



Lynn Rajacich  
Osborn

1979

Executive/  
Mother of two  
sets of twins/  
Volunteer Leader

Princeton was a mind-expanding experience for a small town public school girl from Maryland. Having grown up with two brothers, I found the gender ratio undaunting and I stayed away from people who preferred to remain exclusive.

My professors and advisors, Outdoor Action, Wilson College, Theater Intime, the coffee house, the boathouse, the singing groups, Cloister Inn and my Resident Advisor experience were inclusive and rich.

I met my future husband, Charley, and twenty years later our Princeton friends helped us through his illness and premature death from ALS. Many continue to support me in raising our two sets of twins.

Go, Princeton '77 and '79!



Jessica Berman

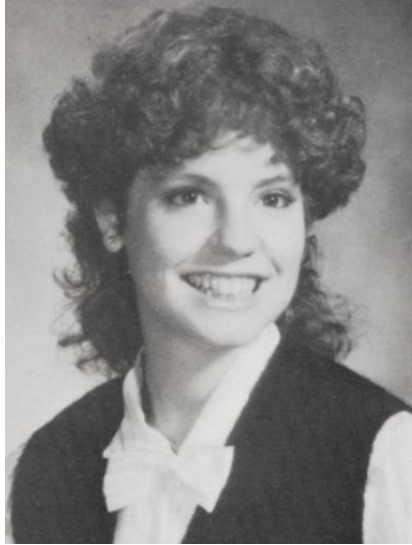
1983

Professor/Parent/  
Feminist

Princeton was a place of struggle, growth, and ultimate belonging for me.

In shock when I arrived, I rebelled against a culture that seemed too uniform, too complacent, and especially too masculine to me. I spent my first semester playing Patti Smith as loudly as possible to all passers-by, as if to announce my rejection of preppy-dom. But a funny thing happened as I struggled that first year: I was beginning to find my corner of the Princeton world. I made great friends in my entry-way, at the Women's Center, and in the music building, some of whom are still among my closest. I found my intellectual home, having the good fortune to take Princeton's first-ever American Women's History course and to encounter the extraordinary Professor Natalie Zemon Davis in my first year. And I found my voice as an advocate for women's and other issues on campus, especially in the effort to begin Princeton's Program in Women's Studies (now Gender and Sexuality Studies). My corner of the Princeton world included wonderful moments practicing music at Woolworth, cooking in the Brown co-op, and joining friends on the street.

I found the love of my life at Princeton and sent my daughter off for her own four years there. Though as a student I never did feel as though Princeton fully belonged to me, I now know how much it helped make me who I am. I hope in the end I helped make it what it is today too.



Lorraine  
Goodman

1983

Former Broadway  
Actress/Singer/  
Nonprofit  
professional &  
Idealist

When I was at Princeton University, the ratio of men to women was still about three men for every woman. Every achievement was groundbreaking: for example, my junior year witnessed the first woman president of Triangle.

There was also a great deal of gender bias, especially in regards to so-called non-traditional studies for women. My passion in high school was in math and sciences – where I excelled – and in fact, I entered Princeton University as a math and physics major. But a nasty case of mononucleosis towards the end of my first semester coupled with the complete lack of support from my male professors made me change my mind. I graduated with a “sensible degree” in history.

Sometimes I wonder what might have been had I had a role model or any encouragement. On the other hand, giving up the intense study of the sciences allowed me to spend more time participating in theater and music. Although I did not make either of those my major, the extra-curricular activities and the friends I made while at Princeton opened up so many possibilities and certainly, my 30-year career on Broadway and in Europe would not have been possible without those experiences.



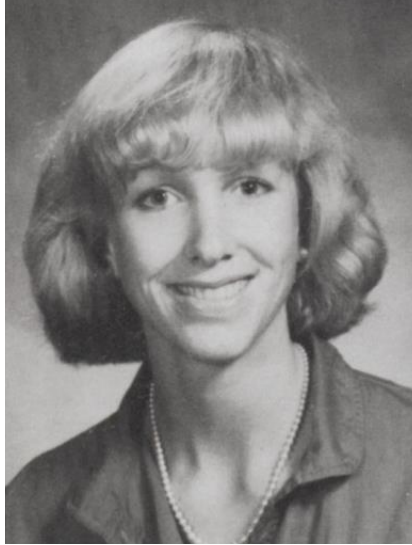
Valerie Kelly

1984

Attorney/  
Volunteer

As a young black girl growing up in Arkansas, I always dreamed of “going away” to college. Princeton became my first choice; a place 1,200 miles from home that I had never visited and where I knew no one. In December 1979, when I was an applicant, my first Princeton experience was a luncheon hosted by the Princeton Alumni Association of Arkansas. There were about 20 alums and a few current Princeton students in attendance. None of them looked like me or had my socioeconomic background. Yet, I felt strangely comfortable and at home. They showed me that Princeton was a place that would accept me for who I was and that I could be at home there.

