcare facilities. While Eleanor Roosevelt was a First Lady, she gave just over a third of a thousand interviews. At these interviews, she only allowed ladies as correspondents, which made the publishing media start offering jobs to ladies, for the first time in the history of the USA. She taught young females to take advantage of a chance to improve their lives instead of rushing to be married. It was her project to organize the very first state paid day care organizations for children of working parents. She stood up for female employees that were disrespectfully and unreasonably dismissed from their jobs as World War II was concluded. Eleanor Roosevelt's motto was that everybody who had a desire to have a job was entitled to have one. She defied cancellation of day care facilities and considered it an attempt to ignore a significant national necessity (Kearns Goodwin 4). In summary, "Long before the contemporary women's movement provided ideological arguments for women's rights; Eleanor instinctively challenged institutions that failed to provide equal opportunity for women" (Kearns Goodwin 4).

While Margaret Sanger was famous as a leader who fought for women's rights, she was also an advocate of civil rights. Not only did she help white women to have a choice to use contraception, she provided the same opportunities for women of the black community, which was a significant improvement for the black women and a big step towards elimination of racism. She believed in equal opportunities for people regardless of their race. Margaret Sanger truly predicted that discrimination against people based on their race would be the biggest problem of the USA. She gathered research that strived to stop prejudice against black people and contraception methods. With support from leaders of the black community like W.E.B. Du Bois and Mary McLeod Bethune, Mrs. Sanger opened birth control medical facilities in the countryside of the southern part of the USA (Steinem 3). I think that it was a stellar project, and Margaret Sanger was one of the many white people who meaningfully supported leaders of the black community, who dedicated their lives to fight for black people to have equal opportunities.

Eleanor Roosevelt was a great advocate of civil rights, and while Margaret Sanger supported the leaders of the black community, Mrs. Roosevelt used a power given her by the title First Lady to organize programs to eliminate racism. She gained experience and knowledge about interactions between people of different ethnic groups in the USA during her journeys all over the country. When Eleanor Roosevelt started working with her husband, Franklin Roosevelt, in the South part of the USA, she was shocked by the fact of constant anti-African American prejudices and chauvinism (Kearns Goodwin 3). She decided to make a difference, "Citing statistics to back up her story, she would interrupt her husband at any time, barging into his cocktail hour when he wanted only to relax, cross-examine him at dinner, handing him memos to read late at night" (Kearns Goodwin 3). Mrs. Roosevelt forced her husband to put his signature on numerous projects to address prejudice. That was the time the First Lady's autonomous power started to increase significantly, and government projects began to be more considerate to people of the black community. The United States could not take a part in the war against racism in Europe, because it had not addressed it within its own borders stressed Eleanor Roosevelt during World War II (Kearns Goodwin 3). She continued her passionate attitude about stopping racism. Her unstoppable interference made significant improvements in the job market for African Americans in industry, farms, and the army. The First Lady had a strong belief in equality; her ideas were much ahead of her time. Ten years prior to the denial of "separate but equal" policy by the Supreme Court, Mrs. Roosevelt disputed that "equal facilities" were not sufficient (Kearns Goodwin 3). She stated, "The basic fact of segregation, which warps and twists the lives of our Negro population, [is] itself discriminatory" (qtd. in Kearns Goodwin 3).

In conclusion, Margaret Sanger and Eleanor Roosevelt are leaders who had different paths but the same goals. Margaret Sanger helped women to acquire rights in making choices about contraception, and she supported the leaders of the black community to fight for elimination of racism by opening birth clinics for black women in the southern part of the USA. Eleanor Roosevelt used her power to improve women's lives by fighting for them to have equal opportunities in the work force and opening the first state-paid day care facilities. Eleanor Roosevelt was one of the most influential white leaders who did her best to stop prejudice based on race by forcing her husband and president, Franklin Roosevelt, to sign a number of projects to eliminate of racism and enlarge opportunities in a job market for black people. It is important to know the leaders who made those significant improvements in the history of the USA. Those improvements affected not only women and African Americans, but also made the whole nation more humanistic, considerate, and open minded.

Works Cited

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