



The following speech appeared in Vital Speeches Of The Day, Vol. LX, No. 7, dated January 15, 1994. It is reprinted with permission.

Single-Gender Education

IS IT BENEFICIAL TO SOCIETY?

By CLAUDIUS E. WATTS III, Lieutenant General, United States Air Force, Retired, President of The Citadel

*Delivered before The Presbyterian Men of the First and Providence Churches,
Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, December 9, 1993*

I want to speak with you this morning on the topic of single-gender education. Although single-gender programs are valuable equally for male and for female students, as President of The Citadel, my focus is on college programs for male students, and that is where I will direct my comments today.

Most of you probably know that the single-gender character of the Corps of Cadets Program at The Citadel is currently at issue in a lawsuit pending in the Federal Court in Charleston. I do not intend to try to address the legal arguments about single-gender education this morning except to point out no court has ruled it is illegal or unconstitutional for a public college to have a single-gender program. Nor have the courts ruled that there cannot be single-gender courses, classes, or even colleges. What the courts have said is that a state must have a program which provides equally for males and for females. I want to come back to this point a little later.

As I understand the crux of the legal argument — it is that the validity of treating people differently depends on whether the classification of them into different groups — upon which the different treatment is based — achieves a legitimate social or governmental purpose. In other words, is there a value to society which results from the classification.

Classifications such as denying certain physically disabled people the right to drive on public roads, or prohibiting minors from purchasing alcohol, or providing separate public restrooms for males and females are all based on the proposition that such classifications produce a social good.

So, at bottom, the fundamental question to be answered

in the courts — and the one I want to address this morning — is whether a single-gender college program for males is beneficial to our society.

I not only believe it is beneficial, I am deeply convinced it is desperately needed.

Even a casual assessment of life in the United States reveals the crushing need for us to do something toward assisting young males to become mature, responsible, honorable adults.

I do not intend to try to give you a litany of social ills we face today, but some of what has occurred in our society and some of the trends which exist literally scream at us to pay attention and do something.

Today, the United States has the highest violent crime rate of any so called “developed” nation on earth. We have a larger percentage of our population in jail than any other industrialized country — including Russia or China. And we continue to legislate additional prison sentences and build more prisons. We have a national drug addiction problem that supports illegal drug cartels around the world.

We have more babies born today addicted to crack cocaine and other drugs than ever in history. We have students with handguns not only in middle and high schools, but now in grade schools. We have a constantly rising percentage of babies born to unmarried mothers and without the support of fathers. We have gangs controlling the streets of many of our cities, preventing us from even being able to walk along sidewalks after dark. We dare not leave our cars unlocked in any public place, and we often cannot be safe even while in our homes.

What has caused these conditions to develop? What per-

petuates the trend?

I am not knowledgeable or wise enough to know all the answers. I believe, however, that many of these things are the result of attitudes or beliefs that reject self-discipline, deny personal responsibility, and claim an entitlement to satisfaction and pleasure without having to earn it. It is an attitude which blames someone else for any failure or shortcoming.

History teaches us that when societies "turn their backs" and "wash their hands" of unacceptable conditions, of misconduct, or of dangerous trends, cataclysmic consequences often result. Perhaps the most graphic example of this led to World War II. I am, of course, speaking of the rise of the Nazi party in Germany and the extermination of millions of Jews by a relative handful of Germans. The great majority of Germans were law-abiding, peaceable people; but they turned their backs on the Nazis and disclaimed responsibility for what was happening in their society.

The lesson should not be lost on us!

Now, you are perhaps asking, how do I relate these things to college single-gender education programs? Let me tell you a little about our Corps of Cadets Program at The Citadel, which is our single-gender program. Although The Citadel is a liberal arts college, our Corps of Cadets provides a military environment for our students in which we seek to educate and train the "citizen-soldier," who is ready and willing to serve his country.

Our program is called a "holistic" program because it involves and envelops the whole lifestyle of the students rather than only the academic life. Its purpose is to teach self-reliance, responsibility, and patriotism; to promote a love of God and country; and to live with honor and integrity. In educating and training the "citizen-soldier," we seek to make "the whole man."

To accomplish these objectives, the young men who enter The Citadel today as students enter into a system that has produced outstanding results for more than 150 years. This system is challenging, it is tough — but it is fair. It imposes on the students a system that pervades their lives; privacy is eliminated; privileges and adornments are removed; constant demands are imposed; high standards of cleanliness, health, appearance, and physical and mental endurance are required to be met. These students live with honor, with integrity, with responsibility.

