

Goddeses, Whores, and Women Physicians: Gender Bias throughout history

By Niran S. Al-Agba, MD

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A Riddle

A young boy and his father are on their way home from soccer practice when a distracted driver crosses the center line and hits them head-on. The father dies at the scene, but the injured boy is transported by ambulance to the hospital and taken immediately into surgery.

The on-call surgeon steps out of the operating room and says, "I can't operate on this boy. He's my son!"

How can this be?

Objectives: Understand Implicit Bias

- A set of ingrained beliefs affecting our unconscious decisions and actions.
- comes from the messages, outlook, and principles internalized from the world we live in.
- predicts our behavior
- Our implicit biases line up with social hierarchies.

Women are judged on perceived weaknesses; males on perceived strengths.

Descriptive

- Assumptions about how men and women ARE
- Men are assertive and direct
- Women are nurturing and agreeable

Prescriptive

- Assumptions about how men and women SHOULD behave
- If either gender violate prescribed gender behaviors, they suffer social reprisals.
- Women are often accused of being “bossy, domineering, or hard to work with” when they work in male-dominated professions

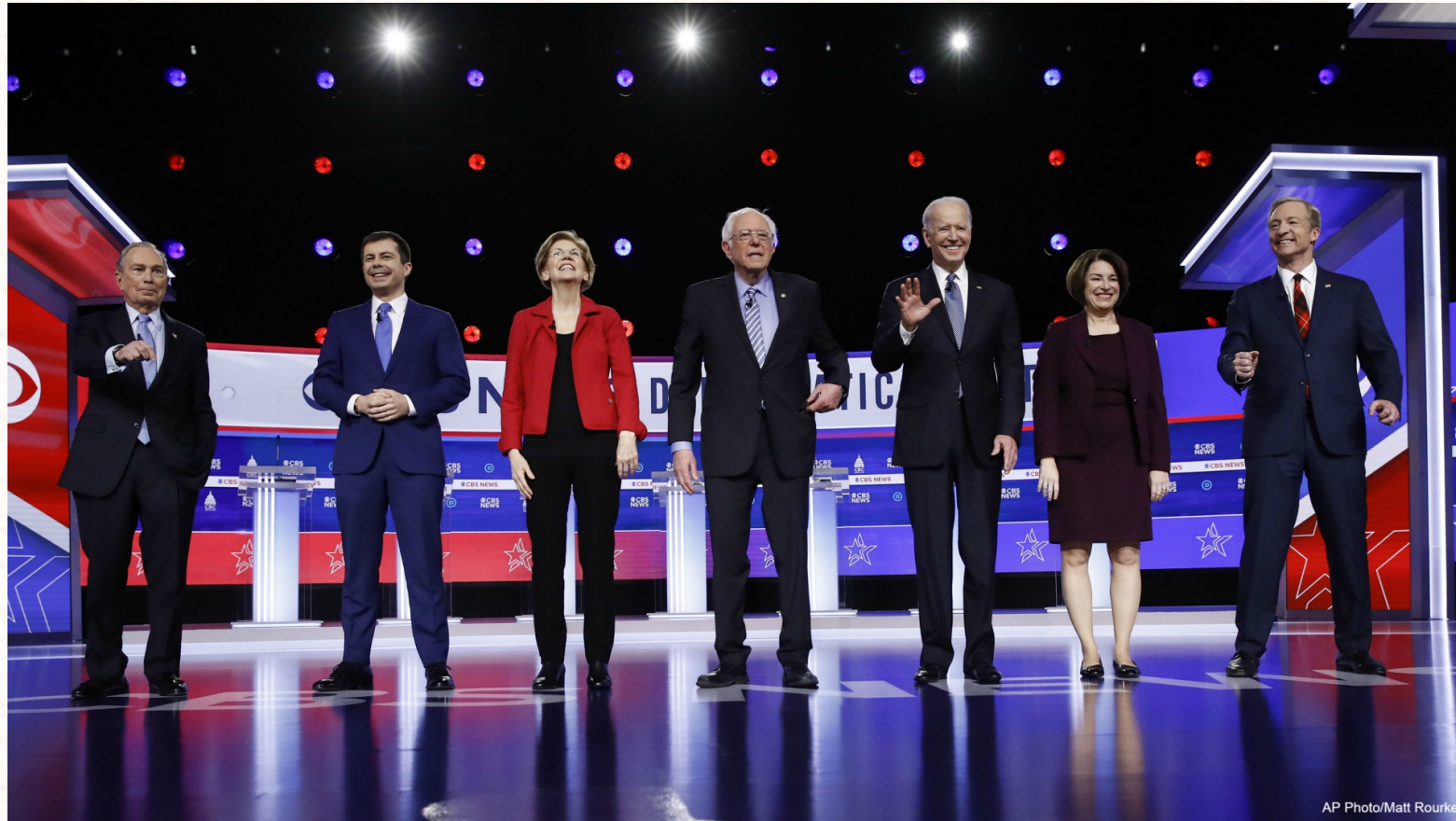
Close your eyes & Form a picture in your mind of:

1. Ferry Boat Captain
2. U.S. President
3. Doctor

*“Bedtime” by Chris Ware
New Yorker Magazine April 6, 2020.*



December 2019 Presidential Debate Stage



AP Photo/Matt Rourke

Why do women
apologize for being
themselves?

Our history, from antiquity to modern day,
holds answers...

