**Olympe de Gouge:   
Declaration of the Rights of Women, 1791**

*Olympe de Gouges, a butcher's daughter, proved to be one of the most outspoken and articulate women revolutionaries. In 1791 she wrote the following declaration, directly challenging the inferiority presumed of women by the*Declaration of the Rights of Man*. Her attempts to push this idea lead to her being charged with treason during the rule of the National Convention. She was quickly arrested, tried, and on November 3, 1793, executed by the guillotine.*

Woman, wake up; the bell of reason is being heard throughout the whole universe; discover your rights. The powerful empire of nature is no longer surrounded by prejudice, fanaticism, superstition, and lies. The flame of truth has dispersed all the clouds of folly... Enslaved man has multiplied his strength and needs you to break his chains. Having become free, he has become unjust to his companion [women]. Oh, women, women! When will you cease to be blind? What advantage have you received from the [French] Revolution? A more pronounced disrespect, a more marked disdain... Do you fear that our French legislators... will only say again to you: women, what is there in common between you and us? ***Everything*, you will have to answer**... unite yourselves beneath the standards of philosophy; deploy all the energy of your character, and you will soon see these arrogant men [will be] proud to share with you the treasures of the Supreme Being [God]. Regardless of what barriers confront you, it is in your power to free yourselves; you have only to want to....

Marriage is the tomb of trust and love. The married woman can with freedom give bastards [children born out of wedlock] to her husband, and also give them the wealth which does not belong to them. The woman who is unmarried has only one feeble right; ancient and inhuman laws refuse to her for her children the right to the name and the wealth of their father; no new laws have been made in this matter. If it is considered a paradox and an impossibility on my part to try to give my gender an honorable and just consistency, I leave it to men to attain glory for dealing with this matter; but while we wait, the way can be prepared through national education, the restoration of morals, and marriage conventions.

QUESTIONS  
1) Why does the author think now is the perfect moment to gain equal rights?

2) What rights does a married women have as opposed to an unmarried woman?

**Form for a Social Contract Between Man and Woman**

We, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_, moved by our own will, unite ourselves for the duration of our lives, and for the duration of our mutual inclinations, under the following conditions: We intend and wish to make our wealth communal, meanwhile reserving to ourselves the right to divide it in favor of our children and of those toward whom we might have a particular inclination, mutually recognizing that our property belongs directly to our children, from whatever bed they come, and that all of them without distinction have the right to bear the name of the fathers and mothers who have acknowledged them, and we are charged to subscribe to the law which punishes the rejection of one's own blood. We likewise obligate ourselves, in case of separation, to divide our wealth and to set aside in advance the portion the law indicates for our children, and in the event of a perfect union, the one who dies will divest himself of half his property in his children's favor, and if one dies childless, the survivor will inherit by right, unless the dying person has disposed of half the common property in favor of one whom he judged deserving.

That is approximately the formula for the marriage act I propose for execution. Upon reading this strange document, I see rising up against me the hypocrites, the prudes, the clergy, and the whole infernal sequence. But how it [my proposal] offers to the wise the moral means of achieving the perfection of a happy government! . . .

QUESTIONS

1) Do you judge this agreement to be fair and equitable? Why or why not?

2)

Moreover, I would like a law which would assist widows and young girls deceived by the false promises of a man to whom they were attached; I would like, I say, this law to force an inconstant man to hold to his obligations or at least [to pay] an indemnity equal to his wealth. Again, I would like this law to be rigorous against women, at least those who have the effrontery to have recourse to a law which they themselves had violated by their misconduct, if proof of that were given...

I offer a foolproof way to elevate the soul of women; it is to join them to all the activities of man; if man persists in finding this way impractical, let him share his fortune with woman, not at his caprice, but by the wisdom of laws. Prejudice falls, morals are purified, and nature regains all her rights. Add to this the marriage of priests and the strengthening of the king on his throne, and the French government cannot fail.

From "Olympe de Gouges, 'Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Female Citizen,"' in Darline Gav Levy, H. Applewhite, and M. Johnson, eds., *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1785­1795*(Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1979), pp. 92­96.