

# Social, Economic, and Political Opportunities for Women around the World

Enduring Understanding: You should understand that since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the world's attention is no longer focused on the tensions between the United States and Soviet Union. Although problems in the Middle East have the world's attention, there are many other issues. Women around the world experience many challenges. This text explains some of those issues effecting women today.



Women throughout the world have gained social, economic, and political rights from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day.

Women played a significant role during World War I. They worked in factories and made war



materials while men fought in

the war. Because of their success in the workforce, they believed they earned the right to vote. The **suffrage movement**, or the movement of women to gain the right to vote, became stronger and finally achieved a measure of success.



### Section Review:

- 1) What is suffrage?
- 2) Why did women start protesting for the right to vote in the early 1900s?



After World War I, many countries around the world gave women the right to vote. Women earned the right to vote in the United States in 1920. Great Britain gave women over the age of thirty the right to vote in 1918. Turkey, which was led by Mustafa Kemal, gave women the right to vote and allowed them to hold political office.

By the 1920s, more women in democratic and industrialized nations were entering new professions, such as journalism and medicine. Women were more active during World War II, serving on the home

front as well as in war theaters. They served both in medical and military capacities. This trend, however, was reversed with the end of the war with the return of the troops in the 1950s.

### Section Review:

- 3) What jobs did women start working in during the 1920s?

Communist countries such as China and the Soviet Union also provided women more equality. Both countries encouraged women to work outside the home. The Chinese Communist Party outlawed foot binding, or the practice of tightly binding the feet of girls to keep the feet as small as possible. The toes of young girls were broken and bound underneath the foot. The goal was to achieve the prized 3-4 inch feet. Tiny feet were a status symbol that allowed young women to marry into money. The practice caused permanent disabilities for women.



**Section Review:**

**4) Why would communist countries want to ban foot binding?**



In the 1960s, the feminist movement gained strength, especially in the United States. Women began to demand equality in the American workforce. Likewise, these social and political desires continued to grow on a worldwide basis throughout the 1970s to the present.

There have been many women from various regions who have held top political positions in their countries, such as Indira Gandhi from India, Corazon Aquino from the Philippines, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from Myanmar, Benazir Bhutto from Pakistan and Margaret Thatcher from Great Britain. Even though women have been given more social, economic and political opportunities, they still face discrimination in employment and salaries.



Indira Gandhi



Corazon Aquino



Daw Aung San Suu Kyi



Benazir Bhutto



Margaret Thatcher

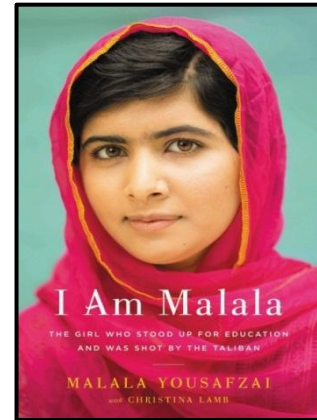
**Section Review:**

**5) Why did the feminist movement gain strength during the 1960s?**

**6) Who are some women in top political positions?**

Women in Arab and Muslim lands and in many developing nations around the world have been denied education and have been victims of abuse.

The United Nations has sponsored many conferences that focused on women's rights and these issues have, in turn, illuminated issues of human rights worldwide.



### Section Review:

7) Why do women in Arab and Muslim lands, as well as developing nations, have fewer rights than women in other lands?

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