



PHOTO FROM TAKE BACK THE NIGHT MARCH, BOSTON FENS, 1973. COURTESY OF BARCC. ARTWORK BY KIMM TOPPING.

YOUTH GUIDE

Mapping Feminist Cambridge Tours



MAPPING
FEMINIST
CAMBRIDGE

What is Mapping Feminist Cambridge?

Mapping Feminist Cambridge is a series of historic tours focused on the feminist movement in Cambridge from the 1970s–1990s. From the takeover of 888 Memorial Drive, to the formation of the first domestic violence shelter on the East Coast, to one of the earliest feminist bookstores, to the home of the earliest women's studies courses – Mapping Feminist Cambridge is a vibrant account of feminist organizing and politics.

Each tour spans several organizations and provides context about the movement and its priorities including abortion access, racial equity, women in film and print, healing for survivors, lesbian and bisexual visibility, political collectives, and so much more.

This guide is designed for Cambridge youth to explore Cambridge's feminist history.



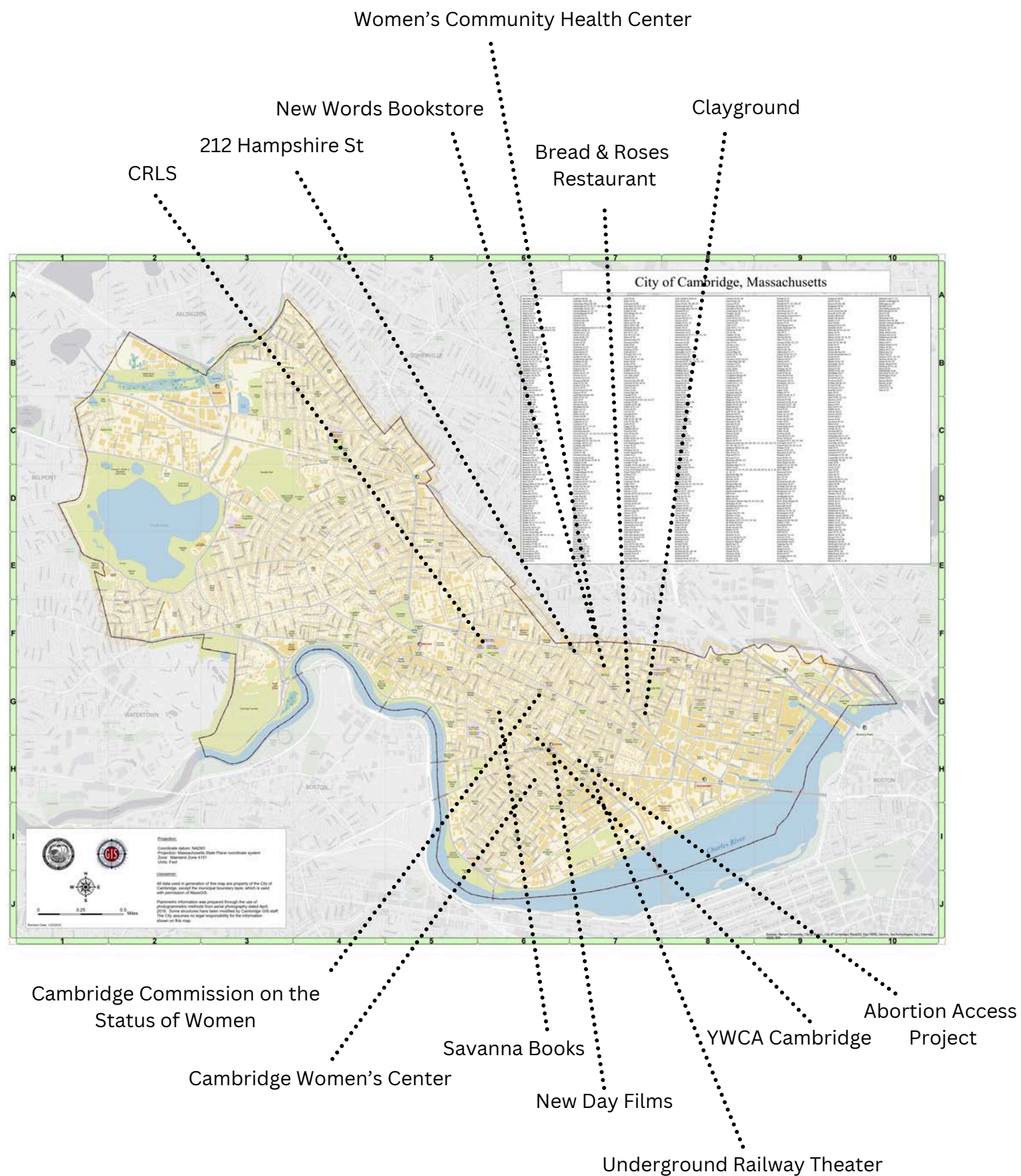
CAMBRIDGE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Mapping Feminist Cambridge is a project of the Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women.

The Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women (CCSW) works in an inclusive manner to promote equity for all women and girls, and advocates on their behalf with other City departments and officials, local organizations, and state government to increase opportunities through policy and program recommendations and development, and to build public awareness of key issues affecting women and girls. The CCSW recognizes, supports, and advocates for all who self-identify as women or with womanhood, including transgender, gender fluid, and non-binary persons. We stand with and for women and girls of all sexualities, races, ethnicities, abilities, immigration status, or religions.



A map of feminist sites





how do you define feminism?



What issues were feminists advocating for in the 1970s - 1990s?

welcome!



PHOTO OF AUDRE LORDE BY
ROBERT ALEXANDER/GETTY IMAGES.

The term **second wave feminism** refers to the feminist activity and thought that took root in the late 1960s and continued for approximately two decades mostly in industrialized nations in the West.

As the women's movement sparked momentum across the United States, **Cambridge became a center of revolution and organizing**, much like New York, San Francisco, and other major U.S. cities twice its size. From a protest of Harvard University's 1970 commencement led by Sandra Graham insisting on low-income housing for the Riverside community to the famous 1971 takeover of a Harvard building by local women at 888 Memorial Drive, Cambridge activists were demanding changes locally that were similar to the national movement's call for greater access to health and childcare, an end to the Vietnam War, and denunciation of sexual violence.

As you explore this guide, you'll learn about feminist organizations, collectives, initiatives, ideas, and people throughout Cambridge from the 1970s through the 1990s. You'll also have opportunities to pause and reflect on your learning.

Allow your curiosity to lead you to new feminist thinkers, history, and local resources!

timeline

Can you guess what years these local and national events took place?

_____ The Women's Strike for Equality March on Washington DC

_____ Later known as "Our Bodies, Ourselves," a 193-page booklet titled "Women and Their Bodies" is published

_____ A takeover of a Harvard building at 888 Memorial Drive by Cambridge and Boston women to protest a lack of both affordable housing in Cambridge and the need for a women's center. This protest led to the purchase of 46 Pleasant Street – the Cambridge Women's Center.

_____ Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women is established as a City department

_____ Project 10 East forms at the Cambridge Rindge & Latin School, becoming one of the first Gay-Straight Alliances in the country

_____ The first Ph.D. program in Women's Studies is offered at Emory University

_____ March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation

COMMUNITY SPACES

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YWCA Cambridge, 7 Temple St, 1891 - Present

The Cambridge YWCA is the oldest organization in this booklet. The earliest programs offered by the Y were in music, cooking, dressmaking, penmanship, and hygiene. As young girls were displaced throughout New England following the industrial revolution, the YWCA responded by building a boarding house in 1911.

The YWCA's national mission expanded to fight discrimination and racism in the 1950s, which remains the core of its current mission to **“empower women and eliminate racism.”**

Throughout the 70s and 80s, committees and partnerships focused on addressing racism led to meaningful actions within the organization and wider community. The Community Relations Committee - chaired by Renae Scott - designed a course titled “Black Women: The American Experience” for Cambridge women to explore the intersections between racism and sexism.



Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St, 1971 - Present

On March 6, 1971, a protest for International Women's Day (organized by Bread and Roses) led around 2000 people to 888 Memorial Drive and claimed it as a women's center. For ten days, protesters held the building, shared child care responsibilities, and provided health and self-defense classes. Donations supporting this protest led to the purchase of 46 Pleasant Street, which became the Cambridge Women's Center (CWC).

Move-in began on February 5, 1972. Constant streams of women filled the space and an exciting, generative energy led to some of the earliest feminist groups in the country focused on lesbian and bisexual identity, self-defense, and reconciling trauma and abuse. The library and kitchen became community gathering spaces for learning and connecting.

A key principle was that all women's voices should be heard. Volunteers held weekly meetings in order to include as many voices from the community as possible in decision-making. Fast forward to 2021, the Cambridge Women's Center celebrated its 50th anniversary with ten days of events in honor of the ten-day takeover.



