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ANNE CONNERS: PANEL ONE - EAST HARLEM GIRLS SCHOOL

Anne Connors

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*Anne Conners **

ANNE CONNERS: First of all, let me introduce myself by saying that I am the president of New York City National Organization of Women ("NOW"). On this issue, in particular, I have journalists and members and public people coming up to me and saying, how can NOW possibly be taking a stance on an all-girl school in East Harlem?

So, at events like this, I feel compelled to reestablish my feminist credentials. Yes, I am a feminist, and I would like to read a statement from Susan B. Anthony,¹ who was a very strong proponent of coed education and whose feminist credentials do not need to be re-established.

Susan B. Anthony was very persistent in going to state teachers conventions where she tried to persuade teachers and officials to adopt coeducational principles.² In 1857 she introduced the following motion in favor of educating boys and girls, men and women, together.

RESOLVED: That since the true and harmonious development of the race demands that the sexes be associated together in every department of life; therefore
RESOLVED: That it is the duty of our schools, colleges and universities to open their doors to women and to give her equal and identical educational advantages side by side with her brother man.³

This seemingly modest resolution caused quite a stir. One

* Anne Conners is the president of the New York City Chapter of the National Organization for Women. She has been active in the organization since she graduated from college in 1984. Under her leadership, NOW has established both a Housing Discrimination and a Job Discrimination Clinic and is currently organizing and leading a coalition of battered women's advocates in a series of meetings with New York District Attorneys in an attempt to address the problem of domestic violence. Conners is a spokesperson for women's issues and has appeared on television and radio.

¹ Susan B. Anthony was born in Adams, Massachusetts, in 1820 and championed the cause of women's suffrage. *ENCYCLOPEDIA AMERICANA*, Vol. 2 (1 ed. 1985) at 39.

² LYNN SHORR, *FAILURE IS IMPOSSIBLE* (1995).

³ *Id.* at 23.

Professor Davies called it “a vast social evil, . . . the first step in the school which seeks to abolish marriage, and behind this picture I see a monster of social deformity.”⁴ The state superintendent of Public Instruction gasped, “Do you mean to say you want boys and girls to room side by side in dormitories? To educate them together can have but one result.”⁵

Indeed, this resolution was defeated, causing Susan B. Anthony's good friend, Elizabeth Cady Stanton⁶ to remark: “I did indeed see by the papers that you had once again stirred that pool of intellectual stagnation, the educational convention.”⁷

The history lesson is important because it reminds us that historically, single-sex schools were not created because educators and think tanks and wealthy philanthropists put their collective heads together and decided that girls would learn better if they were separated from boys. No, single-sex schools for girls were created because girls and young women were discriminated against.⁸ Girls were not allowed into grammar schools with boys,⁹ women weren't allowed into colleges,¹⁰ women weren't allowed into medical school,¹¹ women were not allowed into law school.¹²

⁴ See SHORR, *supra* note 2, at 23.

⁵ *Id.* at 23-24.

⁶ Elizabeth Cady Stanton was born in Johnstown, New York, in 1815 and together with Susan B. Anthony, campaigned extensively to advance the women's rights movement. ENCYCLOPEDIA AMERICANA, Vol. 25 (1 ed. 1985) at 592.

⁷ *Id.* at 24.

⁸ See Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, *The Myths and Justifications of Sex Segregation in Higher Education: VMI and the Citadel*, 4 DUKE J. GENDER L. & POL'Y 101, 115 (1997).

⁹ See generally, Pamela Mitchell, *Who's Idea Was this School Anyway?*, HARTFORD COURANT, Aug. 26, 1997, at E8 (stating that in 1647, Massachusetts required every town with more than 100 families to set up a grammar school to prepare boys for college).

¹⁰ See generally Epstein, *supra* note 8, at 102 (noting how even women of the highest social echelons had a very hard time pursuing higher education).

