

Women's History

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Poetic Relativity

Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz, is considered to be the first North American feminist. All of her written works are in defense of women's intellectual rights. Obsessive to study, she learned to read at age three, to write at age five, learned Latin in less than twenty lessons, and begged her mother to dress her as a boy that she could attend the university in Mexico City. But this was impossible. A female intellectual, she was a rare phenomenon in seventeenth-century Hispanic society. Recognized as a poet of the first magnitude in Hispanic literature, her poetry expresses her interest in science, astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, physics, and in them all, gender equity. The Dream is considered her most important work, but her most famous poem begins:
Hombres necios que acusáis (Stupid men who accuse).

A playwright and author, the *Repuesta*, her preeminent prose work, is an autobiographical letter in which Sor Juana expresses her rebellion against a world based on man's superiority to woman by asserting her belief in the absolute equality between the sexes and in the right of a woman to intellectual activity. Alberto G. Salceda calls it the Magna Carta of intellectual freedom for women in the Americas. It is speculated she would have been a scientist, had the time and place allowed. The Mexican Fine Arts Museum in Chicago (the finest in the country) holds a festival in her honor every fall. Sept-Nov 2005: <http://mfacmchicago.org/festivals.htm>,

Mileva Einstein was a university classmate of Albert. She was always at the top of her class, with her highest grades in math and physics. Her interest in math was said to be insatiable. Albert, awkward in math, tracked her down to be his study mate. "Their" goal was the mathematization and unification of physics. young and in love, he wrote to her: "How happy and proud I will be, when we two together have victoriously led our work on relative motion to an end!" In 1905 articles attributed to Albert, one on the "principle of relativity," appeared in a German physics journal. The original submission was signed "Einstein-Marity:" Marity was Mileva's maiden name. Serbian women had little chance in those days other than as wives attached to their husbands. Mileva is alleged to have said, "We are both one stone." She perhaps hoped that one day he might acknowledge her. However, Albert, a misogynist, degraded her in letters, ended their marriage, and gave up their children. In 1964 the Regional Cultural Association in Switzerland declared the Einstein house a cultural monument. A plaque placed at the entrance reads:
In this house lived Albert Einstein, the creator of the relativity theory,
and his scientific assistant and wife, Mileva.

Sources

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