... Using non-traditional female roles to explore the basis for
deeply ingrained stereotypes about:

Goddesses, Whores, and Women Physicians

Despite having more women in the workforce, women's annual median earnings are 20% lower than men's.

Why?

Discrimination
accounts for 38%
of gender pay gap

26/30 highest paying
jobs, are male-
dominated.

23/30 lowest paying
jobs, are female-
dominated



Work done by women is not as highly valued as work done by men.

Gender Stereotyping. A *habit* of ingrained thoughts and beliefs

The Ever-Present Double Standard:

Be seen and not heard. Look Pretty but not too smart. Be agreeable and not domineering.

The Hippocratic Oath: Tunnel Vision



I swear by Apollo Physician, by Asclepius, by Health, by Panacea, and by all the gods and goddesses, making them my witnesses, that I will carry out, according to my ability and judgment, this oath and this indenture.

(Hippocrates)

lzquotes.com

Originally, Greek mythology was female-dominant.

Gaea, the first earth goddess.

Uranus (heaven) and Gaia (earth) produced the Titans.

Uranus hates his children & hides them.

Gaea convinces son Cronus to castrate Uranus with a sickle.

Rhea marries her brother Cronus; they produce the first generation of Olympians.

Cronus swallows his children

Gaea and Rhea aid Zeus to overthrow his father.

Painting by Clara-Ivana



Zeus, Alpha Male archetype

Fostered an unsympathetic view of women. They should be beautiful.....though never trusted

Hera, Queen of Olympus

Wife and sister of Zeus.

Goddess of Marriage.

Jealous & vengeful towards lovers of Zeus.

Statue known as Barberini Hera



Athena:
Goddess of Wisdom

An archetype of the
masculine woman.

Born directly of Zeus

Identifies with males,
suspicious of women

A warrior, protector, armed
with a shield, spear, and
helmet

*Athena and Pegasus by
Theodoor van Thulden*



Artemis – Goddess of the Hunt and Moon

Primarily concerned with fertility and health, including menstruation, childbirth.

She devised numerous schemes to avoid marriage.

The keystone to her independence is her lack of permanent connection to a male figure.

The statue was given by Pope Paul IV to Henry II of France in 1556 with a subtle but inescapable allusion to the king's mistress, Diane de Poitiers.



Aphrodite – Goddess of Love

Represents physical beauty,
sexual love and of course,
fertility

Considered frivolous and
deceitful, as all sexually
attractive women must be.

*Statuette of Aphrodite Leaning on a
Pillar, Unknown, 250 - 200 B.C.,
From the collection of: The J. Paul
Getty Museum*



The Graces

The Daughters produced by Zeus and Eurynome, his third wife were the three Graces, which represented life pleasures, such as beauty, charm and creativity.

By Carl Pursell



The Olympians set the stage as the feminine ideal.

Hora, plural *Horae*, were daughters of Zeus.

Goddesses of natural order, time and seasons.

A marble panel in the Louvre.



Whores: “The World’s Oldest Profession”

The Whore of Babylon, Ishtar, the Mother of Harlots, is the goddess of sexual activity and fertility.

She is immortalized as the first prostitute in the literature.

Sitting in the Louvre, dated 2000 BC



Social Hierarchies are as
entrenched in prostitution as
they were in Greek
Mythology.

“Sacred” Prostitutes
having intercourse
with males were
thought to be
imitating the female
principle of “nature,”
like the Horae.

Sumerian records dating back to 2400 BC
describe high priestesses copulating with
kings.

The Babylonian marriage market, 1875
Edwin Long



Ancient Greece and Rome: 8th Century BC – 5th Century AD

“We have courtesans for pleasure, concubines to provide for our daily needs, and our spouses to give us legitimate children and to be the faithful guardians of our homes.

Demosthenes, a Greek Statesman and orator during 4th century BC.

