



PAVING THE WAY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF WOMEN LEADERS  
**POST-WWII WOMEN SERVING NYC**

## CONTENTS

Table of Contents	2	Dorothy Height	21
Contributor	2	Primary Source 6	22-25
Overview	3-4	Questions—Primary Source 6	25
Teacher’s Guide	5	<b>The Second Wave of Feminism</b>	<b>26-35</b>
Standards	6	Overview of the Second Wave	26
Key Words and Phrases	7	Constance Baker Motley	27
Internal Links	8	Primary Source 7	28
External Links	8	Questions—Primary Source 7	28
Timeline	9	Primary Source 8	29
<b>The First Wave of Feminism</b>	<b>10-25</b>	Questions—Primary Source 8	29
Overview of the First Wave	10	Shirley Chisholm	30
Gertrude Schimmel	11	Primary Source 9	31
Primary Source 1	12	Questions—Primary Source 9	32
Questions—Primary Source 1	13	Primary Source 10	32
Leona Baumgartner	14	Questions—Primary Source 10	32
Primary Source 2	15	Eleanor Holmes Norton	33
Questions—Primary Source 2	16	Primary Source 11	33
Anna Arnold Hedgeman	17	Questions—Primary Source 11	34
Primary Source 3	17	Carol Bellamy	34
Questions—Primary Source 3	17	Primary Source 12	34
Primary Source 4	18	Questions—Primary Source 12	35
Questions—Primary Source 4	18	Conclusion	35
Primary Source 5	19	Culminating Activities	36
Questions—Primary Source 5	20	About Us	37

**Contributor:** Belinda Hinckley

## OVERVIEW

Picture December 1941—our nation, in turmoil, enters World War II. As men head to the battlefield, women step forward, taking on new roles with unwavering strength and resilience. They fill critical gaps in the workforce, serving as nurses, clerks, farmers, and transportation workers, proving their ability to adapt and contribute in unprecedented ways.

Fast forward four years: the war ends, and a new chapter in women's history begins. As soldiers return home, many women are pushed out of the workforce, with societal expectations shifting back to traditional gender roles. However, not all women accept this reversal. Some challenge the limitations imposed upon them, forging new paths in public service and leadership.

Through an exploration of audio clips, videos, documents, and photographs from the collections of the Municipal Archives and Library, students will gain a firsthand look at the lives of extraordinary women who defied societal constraints to lead in New York City government. These primary sources reveal the triumphs and struggles of trailblazers such as Anna Hedgeman, Leona Baumgartner, Dorothy Height, Gertrude Schimmel, and Constance Baker Motley—women who shaped the city's policies and governance in the post-war era.

The curriculum will also highlight the careers of later pioneers like Shirley Chisholm, Eleanor Holmes Norton, and Carol Bellamy, who rose to prominence during the 1960s and '70s amid the Second Wave of Feminism. Their experiences provide a deeper understanding of how women leaders continued to challenge barriers and advocate for social change.

Furthermore, these sources shed light on the unique challenges faced by women leaders of color, revealing how they navigated both gender and racial discrimination while championing the rights of New Yorkers and beyond.

Through engagement with historic documents, guided discussions, and critical analysis, students will reflect on how post-war women leaders paved the way for future generations. By examining these voices from the past, students will not only deepen their understanding of leadership but also recognize the invaluable role that diversity plays in shaping a more equitable society.

Greetings, Educators!

This curriculum aid will guide your students in analyzing primary sources to explore the impact of post-WWII women leaders and their role in shaping the Second Wave of Feminism. By examining documents, photographs, and audio clips, students will place these sources within their historical context and timeline.

### **Photographs as Primary Sources**

When analyzing photographs, students should first observe key details—identifying people, objects, and their arrangement in the setting. Encourage them to consider the impression the image creates and what it reveals about the time period.

### **Written Sources: Letters & Speech Transcripts**

Written primary sources allow students to generate questions and explore multiple perspectives. By examining letters and transcripts of speeches, they will see how historical viewpoints were shaped and communicated.

### **Audio & Video Clips: Adding Depth**

Sound recordings provide additional context, offering insights into tone, emotion, and bias. Encourage students to listen for mood and word choice, as these elements often reflect the prevailing attitudes of the time.

Through these activities, students will engage deeply with history, developing critical thinking skills while gaining a greater appreciation for the women who helped shape modern leadership.

## STANDARDS

### **Grades 9-12 — Curriculum Connection/Standards:**

NYCDOE — WeTeachNYC: Celebrate Women's History

NYCDOE — Hidden Voices

9-10 RH 4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, economic, or geographic aspects of history/social studies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

### **11<sup>th</sup> Grade NYS Social Studies Standards:**

11.8 — WWII 1935-45. The participation of the US was a transformational event for the nation and its role in the world.