¹¹ See Mary Roth Walsh, DOCTORS WANTED: NO WOMEN NEED APPLY: SEXUAL BARRIERS IN THE MEDICAL PROFESSION, 268 (1977) (discussing barriers to women in the medical profession); BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, U.S. DEP'T. OF COM., STATISTICAL ABSTRACT OF THE UNITED STATES: 1996 (116th ed.) (1996).

¹² See Cassandra S. Franklin, *A Review of Gender Trials by Jennifer L. Pierce*, 7 UCLA WOMEN'S L.J. 131, 132 (1996).

Feminists in the late 1800's were fighting for integrated schools. Suddenly, a century later when there are but a handful of single-sex public schools in the country, when we have finally made some progress, educators and politicians and parents want to turn the clock back to a time of separate but equal.¹³

The Young Women's Leadership School in East Harlem, a public school, opened with public money, is an attractive idea to many feminists.¹⁴ Finally, something is going to be done to help girls, they think. Finally, inequities in the classroom are going to be addressed.¹⁵

I would respond that, finally, something is being done to help a few girls.¹⁶ There are roughly a million students in the New York City School system, half of whom we can assume are girls.¹⁷ By creating this school, the Board of Education of the City of New York is letting itself off the hook.¹⁸ The board is also letting teachers and superintendents off the

¹³ See, e.g., Richard L. Colvin, *Single-Sex Classes a First for State's Schools*, L.A. TIMES, Aug. 29, 1997, at 1 (stating that prior to the civil rights movement, single-sex education was prevalent in America, and that in recent years, there again has been a push for separate but equal facilities); Ted Reuter, *Girls-Only is OK*, CHRISTIAN SCI. MONITOR, Oct. 23, 1997, at 19 (stating that there is some movement in the direction of separate educational facilities for girls and boys).

¹⁴ See *Morning Edition* (NPR radio broadcast, Nov. 10, 1997) (stating that most feminists support single-sex education, including the Young Women's Leadership School in East Harlem).

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ See, e.g., Liz Willen, *Girls Learn Together: In Harlem School, Young Women Find Everything But the Boys-And Like It*, NEWSDAY, Sep. 9, 1996, at A28 (listing the Young Women's Leadership School's initial enrollment as 50 girls). But see Reuter, *supra* note 13, at 19 (noting that the school's enrollment has risen to 165 for the 1997-98 school year, with plans to expand in each of the next three years).

¹⁷ See Vivian Toy, *Accord Closer on Scrutiny in the Public Schools*, N.Y. TIMES, Aug. 22, 1996, at B3 (noting that the total number of students in the New York City public school system is 1.1 million).

¹⁸ See Jacques Steinberg, *Central Board Backs All-Girls School*, N.Y. TIMES, Aug. 22, 1996, at B3 (noting the Young Women's Leadership School in East Harlem has received unanimous support from New York City Schools Chancellor Rudy Crew and the city's Board of Education because they feel they are giving minority women who are traditionally discriminated against a fighting chance).

hook.¹⁹ With the creation of this school, the system can say, "Well, you know, it is your choice after all. There is an all-girls school if you want to go to it, and see, we really are doing something about the inequity that girls face in the classroom."

Never mind that a 1994 report from the Chancellor's Task Force on Sex Equity found that New York City has been in violation of Title IX for several years due to unequal funding and support for girls' sports²⁰ and that the funding levels of boys to girls sports is still two to one.²¹ Never mind that. Heaven forbid we try to address the big picture.

And the big picture is that girls *are* discriminated against in the classroom, they are sexually harassed;²² teachers do call on boys more often than girls,²³ and that, as I've said, girls' sports are under-funded.²⁴ But is this school the solution, or is it a throwback to an era of race segregation and sex segregation?²⁵ To an era where separate public schools for girls and boys translated into separate and unequal spheres in

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *See, e.g.,* *Caulfield v. Bd. of Educ. of City of New York*, 632 F.3d 999 (2d Cir. 1980).

