



# Beyond Gender: The New Politics of Work and Family

*Betty Friedan*

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"A basic restructuring of our economy is needed now," writes Betty Friedan in her latest book, *Beyond Gender*. "And this restructuring can't be accomplished in terms of women versus men, black versus white, old versus young, conservative versus liberal. We need a new political movement in America that puts the lives and interests of people first. It can't be done by separate, single-issue movements now, and it has to be political to protect and translate our new empowerment with a new vision of community, with new structures of community that open the doors again to real equality of opportunity."

As the author of *The Feminine Mystique* and head of the National Organization for Women, Betty Friedan helped spark a movement that revolutionized the fight for equal rights and opportunities for women. Now, in *Beyond Gender*, Friedan argues that the old solutions no longer work. The time has come, she contends, for women and men to move forward from identity politics and gender-based, single-issue political activism. Without yielding on particular women's issues, she calls for a "paradigm shift"—a transformation of the intellectual and political structure within which those issues are viewed.

Friedan's "new paradigm" embraces the entire world of work, family, and community, where some of the most crucial questions of 1990s America have been raised. To explore them, Friedan initiated a conversation among policy experts, scholars, corporate and labor leaders, journalists, and political thinkers. Guiding their conversation with her own reflections, Friedan explores the social anxiety caused by corporate downsizing and displacement of middle-aged male employees—including the impact on working wives who suddenly become their family's sole provider. She confronts the expansion of part-time and temporary work due to outsourcing, which disproportionately affects women workers. She describes the loss of community life and community space in the fast-paced, consumption-oriented suburbs. And she discusses the breakdown of family structure in many parts of American society.

*Beyond Gender* combines enthusiasm, curiosity, scholarship, and practical expertise as it revisits the relations among jobs, home, and society. Once again, Betty Friedan has challenged her readers to rethink the context within which they view both the relations of the sexes and the relations of the marketplace.

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