Painting by Eugène Delacroix



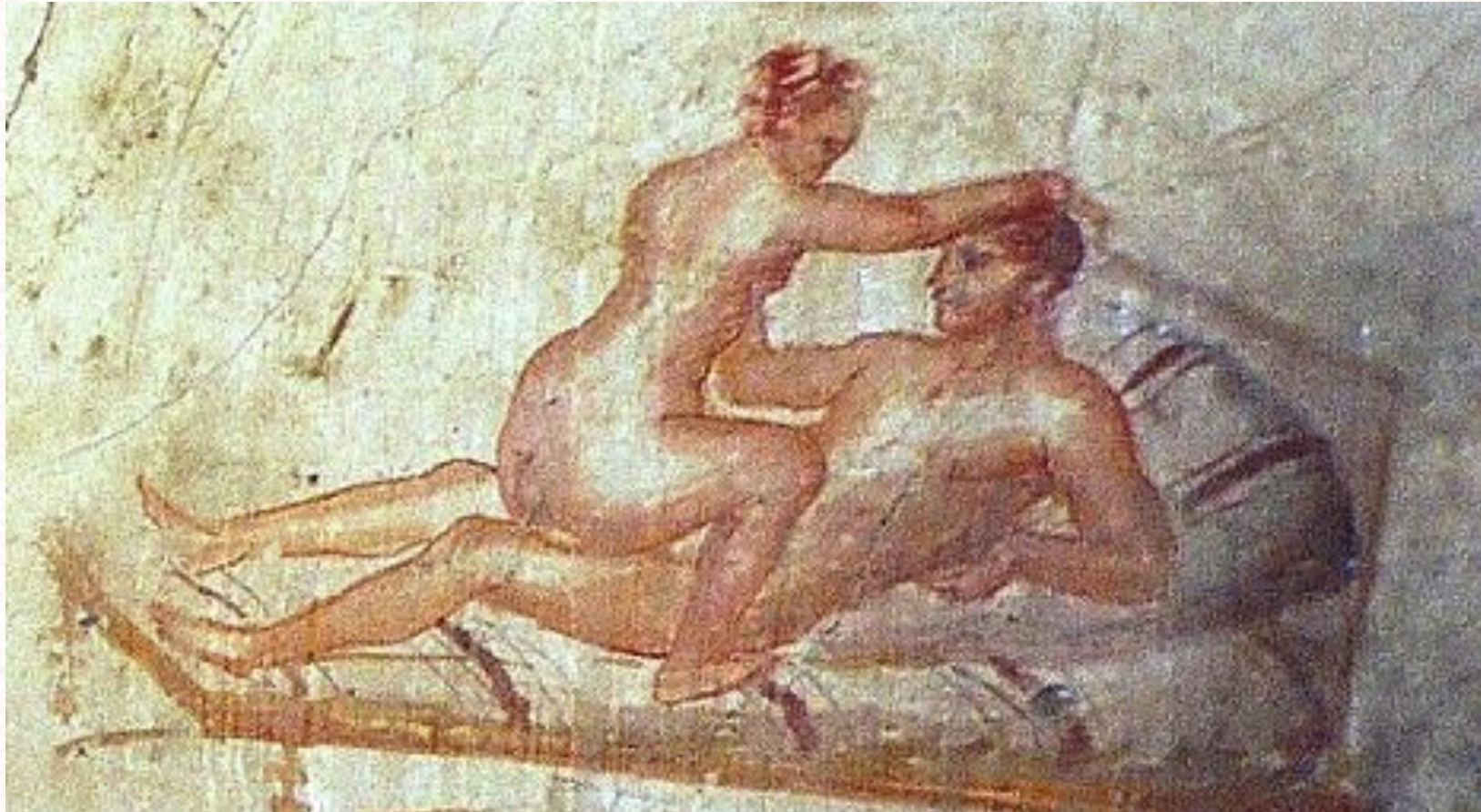
Hierarchies Deeply Entrenched Everywhere

- Famosae: from well-off families, who chose to sell their bodies usually for extra money or to influence politics by using powerful men.
- Lorettes : charming women, foreign, beautiful and expensive
- Doris: had enchanting figures, disliked clothes, and paraded about nude.
- Lupae : “she wolves” trolling parks, howling to attract customers
- Noctilae: walked the streets only at night (part-timers)
- Bustuariae hung around burial grounds and were called “grave watchers”
- Copae: were servant girls at inns and taverns
- Gallinae: were thieves as well as prostitutes.

The Lupanar, a large brothel found in Pompeii, attests to the practice of prostitution in Rome.



The Oldest Profession in the World



Spintria were Roman tokens, found at Pompeii, assumed to pay prostitutes for varied services.



Constantine and Christianity

The idea that prostitution is immoral takes hold as religion gains prominence.

- “Prisons are built with stones of law; brothels with bricks of religion.” — William Blake, 1757-1827, English poet & painter.
- Constantine believed prostitution threatened civil tranquility or morality.
- In 320 AD, Constantine destroyed Ishtar’s temples, abolished “sacred” prostitution, and built Christian churches.

The Dichotomy for Women in Christianity

The 2 most important women in the Bible:

1. Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ.
2. Mary Magdalene

A painting depicting the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Peterskirche, Vienna, Austria



Mary Magdalene

Gospel writers portrayed prostitutes as poor and exploited.

Her story emphasizes the challenges of a woman making her way in the world alone without male guidance.

She is significant. Discovers the empty grave of Jesus. She is the first to witness the resurrection of Jesus.

Mary Magdalen in the Cave, Jules
Joseph Lefebvre, 1876



Bathsheba

Her beauty attracts the attention of David while sunbathing.

“So David sent messengers, and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her.”

David and Bathsheba by Louis-Jean-Francois Lagrene



The Middle Ages

Begins with the fall of Rome in 496 and ends with discovery of the New World in 1492.

The Roman Catholic Church regarded all sexual activity outside of marriage as a sin.



French prostitutes being taken to the police station.
painting by Etienne Jeaurat

14th Century

As religious power grew, women were accused of Witchcraft.

Witch hunting quickly spread from Germany, Italy, then to France and finally England.

St. Joan of Arc (c. 1412–31), French patriot and martyr. Tried for heresy and sorcery, she was burned at the stake in a marketplace at Rouen, France, on May 30, 1431.



The Malleus Maleficarum, The Hammer of Witches, 1486

“No one does more harm to the
Catholic Church than midwives.”
-Kramer and Sprenger, authors of the
Malleus Maleficarum (the Witches
Hammer)

THE THIRD PART
RELATING TO THE
JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS IN
BOTH THE ECCLESIASTICAL
AND CIVIL COURTS
AGAINST WITCHES AND
INDEED ALL HERETICS

CONTAINING XXXV QUESTIONS IN
WHICH IS MOST CLEARLY SET OUT THE
FORMAL RULES FOR INITIATING A
PROCESS OF JUSTICE, HOW IT SHOULD
BE CONDUCTED, AND THE METHOD OF
PRONOUNCING SENTENCE

15th Century –the Age of Venereal Disease

A Harem in the Ottoman
Empire

In the Harem by Fabio Fabbi



Hierarchy Persists Through the Victorian Era

Syphilis affected both men and women, yet its hardship was inflicted on women and not men.

