

# Women in history: they are important too

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George Washington. Martin Luther King Jr. Alexander the Great. Neil Armstrong. Winston Churchill.

All famous, intrinsic people who shaped and created the world known today. All inspiring individuals whose names are known around the world. All men who children in America learn to recognize by name.

From the names memorized in grade school to the movies in Hollywood, the word ‘history’ connotes a strong connection with the male gender. With the kings of medieval days and the Founding Fathers and the First Man on the Moon, history is the intertwined series of events studied in order for humanity to “become better people,” according to Ashland University student, Katie Bailey.

But this series of events—of battles, of power dynamics, of crowns, of declarations, of change—creates the tendency of overlooking certain perspectives throughout time. One perspective, that of half the population, is the woman’s perspective in history.

“There are lots of different stories to be told, not just the white male textbook one,” Michelle Gullion, the archivist of the National First Ladies Library, said.

Due to cultural and societal expectations of women to be the homemakers, the wives, the mothers, the more emotional and the weaker sex, the acknowledgments of the female role throughout history tends to be overlooked in textbooks, research and writing.

Working for the National First Ladies Library, and thus the national site for information on the First Ladies of America, Gullion said that primary sources from women are difficult to come across and even less so in-depth research on these works.

“Women haven’t really been given a voice,” Dr. Richard Gray, professor for the course French Women Writers, said, “and when a woman does speak up, her credibility is very often questioned.”

This lack of a voice and lack of faith in the truth of this voice coincides with the lack of women in actionable roles until the 20th Century.

“Because they were kind of expected to be more in the home... and they’re not in the realm of action as much, if history is the study of man’s thoughts and actions, at least with the action part you see less and less women.” Bailey said.

The primary sources are difficult to find due to the fact that they focus on the everyday or the mundane life, and that sort of everyday “is not man’s history; it’s not exciting history,” Gullion said.

Women were not, as many believe, simply in a submissive role, but because of the expectations of women throughout history, their role has been diminished, Bailey said.

For example, Clementine Churchill, Winston Churchill’s wife and a British suffragette, exerted her influence over her husband to promote peaceful ways in his policies, Bailey said, as women did voice their opinions and influenced their husbands’ decisions.

Beyond these subtler ways women are involved in history, there are more outspoken and drastic women who left their own marks on the world.

In a field mostly dominated by men, the women in French, and in general, history who did leave primary sources behind and go against societal expectations faced ostracization, Gray said.

According to Gray, while these women contributors have existed since the beginning of French literature itself, the price for those who stepped out from the original role of women and the traditional patriarchal structure of society was often being cast out or even killed.

Those women who did not face the extreme measures and step out against what was expected of them often did not leave sources involved in the action of history, Gullion said.

Other women who do get recognition in history, on the other hand, often do so due to taking on the masculine role, Gray said.

“[History] never really puts women into the spotlight except in extreme circumstances where she, for example Joan of Arc, becomes a warrior, so then she looks like a male...and then she might get a little bit of attention,” Gray said.

While women throughout history either stay in traditional roles or step out of traditional roles to find hardship or a focus due to masculinity, this recent recognition of these oversights evolved not only from changing cultural values but also an awakening of the new roles for women.

As history focuses on the big events, the representation of women’s achievements is not as emphasized because women’s involvement in politics is relatively recent, Bailey said.

This shift in politics in the Post-Obama era allows for more wom-

en to enter politics, and therefore there has been more highlighting of not only those women, but the achievements of women in the past as well, Gray said.

“You’re starting to see much more scholarly in-depth research being done on these women and women in general,” Gullion said.

Movies like “Hidden Figures,” “I, Tonya,” “Molly’s Game,” and more are paving the way and bringing to light accomplishments from women that had gone unheard. The current active women in politics, business, science, and other fields opens up the discussion for women in all fields and throughout all times, Gray said.

According to Gullion, this newly discovered discussion of women and female achievements helps to eliminate the previously-conceived notions of historical events and of certain aspects of the world today.

Studying women’s writings and experiences throughout history, Gray said that the way one views historical events, and today’s events, changes drastically, taking the world out of the traditional patriarchal view.

