

Judith sargent murray essay sample



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Judith Sargent Murray was born in Gloucester, Massachusetts on May 1st, 1751. She grew up to be an American advocate to women's rights as well as a famous poet and writer. Judith lived in the time where women were not equal to men and did not have the same opportunities. Growing up, she watched her brother become well educated and she as well wanted to learn everything, but her parents refused to bring her up in the same way they did their son (Wikipedia). Women's voices were not heard and Judith became very aware that society did not succumb to the ambitions of any lady. With time, Judith became one of the first Americans to pursue and fully justify that women and men were equal in the economic world and that would make her a world wide author though her piece called " On the Equality of the Sexes."

Since Judith's parents did not allow her to the proper education that she wanted, she taught herself mostly everything she needed to know. " A student of history, Murray used examples of women's accomplishments dating to ancient times to prove her points and to provide a leadership in what became a long struggle for women to fulfill potential and become fully empowered members of society" (Wikipedia). In 1784, Judith published her first essay, " Desultory Thoughts Upon the Utility of Encouraging a Degree of Self Complacency, especially in Female Bosoms" which was under an assumed name, Constantia (Smith, B). During this time period, women were not taken seriously and she decided that by going under a masculine name would help people read her work without the judgment of knowing it came from a woman. She wanted to be taken seriously even if she had to disguise herself. In 1790, Judith wrote the compelling 2 part essay, " On the Equality of the Sexes." It represented her faith in the women and the fact that if they

were given the proper education, any woman can have the same knowledgeable background as any man.

Any woman can grow up to have the same intelligence and work ethics as long as they were treated equally and fair as men are in the education background. " I would calmly ask, is it reasonable, that a candidate for immortality, for the joys of heaven, an intelligent being, who is to spend an eternity in contemplating the works of Deity, should at present be so degraded, as to be allowed no other ideas, than those suggested by the mechanism of a pudding, or the sewing of the seams of a garment?...Are we deficient in reason? We can only reason from what we know, and if opportunity of acquiring knowledge hath been denied us, the inferiority of our sex cannot fairly be deduced from thence" (Smith, B). Her quotes in some of these pieces strike many people with her knowledge and her ability to perceive the need for equality of sexes.

" Will it be said that the judgment of a male of two years old, is more sage than that of a female's of the same age? I believe the reverse is generally observed to be true. But from that period what partiality! How is the one exalted, and the other depressed, by the contrary modes of education which are adopted! The one is taught to aspire, and the other s early confined and limited. As their years increase, the sister must be wholly domesticated, while the brother is led by the hand through all the flowery paths of science. Grant that their minds are by natural equal, yet who shall wonder at the apparent superiority, if indeed custom becomes second nature" (Staser, K). These quotes from her two part essay clearly have a lot of substance to them and it describes the feminist views that Judith exemplifies.

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A first for many, Judith was the first American to have a play produced. She wrote the play *The Medium* in 1795 and *The Travelled Returned* in 1796. Judith also self-published a book called *The Gleaner* in 1798. This was a book well known to many where Murray develops the persona Mr. Vigilius. The biggest turning point of this book was the fact that she admits to who “*The Gleaner*” is and that her name is Judith Sargent Murray. Not even her husband, John Murray, was aware of this. Due to her family’s lack of income, Judith had *The Gleaner* published for that reason and to ensure that there would be profits, she recruited a large number of subscribers and endorsements from George Washington and John Adams (Staser, K). In *The Gleaner*, Judith wrote, “*Was I the father of a family, I would give my daughters every accomplishment which I thought proper; and, to crown all, I would early accustom them to habits of industry and order that they should be enabled to procure for themselves the necessities of life thus independence should be placed within their grasp*” (Smith, B).

Judith continued to write and publish essays well after she raised her children and family. In her final years, she placed advertisements for many schools and helped recruit students to teach them and become the center of learning where she oversaw the education of several family members and children of family and friends (Staser, K). She died in 1820 and was buried in Fatherland, a family plantation in Mississippi. Judith was one of many great authors and poets during the Revolutionary period. Her pieces and writings of her feminist views of education and equality have set her apart to many other female authors.

Works Cited

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