



A BIT OF ME

PTODI Celebrates SUNY Broome's Women

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Who is the most influential woman you know? How does she inspire you?

I had Madeleine Albright as a professor in graduate school.* Secretary Albright would not remember me, but something she told us sticks with me to this day.

Every spring, she would invite the women from our program to coffee at her house. She pointed out to us that she had completed her PhD at the age of 38, when she had 3 daughters, and when her older daughters, twins, were 15.

She told us that women have different chapters in our lives, and that we shouldn't expect ourselves to be able to do everything at the same time. She said that while she was a mom and a student, she made all the curtains for their home. Later, she went on to become the highest ranking woman in the US up until 1997, when she became Secretary of State.

Paraphrasing her, sometimes I remind myself that "you can have it all, but not necessarily all at the same time." It's good advice for everyone.

*That was back in the 1980's. At that point, she had worked as Senator Muskie's chief legislative assistant, and as a Congressional liaison for Zbigniew Brezezinski in the National Security Council. She had been foreign policy advisor to Geraldine Ferraro (VP candidate in 1984) and Michael Dukakis (Presidential candidate in 1988). It was before she became UN ambassador (1993), and before she became Secretary of State (1997).



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What are some of the biggest challenges that women face today? How do you think these might change over the next 20 years?

I think women often juggle work, and the lion's share of childcare, eldercare, and household responsibilities, whether they live on their own or with a partner.

Covid has brought that to the forefront. I hope we as a society will support more flexible work hours / locations and part-time work. For more on this topic, see Brookings Institute on Covid and women.*

I'd like to see universal health care in the US. I'd like to see more employees (both women and men) able to flex their time and to work part-time if they'd like, to be able to provide care for family members, or to pursue an education.

Of course, people need to be earning a living wage even to consider part-time work. I'd also like to see us invest in access to quality childcare. I'd like to see us invest in our future by supporting our families.

*<https://www.brookings.edu/essay/why-has-covid-19-been-especially-harmful-for-working-women/>



With Renata on Mother's Day

"Listen to yourself, and go for what you really want!"

Which achievement made by feminists are you most thankful for? Why?

I am thankful that trailblazers opened up new careers and pathways for women. My high school math teacher, Mrs. Clancy, showed us that women certainly can do math. My high school French teacher, Mrs. Baynes, showed us that after a divorce, a woman can live a rich full life and also raise great kids. Her example countered a lot of cultural messages that shamed divorce.

Has a particular woman inspired you in your current taste or aesthetic? If so, who?

My friend Dianne de Bergh has encouraged me to listen to my gut. A couple of years ago, I was putting a new floor in my kitchen/family room. The old one had been torn out, and I was waiting for the new materials to arrive. It was going to be a Pergo-style laminate floor. I kept saying I wished I was getting a tile floor, and regretted having ordered the other. She finally said to me, "Will you listen to yourself and get what you really want? Tell the installers you have changed your mind. Spend a little extra money and get tile!" I did, and I've been so happy I did. I was fortunate that I could afford to do so.

Of course, Dianne's lesson extends beyond home repairs: Listen to yourself, and go for what you really want!

Who is your favorite fictional woman and why?

As a kid, I liked Jo in Little Women. She was strong and self confident and went for what she wanted.

One of my favorite real-life women is my good friend, Renata Bernal. She began as my German tutor, and then grew into an adopted mom. Renata is fun, funny, wise, and always supportive. Of course, my daughter Danielle is one of my very favorite people in the world. She works hard, plays hard, and is kind and loving to others and to herself. She's a wonderful daughter! I'm very lucky to have them and other friends and loved ones in my life.