PHOTO COURTESY OF
LEFT ON PEARL FILM



**What is a community organizer?
What do community organizers in
Cambridge do today?**



“At the time, the Center wasn't identifying institutional oppression - there was a lack of connecting the dots. I knew it was a place where you had the ability to make something happen. You could start a group or create what you wanted to see, so I thought 'I'll create it!'”

— Lynn Murray

In 1998, Lynn Murray, a volunteer facilitator for the Women of Color Rap group, became the Cambridge Women's Center's first **community organizer**. Beginning with a women of color reading circle and young women's activist group, Murray created spaces at the Center for women of color, low-income women, and women experiencing trauma to become actively involved in the Center's community organizing efforts.

Murray visited Black women, Cape Verdean women, and Latin American women throughout Cambridge neighborhoods and invited them back to the Center. **Women of Action (WOA)**, a group of low-income women working for economic justice, formed from these connections.

One of the major campaigns the group organized was the Transit Justice Project. Before this project, buses did not have ramps that could lower for accessibility, often leaving mothers struggling to enter the bus or drivers passing people with strollers altogether in order to save time. The transit justice campaign resulted in: 1) bus lifts installed in buses that were accessible to anyone who had a mobility issue, including mothers with strollers; 2) increased cleaning services for elevators and train and bus stations; 3) signage throughout stations about the new cleaning and bus services, along with phone numbers to call if there were any problems in service for customers.

Soon after, WOA crafted campaigns around women's experiences with the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA). WOA met with the Director of CHA to advocate for women. The campaign resulted in CHA agreeing to work with their staff on customer service and sensitivity with clients.

PROTESTS

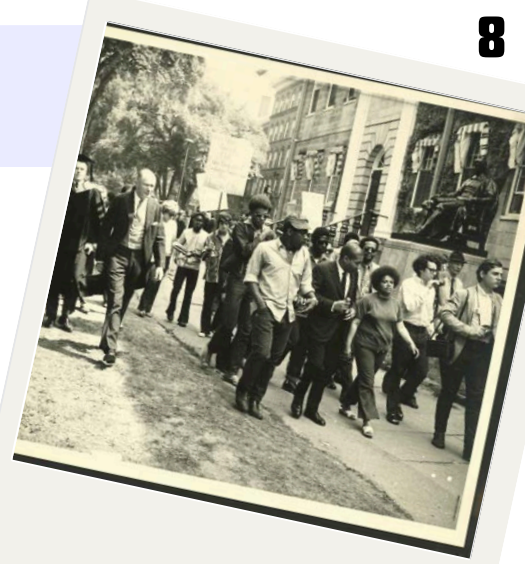
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Spotlight: Saundra Graham

In 1970, Saundra Graham, a 28-year-old passionate housing advocate from Cambridge, made headlines worldwide when she rallied more than 350 Riverside neighborhood residents to protest Harvard University's plans to evict long-standing community members from their homes. They marched up Massachusetts Avenue toward Harvard Square, where protestors took charge of the microphones and interrupted graduation ceremonies for more than 15 minutes. Saundra Graham, along with fellow protesters, opposed the university's real estate expansion into historically Black neighborhoods. They advocated for the preservation of their community.

Through unwavering determination and collective action, the group convinced Harvard to change its actions, ultimately securing a commitment from the university to construct affordable housing complexes for both elderly individuals and other families over the ensuing decade. Saundra Graham's remarkable leadership exemplifies the power of grassroots activism in effecting tangible change.



SAUNDRA GRAHAM LEADS PROTEST. PHOTO FROM HARVARD UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MARCH OF 1970 IN BOSTON. PHOTO BY LIANE BRANDON



BELLAN BORDE ANTI POLICE BRUTALITY RALLY 1980. PHOTO BY ELLEN SHUB.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MARCH, BOSTON, 1970. PHOTO BY LIANE BRANDON.

**What are you most passionate about?
What do your protest signs say?**



BUSINESSES

Clayground, 91 Hampshire St, 1976 - 2001

Clayground was co-owned and created by Annie Hoffman and Carole Ann Fer as a “socialistic” pottery business. The collective offered pottery at lower prices, had flexible hours, and connected with other women’s organizations in the neighborhood by creating commemorative platters and pottery, such as anniversary pottery for New Words Bookstore. It also offered workshops and apprenticeships to women and became involved in the wider Cambridge community by creating banners for the AIDS quilt and Mel King, a well known Boston politician and community organizer.