²¹ *See* Ronnie J. Willis, *Title IX 25 Years Later*, ORLANDO SENTINEL, June 22, 1997, at C13 (showing that NCAA men's programs budgeted \$402 million in operating expenses for the 1995-96 school year, compared to \$149 million for women's programs).

²² *See* Colvin, *supra* note 13, at 1 (arguing that there is a prevalence of sexual harassment at coeducational schools, especially in junior high); *see also* Louis Trager, *Girl Tech; Woman Hopes to Start Math-Friendly School for Silicon Valley's Daughters*, THE SAN FRAN. EXAMINER, July 6, 1997, at D1 (stating that teachers discriminate against girls in the classroom by calling on and extolling boys more than girls).

²³ Trager, *supra* note 22, at D1; Tamar Levin, *A Class of Their Own; An Old Idea--Single-Sex Education--Is in the Midst of a Renaissance*, CHI. TRIB., Nov. 2, 1997, at 3B.

²⁴ *See* Anne Conners, *All-Girls School for Spanish Harlem?*, N.Y.L.J., Aug. 5, 1996, at 2; Laura Pappano, *The Gender Factor: in Our Efforts to Give Girls a Boost in School, Are We Creating New Problems for Girls as Well as Boys?*, BOSTON GLOBE, Nov. 9, 1997, at 25.

²⁵ *See* Anemona Hartocollis, *A Public School for Girls Only*, N.Y. DAILY NEWS, July 15, 1996, at 4 (noting that sex segregation in New York City's public schools ended with the closing of the all-girls Washington Irving High School in 1986).

the workplace and in the family?²⁶ Is this where we want to go in a society as diverse and multi-cultural as New York?

This is a road where some of us want to go, and interestingly, the most vocal proponents of single-sex education generally oppose other programs, like affirmative action, designed to compensate for past discrimination against girls and women.²⁷

For example, one of the main proponents of this particular school, the Manhattan Institute, is a right-wing think tank.²⁸ Let's be clear about that. The Manhattan Institute has a very conservative educational philosophy,²⁹ and, I can tell you, the sudden prohibition on speaking publicly on this issue is new because we have a complaint filed against them. Prior to this recent prohibition, I had been speaking and debating publicly with them for several months. With all due respect to the people on the other side of this panel, you should be hearing from the proponents of this particular school, the very people who are backing this school.³⁰

²⁶ See Michael Meyers, *Schools Dodge the Law*, USA TODAY, Oct. 15, 1996, at 14A (noting that if single-sex education is successful, legally, it "will be the first generation in modern times where boys from the same household as their sisters aren't eligible to enroll in a public school merely because they are boys. In an otherwise co-ed world, sexist schools will teach girls that they can reach for the stars, but only in a universe without boys").

²⁷ See, e.g., Levin, *supra* note 23, at 3B (noting that in California, where government affirmative action programs have been outlawed, Gov. Pete Wilson is the "driving force behind single-sex schools" in the state). *But see*, Susan Estrich, *Sometimes Single-Sex Schools Educate Best*, DENVER POST, Sept. 24, 1997, at B7 (noting that "virtually everyone who opposes the [Young Women's Leadership School in East Harlem] supports affirmative action for minorities").

²⁸ See Henry Goldman, *N.Y. Think Tank Making Waves with Conservative Agenda*, PHIL. ENQUIRER, Oct. 13, 1997, at A3 (describing the Manhattan Institute as "right-of-center" and a "group of conservative policy wonks").

²⁹ See *id.* (citing the Manhattan Institute's backing of "independent, publicly financed schools that are exempt from the constraints imposed by school boards and teacher's unions" and opposition to affirmative action); see also *New York Opens Schools*, WALL ST. J., Sept. 18, 1997, at A18 (noting that the Manhattan Institute advocates school vouchers in its magazine, *City Journal*).

³⁰ See Hartocollis, *supra* note 25, at 4 (citing Ann Tisch and the Manhattan Institute as the formative forces behind the Young Women's Leadership School); see Steinberg, *supra* note 10, at B3 (counting Rudy Crew among the school's supporters).