11.10 — Social and Economic Change — Domestic Issues 1945 – present.

11-12 RH 4: Interpret words and phrases, including disciplinary language, as they are developed in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.



## KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

- **Activism** – Efforts to promote, challenge, or bring about political or social change.
- **Empowerment** – The process of gaining strength, confidence, and control over one's life and rights.
- **Civil Rights** – The legal rights guaranteeing political, social, and economic equality for all.
- **Feminism** – The advocacy of women's rights based on the principle of gender equality.
- **Feminist** – A person who supports feminism or an idea aligned with feminist principles.
- **Ratify** – To formally approve or confirm through official consent.
- **Resilience** – The ability to recover from challenges, adversity, or setbacks.
- **Referendum** – A direct vote in which all eligible citizens decide on a specific issue or policy.
- **Suffrage** – The right to vote in political elections.
- **19th Amendment** – The 1920 amendment to the U.S. Constitution that granted women the right to vote.

## INTERNAL LINKS

<https://www.wnyc.org/story/william-ryan/>

<https://www.archives.nyc/blog/2023/3/17/policewomen?rq=Gertrude>

<https://www.wnyc.org/story/manhattan-borough-president-harlem-revitalization-plan/>

[https://nycrecords.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO\\_10afff1c-c281-4229-8383-044d5e37d30e/](https://nycrecords.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO_10afff1c-c281-4229-8383-044d5e37d30e/)

[https://nycrecords.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO\\_a53edd33-370d-46c8-8e86-99bae7e454d6/](https://nycrecords.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO_a53edd33-370d-46c8-8e86-99bae7e454d6/)

[https://nycrecords.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO\\_b952926f-2b30-4ba4-bc70-769c056d5fb3/](https://nycrecords.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO_b952926f-2b30-4ba4-bc70-769c056d5fb3/)

## EXTERNAL LINKS

<https://now.org/blog/the-original-activists-black-feminism-and-the-black-feminist-movement/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/13/nyregion/gertrude-schimmel-first-woman-named-an-nypd-chief-dies-at-96.html>

<https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/anna-arnold-hedgeman>

[https://cfmedicine.nlm.nih.gov/physicians/biography\\_28.html](https://cfmedicine.nlm.nih.gov/physicians/biography_28.html)

<https://www.uscourts.gov/news/2020/02/20/constance-baker-motley-judiciarys-unsung-rights-hero>

<https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/dorothy-height>

<https://www.eeoc.gov/history/eleanor-holmes-norton>

<https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/individuals/shirley-chisholm>

<https://avoice.cbcfinc.org/exhibits/women-of-the-cbc/shirley-a-chisholm-biography/>

<https://www.brightsightspeakers.com/speakers-a-z/carol-bellamy>

<https://www.nytimes.com/1978/04/12/archives/new-jersey-pages-homosexual-rights-again-council-issue-bill-to-be.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/1971/03/20/archives/effort-to-repeal-rent-rise-scored-43-political-leaders-term-attempt.html>



## A TIMELINE OF FEATURED NEW YORK CITY WOMEN LEADERS

### *1945, End of WWII: First Wave of Feminism*

1940

**Gertrude Schimmel** joins the New York City Police Department. Throughout the 1940s Schimmel took part in undercover work, breaking up gambling operations.

1954

**Leona Baumgartner** was the first female NYC Health Commissioner.

1954

**Anna Hedgeman** became the first Black person to serve in a NYC Mayor cabinet.

1954

**Constance Baker Motley** played a crucial role in crafting the arguments in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case.

1958

**Dorothy Height** led the National Council of Negro Women.

1961

**Gertrude Schimmel** sued the NYPD in 1961 to sit for a promotional exam. She won and in 1965 became the first female police captain.

### *Mid-1960s - 1990: Second Wave of Feminism*

1965

**Constance Baker Motley** was the first Black woman elected to the NYS Senate. In 1965 she was the first woman chosen to serve as Manhattan Borough President. She became the first Black woman to serve as federal judge. In 1966 President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed her to the U.S. District Court.

1968

**Shirley Chisolm** was elected as the first Black congresswoman. She represented Brooklyn's 12<sup>th</sup> Congressional District.

1971

**Shirley Chisholm** was the first Black candidate to run for a nomination to be President of the United States.

1971

**Eleanor Holmes Norton** was the first woman named as NYC Commissioner of Human Rights. Norton held the first hearings in the US on discrimination against women.