Annie and Carole met at Mudflat (a woman-owned pottery studio now located in Somerville) and began selling pottery on the streets until they had the idea to open a storefront. Women did all of the renovations, including electrical and plumbing. The space is still owned by Annie Hoffman and is now a yoga and expressive arts studio.



“We were making vessels. The body is a vessel, and a house is an outer vessel, so learning how to renovate a space was essential and empowering for us as women.”

— Annie Hoffman

Bread and Roses Restaurant, 134 Hampshire St, 1974 - 1978

A gourmet vegetarian restaurant and a center for feminist culture, Bread and Roses was co-founded by Pat Hynes and Gill Gane. It opened its doors as a women-owned business for “women and their friends” after five months of renovating. Except for the plumbing, women did all of the architectural design, electrical, carpentry, sheet rocking, plastering, and painting. The name Bread and Roses was adopted from the demand of the women-led textile strikers in Lawrence, MA in 1912: “We want bread and roses, too.”

Instead of tips, Bread and Roses paid above minimum wage and chose to donate to a feminist cause each week, such as Rosie’s Place, the first shelter in the country specifically for poor and homeless women. Every Sunday evening, leftover meals were given to Transition House, the newly opened domestic violence shelter in Cambridge.

Twice a month, individual women artists, many who had never shown their art publicly, were invited to exhibit their artwork. Radical feminist speakers and performers, like Andrea Dworkin and Mary Daly, novelists Tillie Olsen and Alice Walker, and musicians Alix Dobkin and Willie Tyson electrified the space, as did scientists, and athletes. Once, a woman rushed in, saying, “I just arrived from Ireland, and this is the first place I wanted to visit!” Before the internet, how did she find out? Today, Oleana, a woman-owned restaurant, occupies the space.



When did it become legal for women to take out a loan or credit card?

In 1974, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act passed, making it possible for single, widowed, or divorced women to take out a loan without needing a man to cosign. Even so, women still faced many challenges in gaining economic independence.

The **Massachusetts Feminist Federal Credit Union (MFFCU)** opened in 1975 as one of seventeen feminist credit unions across the country. The Credit Union hosted educational events, including “The Language of Money and Investing: A Primer for Women,” co-hosted with Harvard Women’s Law Association in 1980. Loans were made to members based on their need and ability to repay, and members had to be involved with one of five selected women’s organizations in the area. In 1975, the feminist credit unions met to found the Feminist Economic Network and the Feminist Economic Alliance, which represented thousands of credit union members across the country.



How much did child care cost in the 1980s in MA?

In 1983 in Massachusetts, it cost \$110 per week for infant child care and \$80 per week for toddler child care. At the time, the minimum wage was \$135 per week.

In 2019, Massachusetts was still the 2nd most expensive state for child care with an average cost of \$1,422 a month and a \$500 weekly minimum wage.



In 1971, Quaker Case, Mav Pardee, Maggie Sears, and Heidi Urich founded the **Child Care Resource Center (CCRC)** because they recognized that access to quality, affordable child care was essential to women’s pursuit of equality in the workplace and beyond. CCRC was one of the first child care resource and referral centers in the country.

BOOKSTORES

Savanna Books, 858 Mass Ave, 1989 - 1996

In 1989, Gail Willett opened Savanna Books with the goal of sharing books that celebrate Black, Asian, Latin, and Native American youth. In the years just before the bookstore's founding, Gail led a mail-order business out of her home. She wanted her kids to have access to stories that represented them – and for other families to have the same. As part of her work with the bookstore, Gail facilitated professional development workshops with teachers about the importance of books representing the stories of children of color. The workshops were offered throughout Greater Boston and reached as far as Chicago.

At the time, Savanna Books was one of only two bookstores in the country focused specifically on youth of color. The bookstore regularly hosted authors and illustrators, including Pat Cummings, Eloise Greenfield, Mary Hoffman, and many others. In order to offer larger in-store events, Savanna Books moved to 1152 Massachusetts Avenue in 1993. It closed a few years later in 1996.



New Words Bookstore, 186 Hampshire St, 1974 - 2002

New Words Bookstore was a pioneer in the feminist “women in print” cultural revolution. It was founded by Rita Arditti, Gilda Bruckman, Mary Lowry, and Jean MacRae in 1974.

New Words featured hard-to-find nonsexist children's books, hundreds of titles of lesbian fiction, journals and texts by international feminists, and a selection of writings on domestic violence. It featured writing and events with Black activists, including the writings from the Combahee River Collective and Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press. By the mid-1980s, the bookstore became a bridge between activists and women's studies programs, supplying titles for new women's studies courses.