When I arrived on the campus, it was more beautiful than I could have imagined. I immediately felt at home. However, it was an adjustment. I was not prepared for classmates who did not know where Arkansas was located. I planned to major in civil engineering, and the first-year classes were difficult. After I felt that I had adjusted to the rigors of Princeton, my father died unexpectedly during the first semester of my sophomore year. My world was turned upside down. I considered leaving. Yet, Princeton had become my home. I understood the challenges ahead of me if I wanted to graduate. With the support of family and friends, I stayed. I am glad that I did. My life has been much richer because of my Princeton education.



I arrived on campus the Fall of 1981 and soon had to face the reality that while I was a high school Valedictorian, by Princeton standards I was by no means exceptional nor meriting good grades. I watched my classmates as they worked tirelessly and realized that if I was going to make it, I needed to do the same.

My friendships, with both women and men, made those years fun – despite the grind. I am very grateful for my time at Princeton and continue to stay involved with Princeton as a class officer/volunteer.

Mimi  
Willoughby  
Santry

1985

Mother of 5/  
Small business  
owner/  
Princeton  
volunteer



Isabella  
de la Houssaye

1986

Businesswoman/  
Mother/  
Volunteer

I came to Princeton from Louisiana—the deep south where men held doors for women and women went to college for an MRS.

I remember being very excited about the outdoor action trip—I packed my backpack, added the group gear and then patiently waited to see which of the male students was going to carry it for me through the Pine Barrens. It had never occurred to me that I would have to carry it myself. But I learned. I also learned that I was capable of so much more than an MRS.

I spent my first semester taking copious notes on the eligible young men in my classes while half-heartedly learning about economics from Alan Blinder and creative writing from Joyce Carol Oates. In February, when grades came out, I discovered that I was just as capable as my male counterparts. Yet again—a thought that had never occurred to me. From that point on I put my MRS aside and focused on earning my degree in politics with a certificate in European Cultural Studies.

I graduated Princeton in 1986, received a Rotary Scholarship, went on to Columbia Law School and finally to successful careers in law, finance and business in addition to raising five children. My parents would say that Princeton turned me into a liberal. I would say that Princeton taught me to think critically, speak confidently and act compassionately.

And yes, I did finally get my MRS—in 1991 to a 1981 Tiger!



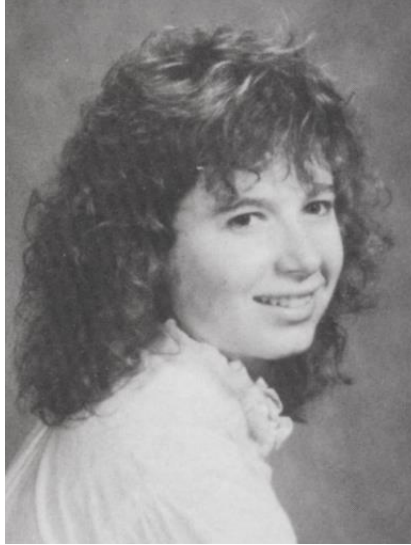
Susan  
Katzmann  
Horner

1986

Mother/  
Consultant/  
Volunteer

To be a woman at Princeton in the early to mid-1980s meant that when you looked around, you saw two men for every one of you—but I understood the trend was moving in the right direction towards gender equality. Frankly, I never felt less than because of this ratio. Thanks to dear friends and the brilliant presence of a few female faculty members who taught English, my concentration, Princeton instilled me with a confidence I could never have imagined I would have.

One of the best experiences I had as an undergrad was to be a reporter, newscaster and one of the news directors for WPRB. I loved the feeling of living on the edge through our live broadcast news programs, and I also had some great opportunities to interview the movers and shakers who came to campus. I had the best of both worlds at Princeton: One minute I could be poring over some 17th century verse, while a few hours later, I might escape the orange bubble to cover a New Jersey election event off campus. The critical skills I learned as an English major and through trial by fire at WPRB helped launch my television news production career. In addition, I was inspired by Princeton's emphasis on service to be active with the Student Volunteers Council, working with young women at a juvenile security facility near Trenton.



Lynne  
Archibald

1987

Volunteer/  
NGO Board  
Member/  
Mother

I was fortunate in that I never experienced discrimination or sexual assault nor did my friends or roommates. However, we accepted it as normal that there were male-only eating clubs. Sally Frank's lawsuit was derided and I often wondered if the issue would have been looked at differently if she had been a gorgeous babe. I regret not supporting her lawsuit. I was a vocal critic of the selective eating clubs and was one of the few people I knew in sophomore year who did not bicker (I was in Campus). But I had no problem dating guys from TI and going to parties at those clubs.