Police “scoured the streets for prostitutes,” after Contagious Disease Acts went into affect.

Any poor woman “identified” as a prostitute was ordered to submit to examination or be imprisoned.





**AMERICAN
DREAM**



A Hierarchy of Women persists...

Tolerating a behavior in males that is not tolerated in females entrenches social hypocrisy.

The same double standard that frowns on female promiscuity, grimaces at the idea of assertive woman in the workplace.

Julia Bulette, a prostitute, managed to achieve “respectable” status.



Women Physicians

How Do We Dismantle
Hierarchies?

Through a changing habits, not
necessarily attitudes



The Rod of Aesculapius
the ancient god of
medicine.

A snake curled around a
staff.

Medicine is entrenched in male
symbolism.

*This marble statue of Asclepius can
be seen in the "Braccio Nuovo" of
the Vatican Museums, Rome. When
William Osler visited the Vatican
Museums, in February 1909, he
admired this statue.*



The US Army Medical Corps accidentally, adopted the caduceus symbol in 1902 for US Army medical officer uniforms.

The Caduceus is depicted by two snakes and a pair of wings,
And is the staff of the Greek god Hermes.



The Caduceus mistake emphasizes male “attributes.”

Many figures carried the Caduceus. Priapus, a minor fertility god, protector of livestock, gardens, and male genitalia.

Like Mercury, he wears winged sandals and holds a caduceus wand.



Priapus depicted on a fresco found at Pompeii, between 89 BC and 79 AD, Naples National Archaeological Museum.

Priapus was known for his huge, permanently erect penis, known today as priapism.



What Does a
Physician Look
Like?

#Ilooklikeasurgeon



“Women have always been healers...For centuries women were doctors without degrees, barred from books and lectures, learning from each other, and passing on experience from neighbor to neighbor and mother to daughter. They were called “wise women” by people, witches or charlatans by the authorities. **Medicine is part of our heritage as women, our history, our birthright.**”

-Barbara Ehrenreich, “Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A history of women healers.” 1973

Women in Medicine: 5 Firsts in Their Nations
BY Miss Cellania April 23, 2015

“Our heritage as women, our history, our birthright.”

Dorothea Erxleben
first woman MD in Germany.

Her father, a doctor, supported education of women, petitioned Frederick the Great to allow his daughter to attend classes.

A relatively enlightened monarch, Frederick's granted the request, and Dorothea attended the University of Halle but they did not let her take final exams and graduate.

A Google Doodle in honor of her 300th
Birthday, Nov. 13, 2015



**“Our heritage as women,
our history, our birthright.”**

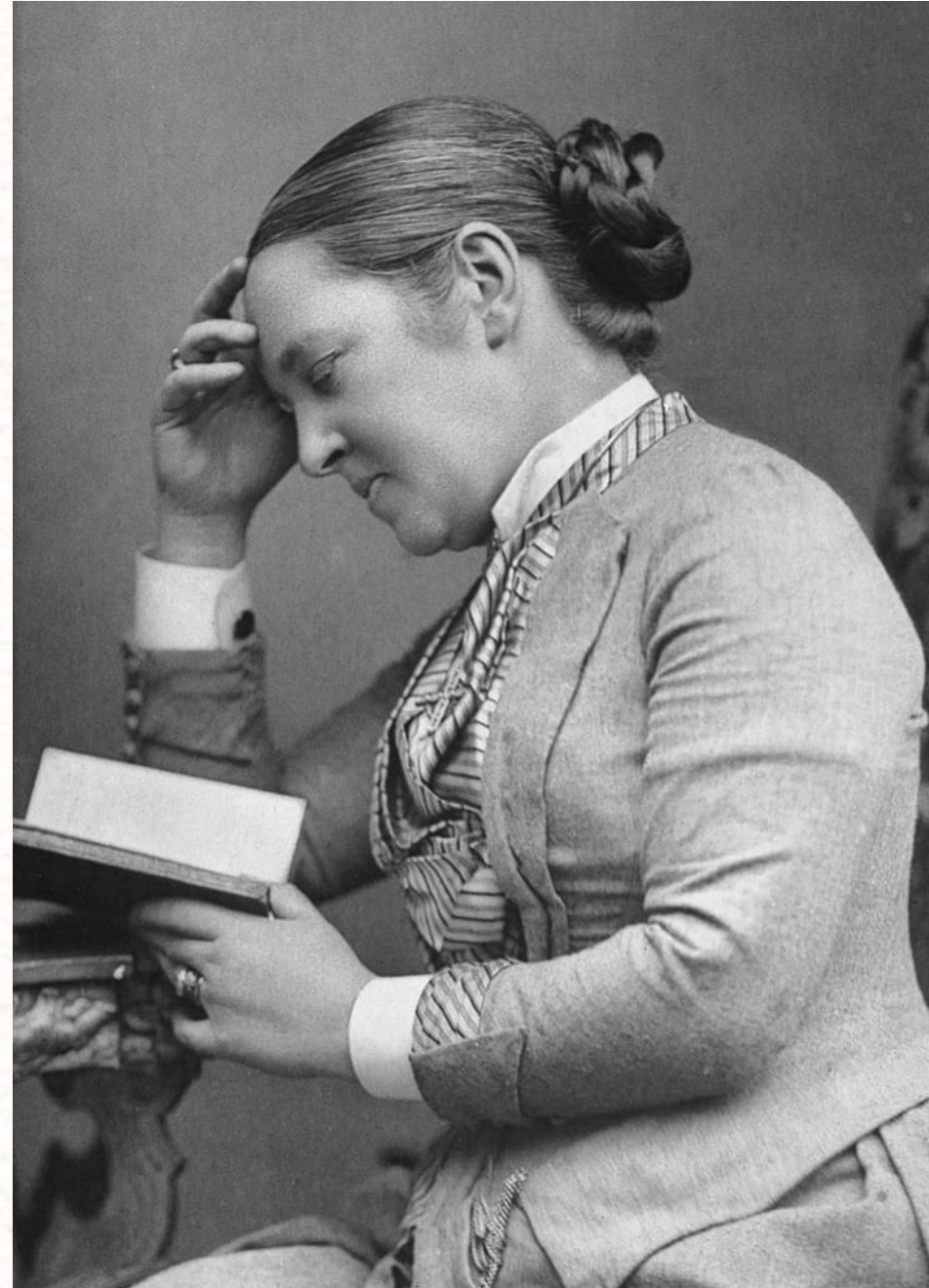
Elizabeth Garrett Anderson : first
woman MD in England in 1865.