1978

**Carol Bellamy** served three terms in the NY State Senate. Later, she was the first woman elected as President of the NYC Council. She held this position until her unsuccessful bid for NYC Mayor in 1985.

1980s

**Shirley Chisholm** co-founded the National Political Congress of Black Women in the mid-1980s.

## THE FIRST WAVE OF FEMINISM

The goal of First Wave Feminism, a movement active in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, centered on legal reform, focusing on securing basic rights for women. The passage of the 19th Amendment granted women the right to vote, while other victories included access to higher education, birth control, and property ownership. However, the movement has been criticized for its "one-size-fits-all" approach, which often overlooked the specific struggles faced by women who were Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). It largely neglected the intersection of racial and gender biases, leaving many women of color to fight for both civil and gender rights.

This section highlights the efforts of post-World War II women leaders who built on the foundation laid by earlier feminist movements, advocating not only for women's rights but also for racial equality. Through a variety of primary sources, we examine the obstacles these leaders faced and the successes they achieved, particularly in New York City. Among these trailblazing women were Anna Hedgeman, Leona Baumgartner, Dorothy Height, Gertrude Schimmel, and Constance Baker Motley. Despite the wartime opportunities that expanded women's roles, these leaders confronted significant challenges, including resistance from those who sought to confine women to traditional roles and cultural stereotypes. Their efforts laid the groundwork for the Second Wave of Feminism, which spanned the 1960s to the 1980s.

## GERTRUDE SCHIMMEL

**Gertrude Schimmel**, a trailblazer in law enforcement, made lasting contributions to the New York City Police Department (NYPD). She joined the force in 1940, facing significant challenges in a male-dominated field. Through determination and resilience, she became a driving force for gender equality within the department.

A pivotal moment in Schimmel's career came in 1961 when she filed a lawsuit against the NYPD, challenging discriminatory policies that restricted women's advancement. Her victory marked a turning point, paving the way for women to earn promotions and serve in patrol positions, dismantling long-standing barriers.

Schimmel went on to achieve several historic firsts, becoming the NYPD's first female Police Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, and Deputy Chief. Her groundbreaking accomplishments not only highlighted her leadership and dedication but also proved that gender should never be a barrier to success in law enforcement.



*NYC Mayor LaGuardia shaking hands with Probationary Policewoman Gertrude Schimmel, Winner, Chief Inspector's Trophy in 1940. Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia records, Municipal Archives.*

## QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 1

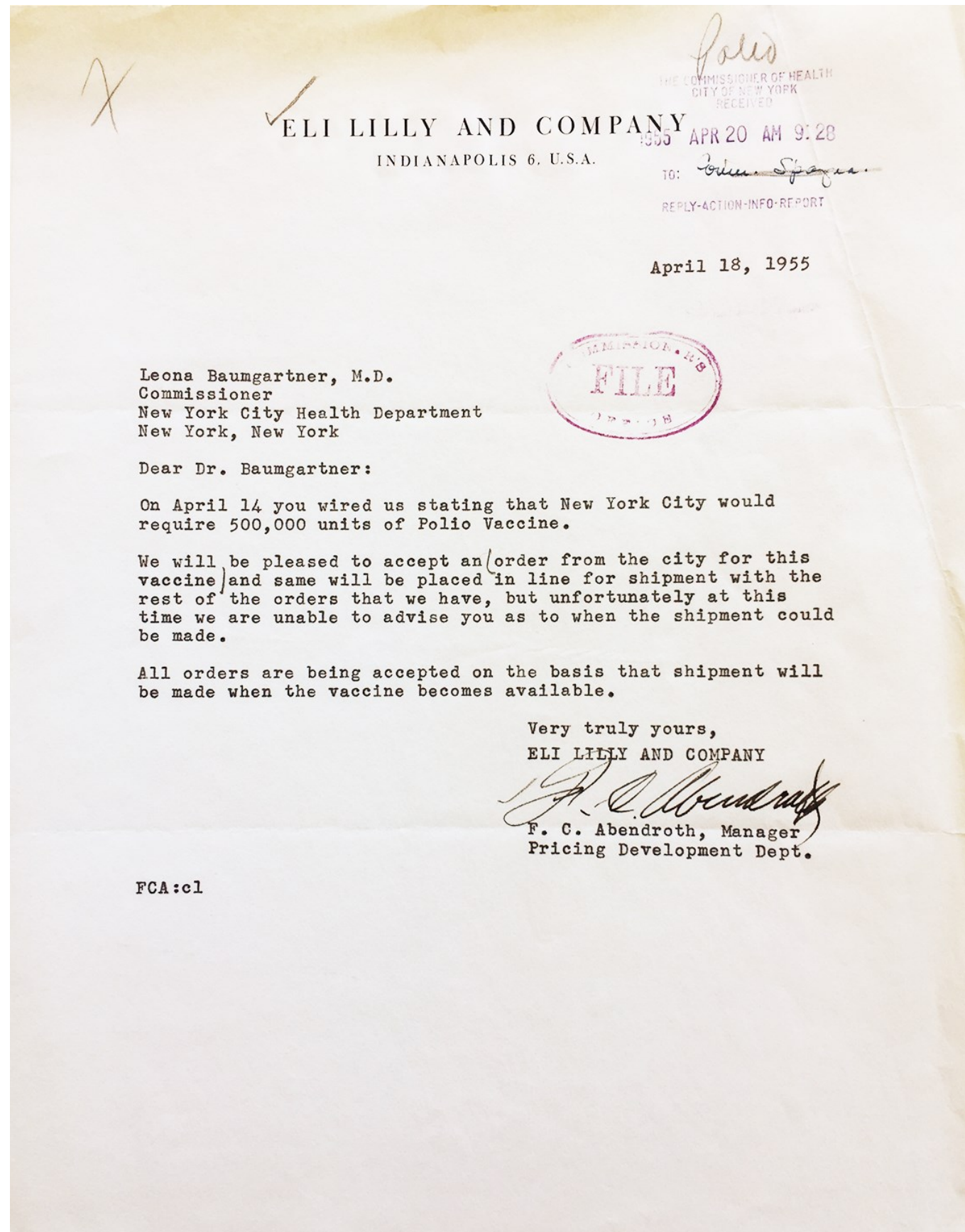
1. **Examine the photograph of Mayor LaGuardia shaking hands with Gertrude Schimmel.** What details stand out to you in both the foreground and background? How do these elements contribute to the overall message of the image?
2. **Consider the photographer's perspective.** What emotions or ideas do you think they wanted to convey to the audience through this scene?
3. **Analyze Gertrude Schimmel's presence in the photograph.** Based on her expression, body language, and surroundings, what can you infer about her role, achievements, or significance in this moment?
4. **Imagine this photograph in an exhibit or publication.** If you had to give it a title that captures its meaning and impact, what would it be and why?

## LEONA BAUMGARTNER

**Leona Baumgartner**, a pioneering public health leader, made history as the first woman to serve as Commissioner of the New York City Department of Health from 1954 to 1962. Her innovative leadership transformed public health practices, leaving a lasting impact on the well-being of New Yorkers. She played a key role in strengthening the city's Health Code, implementing groundbreaking regulations to protect and improve public health.

A strong advocate for preventive medicine, Baumgartner championed life-saving vaccines and immunization programs. Under her leadership, vaccination rates soared, significantly reducing the spread of infectious diseases across the city. Her tenure set a new standard for public health leadership, emphasizing prevention, education, and equitable access to healthcare.





## QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 2

1. Why do you think Dr. Baumgartner advocated for such a large supply of the polio vaccine?
2. How does the 1955 letter from the pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly reflect Dr. Baumgartner's influence on public health in New York City?
3. In what ways does this letter to Dr. Baumgartner highlight the unique pressures she faced in managing the polio vaccine shortage of the 1950s?

## ANNA ARNOLD HEDGEMAN

Anna Arnold Hedgeman, a trailblazing leader, made history in 1954 as the first woman and African American to serve in a New York City mayor's cabinet. Her work, frequently highlighted in the Black press, led to a broad portfolio encompassing welfare, civil service, libraries, museums, air pollution, and the United Nations.

Deeply engaged with New York's communities of color, Hedgeman addressed discrimination complaints and collaborated with voluntary agencies on welfare issues. She played a key role in passing the Sharkey-Brown-Isaacs Law in 1957, which banned discrimination in public housing based on race, religion, or nationality.

A staunch advocate for women in politics, Dr. Hedgeman organized political workshops and championed greater female representation in government.

### PRIMARY SOURCE 3



[Play audio clip from 12:40-14:08](#)

### QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 3

1. In the audio clip, Dr. Hedgeman isn't acknowledged until she demands equal time to speak. What challenges might she have faced when collaborating with male political leaders? How could these challenges have influenced her work with Congressman William Ryan and Mayor Lindsay?
2. How could Dr. Hedgeman's experiences as a Black woman in politics have influenced her interactions with the press? Why would her approach be important in shaping public opinion?