We put these young men in this system, then we provide them with the skills, the discipline and the knowledge to meet those standards and to exceed even their own expectations. In order to gain recognition and privileges in the system, students must comply with its requirements and meet its demands and standards. Their successes in this system are achieved and measured by their accomplishments — not by their background, their social or economic standing, their race, or their prior achievements.

In doing so, they learn not only the specific lessons of how to achieve the high standards of the system; they learn about discipline, about their own abilities, about how to face and conquer adversaries, about concepts of equality and perseverance; and they acquire a sense of achievement.

This program works. It is successful. The student who completes this program at The Citadel has an identity, he has a work ethic, he accepts responsibility, he possesses self-discipline, he lives with honor, he is "the citizen-soldier" who is ready to serve his country.

It is not for everyone, but for some it is the answer to the question of how to make that transition from high school graduate to young adult — one who is educated, responsible, mature and ready to contribute and participate fully in society.

I am often asked:

"Why not let women participate in this program? And share its benefits? Or receive its training? Why do you have to limit it to males? Are not women entitled to the same treatment?"

These are legitimate questions. And I will try to answer them.

First, meeting the needs and the demands of male and of female students is not identical. There are different needs, different demands, and — probably most important — different responses. Let me tell you what the federal courts, based on substantial evidence, have said:

"We accept...the factual findings which recognized physical and psychological differences between men and women...while the evidence demonstrated that the adversative relationship of male against male tended to produce a desired result, an adversative relationship of male against female was believed to lead to different consequences...We also accepted that if women were admitted to VMI, differences in physical ability between men and women, as well as concerns for privacy, would require VMI to adopt a "dual-tracking" program for training men and women in order to achieve equality in effect."

Second, the cadet program is specifically designed for training and educating young males to become young men. It is a masculine program which addresses the needs of young male students. It is not adapted to the needs of female students, and, as a women writer for the *Myrtle Beach Sun News* so aptly stated in an editorial published last August:

"Although The Citadel's success in molding boys into men has been proven, I doubt its ability to mold girls into men, or even girls into women, just as I would question its ability to squeeze orange juice from an apple."

She is correct in that our program is one to teach and train males. Its method is to require the students to measure themselves — every aspect of their lives — constantly against each other. It is an adversative relationship of male against male that enhances their striving for the objectives the program places before them.

In the VMI case, the court of appeals also concluded that the experiences of the military academies supported the accuracy of the court's observation that a holistic adversative program does not work in a sexually mixed environment. Although the military academies initially tried to incorporate female students into the all-male program as it

existed, the court found

“that the military service academies...found it necessary in every case to adopt dual-track programs for men and women.”

Further, the United States Department of Justice has acknowledged the inappropriateness of integrating female students into the holistic single-gender environment of the Corps of Keydets at VMI by petitioning the court to require VMI to change its program so that it will be appropriate for female students to enter and participate.

The truth is that our program would have to be changed in order for female students to participate in it. The alternative to changing the program is to create a separate track for female students as the military academies have done. Simply integrating female students into the cadet program which now exists is not an option.

I share the concern that it is vital for us to provide and to insure equality for all of our students — males and females. However, treating people who in fact are different as though they are alike can — and often does — create much greater inequality. True equality exists when the needs and the desires are met equally, not when we reduce everyone to the same thing.

No necessity exists to abandon the teaching and training of young males in order to provide appropriate teaching and training for young females. These are not antagonistic.

Because of differences between males and females which, in fact, are present, the Corps of Cadets Program as it currently exists could not continue if it were to be made co-educational. It would have to change in order to accommodate female students in it. And I am not speaking only of our physical plant and living quarters, but also of the basic nature of the adversative approach to training.

Although I am not knowledgeable nor wise enough to know all the answers about the differences in single-gender and co-ed college environments, I do know that our program — as it is — works, and works exceedingly well. It works better than most others — including those which are co-educational.

This year, the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education reports The Citadel's 4-year graduation rate as being 65.4 percent. The average 4-year graduation rate for all other public colleges in South Carolina is 22.54 percent. The Citadel average is almost three times the average for other colleges. In fact the second best 4-year graduation rate is just barely more than one-half of The Citadel's rate — 37.6 percent compared to our rate of more than 65 percent.

This past October, *U.S. News & World Report* rated America's best colleges throughout the nation. The Citadel is again classified as a regional comprehensive liberal arts college — one of 559 such colleges in the United States.

