

Feminism and Feminist Resources At Harvard by Ellora Dellencourt

Radcliffe Union of Students

The Radcliffe Union of Students (RUS) is a mechanism through which all female undergraduates at Harvard may have their voices heard. RUS is an organization devoted to discussing and acting upon all issues important to women. We conduct panels, weekly dinner discussion groups, and events that ensure that the voices of all women are heard. In the past we provided grant money to organizations with women's issues as their primary focus. In light of the merger it is unclear whether we will continue in that capacity, but we hope to do so.

Our goals include getting more tenured women faculty, increasing publicity about issues pertinent to women at Harvard, holding panel discussions on women's issues, starting a first-year outreach program, and much much more!

We seek to address the fact that the administration often does not find it necessary to make undergraduate female voices heard. Our mentorship and outreach to first-year women will link them to an upperclasswomen and hopefully spark friendship and lend a nurturing hand to those new to Harvard. We would also like to host panel discussions during Frosh Week in which women's issues can be discussed. RUS wants the diverse women's community at Harvard College to be brought together and welcomed every year into a women-friendly environment. We are dedicated to bringing women's issues to the forefront of campus discussions at Harvard.

Mission Accomplished— RUS and other women's organizations at Harvard have established at long last a new Women's Center on campus!

RUS History *(as submitted to the Women's Guide to Harvard, June 2001)*

At a time when there is no longer any such thing as a Radcliffe student, the Radcliffe Union of students seems a meaningless anachronism. Why should a group that, by the terms of the 1999 merger between Harvard and Radcliffe, cannot have any official contact with Radcliffe choose to name itself after that institution? There are several reasons why this name is still meaningful, for various reasons that, in an ideal world, would, like the title itself, be anachronistic. These reasons, however, are woven into the history of RUS and into the troubled history of women at Harvard.

Radcliffe's transition from an independent undergraduate college for women to a non-degree granting institute for advanced study with no students at all happened in two major steps. After being founded as the Harvard Annex in 1879, the institution soon-to-be-known-as Radcliffe accommodated female students but never actually had its own faculty. In Radcliffe Yard, female students were taught in gender-segregated classrooms by the same professors who taught Harvard students in Harvard Yard. The path to full coeducation began during World War II as classrooms were integrated, and moved further

forward at the beginning of the 1970's when men and women slowly began to live together. The first of Radcliffe's two major steps away from undergraduate education took place in 1977, with the "non-merger merger" agreement, by which Radcliffe ceded much of its educational responsibilities to Harvard. Women were still admitted to "Harvard-Radcliffe" and received a different diploma from men when they graduated. The second phase of the process took place in 1999 with an official merger fully transforming Radcliffe into the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, and removing "Radcliffe" from admissions certificates and diplomas.

The Radcliffe Union of Students was founded in 1969 partially in response to the difficulties women faced as the men's and women's colleges grew closer and closer. It intended to provide a student government more independent of sometimes overbearing administrative influences than the parallel Radcliffe Government Association. As the preamble to RUS' constitution reads: "We, the students of Radcliffe College, to maintain its identity as a distinct institution, and to represent, support, and encourage the interests of undergraduate women at Harvard University, have organized ourselves into a Union of Students." Since it was conceived with those words, RUS has made numerous changes still intimately felt by all Harvard undergraduates. The group was a major force, for example, in effecting the abolition of parietal rules, the restrictions that limited the hours of coeducational mingling in dorms and enforced curfews that would now seem absurd to undergrads. RUS also helped incite the campaign and continue the struggle for a committee on Women's Studies—a program that Harvard was the last Ivy to establish. As early as the '70's, RUS was also struggling to increase the University's still-abysmal number of tenured women. Harvard's sexual harassment policy and current security measures (like better lighting and escort services) are also due in part to RUS activism. A Women's Center, located in Phillips Brooks House, was established for sometime during the '70's, also thanks to the group.

