



A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



November 2021 Her Story ENewsletter Social Reform Advocates

Women have been at the forefront of many social reform movements during the history of our country. The movements to which we are referring include civil rights, suffrage, the elimination of child labor, disability rights, assistance to survivors of sexual assault, women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and many others. In this month's eNewsletter we profile two of the many women social movement advocates: Helen Keller and Marilyn Van Derbur Adler.



Helen Keller became blind and deaf when she was 19 months old. Unable to effectively communicate with those around her, when she was seven years old, her life changed and her intelligence and capabilities grew when she learned to communicate with sign language, through the help of her teacher and later life-long companion, Anne Sullivan (Macy). With Sullivan's assistance, Keller was able to attend specialized as well as mainstream schools, in preparation for attending college. A graduate of Radcliffe College (Phi Beta Kappa), Keller became the first blind and deaf person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree.

As an advocate for individuals with disabilities, Keller served as an inspiration to disabled people the world over. She learned to speak and gave lectures all over the world to encourage support for those with disabilities. Her autobiography was titled *The Story of My Life*. It was popularized through the play and movie *The Miracle Worker*. One of the founders of the American Civil Liberties Union, Keller was also an advocate for women's rights and birth control. She has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame, been featured with Anne Sullivan Macy on a U.S. postage stamp, and her statue is one of the two representing the state of Alabama in National Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol.



Incest survivor **Marilyn Van Derbur Adler** has given hope to many through her recovery from years of abuse. The 1958 Miss America, representing Colorado, Adler, who had spent years as one of the country's top motivational speakers, revealed in 1991 that she was a survivor. She established the Survivor United Network to help others with emotional help and support to start their recovery process. After her story appeared on the cover of *People* magazine, she thought her worst nightmare had occurred. Yet she now considers it among her greatest blessings.

Adler has spoken in more than five hundred cities and been in touch with more adult survivors of rape/sexual assault than anyone in the country. Her book *Miss America by Day* received Writer's Digest Most Inspirational Book Award. Adler has been inducted into the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame and the Colorado Authors' Hall of Fame. An earlier version of the 2019 documentary, *An Incest Survivor's Odyssey*, won the 2018 Los Angeles Film Festival "Most Inspiring Woman in Film Award".

Helen Keller and Marilyn Van Derbur Adler are among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Women's accomplishments continue to inspire and encourage us all. Continue to help us tell women's stories!

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen

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