

Women's History

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True To The Corps

After the 1992 AAUW study which documented historic theories that girls were not receiving the same quality or even quantity of education as boys, data on boys' behavior in academia claims cause. Whether it be timely, timeless, or about time, evidence citing boys behavior, is woven throughout the history of education. The 68 clauses of the University of Oxford's 1379 statutes, mention only one woman by name, the Virgin Mary. The 59th clause states: "All jobs in the college are to be done by men, as far as possible." The exception was that as, even in the 14th century, unlikely that a launderer could be found, a servant could deliver the laundry to a laundress, provided she was old and ugly enough to cause no rumor or scandal.

Academically women have been placed on the periphery of college educations of men. One of the early ideas had been simply to put women somewhere else. When the first female students were allowed admission to Oberlin College in 1833, they were limited to the "ladies course" mainly, home economic studies to prepare women to be superior homemakers. Men resented the female presence on campus - women were segregated. By 1867, 22 colleges in the U.S. were co-educational but the major reason for admitting women was to fill space in classes. The Radcliffe women of 1879 had to reach their seats in a heavily curtained back room where Harvard professors taught them, by climbing in windows. In 1883 Columbia permitted women to take exams but not classes with men. Gradually women were allowed to study and to instruct.

Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI) admitted five women to its enrollment of 878, forty-nine years after its beginning in 1872. The corps of (male) cadets publicly protested. The 1922 yearbook reads in part, "I'm peeved and I'm mad, I favor Co-ed extradition, The sooner the better, Or we shall let her murder our very tradition." Shortly, a woman received the highest academic honors at commencement; her achievement got mixed applause that swelled into protest and threatened pandemonium. The college president stood on stage shaking his finger at the male cadets, accused them of being jealous of the coeds, and restored quiet. But on campus, cadets continued to battle coed's achievements, sometimes with [male] faculty support. Not allowed to walk where the cadets' barracks were to access the bookstore to get their books, women had to send messengers, often their fathers. Walking where permitted, often water came down from open windows, along with [male] voices yelling. Though not in the Athletic Association, the women formed a basketball team. The few men who came, always rooted for the opposing team.

Granddaughter of a slave, and great-granddaughter of a slave owner, Pauli Murry was denied admission to the University of North Carolina Law School in 1938, due to her

race. At Howard University Law School, she was the sole female in her class. On her first day in class, one professor remarked that he didn't know why women came to law school, but since they were there, the men would have to put up with them. Thus inspired, she was top student in his class. Murry applied to Harvard Law School for an advanced degree but was denied, due to her gender

Police cleared and arrested women protesters at Columbia in 1968; threatened by HEW in 1972, its first coed class entered in 1983. After years of lower court appeals, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1996, that as a state school, Virginia Military Institute (VMI), "had" to admit women to its corps of cadets. The six years prior, the all male VMI, spent millions to keep out women The Washington Post, April 15, 2005, quotes Larry Summers, still president of Harvard, "You know, universities like ours were structured in their basic structure many years ago, and it's probably an exaggeration but not too much of one to say that they were designed by men for men."

Sources

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