Without the woman’s perspective, the view of history is “a sort of myopic” one, Gray said, as the view is incomplete or not the entire story.

The tendency is to assume the forced cultural expectations of women detracts from their importance in shaping the world as it is today, making their perspective less pivotal to the story of mankind, but Bailey disagrees.

“They weren’t submissive and in the background like a lot of people think they were or totally subordinate to men.” Bailey said. “Women didn’t necessarily have the right to vote and weren’t necessarily in office but they did have a lot of influence over their husbands’ lives.”

The picture painted of the submissive woman who has nothing to offer ignores not only the women who stood out, but also the everyday women and their perspectives.

For example, in her study of hospitals in the Civil War, Bailey found an account written by Mary Phinney, a Civil War nurse, that added a different dimension to the historical perspective of Civil War hospitals: mercy.

“Through her eyes, I’ve kind of gotten to know that entire world,” Bailey said. “Because you hear about the Civil War hospitals and the amputations and how gruesome they were, but you don’t hear about the mercy.”

The viewpoints and experiences of women help to fill in more to the history that is already known,

Gray said.

Creating a fuller picture of history, the women’s perspective that is rapidly coming to light can also illustrate the struggles women have been facing for centuries.

With struggles such as infidelity and miscarriages described throughout time, the writings of and on women in the past help show “how much things have not changed for women,” Gullion said.

These struggles which can be the same for women today and the accomplishments of past women offer a sense of inspiration to Bailey.

In particular, Clementine Churchill and Sarah Churchill, Winston Churchill’s ancestor the Duke of Marlborough’s wife, inspire Bailey through their balance of both loving and strong natures, toward their husbands and toward their lives.

“[Clementine] is the love of Churchill’s life, and she’s a very strong woman to have to put up with a man like Churchill. But she helps guide him through her love,” Bailey said.

By considering both loving and strong traits, Clementine and Sarah emulate both the feminine and masculine traditional roles to Bailey, evoking the sense that one does not have to be one or the other and promoting the concept of strong women through the lives they led.

Abigail Adams, Dolly Madison, and the other First Ladies are also often popular inspirational women, although Gullion warns against “grouping them all together and mak[ing] them a status symbol.”

Rachel Carson, the famous author of Silent Spring, called to light the harmful effects of pesticides on the environment, but she also suffered from breast cancer her doctors refused to discuss with her due to her gender.

While those and other famous wives evoke inspiration for change and for action, there are more unknown women that should be recognized and hailed as examples.

In terms of those everyday women who are often overlooked, Bailey cited Mary Phinney, the Civil War nurse whose writings inspired a television show on PBS entitled Mercy Street, and the women of Pin School, which was the first school in the South for freed slaves that was founded by women in the Civil War.

Women of color, facing even more discrimination to leave a lasting impact on society, also have many noteworthy achievements that go unrecognized.

For example, Ann Lowe, a fashion designer in the 1920s and the

first significant African American designer, created gowns for high society and even for Jackie Kennedy, died relatively unknown and in poverty, Gullion said.

Another lesser known woman of color was Annie Waunelua, a Navajo woman who served on the Navajo Tribal Council, Gullion said and in the wake of a tuberculosis epidemic on reservations, Waunelua “brought modern medicine and education to her people.”

While these women brought change to American society, international women have also been overlooked in their achievements or works, like many of the French women in Gray’s specialty.

Colette, an author Gray cited from the early 1900s, won the Nobel Prize for Literature, and yet she still published under her husband’s name with the fear that no one would read a novel written by a woman. A problem which bleeds into today, he discusses in his class the modern women like J.K. Rowling who deal with the stigma of women writers still to this day.

Olympe De Gouges wrote Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Female Citizen on equality, a pivotal feminist document as possibly the first French feminist, in the 1780s, eventually suffering for her beliefs by execution during the Reign of Terror, Gray said.

“And it still wasn’t until the 1940s that women in France got the right to vote” he said.

While all these women played integral roles in shaping certain aspects of society, there is still the underrepresentation to them in history, in popular culture, in research, and in the mind of the world today. Even though women and their role in politics today have helped drive this information into the light and there is more and more research being done on these women, Gullion said, this fight for recognition has a long road ahead.