I think their silence is very telling.³¹ Why are they not here to explain and defend their views to you? This question goes to the whole process under which the Board of Education opened this school. As I have said to many hostile audiences, "O.K., given your premise that single-sex, publicly funded education is good, you want to have this choice, in terms of the formation of public policy, we have to question how this school was opened."³² The Board of Education did not hold public hearings on this school.³³ Plans to open the school were kept secret for two years until an enterprising newspaper journalist broke the story two months before the school opened."³⁴

In 1991, there was an effort to open up a single-sex school for minority boys in Brooklyn and it was defeated.³⁵ At least the proponents of that school had the gumption to hold public hearings and have people come and express how they felt, and voice what they wanted to do.³⁶ The

³¹ See, e.g., Hartocollis, *supra* note 25, at 4 (noting that the Young Women's Leadership School's supporters kept plans for the school secret "[b]ecause of fears of litigation"); see also *60 Minutes: School or Scandal?*, (CBS television broadcast, June 8, 1997) (quoting Morley Safer saying, "Norman Siegel. . . [has] scared the wits out of the school's backers. New York City Schools Chancellor Rudy Crew won't talk and won't let cameras into the school. . . . Ann Rubinstein Tisch. . . has run for cover and will not publicly defend what she truly believes in. . . .").

³² But see Jeff Simmons and Anemona Hartocollis, *Ed Bigs Like Idea of All-Girls School*, N.Y. DAILY NEWS, July 18, 1996, at 12 (quoting Young Women's Leadership School proponent Seymour Fliegel, "We created 27 schools. The central board never voted on any of them.").

³³ See Steinberg, *supra* note 18, at B3 (noting that the Board of Education added the resolution for the Young Women's Leadership School to its agenda two hours before unanimously voting to open the school).

³⁴ See Hartocollis, *supra* note 25, at 4 (revealing the existence of the proposed Young Women's Leadership School two months before it opened).

³⁵ See *New York City: Hispanic School Opening Delayed*, DAILY REPORT CARD, Oct. 13, 1993 (noting that the Ujamaa Institute, a single-sex school for minority boys, opened after it agreed to allow all students of all backgrounds to attend, once the name was changed).

³⁶ See Anemona Hartocollis, *Walking His Own Line*, NEWSDAY, Apr. 14, 1993, at 60 (noting that the speakers praised the school at a meeting at the Board of Education headquarters in Brooklyn).

proponents of this school have not.³⁷

Most of the proponents of this school with whom I have debated have been white men, older white men, whose attitudes towards women and girls are sexist and condescending.³⁸ During a debate before a class at New York University Law School, I made the mistake of pausing in the middle of what I was saying to see if I was repeating myself and to look over my notes. One of the key proponents of the school from the Manhattan Institute stood up and said, "Well, if you are finished talking, you can just sit down now." I said, "Well, you know, I would like to make the determination of whether I am finished speaking on my own."

The same proponent of the school and opponent of my views kept talking about socialization. I was pointing out that these schools reinforced stereotypes about typical male and female behavior. He kept getting up, interrupting me, and saying, "I don't know what she's talking about. Girls in East Harlem have too much socialization." So I said, "What are you talking about? There is something very wrong with what you are saying." He replied, "Well, what is it?" I said, "I don't know. I don't know what you're saying. What are you saying?" I kept trying to get him to clarify what he meant, and he would not. Finally, during this tortuous process back and forth, with help of the law students in the class, we finally figured out what he meant. He was saying that these Latino girls were over-sexed, that they were just bursting with hormones, and they needed to be separated from the boys.³⁹ Now, what kind of enlightened

³⁷ See generally Jacques Steinberg, *Just Girls, and That's Fine With Them: At a New School, No Boys, Less Fussing, and a Freer Spirit*, N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 1, 1997, at 21. (New York Law School held a conference in order to discuss the legal issues regarding the school).

