



New Paths to Power: American Women 1890-1920 (Young Oxford History of Women in the United States)

Karen Manners Smith

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In the 30 years from 1890 to 1920--a period known as the Progressive Era--American women began to demand greater participation in the country's public and economic life than they had ever previously had. They sought, and won, both more freedom and more responsibility. Girls and women (many of them immigrants or the daughters of immigrants) swelled the growing ranks of wage earners and of high school and college students. African-American women, even in the racially divided South, increasingly became teachers or owners of small businesses. Other women, working through clubs and voluntary organizations, pressured government and businesses for reform. Following leaders such as suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt, birth control pioneer Margaret Sanger, black journalist Ida B. Wells, and social worker Jane Addams, women made significant personal and social gains. In 1920, after a 72 year struggle, they won the right to vote. Karen Manners Smith notes that even though the Progressive Era did not bring women full equality, it was nevertheless a time when an unprecedented number of women began to find *New Paths to Power* and fulfillment.

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