



A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN  
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



## October 2024 Her Story ENewsletter Talk Show Hosts

The media has a tremendous influence on our lives; talk show hosts often become a member of the family. Two of the women profiled in *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America* became influential and well-known talk show hosts. Let's learn a little bit about Ruth Westheimer and Oprah Winfrey.



**Ruth Westheimer**, known more familiarly as Dr. Ruth, began talking about human sexuality in 1980 on WYNY-FM in New York. Her show, *Sexually Speaking*, continued until 1990 and, in 1983, was the top-rated radio show in the country's largest radio market. It started at 15 minutes but was eventually two hours long, due to public demand, airing on 50 stations nationwide. Her television show, *The Dr. Ruth Show*, had two million viewers by 1985. She gave serious advice while at the same time being warm and cheerful, respectful, and funny. The program aired five nights a week on the Lifetime network.

Dr. Ruth's background is quite eclectic. She was born in Germany; her name was Karola Ruth Siegel. She was sent via the *Kindertransport* to Switzerland in 1939, when she was ten years old. During the second World War her parents died in a Nazi concentration camp. In 1945, she settled in Palestine and became a sniper in the Israeli Haganah. She married and followed her husband to France where she earned a degree in psychology at the Sorbonne. After emigrating to the U.S., she took a job in New York, with Planned Parenthood. She earned her doctorate in psychology from Columbia University. The author of 45 books on sex and sexuality, Dr. Ruth recently died at age 96.



Actress, producer, director, talk show host, editorial director and cofounder of television networks, **Oprah Winfrey** continues to exert much influence on the American television viewing public. Her television talk show, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, was in national syndication for 25 years (1986-2011). While in high school, she began in radio and by age 19 was co-anchor of the local evening news. She then transferred to a daytime talk show and later launched her own production company. For a time, the world's only Black billionaire, Winfrey was nominated for her first Oscar for Best Supporting Actress for her role in *The Color Purple* (1986). She starred in *Beloved*, a 1998 movie for Disney's Touchstone Pictures. She has received the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award and as a producer received a Best Picture nomination for *Selma* (2015) making her the first African American woman to be nominated for Best Picture. Among

her many honors, Winfrey has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

In acknowledging the women who came before her, Winfrey says, "I have crossed over on the backs of Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Madam C.J. Walker. Because of them I can live the dream. I am the seed of the free, and I know it. I intend to bear great fruit."

Ruth Westheimer and Oprah Winfrey 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. Continue to help us tell women's stories!

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen

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