³⁸ For example, one of the founders of the Young Women's Leadership School is Andrew Tisch, Chairman of the Loews Corporation, and another is Seymour Fliegel, a senior fellow at the Center for Educational Innovation. Jacques Steinberg, *Plan for Harlem Girls School Fares Concern Over Sex Bias*, N.Y. TIMES, July 16, 1996, at A1.

³⁹ See Liz Willen, *Student Briefing Page on the News*, NEWSDAY, Nov. 6, 1996, at A68 ("With the boys around, you have girls that giggle and talk because they are afraid of the boys or trying to get their attention. I find there is a certain amount of tension not present when you have only girls."); See also Jacques Steinberg, *Where the Boys Aren't, Schoolgirls Both Eager and Not So*, N.Y. TIMES, Aug. 19, 1996, at B1 (reporting that a mother directed her

viewpoint is that for the people who are backing this school? Diane Ravitch,⁴⁰ the one woman affiliated with the Manhattan Institute who has very publicly backed this school,⁴¹ campaigned against the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in New York State when we were trying to get that passed. She has also reversed her position drastically on this question of single-sex education, apparently deciding that the political winds were blowing in a new direction.⁴²

When she was an official in the Department of Education under the Bush administration, she prowled the corridors of Congress arguing vehemently that there was no such thing as a gender gap in science and math achievement. She particularly criticized an American Association of University Women report *How Schools Short Change Girls*. Ravitch told *Education Week*, a well regarded trade paper for educators, that efforts to strengthen Title IX legislation and increase its funding were misguided because the legislation takes as findings of Congress that these flawed claims were true.⁴³

In 1991, when the plan to open an all-boys public school in Brooklyn was announced, Ravitch was quoted as saying that it was ironic that the New York City schools were returning to segregation on the same day that apartheid was being repealed in South Africa.

Ravitch is not alone in changing her tune. California Governor Pete Wilson, once a proponent of affirmative action, led the way to

daughter, Cynthia Lopez, to apply to the school because she believed that she was too “boy crazy” to focus on her studies).

⁴⁰ Diane Ravitch is the former Assistant Secretary of Education from the Bush Administration, and is now a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution.

⁴¹ See generally, Diane Ravitch, *Stereotype Bashing*, FORBES, Nov. 18, 1996 (arguing that single-sex education is beneficial because it allows boys and girls “to concentrate on their studies instead of worrying . . . how they look to the opposite sex.”).

⁴² See *Today* (NBC television broadcast, Aug. 27, 1997) (Diane Ravitch debating that single-sex education is beneficial and the solution to gender inequity in the classroom is to open all-girls and all-boys schools).

⁴³ See Jillian Mincer, *Persistent Sexism in American Education; Boys Get Called On*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 9, 1994, at A4.

dismantle affirmative action in the state university system.⁴⁴ Now he is offering \$500,000 to each district that creates all-boys and all-girls academies with equal facilities and arranges for an outside evaluation of their pilot program.⁴⁵

Given this public pressure, NOW, the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU), and the New York Civil Rights Coalition (NYCRC) want to remind our friends in the liberal establishment as well as our foes outside of it that once Title IX, the federal law prohibiting sex discrimination in schools that receive federal money, is blithely set aside, it is gone and proponents of gender equity in the classroom cannot wish it back.

The text of Title IX, the Education Amendments of 1972, reads that “[n]o person in the United States shall, on the basis of 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.”⁴⁶ That seems like a clear statement to me.

I know my time is almost up, let me quickly cover some of the basic elements those in favor of this publicly funded single-sex school make.

The most popular argument seems to be that single-sex schools build girls' self-esteem.⁴⁷ I question the message that is being sent when you take girls out of a coeducational setting. Placing girls in a special math and/or science class, or putting them in a special school, reinforces the stereotype that girls are inferior to boys, and that boys are really the rulers of the classroom kingdom.⁴⁸ It also tells girls that they are not as

⁴⁴ See Tim Golden, *California's Ban on Preferences Goes Into Effect*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 9, 1997, at A1.