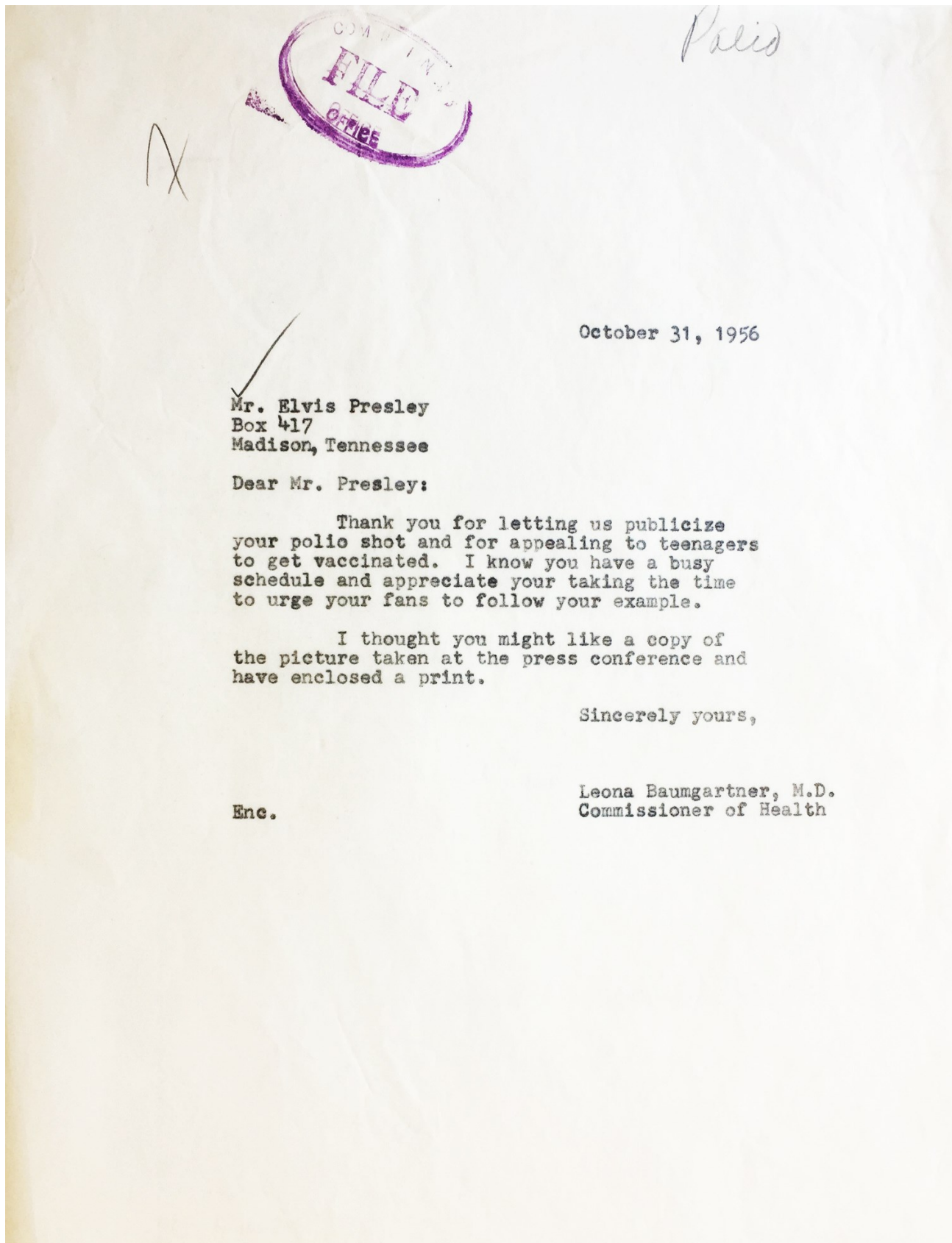
## PRIMARY SOURCE 4



*Elvis Presley (center), an extremely popular mid-20th century musician and actor, receiving a polio shot in October 1956 from Assistant Commissioner Dr. Harold Fuerst (left). Commissioner Baumgartner (right) holds Presley's arm while Fuerst administers the vaccine. Department of Health Collection, NYC Municipal Archives.*

## QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 4

1. How would you describe the mood and emotional impact of this photo? What message does it convey to the public?
2. Why do you think Dr. Baumgartner chose to have the vaccination of well-known musician and actor, Elvis Presley, photographed and widely publicized? How might this have influenced public perception of vaccines?



## QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 5

1. How does the letter to Elvis Presley highlight the power of celebrity endorsement in public health? What impact do you think his endorsement had on teenagers in New York City and beyond?
2. What did Dr. Baumgartner recognize about the influence of Presley's celebrity endorsement, and how might it have shaped public health efforts in a city of 13 million people in the 1950s?