Rejected by many medical schools, she
studied to be a nurse while working on
her admittance.

Anderson discovered the Society of
Apothecaries had no rules against
women doctors.

She took and passed the apothecary
exams, allowing her to become a
doctor.

Then, the Society officially barred
women from taking the exams.



Our heritage as women, our history, our birthright.”

Maria Montessori

the first Italian woman to earn a medical degree.

Montessori defied convention regarding education in a conservative country.

Pope Leo XIII intervened to enroll in the University of Rome's medical program.

When she graduated in 1896, the printing template for diplomas were altered to accommodate her gender.



U.S. Women Physicians

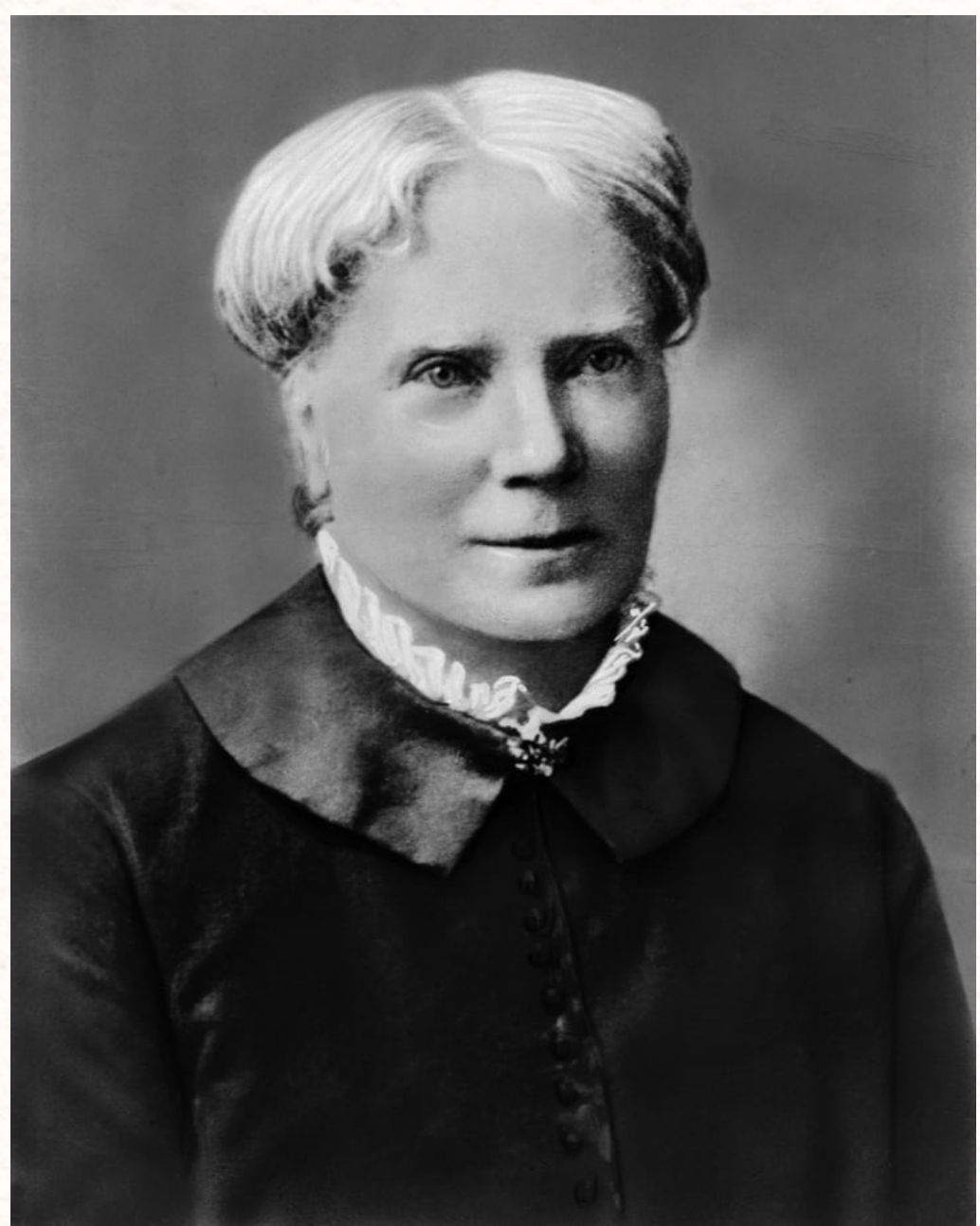
The strongest, most dedicated women who managed to acquire their degree deserve to be remembered for their fortitude. These early pioneers opened the doors for many woman physicians, including myself, who followed in their footsteps.