For those on the AU campus, she encourages learning about feminism and about the recent movements for women’s rights.

Creating “more of a study of their thoughts, actions, and virtue,” as well as studying primary sources of individual women instead of from textbooks, can help to promote and encourage more discussion on women in history, Bailey said.

For example, women’s fashion over the years, gives insight into the changing times and ideas of women throughout history.

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# Earth Day: taking care of the planet

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For many people, April 22 is an insignificant day of the year. There is no giving or receiving presents. There is no meal that brings families together. Nonetheless, Earth Day reminds people of the importance of preserving the environment.

“I wish Earth Day could be 365 days a year,” said Peggy Kohler, Director of Facilities Management. The harsh truth is that “our resources are going to be depleted and we do not want to be living in a landfill. We have got to be more careful about how and what we recycle, what we purchase, and how we reuse,” she said.

This day is an opportunity to recognize everyone’s part in the commonly used phrase, reduce, reuse and recycle.

“Some people take Earth Day very seriously and other people don’t even know what it is,” Kohler said.

Facilities Management employee, senior, Frankie Craider said, “It’s our Earth and we should be doing our best to keep it clean and do ev-

erything we can to take care of it.”

Kohler agreed that “so many times, we neglect and take things for granted.”

Craider’s passion for recycling began in high school when she took an environmental course.

She realized that “we are living here, so why not do everything we can to save it?”

Kohler said that protecting the environment is something we have to learn.

“It is our lifestyle and we have got to be able to modify that to make a difference,” she said.

AU has begun to take the steps necessary to improve the Earth.

Kohler said, “About 40% of our material is diverted from the landfill and is being recycled.”

She said, We have got recycling bins located everywhere on campus. There are water bottle refill stations in 13 buildings and many of the chemicals used on campus are green chemicals which are safer for the environment.

Some people “don’t care where they are throwing the recycling” but if they “take the time to walk by that trash can and recycle appropriately,” these little things can

make a huge difference, Craider said.

Kohler said the issue may be that not everyone knows what AU recycles. The recyclable materials include: paper, plastics 1-7, aluminum, books, scrap metal, solvents, toners, greeting cards, electronic waste, glass, cardboard, fluorescent light bulbs, tires, printer cartridges and grease. AU has recycled over 40 thousand pounds of cardboard in 2017 and 2018.



“We are paid for paper, aluminum and cardboard, so by not recycling just those three things we are throwing money down the drain,” Kohler said.

This money is used to employ students for the recycling department of Facilities Management.



“The more we recycle, the more revenue we bring in, the more students we are able to hire,” she said.

In an effort to be more ecofriendly, Kohler suggested using reusable objects such as glass water bottles and the green containers at the Eagle’s Nest. She also said to walk across campus, rather than drive.

“It is a personal choice and people need to understand that the consequences are real,” Kohler said.



- 1 PETE – water bottles, mouthwash bottles, peanut butter jars
- 2 HDPE – milk jugs, detergent bottles, grocery bags
- 3 V – clear food packaging, shower curtains, children’s toys
- 4 LDPE – bread bags, squeezable bottles, dry cleaning bags
- 5 PP – straws, bottle caps, dishware
- 6 PS – egg cartons, meat trays, CD/video cases
- 7 Other – 3 and 5 gallon water jugs, gas containers, sunglasses



Facilities Management started AU Cares in 2009. This program encourages students to donate reusable items and non-perishable food at the end of the academic year.

Kohler said, “If you don’t want [it], donate [it].”

The donated items are then sent to local charities. Last year, they were given to Living Waters Ministry and the Ashland County Cancer Association. Since the beginning of this program, AU Cares has donated over 33 thousand pounds of items. The preservation of the environment does not have to wait until Earth Day.

On March 24 from 8:30-9:30pm, Earth Hour encourages people across the world to unplug everything and power down as much as they can.

“Even though the appliance is not on, but plugged in, you’ve got phantom energy and it is still energy being used,” Kohler said. “If everybody would make that effort for one hour it could end up being a lifestyle change.”

The long-term effects of acknowledging the reality of Earth Hour and Earth Day will impact the world for current and future generations, making it a gift no one knew they needed.