## DOROTHY HEIGHT

**Dorothy Height** defied the odds and left a lasting impact on the civil rights movement. Her life was a testament to resilience, determination, and an unwavering commitment to justice.

When Barnard College denied her admission due to discriminatory policies, Height forged her own path, earning degrees in education and psychology from New York University. From 1934 to 1937, she applied her training while working with the New York City Department of Welfare.

Height's indomitable spirit led her to Harlem, where she emerged as a leader in the Harlem Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) during the 1930s and '40s. She later joined the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), becoming its president in 1958—a role she held for four decades. A tireless advocate for justice, she fought to end the lynching of Black Americans and pushed for critical reforms in the criminal justice system.

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Mayor David N. Dinkins  
FROM: Speechwriting (Nick B.)  
RE: Tribute to Dr. Dorothy Height  
DATE: March 12, 1991, 6:30 PM

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The VIP reception begins at 6:30 PM, while the dinner program begins at 7:30.

Bill Cosby is the M.C., and he will open the program. The sequence of speakers (subject to last-minute adjustments) is attached, and includes such notables as JLJ, Melba Moore, and Barbara Bush.

Cosby will introduce you; you are next after Mrs. Bush, and the last speaker before dinner is served.

You have been allotted three minutes -- thus the remarks are short and the acknowledgements are even shorter.

cc: Hulbert James

*Speech by Mayor David Dinkins paying tribute to Dr. Dorothy Height, 1991.  
Box 6.5.12, Folder 513, NYC Municipal Archives.*

TEL: 566-5090

S 144-91

For Immediate Release:  
Tuesday, March 12, 1991, 6:30 p.m.

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REMARKS BY MAYOR DAVID N. DINKINS  
TRIBUTE TO DR. DOROTHY HEIGHT  
HILTON, WEST 53RD ST. & 6TH AVENUE  
MARCH 12, 1991

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Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. -- who was a close colleague of Dr. Height -- spoke often of the moral dilemma faced by every human being in our modern society. "Every man must decide whether he will walk in the light of creative altruism or the darkness of destructive selfishness," he said. "This is the judgment. Life's most persistent and urgent question is, What are you doing for others?"

If we asked Dorothy Height to answer that question this evening, we would run out of time before we heard even half her response -- so great has been her contribution to the welfare of our society.

I am proud to say that Dr. Height received her education at New York and Columbia Universities and at the New School for Social Research, and began her illustrious career as a welfare department caseworker for the City of New York.

In 1937, while still in government service, Dorothy joined the National Council of Negro Women, which had been founded in our city just two years earlier by Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune.

Dorothy Height devoted enormous energy and enthusiasm to the

(more)

NCNW over the next two decades and in 1958 became its president. During that period, she also served with distinction on the national staff of the YWCA, where among many other contributions, she founded the Center for Racial Justice.

In her more than three decades of national leadership, Dr. Dorothy Height has demonstrated an unflagging commitment to the ideals of peace, brotherhood, equal opportunity and economic and social justice -- and not only in our own country, but throughout the world.

She shared with Dr. King a belief that, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Geographic boundaries never hindered Dorothy Height, and she has carried the proud standard of justice throughout the United States of America and into Asia, Africa, Europe and South America.

In the course of the last three decades, she has been honored by many of the most distinguished organizations and individuals in the world today -- and it is a measure of her extraordinary achievement that this evening, the First Lady of the United States has traveled to our city to pay tribute to Dr. Height.

Although we have not yet finished our long march down freedom's road, it is the custom of footsoldiers to pause every so often to recognize those among us who have helped lead the way. Dorothy Height has not only led the way -- she helped pave the road.

Brothers and sisters, on behalf of eight million New Yorkers, it is a joy and an honor for me to add my voice to the

(more)

chorus of praise for Dr. Dorothy Height. Dorothy -- thank you,  
and God bless you.

# # #

NB/LK/03-11-91

## QUESTIONS — PRIMARY SOURCE 6

1. What key elements of Mayor David Dinkins's speech honoring Dorothy Height stand out? What themes or messages should readers pay close attention to?
2. In what ways did Dr. Height's close association with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. influence her activism? How did their relationship shape her approach to civil rights?
3. How did Dr. Height's leadership in the YWCA, the National Council of Negro Women, and the Center for Racial Justice contribute to her lasting impact on society? What common goals or strategies connected her work across these organizations?
4. How does Mayor Dinkins's portrayal of Dr. Height reflect the best qualities of humanity? What values or traits does he highlight that make her legacy so powerful?