⁴⁵ See Tamar Levin, *In California, Wider Test of Same-Sex Schools*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 9, 1997, at A1.

⁴⁶ 20 U.S.C. §1681(a)(1) (1972).

⁴⁷ See *id.* (stating that “studies have found that women in single-sex educational settings demonstrate higher self-regard and self-confidence”).

⁴⁸ See Carrie Corcoran, *Single-Sex Education After VMI: Equal Protection and East Harlem's Young Women's Leadership School*, 45 U. PA. L. REV. 987 (1997) (stating that the Young Women's Leadership School emphasizes math and science classes, disciplines in which

smart as boys, and they cannot succeed unless they have this special attention, this special environment.⁴⁹ At NOW New York City, we operate a Women's Help Line.⁵⁰ Many of the complaints we receive are about employment discrimination. When women call with complaints about employment discrimination, we do not say, "Well, the solution for you is to go work in an all female work place."

Just because you take boys out of the classroom does not mean you take sexism out of the classroom. You can have sexist administrators in an all-girls school, you can have sexist teachers, you can have sexist attitudes.⁵¹ The single-sex environment is an easy fix, but it just does not solve the problem.⁵²

The other thing proponents of publicly funded, single-sex schools

girls have historically under-performed); *see also* NPR, *Morning Edition, Harlem All-Girls School Scrutinized After VMI Ruling*, Aug. 21, 1996 (transcript no. 1938-14) (stating that at the Young Women's Leadership School, the cafeteria will be called a dining room instead).

⁴⁹ *See* Sarah Eckel, *The Case for Single-Sex Schools*, SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE, Sept. 14, 1996, at B6 (explaining that "programs for girls are condescending to young women, and that creating different educational opportunities for girls suggests that they are less capable than boys; however well-intentioned, this is ultimately a sexist assumption, since it plays into the idea that any acknowledged difference between girls and boys necessarily means that girls are inferior").

⁵⁰ The NOW New York City help line number is: 212-260-4422.

⁵¹ *See* Brenda Ingersoll, *All-Girls Schools Foster Sexist Views*, USA TODAY, May 30, 1992, at 9A (stating that researchers found that teachers, even female teachers, perpetuate sexist views and attitudes toward women in all-girls schools).

⁵² *See* Lucinda M. Finley, *Sex-Blind, Separate But Equal, or Anti-Subordination? The Uneasy Legacy of Plessy v. Ferguson for Sex and Gender Discrimination*, 12 GA. ST. U. L. REV. 1089, 1119 (1996) (stating that the reasons single-sex education may benefit females does not apply to men, hence, all-male schools will not ameliorate the effects of societal discrimination on women). *See generally* David Sadker, *But Still Short Changed*, THE WASH. POST, Nov. 1, 1995, at A19 (explaining that when we separate students by gender or race, the lower valued group ends up with fewer resources and a weaker education, and that we do not need to create single-sex schools in order to eliminate inequities, we simply have to be fairer in our co-ed schools); *see also* Dion Haynes, *Single-Gender Schools Take Form in California Plan's Aim: Cut Out Distractions*, CHIC. TRIB., Jul. 28, 1997 (explaining that opponents who fought the Detroit and New York academies, contend that historically separate has rarely meant equal and they assert that the state should devote more attention to ensuring gender equality in co-ed classrooms).

like to point out is that girls learn better in single-sex settings.⁵³ We can discuss studies and what they show and what they do not show, but one thing that is clear in the studies that show that girls learn better in single-sex settings is that they are done by proponents of single-sex schools or single-sex schools themselves,⁵⁴ which can lead to biased results. Also, most of these studies are done on private schools,⁵⁵ and private schools self select their student body, so of course they are going to have better results, because they don't have to educate everybody.⁵⁶