**“Our heritage as women,
our history, our
birthright.”**

Elizabeth Blackwell was the first woman in America to receive a medical degree.

She studied with doctors, yet her applications to medical school Blackwell applied to medical schools, and was rejected by dozens of them.

Geneva Medical College
“accidentally” accepted her in
1847.



**“Our heritage as women,
our history, our birthright.”**

Ann Preston

After working as an apprentice to a doctor, she applied and was rejected by four medical schools in Philadelphia—as were all females.

In 1850, she enrolled in the first class at the Female Medical College of Pennsylvania and graduated 18 months later, serving as a professor at the school.



**“Our heritage as women, our history,
our birthright.”**

Dr. Mary Edwards Walker

After graduating from medical school in 1855, Walker volunteered for the Union Army as she was not allowed to enlist.

She treated the wounded at the First Battle of Bull Run and became a field surgeon.

Walker was taken as a POW by the Confederacy and held several months in 1864.

In 1865, at the behest of President Lincoln, Walker was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, for her efforts at the First Battle of Bull Run, the only woman ever to have received this honor.



“Our heritage as women, our history, our birthright.”

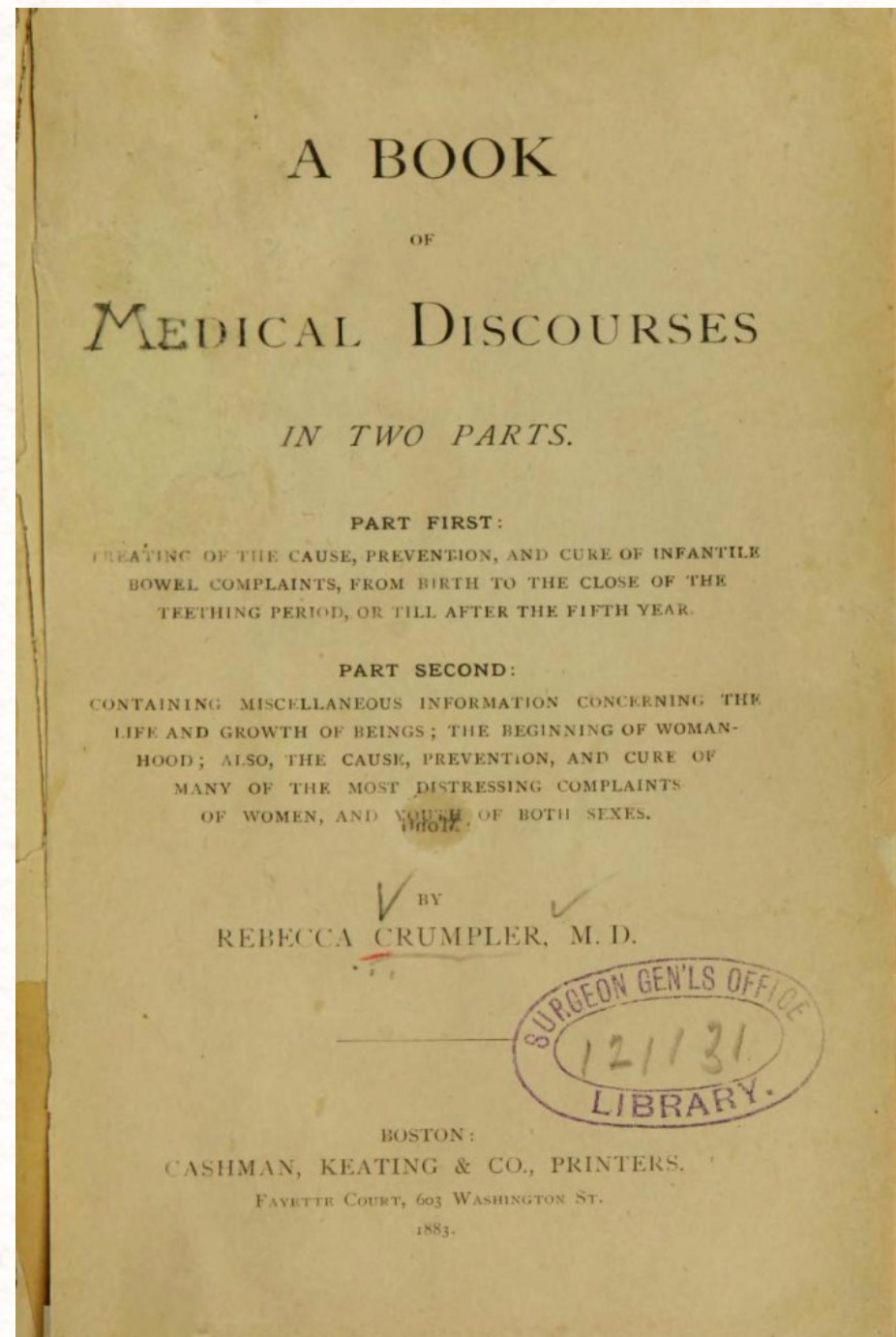
Rebecca Lee Crumpler

First Black woman to earn an MD in the U.S.

