



In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution

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Male-only admissions policies. Back-alley abortions. The pervasive belief that rape was a woman's fault. These were the shocking conditions that stirred students, mothers, businesswomen, and grandmothers to activism in the latter half of the twentieth century. In this stirring memoir, Susan Brownmiller, feminist activist and author of the landmark work on rape, *Against Our Will*, draws upon her four decades on the front lines of the women's movement to chronicle the startling inequities, groundbreaking campaigns, and colorful cast of characters that ignited one of the most transformational movements in American history.

In Our Time takes us behind the scenes to meet the passionate and provocative "foremothers" who steered the rising tide of feminism in America: Germaine Greer. Kate Millett. Betty Friedan. Gloria Steinem. Rita Mae Brown. And it reveals the real stories behind the headlines that heralded womankind's quest for freedom. The Miss America protest of 1968. The sit-in at the Ladies' Home Journal. Karla Jay's table-turning Wall Steer "Ogle-In." Lucy Komisar's "This Ad Insults Women" sticker campaign. The conception and creation of Ms. magazine. And every skirmish, standoff, and highlight of the thirty-year struggle for equality--as told by a woman who was at the center of the action.

In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution Details

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Jennifer Abdo says

This is definitely one that should be read in addition to other feminist movement biographies and histories. Brownmiller is comprehensive, but I think everyone involved personally in a moment in history like this has both an interesting viewpoint and possibly inflated view of their own importance to the whole. She also came down on what I see as the wrong side of several issues, like antipornography, she's rather intent on defending, but I get that need to tell your side of the story and the history of the time is richer for it. A must read as long as it's part of a survey of the period.

Ciara says

i remember the first time i read this book, which was shortly after it was released (2003-ish?), i really, really loved it. you know, due to my whole fascination with feminist-y memoirs from the era of the 1960s. i mean, in that respect, it's like this book was tailor-made to satisfy my interests. susan brownmiller was heavily involved in the second wave of the feminist movement. she wrote against our will, one of the first major feminist works about rape, & helped bring awareness to the issue of sexual harassment. she was involved with consciousness-raising groups back in the day, & went on to participate in feminist newspaper collectives & an organization that gave tour of times square in new york in order to shed light on the evils of the sex industry. & this is where susan & i part ways upon my second reading. i am hopeful that i was critical of the whole sex-industry-is-bad thing the first time i read the book, since there's never been a time in my life when i was whole-heartedly opposed to the sex industry. i mean, growing up, a lot of my mom's friends were sex workers, so i had a little window into the reality of the situation, besides just reading books or whatever. but for some reason, i didn't remember all this anti-sex work stuff. i guess i was just so excited by some of the other stories in here, like the account of the miss america protest, & susan's experiences breaking through the glass ceiling as a reporter (or trying, anyway) & all the dishy gossipy insider second-wave info that i forgot about the whole times square part. not so surprisingly, considering the deviations between second-wave credo & my personal conception of feminist politics, there was a lot in here i didn't agree with. & as much as i love a little gossip when it comes to political movements, there is a fine line between political disagreement & just straight up cutting other women down for the sake of cutting other women down, & i think susan crosses the line every now & again. jealousy kills girls, susan! although, as susan became well-known as a voice of 1970s feminism because of her ability to provide quote-able responses to reporter questions, other feminist turned on her & it all sounded pretty nightmare-ish (& something i can TOTALLY RELATE TO, for real), so i guess susan is all too aware that jealousy kills girls. this book is actually totally worth a read, just for the whole famous-activist-spurned-by-movement dynamic. fascinating shit, right there.

Jen says

This book changed my life and the way I think about myself, my friends, my career and my future. It helped me find my voice.

Emily says

An engaging memoir of Women's Liberation. I greatly augmented my list of books to read throughout reading this book from a number of works Brownmiller mentions.

I read most of this book on my commute to and from school. It is written clearly and organized in such a way that it was easy to put down and pick up. a few times a day and be able to stay involved.

AJ says

A very comprehensive memoir detailing the second wave of feminism, from its radical start protesting the 1968 Miss America pageant to its demise in the 1980s due to infighting and clashing ideologies.

The book was surprisingly easy to follow, even though it covered many events and discussed hundreds of individual women (and some men) who helped change the course of history.

Topics include abortion rights, lesbianism, rape, sexual harassment, pornography and gender discrimination, among many others.

Today's women certainly have the women in this book to thank for our access to abortion services, rape hotlines and battered women's shelters; our ability to prosecute rapists, sue co-workers or bosses who try to use sexual advances to keep us "in our place", and also to sue against employers who practice gender discrimination. All of these things were practically unheard of in the early 1960s to 1970s, before feminism brought them to light.

Elliot Stoller says

Excellent history of second wave feminism. "Whereas first-wave feminism focused mainly on suffrage and overturning legal obstacles to gender equality (e.g., voting rights and property rights), second-wave feminism broadened the debate to a wide range of issues: sexuality, family, the workplace, reproductive rights, de facto inequalities, and official legal inequalities.[1] Second-wave feminism also drew attention to domestic violence and marital rape issues, establishment of rape crisis and battered women's shelters, and changes in custody and divorce law."

Pam says

There were way too many names in this book, of people I don't know anything about. Some I learned about, but many I didn't, and I found myself wondering if she's mostly just trying not to piss people off by leaving them out. A daunting task for sure.