## THE SECOND WAVE OF FEMINISM

The *Second Wave of Feminism* refers to the era of the women's movement in the United States from the 1960s through the 1970s. While the *First Wave* secured women's right to vote with the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, the movement slowed in the following decades. However, in the post-World War II era, women leaders continued the fight, breaking barriers and shaping public life.

The *Second Wave* focused on achieving equality in employment and education, financial independence, and reproductive rights. Key victories of this period included the **Equal Pay Act of 1963**, **Title IX in 1972**—which mandated gender equality in federally funded education—and the Supreme Court's 1973 decision in **Roe v. Wade**, which legalized abortion.

Similar to the *First Wave*, which emerged during a period of broader social reform, the *Second Wave* unfolded alongside the **civil rights movement** and **anti-war protests**. However, Black women, who faced racism, sexism, and classism, often had to mobilize separately from the predominantly white, middle-class feminist movement. This era became a defining moment for **Black feminists**, who worked to amplify their voices and address the unique struggles they faced.



## CONSTANCE BAKER MOTLEY

**Constance Baker Motley**, a pioneering lawyer, left an indelible mark on the civil rights movement through her groundbreaking contributions. One significant achievement was her role in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case, which challenged racial segregation in public schools. As the only woman on the legal team, Motley played a crucial role in crafting the arguments that led to the Supreme Court's 1954 decision declaring segregation in public education unconstitutional.

With the Second Wave of Feminism in 1965, Motley shattered racial and gender barriers by becoming the first Black woman to serve as Manhattan Borough President. Leading New York City's most diverse and influential borough, she focused on tackling housing discrimination, advancing educational equity, and expanding employment opportunities. Her leadership helped break down systemic barriers and improve the lives of countless New Yorkers.

Motley made history once again in 1966 when she became the first Black woman appointed as a federal judge. Nominated by President Lyndon B. Johnson to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, she brought her keen legal mind and unwavering dedication to justice to the federal bench. Throughout her career, Motley remained a tireless advocate for equality and fair treatment under the law.

## PRIMARY SOURCE 7



*Mayor Robert F. Wagner swears-in Constance Baker Motley as New York State Senator, February 7, 1963, City Hall. Official Mayoral Photograph Collection, NYC Municipal Archives.*

## QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 7

1. This photograph captures Mayor Robert F. Wagner swearing in Constance Baker Motley as a New York State Senator in 1963. Why is this moment historically significant? What does it symbolize in the broader context of the civil rights movement?
2. What message do you think the photographer aimed to convey to the audience? How do the composition and expressions in the image contribute to this message?

## PRIMARY SOURCE 8



[Listen to the radio clip](#)

### QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 8

1. What key issues did Constance Baker Motley address as Manhattan Borough President in this radio broadcast? How did she advocate for Harlem’s revitalization?
2. Based on the broadcast, how did Motley’s leadership and policies make her a powerful force in the civil rights movement?
3. In her 2024 presidential nomination speech, Kamala Harris praised Constance Baker Motley as one of her heroes. From listening to the broadcast, what qualities made Motley an inspirational and influential leader?

## SHIRLEY CHISHOLM

Born in Brooklyn on November 30, 1924 to parents from Barbados and Guyana, **Shirley Chisholm** attended Brooklyn College, where she was encouraged to pursue politics. After earning a master's degree in early childhood education from Columbia University, she became a consultant with the New York City Division of Daycare.

Chisholm's leadership in various political organizations led to her election to the New York State Legislature, and in 1968, she made history as the first Black woman elected to the U.S. Congress, representing Brooklyn's 12th congressional district.

In 1972, Chisholm became the first Black candidate—and the first woman—to seek the Democratic nomination for President of the United States. Facing racial and gender discrimination, she was often excluded from televised debates and campaign events. Despite these barriers and a severely underfunded campaign, she won 10% of the delegates' votes, proving that a Black woman could compete on the national political stage.

Chisholm remained in Congress until 1983, co-founding the National Political Congress of Black Women before retiring from politics. She passed away in 2005, but her legacy endures as a champion of justice, equity, and representation.





*March 19, 1971 – Press Conference with Shirley Chisholm at the Overseas Press Club.  
NYC Department of Housing Development Collection, Municipal Archives.*

## QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 9

1. As a congresswoman, Shirley Chisholm advocated for underserved communities in NYC. Why do you think she supported rent increases under rent control? How might this policy have helped the communities she represented?
2. As the first Black woman in Congress, how does Shirley Chisholm's presence in this photograph symbolize her influence and role as a decision-maker? What does this image reveal about her impact in Congress?

