

The President's wife who supported your economic rights as a woman



Anna Moore
Butzner/The
Grand Rapids
Press, via
Associated
Press

She did not seek public prominence. She saw herself and a mother and a housewife. **But when opportunity presented itself she publicly took a stand not to change her life but to change your life.**

It is Betty Ford who changed *breast cancer* and *mastectomy* from taboo whispered words or what men euphemistically called "*women's things*" into a public campaign for women's health.

It was Betty Ford's very public admittance of her alcohol and drug dependence that led to the creation of one of the most long-serving and successful abuse treatment centers – The Betty Ford Center.

With Betty Ford's passing on July 8, 2011 praise has focused on both private and public accomplishments as mother, wife, survivor and spokesperson. Yet few have lingered on her most heretical action taken on behalf of all women.

For those of you who don't know, Betty Ford added not just her support but her personal voice to the powerful debate of the Equal Right Amendment (ERA) fight in 1975 while her husband was still in office as President of the United States.

Even though woman had received the right to vote under the 19th amendment, there was still the issue of "legal sex discrimination." Beginning in 1848 the following amendment was submitted to congress stating –

"Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction."

It was not until 1972 that rewording allowed for congressional approval. However, it also required ratification by 38 states. Despite an extended deadline until 1982 by Congress only 36 states had given legislative approval.

What makes Betty Ford's role so remarkable is that in the face of mounting anti-sentiment by both men and women she took the stage and as we say today – **she spoke her truth.**

"A housewife deserves to be honored as much as a woman who earns her living in the marketplace. I consider bringing up children a responsible job. In fact, being a good housewife seems to me a much tougher job than going to the office and getting paid for it. What man could afford to pay for all the things a wife does, when she's a cook, a mistress, a chauffeur, a nurse, a baby-sitter? But because of this, I feel women ought to have equal rights, equal Social Security, equal opportunities for education, an equal chance to establish credit.[*]" * at the time women did not have access to credit of their own

To date the same amendment has been submitted to every session of Congress to no avail.

That's why as women today you have rights but you still don't

have equal rights.

Below is video format of Betty Ford's original speech in 1975. The visual is poor but close your eyes and listen to a woman speaking for you.

By Joyce Hansen

<http://www.tributes.com/show/84440068>

<http://www.equalrightsamendment.org/era.htm>