In 2002, the bookstore moved its mission to the newly-created Center for New Words (CNW), housed in the Cambridge YWCA. Then, in 2010, CNW channeled all its resources to support the Women, Action, & the Media (WAM), an online network of feminist journalists, authors, and activists, that continues today.



Research authors published by Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press. Which books interest you?



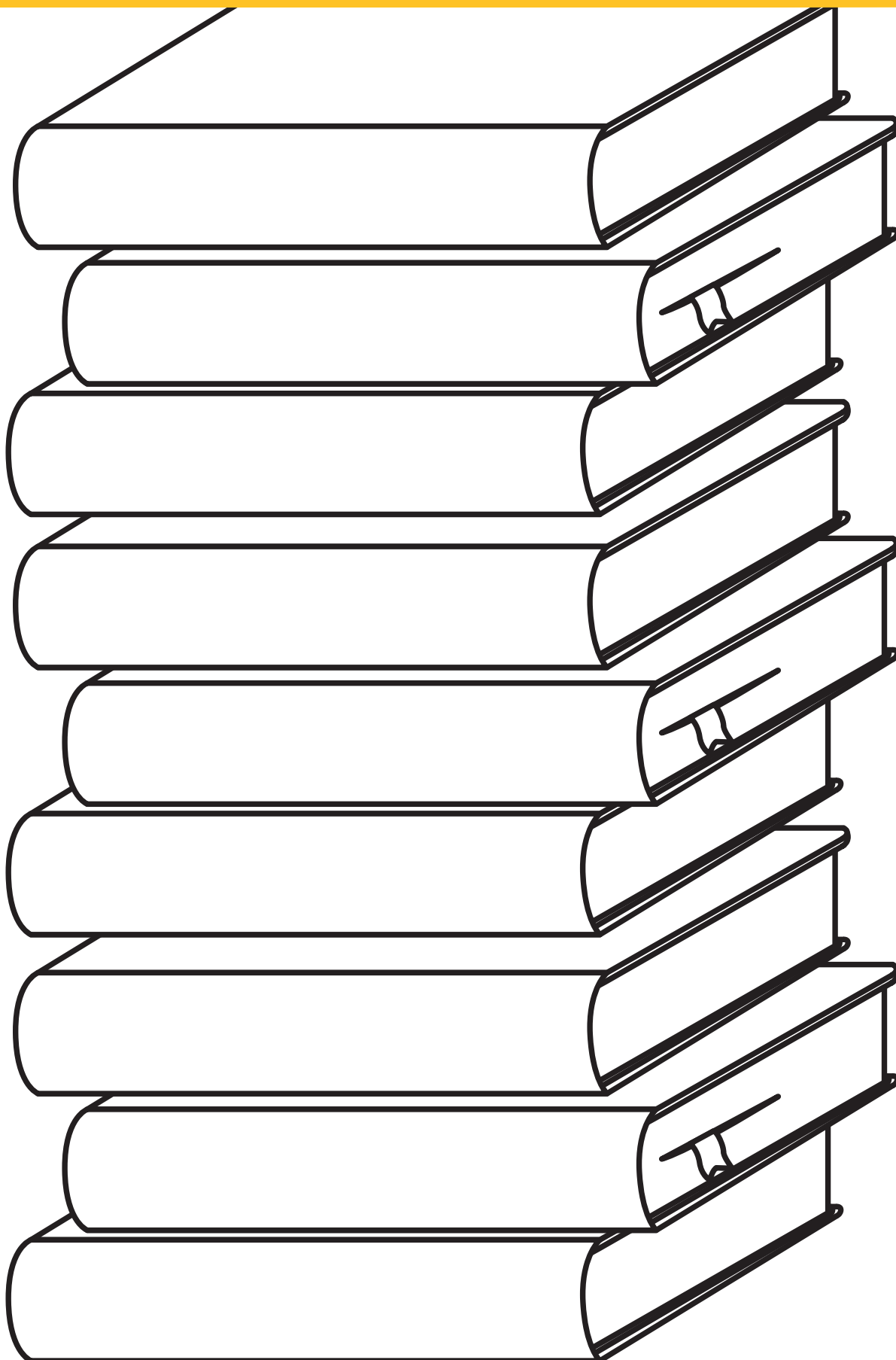
BARBARA SMITH, FOUNDER OF KITCHEN TABLE:
WOMEN OF COLOR PRESS



New Words Bookstore hosted many readings for authors from Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, a publication led by Black feminists of the Combahee River Collective, which was founded in the 70s by women of color for women of color. Barbara Smith, Demita Frazier, and Beverly Smith co-founded the collective. To solidify the politics of an antiracist feminist movement inclusive of lesbian and trans women, the group published The Combahee River Collective Statement.