These historical campaigns do not only suggest, however, that RUS was an important force in the past, when Radcliffe students were a disempowered minority, but also give us an idea of how necessary a group like it is in the present. Harvard was until now the only Ivy without some kind of space for women—a Women's Center. [In 2004, only 4 of 32 tenured positions went to women in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.] The Committee on Women's Studies still lacks departmental status and the power to give tenured positions. These are only examples, but clearly the struggle for equal coeducation has not yet been won. The mission of the current Radcliffe Union of Students, to be a visible feminist presence on Harvard's campus, follows in the tradition of this effort. We hope that the name of Radcliffe will continue to evoke a tenacious tradition of Radcliffe women—both to keep the history and current condition of women at Harvard vocal, visible, and alive, and to buttress, with their strength and experiences, our own participation in this long struggle.

by Jessica Rosenberg, RUS member class of 2004, June 2001

What's in a name?

Part of the reason for our name is just history: RUS used to be the student governing body

of Radcliffe College, much like the Undergraduate Council today. Between the 1977 agreement and the 1999 merger of Harvard and Radcliffe, RUS got \$5 from every woman undergraduate's term bill, which we then redistributed to women's groups on campus.

After the 1999 merger we saw no need to change our name, since the college had stated there was no need for any student groups to remove Radcliffe from their names. We keep the name although all of our members are students at Harvard, and Harvard alone. We keep the name to remember the women who came before us: who had to clean rooms of Harvard students, who were not allowed into Harvard's Faculty Club, who could not enter Lamont Library until the late 1960's. Most of all we keep the name to remind us that Harvard has not always had any kind of commitment to educating women, and that with that lack of tradition we must be constantly watchful. There is still a long way to go.

by Lisa Vogt, RUS member class of 2001, 2000

Famous Radcliffe Alumnae

Alberta Scott, 1898 – first African American to graduate from Radcliffe

Margaret Atwood, 1947 - author 1962 masters degree from Radcliffe

Benazir Bhutto, ex-Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Melissa Block, radio journalist, Co-host, All Things Considered

Caitlin Carson, actress

Stockard Channing, actress, famous for her roles in Grease and The West Wing

Amy Gutmann, Current president of the University of Pennsylvania

Abigail Folger, 1964 - American heiress and murder victim.

Helen Keller, deafblind writer, activist

Ursula K. Le Guin, American writer, poet

Elizabeth (Sadie) Holloway Marston, M.A. 1921 - co-creator of the comic book character, Wonder Woman

Anne McCaffrey, 1947 - Science fiction author

Gertrude Stein, American writer, poet, playwright and feminist

Abby Sutherland, cum laude graduate, head mistress, president, and owner of The Ogontz School for Girls. Sutherland deeded the school to Penn State in 1950.

Charlotte Wilder, M.A. - poet and eldest sister of Thornton Wilder

Resources

Feminist Bookstores in MASSACHUSETTS:

Center for New Words

in transition

The Center for New Words continues to sponsor regular events.

newwords@world.std.com

<http://www.centerfornewwords.org/>

Radzukina's Gifts for Womyn

714 North Broadway

Haverhill MA 01832
978-521-1333

Pride & Joy *

20 Crafts Ave.
Northampton MA 01060
413-585-0683
Fax: 413-584-4848
Info@nohoprideandjoy.com
www.nohoprideandjoy.com

Third Wave Feminist Bookseller

42A Green St.
Northampton, MA 01060
413-586-7851

Recovering Hearts Book and Gift Store

2 & 4 StandishSt.
Provincetown MA 02657
508-487-4875
Fax 508-487-1445

Womencrafts Inc. *

376 Commercial St. / Box 190
Provincetown MA 02657
508-487-2501
Fax 508-487-2629
info@womencrafts.com
http://www.womencrafts.com

Radical Resources in the Area:

www.inciteboston.blogspot.com/
www.lucyparsons.org
www.commchurch.org
45 Mt Auburn St
Campus Women's Center (Canaday Basement, B-Entryway)