I don't know if this is the best book that could have been written on the topic, it's certainly not perfect, but I

really appreciated it in so many ways. I was born in 1968, pretty much alongside second wave feminism. I sort of took it for granted and couldn't quite imagine a world before/without it. I find myself dismayed at the backlash (perhaps just normal pendulum swing) that seems to be in place kind of since I grew up, and there was something heartening about reading about this process. As many of the dreams as we (they) failed to accomplish, I'm glad I grew up with the idea that I, as a woman, am a valid human being. Interesting to get a glimpse into the work that went into making that my reality.

Ryan Mishap says

I almost always enjoy memoirs of partisans, people who were involved in movements, and this is no exception. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of all her assertions about others (I'm sure there are always bad feelings and people remember things different) but this is an enjoyable read that puts you inside the early second wave feminist movement.

Sondra says

I had trouble with the very beginning of Brownmiller's memoir. But I have to say I'm glad I stuck with it. Brownmiller's work is an essential read for any young feminist or person wanting to understand 2nd wave Women's Movement in the 1960's and 70's. She paints a world I never grew up in--a world without access to birth control, abortion rights, protection from sexual harassment or sexual expression, rape crisis centers, or job opportunities for women that existed beyond teacher or secretary. It is an enlightening read, which has allowed me to appreciate what all those women during that time worked for. Their sacrifices have enabled the women of my generation to lead full independent lives, legally protected, and without question. I think a good read after Brownmiller's book is Gail Collins' "1960 When Everything Changed." Her information flows a bit more smoothly and she references a lot of the women that Brownmiller discusses. Collins also does a bit more pre-60's history with her discussion on Alice Paul and also Martha Griffiths..well worth the read.

Rebecca says

Overall I found this book disappointing. Not so much due to the topics covered, but I didn't really think it was a memoir. Rape, abortion and battery were some of the hard topics covered, along with women and the media; the basis or beginnings of feminism and feminist authors. The whole era of this feminist movement can be summed up by the authors own words "suffered from burnout and divisive internal struggles stemming from the usual problems endemic to all movements for social change - theoretical disputes, personality differences, ego trips and power plays" - women were too busy fighting among themselves. The author seems to think the headway made in rape and abortion is complete, but are still two topics discussed today as requiring further discussion, debate and activism.

Quotes through the book remind you however of just how far things have come. "Imagine a time - or summon it back into memory - when a husband was required to countersign a wife's application for a credit card, a bank loan, or automobile insurance, when psychiatrists routinely located the cause of an unsatisfactory sex life in the frigid, castrating, ball breaking female partner, when abortion was an illegal,

back-alley procedure, when rape was the woman's fault, when nobody dared talk about the battery that went on behind closed doors, or could file a complaint about sexual harassment."

The advocates for women's suffrage in the late 1800s and early 1900s along with these women in the 1960s and 1970s have brought us to a point we need to make sure to maintain and continue forward.

SBC: Match song I'm just a girl by No Doubt

Keri says

I struggled with how to rate this book. I enjoyed learning about various pieces of the feminist movement, which I hadn't learned much about before. I know that a lot of the things the women profiled in this book fought for have directly benefited me, and I'm fortunate to live in this era. That being said, I felt like I would have enjoyed the book more had there been more of a unifying narrative. There were a LOT of details, some seeming unnecessary, and a lot of the chapters seemed to be more of a laundry list of the things that happened rather than any true reflection. This is probably why it took me a month to read it - it just didn't hold my interest like I felt it could.

Dave says

A narrative description of the 2nd wave feminist movement (roughly the '60s and '70s), from the perspective of a prominent white feminist. There are almost certainly gaps in what this book can provide, but it was potent, especially when Brownmiller was discussing the early days before too much structure jumped into the mix. Above all, Brownmiller is able to weave subtle themes throughout the book about some of the challenges that the movement faced; a distrust of acknowledgement being a major one. As a historical review, I found it really helpful in contextualizing my own feminist work.

Erin says

More like 3.5 stars but rounding up due to the importance of the history and the massive amount of work that went into researching.

Very comprehensive history of 2nd wave feminist movement. Many figures to remember which made it a bit confusing; it felt like sometimes the author forgot to remind us these women's contexts from previous parts of the book and then later in a subsequent piece, remembered to reminded us. However, still giving 4 stars for the massive undertaking to put these stories together for future feminists to learn from.

A criticism could be that it again, as with the movement itself, defined white women's contributions as the core from which minority groups sprang. Though I think Brownmiller did her best, as part of that group, to include contributions from non-white, not-heterosexual feminists. To be debated as to whether she was successful.

Not rating a 5 because the narrative dragged on in a few spots with details that perhaps were important to the

author, due to her vantage point in the movement, but perhaps not critical to add to such an already comprehensive tome.

colleen says

a great piece of history detailing the revival of the feminist movement in the late '60s and '70s. some of the names are still familiar today, and it's scary how we seem to be treading the same ground.

Kate says

This was interesting as an overview, and it was fascinating (and frankly disheartening) to read about how all of the infighting (clearly not limited to feminism- a cautionary tale in general!) worked against the movement, even while at times bringing important concerns to the table. I was reminded of another book I am reading about the Spanish Civil War and the different factions on the left that continually got in each other's way (or worse.) Yet at the same time it is an inspiring read, and sobering to realize that so much that those of us born in the seventies grew up taking for granted was actually so recent and hard-working (and unfortunately, not necessarily permanent, as recent events make clear.)

I gave it only three stars because at times it felt like an endless parade of names that were hard to keep straight, though I do value the personal, memoir aspect of it as opposed to a more historical account. It does provide a lot of perspective on the movement, and now I am curious to read other accounts from other people with their own, different perspectives.