## PRIMARY SOURCE 10

### Primary Source Analysis: Shirley Chisholm's Presidential Announcement



[Audio Recording](#)



[Transcript](#)

## QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 10

1. What challenges might Shirley Chisholm have faced as a Black woman running for president in 1972? How does her speech address these obstacles?
2. How does Chisholm distinguish her candidacy from traditional political movements? In what ways does she use her identity as a woman to emphasize her unique approach?
3. In her speech, Chisholm stresses the need for more women, particularly Black women, in politics. What legislative areas does she believe would benefit from increased female representation?
4. How does Chisholm portray America's potential to overcome prejudice and discrimination? What role does she envision for women, especially women of color, in this transformation?
5. How does she propose that women's perspectives could help reform environmental and social policies, and why does she view this as crucial for the future of the country?



## ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

A Yale Law School graduate, **Eleanor Holmes Norton** became a trailblazer for gender and racial equality. In 1974, she became the first woman to chair the NYC Commission on Human Rights, and later, President Jimmy Carter appointed her as the first woman to lead the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Norton played a pivotal role in issuing federal guidelines defining sexual harassment as a violation of employment laws. Since 1991, she has served as Congresswoman for Washington, D.C.

### PRIMARY SOURCE 11



*March 8, 1974 – Swearing-in Ceremony at City Hall.  
Mayor Beame Photograph Collection, NYC Municipal Archives.*

In the photo above, Shirley Chisholm (left) and Coretta Scott King (center) join Eleanor Holmes Norton (right) as Norton is sworn-in at City Hall by Mayor Abe Beame as the Commissioner of the City Commission on Human Rights, March 8, 1974. Mayor Beame Photograph Collection, NYC Municipal Archives.

## QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 11

1. Why is it significant that Shirley Chisholm and Coretta Scott King stood beside Eleanor Holmes Norton as she was sworn in as Commissioner of Human Rights?
2. What emotions does this photograph convey? Why is it so powerful?
3. In 1970, Eleanor Holmes Norton became the highest-ranking Black woman in city government. Why was her role as Commissioner of Human Rights critical for New Yorkers?
4. The NYC Commission on Human Rights combats discrimination and bias in diverse communities. How might Norton's experiences have uniquely prepared her for this role?

## CAROL BELLAMY

A New York University Law School graduate, **Carol Bellamy** served as a New York State Senator (1973-1977). In 1978, she made history as the first woman elected to citywide office in New York City, serving as President of the NYC Council (now the position Public Advocate) until 1985.

## PRIMARY SOURCE 12



### Video Analysis: Carol Bellamy and the NYC Gay Rights Bill



Watch (2:00-3:25): [Video Clip](#)

In this video, Carol Bellamy discusses the Gay Rights Bill, which had been defeated four years earlier. The bill sought to amend the city's human rights law by adding "sexual orientation" to the list of protected characteristics—alongside age, sex, and religion—prohibiting discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodations.

## QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 12

1. How did Carol Bellamy's support for the Gay Rights Bill reflect her broader commitment to expanding civil rights in NYC?
2. How might her experience as a woman in politics have shaped her understanding of anti-discrimination laws for marginalized groups?
3. How does Bellamy's response to questions about opposition to the Gay Rights Bill demonstrate her strategic thinking as a female political leader?
4. What does Bellamy's discussion of a potential referendum on the bill reveal about her views on democracy, gender, and LGBTQ+ rights?

## CONCLUSION

Through the primary sources explored in this curriculum aid, we have seen how **Post-World War II trailblazers** such as **Anna Arnold Hedgeman, Leona Baumgartner, Gertrude Schimmel, Dorothy Height, and Constance Baker Motley** laid the foundation for **Second Wave feminists** like **Shirley Chisholm, Eleanor Holmes Norton, and Carol Bellamy**.

Their courage, determination, and resilience were not just historical milestones but continue to inspire today's leaders in the ongoing pursuit of **gender and racial equity**. Understanding their struggles and achievements equips us to recognize both the progress made and the challenges that remain.

## CULMINATING ACTIVITIES

### **Class Discussion:**

- How did Post-WWII women leaders influence the Second Wave feminists?
- What qualities do all these leaders share?
- How has their work impacted future generations?

### **Primary Source Analysis:**

- In small groups, discuss the most impactful sources.
- Which sources were most surprising?
- Which sources left you with further questions?

### **Historical Profile Posters:**

- Choose a leader and design a visual biography showcasing their background, achievements, and challenges.
- Include powerful quotes and insights from primary sources.

## ABOUT US

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