

[Call for Papers: “1977-2017: The IWY National Women’s Conference In Retrospect”](#)

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Call for Papers

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Political History / Studies, Public History, Women's & Gender History / Studies, Political Science, Law and Legal History

Call for Papers: “1977-2017: The IWY National Women’s Conference In Retrospect”
November 5-7, 2017, University of Houston

This year marks the 40th Anniversary of the 1977 National Women’s Conference, the domestic answer to the United Nations’ International Women’s Year initiative. The Houston Conference, as it came to be known, was the largest federally mandated gathering of American women in history. On this occasion, 2000 delegates elected from fifty states and six territories and roughly 16,000 observers came together to craft a twenty-six plank National Plan of Action, submitted to President Jimmy Carter in 1978. The conference remains one of the most imaginative and wide-ranging exercises in civic engagement realized in the twentieth century, and we seek to draw attention to the diversity, ingenuity, and determination of participants who dared to dream up concrete policy goals of “what women want.” The recent global response to the Women’s March on Washington suggests just how much the issues debated at the Houston Conference still resonate.

During a three day conference, November 5-7, we aim to take stock of this momentous feat as well as consider the separate concerns articulated at a “pro-family” counter-convention held in Houston simultaneously. A scholarly academic symposium will coincide with a delegate and observer reunion. Commemorative activities will occur simultaneous to academic sessions and begin the prior weekend. In holding two events at once, we seek a cross-pollination of ideas and action, bringing together academics and activists, current and lifetime students and teachers, and those that remember being there alongside those who seek to carry the torch forward.

We would like to take the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the National Women’s

Conference to engage a fresh conversation about U.S. politics and society in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Issues debated at the Houston Conference have dominated American culture since: LGBTQ and racial civil rights; family planning and reproductive health; immigration and civil justice; access to education and childcare; welfare and government spending; poverty and wealth distribution; environmentalism; foreign policy priorities; globalization and a shifting workforce; and gender neutrality and protection in law. Likewise, we seek papers that engage these broad currents. Work that interrogates the conference itself, the context from which it developed, its prominent themes, and its legacy will be considered. Papers need not focus on the conference per se or women's history in general. Rather, we aim to foster a dialogue about contemporary history and society using this conference—a barometer of its times—as a jumping off point. We seek the participation of scholars who explore institutional politics, social movements, cultural conflicts, global and transnational politics, and economic turmoil.

We welcome individual paper proposals as well as complete or partial session proposals. Format ranges from dynamic roundtable discussions to more traditional sessions with three papers and a chair/commentator. We are especially interested in sessions that mix academic research with the experience of activists. We envision this conference to be a forum for interdisciplinary thinking and encourage broad methodology, perspective, and disciplinary grounding (such as history, political science, public policy, English, economics, sociology, and the arts).

Questions that could be considered by participants include: *Why did a policy forum that emerged from bi-partisanship become a caustic ideological battleground? What political, economic, and social changes underway manifested reaction and response at this conference and the coinciding counter-conference? In what ways do the issues considered at the National Women's Conference still resonate? Is the leading question asked then—what do women want?—still relevant today?*

Tentative schedule:

November 5: Commemorative Activities Around Houston

November 6:

9-10:20: Panel One

10:30-11:50: Panel Two

12-2: Luncheon with Keynote Speaker, Dr. Marjorie Spruill, author of *Divided We Stand: The Battle Over Women's Rights and Family Values That Polarized American Politics*.

2:30-3:50: Panel Three

6-8: Public Evening Program and Reception: McGovern Lecture by Martha Cotera and Delegate Panel to Follow

November 7:

9-10:20: Panel Four

10:30-11:50: Panel Five

12-2: Living History Panel: Houstonians Host the National Women's Conference

2:30-3:50: Panel Six

6-8: Public Evening Program and Reception

Ongoing activities include: poster/book sessions; oral history commons; film screenings; special collections tours; student-delegate issue dialogues; wikistorming edit-a-thon; self-guided walking tours.

Traditional paper session and roundtable proposals: Abstracts should include a short session description and title, individual paper titles, one page proposals of approximately 300 words for each paper, and one page CVs for all participants including chair/commentator.

Individual paper proposals: Abstracts should be 300 words, and should be accompanied by a one page CV.

While we do not promise travel support, please indicate on your proposal if you request such support should it become available. A separate application for these funds will be issued to selected participants should we have such funds to distribute. Priority consideration for such funds will be given to graduate students and adjuncts.

Submission deadline: **July 15, 2017**

Please submit applications as one PDF at: houstoncon17@gmail.com

Contact Info:

Please submit applications as one PDF at: houstoncon17@gmail.com

For questions, please consult our website: <http://classweb.uh.edu/iwynatlwomensconf/>

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