In 1864, she graduated from the New England Female Medical College and married Arthur Crumpler.

After the Civil War, Dr. Crumpler served medical needs of freed slaves working for the Freedman’s Bureau in Richmond, Virginia.

Until recently, Dr. Crumpler was buried in an unmarked grave.



The Hierarchy: “Women can either menstruate or educate, but they cannot do both.” - Edward Clarke



- In 1873, Harvard professor Clarke published “Sex in Education; or, A Fair Chance For Girls.”
- Despite the title, “a fair chance” meant to discourage higher education for women because,
- *“There have been instances, and I have seen such, of females... graduated from school or college excellent scholars, but with undeveloped ovaries. Later they married and were sterile.”*
- Clarke’s rationale was it was dangerous for a woman to menstruate and think at the same time.

“Our heritage as women, our history, Our birthright.”

Mary Putnam Jacobi

earned an MD at Woman’s Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1864 (at 22),

Jacobi used empirical data to refute Clarke’s views and presented her findings without emotion or personal opinion.

“There is nothing in the nature of menstruation to imply the necessity, or even the desirability, of rest.”



“I SHALL ALWAYS FIGHT GOOD AND HARD, EVEN IF I HAVE TO FIGHT ALONE.” –Susan La Flesche Picotte



- First Indigenous female physician in the U.S.
- She was valedictorian graduating in 1889, after three-years of study.
- She was the quintessential family physician, serving in limitless capacity for her people, the Omaha.
- She focused on public health, fought for Omaha land rights, wrote for her local newspaper, and never gave up the fight for social justice.
- <https://drsusancenter.org/restoration-project>

Drivers of Discrimination Against Women Physicians

Implicit Bias: Women should be pretty,
well-behaved and nurturing.

“Well Behaved Women Rarely Make
History.”

- 1. Broad Cultural Norms
- 2. Culture of Medicine
- 3. Maternal Discrimination

Why do real-life images of female surgeons in scrubs or camouflage-clad soldiers make us more uncomfortable than the highly sexualized images of warriors, like Wonder Woman?

...because we did not question it.

Boob Armor:

a form-fitting breastplate complete with bra cups designed for sexuality rather than fighting.



No person in the United States shall, based on sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

Despite 50 years, women remain under-represented in professional leadership positions.

30 years of research confirms gender stereotypes harm women in leadership positions at academic institutions.



The Glass Ceiling:

introduced more than 40 years ago, refers to an invisible, systemic barrier that prevents women from rising to senior leadership.



The “Broken Rung”

Our biggest obstacle --getting stuck at the entry level and not promoted to management.

It is NOT a pipeline problem. Women are less likely to be promoted.

In 1995, the number of women enrolling in U.S. medical schools was equivalent to males for the first time.



Academic Institutions

- Professional titles influence perceived expertise.
- A study of the introduction of speakers for medical grand rounds in the specialty of internal medicine.
- When females introduce male speakers, professional titles were used 95.0% (57/60) of the time.
- When males introduce female speakers, professional titles are utilized only 49.2% (31/63) of the time ($p < 0.001$).
- Differences like this may amplify marginalization and undermine self-confidence of women faculty in academic medicine.

“I was told by nursing
administration I should
smile more.”

Female Physician as part of qualitative analysis research on
workplace discrimination.

Society holds
preconceived notions
about how women
should behave.

“Stereotype Susceptibility” – a
phenomenon where an implicit belief
alters performance in the same
direction predicted by that stereotype.



“Only” Women have it the Hardest.

She recalled her years as the solitary female justice were “the worst times,” in a 2014 interview.

“The image to the public entering the courtroom was eight men, of a certain size, and then this little woman sitting to the side. That was not a good image for the public to see.”

Eventually she was joined by two other women, both named by Mr. Obama: Sonia Sotomayor in 2009 and Elena Kagan in 2010.



Culture of Medicine

Medicine is considered "one of the loneliest professions."

Implicit Bias: Female physicians are "bossy" and "difficult to work with."

- 80% of professional women experience harassment
- 70% of female medical students experienced gender discrimination during medical school (clerkships.)
- Gender bias persists in medicine because most are unaware of its existence.
- Female physicians are 46 percent more likely to die by suicide than women in general, according to a meta-analysis of nine studies published in JAMA.

Culture in Medicine

Norms and expectations of women's financial or family role

Physician mothers experience of workplace discrimination: a qualitative analysis. BMJ Dec 2018.

- “Administrators have said, ‘you should just stay home and be a mom’ as well as ‘your husband makes enough money; why do you work?’” – Participant 64
- “My first chair gave the man... who I supervised, the title of director of clinical services. My boss explained that I would still do the job but the title needed to go to him so that he could give him a raise because his wife just had her second baby and wanted to stay home and that was a lifestyle my boss wanted to promote.” – Participant 4

Gender Biased Adjectives

“Hard to Work With”

“Unreasonable”

“Manipulative”

The infographic features a central graphic with a purple silhouette of a woman on the left and a blue silhouette of a man on the right. Above the woman is a purple arrow pointing left with the text 'ADJECTIVES ASSOCIATED WITH WOMEN'. Below the man is a blue arrow pointing right with the text 'ADJECTIVES ASSOCIATED WITH MEN'. Lists of adjectives are placed on either side of the silhouettes.

