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We Are Our Mothers' Daughters?

Marilyn L. Grady
Barbara Y. LaCost

Writing that makes us think, writing that enriches our understanding of the past and present, that's what Cokie Roberts' book, *We Are Our Mothers' Daughters* provides, and that, too, is what the authors of this issue of the *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership* provide. Roberts' background as a news analyst covering politics, Congress and public policy, as well as her heritage as the daughter of Lindy Boggs, Congresswoman and Ambassador to the Vatican, inform her perspectives on women of the past and present.

A number of the observations and vignettes from Roberts' book offers perspective to the topics addressed by those who write for and read the *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*. One is the reminder that "we are not alone." Roberts' noted that "We were the first women at almost everything we did, and most of us often had the experience of being the only women in the room" (p. 4). Or, she noted that "women have always played many roles at the same time" (p. 6). The word "multitasking" may be kitschy but hardly an original concept for women!

As we approach a national presidential election, let's give a nod of remembrance to Jeannette Rankin.

When the first woman, Republican Jeannette Rankin, was elected to Congress in 1917, she carried with her from the wilds of Montana a full bag of female concerns. Keep in mind, she was elected from one of the few states that allowed women to vote, so her first task, of course, was pushing for national suffrage. (p. 24)

In tribute to her pioneering role, may all eligible women vote in the elections!

In examining the ballots for the upcoming elections, we might consider Roberts' position on candidates' private lives.

A lot of people are sorry that we now know so much about a presidential candidate's private life. I'm not among them. I think character counts, especially for a president, who serves in a singular position, who does not

have the check of 99 other senators or 434 other members of the House. And I think that attitudes toward women and family contribute to the definition of character. (p. 124)

As we cast ballots, may we all be cognizant of attitudes toward women and families!

On principled behavior and the value of work, Clara Barton was distinguished according to Roberts' report.

One of those intrepid Massachusetts women, Clara Barton established a free school in New Jersey which grew from 6 to 600 students in one year. When the school hired a male principal, she quit and moved to Washington where she worked in the Patent Office. (p. 176)

The confidence and freedom to "move on" are priceless!

"Without work, Barton became 'sickly,' a pattern that repeated itself throughout her life" (p. 176). The women described in this issue of the *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership* do not appear to be "sickly" due to a lack of work!

Roberts points to a practice that certainly facilitated the work of women journalists. "By insisting that only women journalists could cover her press conferences, Eleanor Roosevelt did a lot to promote their positions" (p. 112). To what extent do we enable the work of other women?

As a guide to daily living, Roberts' offers the following.

By living on this earth long enough, I've learned that clichés are clichés because they are true. It's true that you'll only have one opportunity to witness your baby's first step, to hold your dying sister's hand, to see your mother credentialed by the Pope, to hold your mother-in-law as she learns of her husband's death, to celebrate thirty years with your husband. There will always be another job." (p. 194)

We are enriched by words that stimulate our thinking and give clarity to what is significant in our lives.

References

Roberts, C. (1998). *We are our mothers' daughters*. New York: William Morrow and Company.