Our overall ranking is number 12 of all these colleges and universities — public and private — in the south region. Our academic reputation is rated as the 5th best in this region; our graduation rate is the 8th highest, and our faculty resources are rated 9th.

U.S. News & World Report also rated the values of colleges and universities in the United States by comparing

the quality of the education provided to the cost of obtaining it. The Citadel was ranked as on the 10 “best college buys” in the South.

Finally, let me come back to what the courts have said about single-gender programs in public colleges. Let me quote Judge Niemeyer, speaking for the United States Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit in *The Citadel* case, where he is comparing *The Citadel* to the Court's findings about VMI:

“With respect to the educational program...scientific studies...supported the conclusion that single-sex education is pedagogically justifiable both for males and females...Thus, with respect to both VMI's military and educational aspects, we held that a single-gender policy was justified by an important state purpose and that the state could appropriately offer a single-gender military education...”

“We can perceive no reason why our holding in *VMI* would not apply in this case.”

As I mentioned earlier, no court has ruled that it is illegal or unconstitutional for a public college to have a single-gender program, nor have courts ruled that there cannot be single-gender courses, classes, or even colleges. What the courts have said is that a state must have a program which provides equality for males and females.

This state supports numerous co-educational colleges, as well as the single-gender programs at *The Citadel* and at Columbia College and Converse College. It provides 58 percent of the student spaces in public colleges to female students, although only 51 percent of the population is female. Additionally, 64 percent of the tuition grants made by the state goes to female students to attend private colleges. It is difficult to determine the lack of equality in the state system of higher education in South Carolina.

This past spring, a resolution was presented to the South Carolina General Assembly concerning the state's continuing support for single-gender programs in higher education. By overwhelming majorities in both the state Senate and the House of Representatives a resolution strongly supporting single-gender programs as part of the education system in South Carolina and specifically endorsing the Corps of Cadets Program at *The Citadel* was passed. The votes in favor of preserving single-gender education programs as a choice in South Carolina colleges was 29 to 14 in the state Senate and 97 to 20 in the House of Representatives.

Concluding — I would say to you, that it is not possible to continue the cadet program we now have if it becomes co-educational. It would have to be changed to accommodate the physical and psychological differences which exist between men and women — and which the courts have recognized.

The program should not be changed because it serves a very useful social need as it is: it is exceedingly successful in producing the “whole man” — the graduate who is educated, who is honorable, who has integrity, and who is responsible, who is ready and willing to step forward when needed, and prepared to participate fully in society.

###

“[T]he preliminary injunction will not change or destroy any material aspect of The Citadel’s program...We are quick to note that the status imposed by the preliminary injunction is not permanent and does not determine the outcome on the merits. Those issues must await trial and findings by the district court. We trust the court will proceed to hear the merits without undue delay, recognizing the importance of the interests of all parties which remain at stake.” (Opinion of Judge Niemeyer of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit in the Faulkner case, November 17, 1993.)

“Whether it is constitutional for a State to have a men-only military school is an issue that should receive the attention of this Court before, rather than after, a national institution as venerable as the Virginia Military Institute is compelled to transform itself.” (Opinion of Justice Scalia of the United States Supreme Court in the VMI case, May 24, 1983.)

- “...a substantial body of ‘exceedingly persuasive’ evidence supports (the) contention that some students, both male and female, benefit from attending a single-sex college. For those students, the opportunity to attend a single-sex college is a valuable one, likely to lead to better academic and professional achievement.”
— Judge Jackson Kiser, United States District Court, Roanoke, VA
- The Citadel has been ranked in eight of the last nine surveys of America’s Best Colleges by *U.S. News & World Report*. In 1993, The Citadel was ranked #12 among regional colleges and universities in the South as one of “America’s Best Colleges” and was ranked in the top 10 percent of regional colleges and universities in the South as one of “America’s Best College Buys.”
- The Citadel’s four year graduation rate is the highest among public colleges and universities in South Carolina and is 37 percent higher than the national average.
- The Citadel’s African-American graduation rate is 135 percent higher than the national average.
- As demanding as freshman year is, The Citadel retains more than 82 percent of its students during an academic year. That ranks among the very best records in America.

**OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
THE CITADEL
171 MOULTRIE ST.
CHARLESTON, S.C. 29409**

“Nonprofit Organization”
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Charleston, S.C.
Permit No. 779