**CHY4U Women in the French Revolution**

**Your Questions About Women in the Revolution**

**Historiography** = the study of how history has been written over time

Melzer, Sara E and Leslie W. Rabine. Eds. *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution*. New York: Oxford University

 Press, 1992. Google Books.

In the 1970s historians got involved in “unearthing and making accessible the hidden story of women’s participation in the events of 1787 to 1795, as well as the masculine leaders’ contradictory and ultimately repressive response to it.”

**The Essential Dilemma**

“The further one delves into the subject of gender and the French Revolution, the less one can validate Francois Furet’s contention that the “French Revolution” is over. Our attempts to talk about the revolution, even at a distance of 200 years, are strangely haunted by its most famous patrimony - institutionalization of the Universal Rights of Man. Implicit in this doctrine is the notion of “man” as ungendered and universal, on the one hand, but also gendered and exclusive of women on the other. The liberal discourse of the rights of man thus institutionalized the implicit assumption of “woman” as particular, excluded from universality. Women had of course always been on the periphery of Western culture, but never before within the closed conceptual framework of universal rights to liberty, equality, and fraternity. …

So what changes with the French Revolution? It marks a new era that holds out to women the promise of inclusion in its universal community of equal human subjects only to snatch that promise away when women rise up to actively claim its fulfillment, as they have done ever since the first days of the 1789 upheavals. …In order to win rights and freedoms, women had to, and still must, rebel against a revolution that ultimately rejected and excluded them, but they could, and can, justify and articulate their claims only by virtue of the principles established by that revolution. “

Darline Gay Levy and Harriet B. Applewhite, “Women and Militant Citizenship in Revolutionary Paris”

**Who Was A Citoyenne?**

1789 - Declaration of Rights of Man and of the Citizen = women’s citizenship “indeterminate”

1791 – women not part of “active citizenship”

1793 – women not part of “democratic citizenship”

**Public and Private Roles**

**Domestic** sphere for women (maybe they could educate future citizens) - **but women had been active in public roles for a long time**

**Public** service (jobs) for men

**March to Versailles, Oct. 1789**

In October of 1789, over 7000 Paris women complained about the lack of bread. They started to round up other women to protest, and eventually they got weapons. They travelled the 14 km to Versailles. There they went to the National Assembly to see what had been done for them, along with thousands of other armed civilians and national guardsmen. At Versailles, they criticized the king for not signing the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. A delegation of women even went inside the palace. As a result, the king promised more wheat for Paris. Since the women didn’t trust his word, they made him sign his promise. Finally, the women, unhappy with progress, invaded the palace and forced the king to come to Paris.

Garrioch, David. “The Everyday Lives of Parisian Women and the October Days of 1789”. *Social History.* Vol. 24, No. 3 (Oct.

 1999): 231-249. JSTOR.

**HTCs**

* Long and short-term origins of women’s political action.
* Continuity and change in gender roles related to political action.

**Main Argument**

* Men’s identity was more closely tied to work and the public sphere.
* Women’s identity was more tied to the local neighbourhood in their working and personal lives. Therefore, public and private overlapped for women.

**Support for Argument**

* Women in the central Paris food shops and markets (where most of the October 1789 protestors came from) had long taken public political action by breaking up fights, protesting against bailiffs who tried to evict tenants, and protesting against bakers who overcharged their customers. They knew how to incite a crowd before the October Days of 1789. They saw it as their local responsibility.
* In October 1789 the women of the central market in Paris felt frustrated that newly appointed (and centralized) local officials were not doing their jobs when it came to food supply.
* Their protest caught on and spread very quickly because of the increasingly common connections between the women in the central market area and the poor garment workers in the industrial suburbs (faubourgs).
* Though the revolutionary tone since 1789 may have helped give them a favourable environment, the women didn’t need the revolution’s “political education” because they were already living in a politicized way.

**Questions Answered? New Questions?**