

MARCHING ON

Half a century after she took the world stage as America's leading feminist, **Gloria Steinem** says the fight for parity is far from over.

BY DANIEL SCHEFFLER

Gloria Steinem has been fighting the good fight for nearly five decades. After all, the 82-year-old activist and women's advocate has been the voice for the feminist movement since the '60s. She helped start *Ms.* magazine in 1972, co-founded the Women's Media Center aimed at making "women visible and powerful in the media" in 2005, published her memoir, *My Life On The Road*, in 2015, and these days travels the globe lecturing.

Steinem recently traveled with Annie Leibovitz to 10 cities—from Mexico City to Milan and Tokyo—for the exhibition "Women: New Portraits." Some of the works are an extension of Leibovitz's book "Women" while others are commission by UBS, the exhibition sponsor. Over the past year the duo has also set up the exhibition in spaces that are in various stages of evolution - or as Leibovitz calls them: "places that would eventually have another life."

One such place is an art deco building on the West Side Highway of Manhattan—the Department of Correctional Services. Constructed by Shreve, Lamb & Harmon, the

same architectural firm that designed the Empire State Building, the space is about to come down later this year and morph into The Women's Building. This center, set to open 2020, is developed, designed, and will be constructed by an all female workforce, and then inhabited as a place of activism.

"The destruction preceding the construction of this building needed to coincide with this traveling exhibition, and it all worked out," says Steinem, standing in front of a group of portraits in the womb of the building. "Welcome to a place of freedom that was formerly a place of limits and difficulty and discrimination. There could be nothing more symbolic than this space right now—nothing we need more than this space right now,"

The photographs, mounted in the building's gym, are of Women, with a capital "W," who according to Leibovitz are "extraordinary in their fields." Think: Hillary Clinton, Meryl Streep, Yoko Ono, Misty Copeland, Venus and Serena Williams, Cindy Sherman, Caitlyn Jenner, Patti Smith, Lena Dunham, Doris Kearns Goodwin, Andrea Medina Rosas, Malala Yousafzai, Aung San Suu Kyi, and, of course, Gloria Steinem.

"You can't look at all those images without seeing the true human diversity of women, not characterized by whatever feminine idea or roles of who we're supposed to be," says Steinem.

And this is exactly where Steinem injects herself into the cultural and political fray. Her ability to take on anyone—particularly the patriarchy—is what has given her a solid and worthwhile platform her entire career. Her deep concern for women has stretched beyond just furthering the feminist cause, which was created as an inclusive way of being in the world. "This exhibit captures what it's like to be a human being and therefore it shatters gender," she says. "Because it's so diverse. It helps us realize that gender is artificial."

The show comes at a critical time in history—particularly for women—with a new rise of white male power in post-Trump America. "What has been revealed to us is a truth that we must now deal with," says Steinem. "Never again is anyone going to say 'post-feminist' or 'post-racist.' Because there is still something like a third of the country that is still locked into these old hierarchies."



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Gloria Steinem at home in New York City in 2015.