



Interviews with Betty Friedan (Conversations With Public Intellectuals)

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Writer, teacher, and public intellectual, Betty Friedan has been in the spotlight almost continuously since the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, her landmark book, in 1963.

Transforming Friedan into the mother of modern feminism, that book challenged the prevailing gender ideology in the country and ultimately led to one of the most profound movements for social change in American history. Friedan has been a passionate advocate of social and economic justice in America for nearly four decades.

Interviews with Betty Friedan is the first collection of her public discussions. Combative, witty, sly, and unrestrained, Friedan was often her own worst enemy in interviews. Early in her public career she avoided them, distrusting the way media portrayed her. Journalists, she complained, wrote as often about her appearance--droopy-eyed, messy, frumpy, drunk--as they did about what she said.

"It is ironic," notes editor Janann Sherman, "that the genre she resented for misrepresenting her serves so well in this volume in letting her speak for herself."

In *Interviews with Betty Friedan*, Sherman has gathered interviews spanning the thirty-six years at the heart of Friedan's career as a public intellectual. While Friedan's body of published work spells out her positions on a host of important public matters, these interviews cover a much broader range of social, political, and personal topics.

Though she spawned a movement, the tenor of feminism quickly changed, and Friedan battled to regain ground lost to radicals and lesbian feminists, whom she called "the lavender menace." Throughout these interviews the logic of her arguments about equity and fairness--as well as the remarkable consistency of her views about men, women, and the American family--provide a rich resource for scholarly research.

In showing her political and philosophical development, the interviews reveal Friedan as one of the twentieth century's most significant thinkers.

Janann Sherman is an associate professor of history at the University of Memphis. Her previous books include *No Place for a Woman: A Life of Senator Margaret Chase Smith* and, with Carol Lynn Yellin, *The Perfect 36: Tennessee Delivers Woman Suffrage*.

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Charles Frye:

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