I don't think it would have been easy to be a person of color or limited means or anything non-heterosexual in the Princeton of the 80s - it was a very white, preppy world. As a Canadian, I played catch up to understand the feeder system of east coast prep schools that many had attended and all those connections that had already been made.

I enjoyed my courses and still feel that my PU education serves me often though I now regret not having made connections with any professors. I really enjoyed my years at Princeton - I am still in close, regular touch with my roommate and best friend from Princeton and was thrilled when my daughter was accepted in 2012.





Catherine Legro  
Gentry

1988

Writer/Teacher

The first time I felt the sting of discrimination at Princeton, it surprised me.

As a woman, I felt welcomed. Freshman year I shared a suite with seven other girls in Dodge-Osborne. We lived beneath “The Zoo,” the home of 12 guys, which could have been awful but wasn’t. The guys were inclusive and supportive and kind, and when they weren’t, we told them so.

I sang with the Tigressions, and my roommates and the Zoo guys would come listen to the arch sings. One weekend, my parents came to visit from Texas. It was packed, but my roommates helped them find a place near me, squeezed in next to several older alums in their orange jackets. Surrounded by friends on a perfect fall day, I couldn’t have been happier to be a Princetonian. But during a break between songs, I overheard one of the alums talking to my dad.

“It’s not like it was in the good old days, is it? Princeton is a place for men. Not all these women.” The disdain in his voice was palpable.

My dad, who is not a Princeton alum, smiled broadly and put his arm around me and gestured to my friends. “To me, it seems these women make these the good old days.”

When we sang the alma mater, my friends and I sang the new words just a little louder than usual, as ‘all of our hearts, not just her sons’, gave three cheers for Old Nassau.

Nellie Gorbea

1988

Elected  
official/  
Mother/  
Latina/  
Boricua

One of my first memories of freshman year was references to "The Ratio". "The Ratio" was referred to quite frequently in conversations of both the academic and social life. Frequently, the Ratio meant that it was somehow easier for women students to get dates because there were fewer of us on campus.

As the population of women students grew, it became important to reflect on the vestiges of the "old boy" tradition. The words to Old Nassau - "In praise of all Nassau, my boys, we sing....her sons shall give while they shall live" were debated at length, changed to "Let all with one accord rejoice,

In praise of Old Nassau we sing...we all shall give" and, much later accepted. At the time of the change, I wasn't sure that it was worth the hassle. Over time, I grew to appreciate the inclusiveness of the new lyrics and how it welcomed us as women students and alumnae.

My senior year I signed up for a Women in American History class. I signed up on a lark - as in, "I have to take 4 courses senior year and I've never taken a Women's Studies class so I'll take it and see what that's like." It was one of my most memorable classes at Princeton. It introduced me to so much history that I had never heard of - Seneca Falls, Sojourner Truth, the battle against midwifery, the loss of the ERA. The stories and insights I gained stay with me to this day.

Sally Frank. During my time at Princeton, we still had all-male eating clubs. Maybe it was my upbringing in a traditionally Hispanic community with its own challenges of machismo, but at the time I didn't quite get what the fuss was all about. Today, many decades later, I feel a debt of gratitude to Sally and to all the women like her who forge ahead of us so that we can catch up more easily in ways we will later understand.

It took me a few decades of life to process all of these experiences. In the end, Princeton prepared me for going toe to toe with guys in a world that still suffers from problems thanks to The Ratio.



Claudia  
Showalter  
Reynders

1988

Physician/  
Mother/  
School Board  
Member

When the women of the Class of 1988 were born, Princeton was all-male. I will never forget the unreal feeling of first stepping onto campus as a student in fall 1984. I still recall the palpable joy I experienced when walking into East Pyne for my first class, French 207, taught by the esteemed Andre Maman. What an array of classmates — a 24-year-old fluent in French, a friend I had met at April hosting, and Brooke Shields! Never before had I experienced such an impressive, diverse peer group or faculty. Elaine Showalter, Maitland Jones, John Fleming, Maria DiBattista, Michael Cadden come to mind. I learned from Professor Showalter that feminisim was “just common sense” and from Professor Jones that organic chemistry could be miraculous and beautiful.

The women in our class made up one-third of the student body. We felt embraced and supported, yet still a sort of rarefied species. Our voices were heard: I remember Sally Frank and her efforts to modernize the eating club scene. I remember the Take Back the Night march. My most joyous times were spent with my singing group, the Princeton Tigerlilies. I recall our fall “football arch sings” each Saturday in 1879 Arch. In the spring, we sang on Thursdays at midnight in East Pyne Arch, and it felt magical.

Triangle shows, football games, Wawa runs, Nude Olympics, Houseparties, Firestone reference room, holiday arch sings in Blair, Mathey College dining hall, movies at Frick, senior thesis, graduation... a glorious, momentous blur!!