As for this school in East Harlem, I would be surprised if it did fail. It is clean, the equipment is new, the student-staff ratio is low, and a wealthy woman, Ann Rubenstein Tisch,⁵⁷ is standing in the wings ready to buy a new computer or to refurbish the stockroom should supplies run low. All of this is great, but any student in New York City would benefit

⁵³ See *Brief Amici Curiae in Support of Respondents by Dr. Kenneth E. Clark et al.*, VMI V, 116 S. Ct. 2264 (1996) (No.94-1941), (relying heavily on the work of M. Elizabeth Tidball for the conclusion that graduates of all women's colleges are more likely to become achievers than graduates of co-ed institutions); See also, e.g., M. Elizabeth Tidball, *Perspective on Academic Women and Affirmative Action*, 1973 EDUC. REC. 130, 135 (finding that women's colleges with high women faculty-to-student ratios provide the most beneficial educational conditions for female students). But see Faye Crosby et al., *Taking Selectivity into Account, How much Does Gender Composition Matter?: A Re-Analysis of M.E. Tidball's Research*, 6 NWSA J. 107, 108 (1994) (challenging Tidball's claim that women who graduate from women's colleges accomplish more than women who graduate from coeducational colleges).

⁵⁴ See Christopher H. Pyle, *Women's Colleges: Is Segregation by Sex Still Justifiable After United States v. Virginia?*, 77 B.U. L. REV. 209, 223 (1997) (discussing the various arguments and studies performed by proponents of single-sex education).

⁵⁵ See *id.*, e.g., at 221 (citing that most single-sex institutions were private schools).

⁵⁶ See, Denise M. Topolnicki, *Why Private Schools are Rarely Worth the Money*, MONEY, Oct. 1994, at 98 (noting that although test scores are higher at private schools, the explanation is not educational quality but rather selectivity in admissions).

⁵⁷ See Michael Meyers, *Schools Dodge the Law*, USA TODAY, Oct. 15, 1996, at 14A (stating that the Young Women's Leadership School is supported by the mayor and philanthropists); see also Wilbert Lemelle, *Do We Know How to Improve Schools? Yes!*, NY AMSTERDAM NEWS, Aug. 17, 1996, at 11 (stating that the YWLS has strong financial backing of a well-known philanthropist in the City, Ann Rubenstein Tische).

from such a classroom environment.⁵⁸ Every student in New York City deserves such an environment.

Of course, the major plank in the agenda of those advocating for this school is that single-sex schools are needed to combat sexism in education (even if a few of the proponents are recent converts to the cause).⁵⁹ Again, single-sex schools embody the sexist view that differences between men and women are so significant that there must be separation of the two in order for girls and young women to learn.⁶⁰ In a strange way, single-sex schools have a vested interest in keeping sexism alive because they are benefitting from it.⁶¹

We are also told by proponents of this school that single-sex schools foster feminism and we are pointed to examples like Hillary Rodham Clinton (who did attend an all-womens college, Wellsley, but did she do so because she wanted to or because Yale, Harvard and other Ivy League schools were not co-ed at the time?).⁶²

Boys will be boys is not a feminist tenet. At NOW we confront men about their sexist behavior, we do not sweep it under the rug or tacitly

⁵⁸ See *Edgewood Indep. Sch. District v. Kirby*, 777 S.W.2d 391, 393 (1989) (noting that “[t]he amount of money spent on a student's education has a real and meaningful impact on the educational opportunity offered that student.”); see also Mikyong Dim & Rodolfo Alvarez, *Women-Only Colleges: Some Unanticipated Consequences* (discussing the reasons for the supposed success of women who attended single-sex schools), 66 J. OF HIGHER EDUC. 641, 1995, at 653.

⁵⁹ See, e.g., Valerie E. Lee & Anthony S. Bryk, *Effects of Single-Sex Secondary School on Student Achievement and Attitudes*, 78 J. EDUC. PSYCH. 385 (1986) (finding that less stereotypical views of women's roles were also demonstrated in boys attending single-sex schools, although not to the same extent as girls in single-sex schools).