Women of Color Press emerged and flourished through Barbara Smith's leadership and published books exclusively by women of color, including Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Angela Davis. Smith was a regular visitor at New Words and was involved with several Cambridge-based organizations, including Transition House, where she trained staff on anti-racism.

What books are you interested in reading based on the topics we've discussed in this guide?



LGBTQIA+ ORGANIZING



GRAFFITI FOUND IN CAMBRIDGE.
PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARY LENO.



212 Hampshire Street

Until 1998, the Lesbian Avengers had weekly poetry slams and other events at Ryle's Jazz Club, the oldest jazz club in Cambridge and the second oldest in the Greater Boston area. It closed in 2018. The group was focused on lesbian visibility and they were known for their spontaneous public skits, such as passing out Hershey Kisses on the subway for Valentine's Day while wearing Lesbian Avengers shirts.

After 1998, they rented meeting space at Boston GLASS, an organization that still provides mentorship programs to LGBTQ+ youth of color. In 1996, the Lesbian Avengers were involved in founding Dyke March in Boston, which still takes place each year, typically on the Friday before Boston's Pride celebration.

Across the street at S&S, another Cambridge restaurant staple, a LGBTQ+ seniors group met weekly through the sponsorship of the Cambridge Somerville Elder Services.

Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (CRLS)

Project 10 East became the the first school-based program on the East Coast for LGBT youth in 1988. In response to the suicide of a recent high school graduate at CRLS, a teacher at the school named Al Ferreira decided there was a problem that needed to be addressed. After coming out to the school community, Ferreira went about creating a "safe space" for discussions about sexuality and identity. The group's name comes from Project 10, the earliest Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) in the country founded by Virginia Uribe in 1984 at Fairfax High School in Los Angeles.

After eight years of being an informal organization made up of volunteers and activists, Project 10 East became an official nonprofit in 1996 with the mission of creating a safe space for youth in schools and communities. The organization had an office at the Old Cambridge Baptist Church and held annual fundraising brunches in collaboration with other local organizations like BAGLY and the MA Commission on LGBTQ Youth.

Activities included a newsletter called Project Voice, Off Broadway play productions, partnerships with the state of Massachusetts on developing other gay-straight student alliances, 'zine workshops, teacher resource packet distributions, HIV prevention programs, and much more. Project 10 continues to be CRLS's GSA to this day.

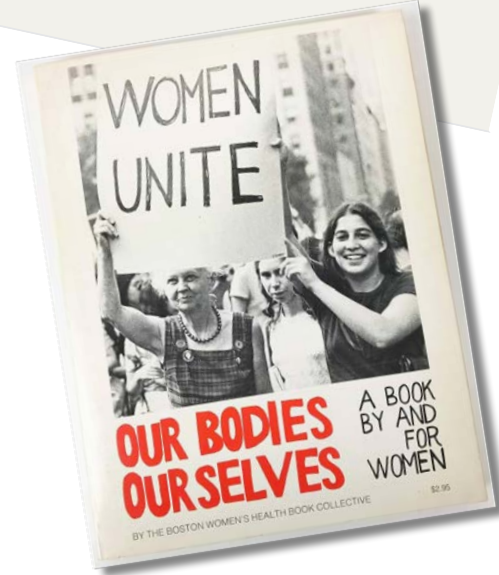


Abortion Access Project, 552 Mass Ave, 1992 - 2006

The Abortion Access Project (AAP) grew out of Boston's chapter of the Reproductive Rights Network (R2N2), and was co-founded by Marlene Fried, Dr. Maureen Paul, and Susan Yanow.

At the start, AAP had three goals: to increase hospital-based abortion services; to expand the types of medical professionals who could provide abortions, including physician assistants (PAs), nurse practitioners and nurse midwives; and to raise awareness about lack of access. "Abortion may be legal, but who can get one?" was their slogan. Leading with an anti-racist lens, the organization sought to secure abortion access for those most marginalized by institutions.

