

# Robin Morgan, Voice of Radical Feminism, Dies at 85

**She edited the landmark 1970 anthology “Sisterhood Is Powerful,” led Ms. magazine and helped build the institutions of the modern feminist movement.**

Sept. 5, 2026



Robin Morgan in 1990 when she was editor in chief of Ms. magazine. Susan Ragan/Associated Press

Robin Morgan, a prolific feminist writer and radical activist who edited the landmark 1970 anthology “Sisterhood Is Powerful,” served as editor in chief of Ms. magazine for five years and helped organize one of the first protests of the Miss America pageant, died on Saturday in Manhattan. She was 85.

The death, in a hospital, was confirmed by her son, the musician [Blake Morgan](#), who is her sole survivor.

From the front lines of a much-splintered feminist movement, Ms. Morgan gave voice to women as a poet, journalist, novelist, memoirist, agitator and iconoclast. She came of age in the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements, but along with other young women of the new left, she found those movements dominated by men, and, in particular, men who wanted to keep women as second-class citizens.

“We were tired of making coffee and not policy,” she [told The Guardian](#) in 2006.

Ms. Morgan caused shock waves in 1970 when she published an essay in *Rat*, an underground newspaper. The article, titled “Goodbye to All That,” named specific men as sexists. “Goodbye to Hip Culture and the so-called Sexual Revolution,” she wrote, stating that the [murderous Charles Manson](#) was “only the logical extreme of the normal American male’s fantasy.” The piece became an instant classic of second-wave feminism; it also brought her death threats from counterculture activists. “They called it ‘the shot heard round the Left,’” she [told](#) *The New Yorker* in 2008.

She returned to that theme in 2008 with “Goodbye to All That (#2),” an essay [calling out the toxic misogyny](#) aimed at Hillary Clinton, then a senator who was running for the Democratic presidential nomination. The article went viral (and was mass-forwarded by Chelsea Clinton, her daughter).

Ms. Morgan’s early activism in the late 1960s included cofounding the radical feminist groups Women’s International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell and New York Radical Women, which in 1968 organized one of [the first protests](#) against the Miss America pageant for its objectification of women.



Ms. Morgan, center, in a striped suit, at one of the first Miss America pageant protests, in 1968 on the Atlantic City, N.J., boardwalk. Bev Grant/Getty Images

At the protest, on Atlantic City’s boardwalk in New Jersey, several hundred women staged guerrilla theater actions: Some threw bras, girdles, hair curlers, mops and other symbols of women’s “enslavement” into a trash bin (but, contrary to popular belief, Ms. Morgan [insisted](#) that there was [no bra burning](#)). The climax of the day’s events was the unfurling of a banner inside the city’s convention hall that said, “Women’s Liberation.” The protest earned Ms. Morgan [prominent mention](#) in *The New York Times Magazine* under the headline, “Meet the Women of the Revolution, 1969.”

She coined the term “herstory” — history written from women’s point of view — and claimed partial credit for the slogan “the personal is political.” Her phrase “pornography is the theory; rape is the practice” became a rallying cry for the anti-porn movement.

As the keynote speaker at the 1973 West Coast Lesbian Conference, Ms. Morgan protested the presence of the transgender folk singer Beth Elliott, whose performance became a symbolic dividing line between feminist groups at the event. “No, I will not call a man ‘she,’” Ms. Morgan said in her speech. “Thirty-two years of suffering in this androcentric society, and surviving, have earned me the title of ‘woman.’”



Ms. Morgan, with a cigarette in her hand, at a women’s conference in New York in 1970. Ed Ford/Associated Press

Decades later, this speech earned her the label “trans-exclusionary radical feminist” as 21st-century gender politics brought about [a rethinking of sex, gender and transgender rights](#). When asked about that speech in a 2024 interview for this obituary, she said, “I believe that trans rights are human rights.” Then she paused and sighed before adding, “It’s complicated.”

Ms. Morgan created the iconic image on the cover of “Sisterhood Is Powerful,” taking the symbol for female — a circle above a cross — and filling it with a raised red fist. The book, a comprehensive collection of the writings of second-wave feminists such as [Kate Millett](#), [Eleanor Holmes Norton](#) and [Florynce Kennedy](#) as well as documents from feminist organizations, became a best seller; it was included in the New York Public Library’s “Books of the Century” exhibition and was named by the American Library Association as one of the 100 most influential books of the 20th century. Ms. Morgan

used the royalties to create “The Sisterhood Is Powerful Fund,” a feminist grant-giving organization.

Her second anthology, “Sisterhood Is Global” (1984), focused on interviews with women from around the world, which led her to establish the [Sisterhood Is Global Institute](#) with the French activist [Simone de Beauvoir](#). She worked on the book from her office at Ms. magazine, where she was a contributing editor. In 1989, she was asked by its co-founder [Gloria Steinem](#) to become editor in chief and re-established the publication as an ad-free, international bimonthly magazine. Circulation soared, and the magazine won numerous journalism awards. She resigned as editor in chief in 1994 but remained on as consulting global editor.

She completed her final “Sisterhood” anthology, “Sisterhood Is Forever,” with essays by more than 50 feminists, in 2003. She then joined forces with Ms. Steinem and Jane Fonda in 2005 to create the [Women's Media Center](#), a nonprofit organization supporting women working in the media. She hosted a podcast on politics for the center for many years. (Ms. Steinem [died](#) on Wednesday.)

By her 80s, Ms. Morgan had published two dozen books, including poetry, novels, nonfiction works and numerous essays in both the mainstream and alternative media. Her books included the best seller, “The Demon Lover: The Roots of Terrorism” (1989), a feminist analysis of violence, and her acclaimed memoir “Saturday’s Child” in 2001.

Robin Evonne Morgan was born on Jan. 29, 1941, in Lake Worth, Fla., to Faith Malkah Teitlebaum Berkley, a sales clerk at Lerner Stores, a women’s clothing chain. Faith was not married and had traveled to Florida from New York to hide her pregnancy; for years, she told Robin that she was born in 1942.

Robin did not meet her father, Dr. Mordechai Morgenstern, a gynecologist, until she was 20. He handed her a birth certificate that revealed she had been born a year earlier.

Robin’s aunt pushed her into child modeling and Faith became an aggressive stage mother. By age 5, Robin had her own half-hour weekly call-in radio program, “The Little Robin Morgan Show,” on WOR in New York. At around age 8, she began appearing on TV and starred in the popular show “Mama,” about a working-class Norwegian immigrant family in turn-of-the-century San Francisco. When she was a teenager, she quit acting to become a writer against her mother’s wishes. She enrolled in nonmatriculated literature classes at Columbia University at 16.

Instead of earning a degree, she landed a secretarial job with the Curtis Brown literary agency by her early 20s, which gave her access to influential writers such as W.H. Auden. She joined a writing workshop, where she met the poet Kenneth Pitchford, a founder of the Gay Liberation Front. They married in 1962, shortly after his boyfriend broke up with him — and served as best man at their wedding.

As an adult, she loathed any mention of her having been a child star. She famously walked off “The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson,” which was airing live, in 1969, when it showed footage of her as a child actor while she was talking to Mr. Carson about rape. “Imagine talking about such a subject and having it trivialized like that,” [she told The Guardian](#).

Her marriage ended in divorce in 1990. Mr. Pitchford died in 2020.

She always remained prolific — and fiery.

“I’m now 77,” she [said in 2018](#), “which once would have sounded positively antique to me. But I just came out with my 23rd book.” She added: “I am still intensely an activist. When younger women come to me for advice, I smile. ‘Get your own torch,’ I tell them, ‘I’m not done with mine yet.’”