⁶⁰ But see Epstein, *supra* note 8, at 112 (discussing that the statement that women in single-sex colleges perform better is a statistical misrepresentation).

⁶¹ See generally Jolee Land, *Not Dead Yet: The Future of Single-Sex Education After United States v. Virginia*, 27 STETSON L. REV. 297, 316 (Summer 1997) (stating that all-female schools may reinforce the stereotype that “girls need help to keep up with boys” and that women in coeducational schools may suffer negative effects).

⁶² See generally Jennifer R. Cowan, *Distinguishing Private Women's Colleges from the VMI Decision*, 30 COLUM. J.L. & SOC. PROBS. 137 (Winter 1997) (stating, “Private women's colleges stand as an anomaly in feminist thinking.”).

condone male violence in schools by forming separate academies.⁶³

Finally, equality benefits both men and women. When we hear these arguments about how good it is for girls to have these role models and how good it is for them to learn leadership; well, it is good for boys to see girls learning leadership, too.⁶⁴ If we are going to change society, we have to involve boys and men, we can't do it on our own.

Here is a radical idea. Instead of establishing single-sex schools for boys and girls, and, who knows, single religion schools for Catholics and Jews and Muslims who may have their own cultural needs, why not just change the way girls are treated.⁶⁵ Why not just do that? We are told that single-sex schools take girls academic work seriously.⁶⁶ Why can't all schools?

⁶³ See generally Kristin S. Caplice, *The Case for Public Single-Sex Education*, 18 HARV. J. L. & PUB. POL'Y 227, 232 (Fall 1994) (noting the decision in *Vorchheimer v. School District of Philadelphia* in which an all-male public high school was permitted provided that an equal all-female school existed).

⁶⁴ See generally Valorie K. Vojdik, *Girls' Schools After VMI: Do They Make the Grade?*, 4 DUKE J. GENDER L. & POL'Y 69, 92 (Spring 1997) (stating that although single-sex education is beneficial for girls, it provides little or no benefits for boys, and possibly has negative effects on boys).

⁶⁵ *Id.* at 86 (noting that girls are not always given the attention they need in the classroom, which can negatively effect their self-esteem and encourage silence).

⁶⁶ *Id.* at 83 (stating that single-sex schools for girls are trying to improve education for females and to eliminate inequities between males and females in the classroom).

*Michael Meyers **

Michael Meyers made an oral presentation at the Symposium. However, due to technical problems with the transcription, he has declined the opportunity to include an edited version of his transcribed remarks in this volume.

*Michael Meyers is President and Executive Director of the New York Civil Rights Coalition (NYCRC), which he co-founded in 1986. He came to NYCRC from his senior staff position in the New Jersey Department of Higher Education where, for four years, he served as Special Assistant to the Chancellor. A close associate of Dr. Kenneth B. Clark, the educator and social psychologist, Meyers was Dr. Clark's intern, fellow and assistant when Dr. Clark headed the Metropolitan Applied Research Center, from 1967 to 1975. From 1975 to 1984, Meyers was on the National Staff of the NAACP. As the NAACP's Assistant Director he worked directly with Executive Directors Roy Wilkins and Benjamin Hooks. Born and raised in Harlem, Meyers received his B.A. from Antioch College, and his J.D. from Rutgers University School of Law. He is a long-time member of the national board of the ACLU and the NYCLU board, and serves on their executive committees. A former board member of the New York Association of Scholars, his other current directorships include the City Club of New York, and the American-Israel Friendship League. Meyers is a columnist for the N.Y. POST. He has a national reputation as an opponent of single-race, single-sex education. A staunch integrationist, Meyers opposes Afrocentrism, and all forms of racial segregation and "idiocies that separate human beings on flimsy bases." His publications are numerous and include law review articles and essays in the *N.Y. Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Academic Questions*, *Youth & Society*, *Crisis*, *Change*, and *Integrated Education*.