Demonstrations at hospitals were a frequent strategy of the organizers to raise awareness of needed healthcare access; their first was at Mass General in 1994. AAP worked to introduce abortion care into the Cambridge Health Alliance, which now provides abortion services in a number of health centers. AAP also worked to get regulatory change, which now allows nurse practitioners, midwives and PAs to provide abortion pills across the state. To address and reduce abortion stigma, AAP placed ads across the MBTA system and on buses in Western Massachusetts. By 2000, AAP had projects to expand abortion access in 17 states, with organizers in 11 of them.

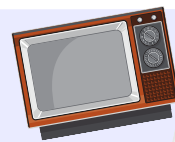


Women's Community Health Center, 137 Hampshire St, 1974-1981



Conceived in 1973, the same year of the landmark Supreme Court decision affirming a women's right to an abortion (Roe v. Wade), the Women's Community Health Center (WCHC) was organized by Cookie Avrin, Jennifer Burgess, and Terry Plumb, along with many others. In 1974, WCHC acquired a physical space at 137 Hampshire Street and incorporated as a non-profit. The goal was to offer a women-controlled and owned health center for education, prevention, and health services.

For seven years, WCHC gave women tools to gain control of their health, health care, and lives. The organizers believed that health care should not be provided for a profit. Rather than a predetermined sliding scale, there was a suggested fee system. WCHC translated all literature into Spanish and Portuguese and offered Spanish-speaking and lesbian self-help and group sessions. From 1975-76, members of the collective instructed Harvard Medical School students on the pelvic exam. WCHC provided essential services to women, including abortions and gynecological care. It operated with a physician's license and employed women doctors. In March of 1975, the center began a frustrating process of applying for a clinic license, which wouldn't be granted until January of 1981, only months before WCHC had to close its doors. Fenway Community Health Center provided follow-up care to WCHC patients.



New Day Films, 2 1/2 Douglass Street, 1971 - Present

New Day Films began in 1971 and continues to be the largest, longest running social issue and feminist filmmaker-run cooperative in the country. At the time, mainstream media either didn't cover the women's movement or did so in an inflammatory way, and commercial distributors didn't think the Women's Movement would last (!). Much like other feminist activists, filmmakers had to find creative ways to distribute their message. Their films helped to spread the word of the Women's Movement across the country. New Day Films continues to operate as a democratically-run cooperative of over 100 filmmaker members who gather once a year for four days to make decisions about the cooperative.



ORIGINAL FOUNDERS LIANE BRANDON, JIM KLEIN, JULIE REICHERT, AND AMALIE ROTHSCHILD



Underground Railway Theater, 450 Mass Ave, 1979 - Present

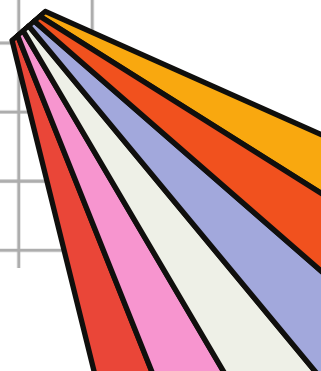
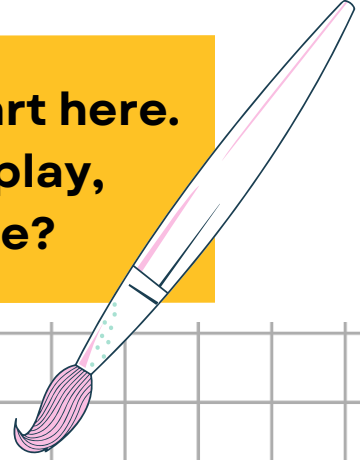
The Underground Railway Theater (URT), founded in Oberlin, Ohio - one of the stops on the Underground Railroad - traveled the country for 30 years, creating live, accessible performances in the activist and collaborative spirit of its namesake. In 2007, URT found its home at Central Square Theater. Throughout their history, co-Artistic Directors Debra Wise and Wes Sanders created original productions through intentional collaborations with a wide range of community groups.

By the late 90s, URT set out to find a permanent home in Cambridge. It collaborated with the Cambridge Public Schools and Harvard's Project Zero on a playwriting program, with Human Services to teach in City after-schools, and with the Cambridge Community Learning Center and playwright Melinda Lopez to produce *How Do You Spell Hope?*, a play centered on Frederick Douglass and literacy. In 1999, they co-founded with CentaStage the "Women on Top Festival," featuring women playwrights. This set the stage for two formative collaborations: first with the women-led Nora Theatre Company, to build the Central Square Theater, and then with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



FROM SANCTUARY - THE SPIRIT OF HARRIET TUBMAN (L-R: VALERIE STEPHENS, JORGE ARCE, JOHN LEWANDOWSKI, DEBRA WISE, WES SANDERS)

**Brainstorm ideas for your own feminist art here.
What would your vision of a feminist play,
mural, photograph, film, etc. include?**



CITY GOVERNMENT

Domestic Violence-Free Zone

Have you seen these signs around the city?

