

# Judith s. murray's views on education, religion and gender equality

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## **Judith Sargent Murray's Views on Education, Religion, and Gender Equality**

Expressing strong views on education, religion, and gender equality are topics that Judith S. Murray appears to have expressed through her pieces of literature (772-779). One of her literature pieces is titled “ On the Equality of the Sexes” and the piece gives the impression that she was an advocate for women (Murray 772-779).

Sandra M. Gustafson discusses Murray's life in a small biography titled “ Judith Sargent Murray” and the biography is found in The Norton Anthology American Literature 9th Edition text book (770-771). Gustafson states, “ Judith Sargent Murray addressed her most important subject—the independent female mind...” (770). She informs the reader that Murray was “ an intellectual woman in a culture that regarded women as men's mental inferiors” (Gustafson 770). Gustafson details the basic information on Murray, her birth place, her parents, and some religious views from Murray's family (770). Gustafson states the family “ embraced the teachings of the English Universalist James Rely, who proclaimed that salvation was available to anyone who accepted Jesus Christ” (770). Murray is portrayed by Gustafson as a woman who is concerned with women's rights to an education and her religious beliefs were of the Christian faith (770). Gustafson also informs the reader “ at the beginning of Murray's writing career, in 1779, Murray drafted “ On the Equality of the Sexes,” which offers a defense of women's intellectual abilities” (771). To end Gustafson's biography of Murray she states, “ Murray was at the forefront of the

movement in the revolutionary Atlantic world to extend the promise of equality in the Declaration of Independence to women as well as men” (771).

In the literature piece titled “ On the Equality of the Sexes” part I, Murray’s poem eloquently expresses her views about women and how they are not allowed the same opportunities as men (772). Murray also wrote an essay in part I by where she continues to express her views concerning education and women (773). Murray even ask a question for the reader to ponder by stating, “ In what the minds of females are so notoriously deficient, or unequal? May not the intellectual powers be ranged under these four heads —imagination, reason, memory and judgment?” (773). In the essay, Murray adds some of the positive character traits found in women and states, “ Another instance of our creative powers is our talent for slander. How ingenious are we at inventive scandal?” (773). Murray debates the opinions where society believes that “ two-year old males are more sage than that of females of the same age” and she continues to ponder how can “ one be exalted and the other depressed by the contrary modes of education” (774). In part II of Murray’s essay, she continues to debate the intellectual mind of women and she references her religious beliefs (776). Murray states, “ The exquisite delicacy of the female mind proclaimeth the exactness of its texture, while its nice sense of honor announceth its innate, its native grandeur” (776). As for her religious views, Murray mentions a few men of the bible “ David and Job” as she states, “ Thus David was a man after God’s own heart” and “ Listen to the curses which Job bestoweth upon the day of his birth” (776).

In the online article “ The Strange Case for Women’s Capacity to Reason: Judith Sargent Murray’s Use of Irony in “ On the Equality of the Sexes”” written by Elizabeth Galewski, she states Murray “ spilled ink upon paper to argue for women’s greater educational freedom” (84). Galewski divulges that Murray’s essays were viewed as having “ considerable influence” and “ George Washington and John Adam, who was then President of the United States, bought a copy of The Gleaner, and gave it praise” (85). Galewski also informs “ many contemporary scholars praise Murray as one of the first feminists in the United States” (85). While discussing the debate for women’s education, Galewski adds “ The idea that education should be reformed to give women access to conventionally masculine disciplines was not unique to “ On the Equality of the Sexes,” either” (86). Galewski also discusses Murray’s childhood where as a child “ Murray may or may not have been permitted to sit in on certain lessons offered to her brother Winthrop” and that Murray complained “ her parents refused to allow her to learn Latin with him” (89). This information alone allows the reader to gain an understanding of why Murray felt compelled to discuss the educational rights of girls.

Paul Lewis also discusses Murray in an article titled “ Selected Writings of Judith Sargent Murray, Sharon M. Harris.” Lewis concludes Murray as an advocate for women by stating, “ Murray’s advocacy of woman’s intellectual equality in works also argue for female subservience...” (275). While discussing the many works from Murray, Lewis states, “ Murray defends religion from the assault of French radicalism” (275). He also mentions how Murray tried to lead with the “ development of American Protestantism away

from Calvinist exclusivity toward a Universalist acceptance of mankind” (Lewis 275). Lewis’s statement of Murray highlighting the need for society to change from the exclusive Calvinistic views to a Universal acceptance for all of mankind demonstrates Murray’s quest for change.

To conclude Murray was an advocate. She was an advocate for women and for gender equality. Murray demonstrated her religious views in her literature pieces. She also was an advocate for education and the need for each child, whether a boy or a girl, to receive open opportunities through education. Murray’s views on education, religion, and gender equality, through her literature pieces of work, brought attention to many reform issues which highlighted the need for a change in societies thoughts and practices.