| ADJECTIVES ASSOCIATED WITH WOMEN | ADJECTIVES ASSOCIATED WITH MEN |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Unexcitable | Adventurous |
| Affected | Aggressive |
| Affectionate | Ambitious |
| Appreciative | Assertive |
| Attractive | Autocratic |
| Charming | Boastful |
| Complaining | Coarse |
| Dependent | Confident |
| Dreamy | Courageous |
| Emotional | Cruel |
| Excitable | Daring |
| Feminine | Disorderly |
| Fickle | Dominant |
| Flirtatious | Enterprising |
| Frivolous | Forceful |
| Fussy | Handsome |
| Gentle | Independent |
| High-strung | Jolly |
| Meek | Logical |
| Mild | Loud |
| Nagging | Masculine |
| Prudish | Rational |
| Rattlebrained | Realistic |
| Sensitive | Robust |
| Sentimental | Self-confident |
| Softhearted | Severe |
| Sophisticated | Stable |
| Submissive | Steady |
| Talkative | Stern |
| Weak | Strong |
| Whiny | Tough |
| | Unemotional |

“The Bitch”

- In 2003, a local ER physician consulted me regarding a pediatric patient.
- I recommended a lab test.
- This white, male physician asked me “why I am always “such a “bitch.”
- I hung up the phone.
- A week later, Dr. Belding, Harrison’s CMO at the time, suggested I “behave myself, if I wanted to be well liked” in a closed door meeting.
- I requested not to be called derogatory names. Belding shrugged and said he did not think this physician would change.

Culture in Medicine

1317 direct observation
evaluations by ER faculty

- One female resident receive No negative comments about her personality, vs. 50% of the males
- 62% of women were criticized for not having the right personality traits, whereas only 36% of the male residents received this feedback.
- Males received very consistent positive and negative feedback whereas women feedback were nowhere close to consistent.
 - “Emma is receptive to feedback and asks good questions.” (Female)
 - “Emma can improve by being more open to feedback and constructive criticism.” (Male)
 - “Emma needs to be more assertive.” (Male)
 - “Emma argues a lot with the attending.” (Female)

Culture of Medicine

Microaggressions:
Forms of everyday
discrimination
grounded in bias

- Whether intentional or not, microaggressions are often directed at those with less power.
- Women of color and those with disabilities are more likely to face demeaning remarks about themselves or others.
- Negative experiences add up over time to have a significant impact.
- Women experiencing microaggressions are three times more likely to think about leaving their job.

Culture in Medicine

“The Princess”

- When a physician needs help from another physician, it is best for patient care to do a doctor-to-doctor call.
 - It allows the consultant to understand the details of a patient case.
 - Prevents complications
- Many OB’s had ward clerks call and say, “you are needed” without any information. It put patients at risk.
- I did not accept a consult requests without hearing from a clinician, such as the nurse, doctor, or personnel involved.
- Dr. Zarnecki began calling me “The Princess” in order to convey his disdain when I took a stand.

Maternal Discrimination

There is an insidious, persistent and blatant discrimination experienced by female physicians based on their status as mothers.



Maternal
Discrimination

Implicit Bias

- Doctors cannot be good mothers
- Women physicians should delay childbearing
- Physician mothers do not value their careers
- Childbearing ruins women physician's careers

Maternal Discrimination

*Physician mothers experience
of workplace discrimination:
a qualitative analysis. BMJ
Dec 2018*

- As a third year medical student, a male attending told me I had to decide if I was going to be a good mother or a good doctor, but I couldn't be both – Participant 13
- Had a miscarriage (bleeding through my clothes) in the OR and my senior resident wouldn't find someone to relieve me because he 'didn't believe I was sick.' – Participant 16

Maternal Discrimination Outcomes

- Limited Advancement Opportunities
 - Pregnancy or maternity leave causes exclusion from administrative decision making, passed over for promotion, and job termination.
- Financial Inequalities
 - Asked to take on more work without pay to “make up” for lost time despite the fact leave was unpaid
- Lack of support in Pregnancy and Postpartum Period
 - Calling maternity leave a “vacation”
 - “Punishing” women for their pregnancy, maternity leave, or need to pump breast milk.
 - 40% of female physicians are working part-time within 6 years after completing residency training, in large part because they are mothers of young children.

Solving Old Problems requires New Strategies

- Acknowledge implicit gender bias is a *habit*. Habits can be changed.
- Women in positions of power must call attention to gender-based inequity.
- Change the narrative describing women who do their job.
- Evaluate competence, rather than physical appearance, including facial expressions, clothing, and makeup.

Goals

“A rising tide lifts all boats” –
- John F. Kennedy

- We are all women. Many of us our mothers. We ALL have a responsibility as women to change this for the next generation.
- Make sure our sons accept women as equals in all things: workplace, marriage, and parenting.
- Make sure our daughters accept themselves for who they are and understand what great things they are capable of.
- Be careful not to judge women using a male standard. It would be the wrong one.
- Own your piece of the challenge, with your voice, with your vote, and with your actions
- Be Who You Are. And make the change you wish to see in the world from where you are.
- And before we think our job is done..... look at a recent advertisement from one week ago.

This is what sexism in medicine looks like...

Women physicians, nurses, clinicians,
whores and goddesses deserve respect.
Period.



Fighting Sexism is
about making deep
cuts.

*Picture Courtesy of Dr. Grace Hu,
Physicians Moms Group. 2020*



I am no longer accepting
the things I cannot change.
I am changing the things I
cannot accept.

Thank You.

*Questions?
Thoughts?
Comments?*

niranalagba@gmail.com

Picture of Alyssa Cole, DO



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