The movement against domestic violence (then, the “battered women’s movement”) began to find its national presence in the 70s as women shared their experiences in consciousness-raising groups, or fled to some of the earliest programs that housed survivors.

Following many years of work by grassroots organizations and activists, Cambridge passed the “Domestic Violence-Free Zone” initiative on March 7, 1994. Led by Councillor Katherine Triantafillou, the city resolution resulted in 55 signs installed throughout Cambridge, and the Domestic Violence Free Summits which began in 1995. These summits laid the groundwork for the city’s current Domestic and Gender-Based Violence Prevention Initiative.



Domestic Violence Prevention Organizations Founded in Cambridge

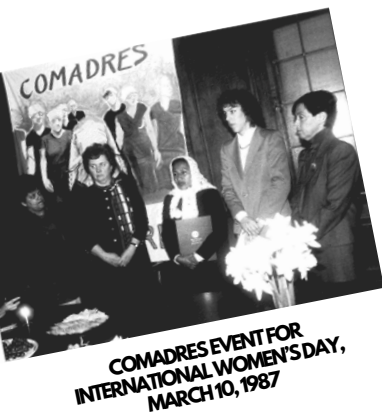
- Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (1973)
- Transition House (1976)
- Emerge (1978)
- On The Rise (1995)
- The Network/La Red (1998)



Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women, 51 Inman St, 1977 - Present

A group of women joined together and worked tirelessly to propose a local Women’s Commission to the City Council. The Cambridge Commission on the Status of Women (CCSW) was officially established by ordinance of the City Council vote on October 3, 1977.

The early CCSW worked to connect with groups that had predominantly women membership - child care organizations or religious groups - but didn’t identify with the feminist movement. Early projects included a “Women’s Work” photo exhibit that toured throughout Cambridge, translation and printing services, women’s job fairs, “Reel Women” film festival by Cambridge women, Newtowne Court Women’s Center Fabric History Project, an event with Angela Davis, lobbying workshops, a Latin American Women Photography Exhibit, and numerous CoMadres (Committee of Mothers and Relatives of the Disappeared, Assassinated, and Political Prisoners of El Salvador) events. The CCSW also established the Domestic Violence-Free Zone, and many self-defense and safety awareness programs that trained hundreds of women in Cambridge.



Research women who have been elected to office in Cambridge. What did they accomplish while in office?



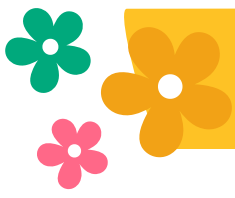
Did you know?

The first same-gender marriage in the country took place at Cambridge City Hall between Marcia Hams and Susan Shepard in May of 2004.



Who was the first woman to serve as mayor of Cambridge?





CLOSING REFLECTIONS

What differences and similarities do you notice about the feminist movement of the 1970s-1990s compared to now?

**Which organization or activist interested you the most?
What did you learn about them?**

What are you still curious about? What else would you like to learn about feminist history?

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Cambridge Women's Commission

www.cambridgewomenscommission.org

The Cambridge Women's Commission offers programming to the public including programs for youth, like Consent Camp in the summer.

Cambridge LGBTQ+ Commission

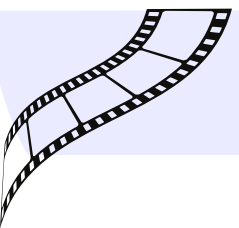
www.cambridgema.gov/departments/lgbtqpluscommission

The commission's meetings are open to the public. They host regular events, including a Pride brunch every June that honors a Cambridge youth with a scholarship.

YWCA Cambridge

www.ywcacam.org

The YWCA hosts programs for middle and high school youth in leadership and identity development, including GOLD for girls and femmes, and Gender Expansive Youth Group for trans and gender non-conforming youth.



FILMS & BOOKS



Left On Pearl

www.leftonpearl.org

A Moment in Herstory

www.catherinerussodocumentaries.com

How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective

by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (2017)

The Feminist Bookstore Movement

by Kristen Hogan (2016)



CAMBRIDGE COMMISSION
ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Mapping Feminist Cambridge: Youth Guide

Written and designed by Kimm Topping

Many thanks to the CCSW staff and MFC Advisory Committee

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