

General speaks of competence over gender as she looks to future

Robert D. Martin II, Public Affairs Office

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The Army's Judge Advocate General, Lt. Gen. Flora Darpino discussed the progression of women's careers in the military at the Women's History Month event here, at Bliss Hall for an audience of students, military JAG officers, faculty, staff and community members, March 25, 2015.

Lt. Gen. Darpino referred to this year's theme, *Weaving the Stories of Women's Lives*, when she said, "This allows me to really talk with you about incredible women who through history have truly made a difference," said Darpino at Bliss Hall for an audience of students, military JAG officers, faculty, staff and community members, March 25, 2015.

Darpino shared stories of women in war, from Deborah Gannett who for 17 months served as an enlisted soldier using the name of her brother so she could serve in Army during the Revolutionary War, to Dr. Mary Walker who attempted to serve her country during the Civil War but was told she was the wrong gender; she did so anyway, and now is the only woman to have received the Medal of Honor for her service to our country.

"Competence is not based on gender," said Darpino. "These women soldiers demonstrated competence as soldiers over their gender," she said.

She added personal insights about her own career.

When she joined the Army, women made up just 9 percent of the JAG corps, she said. "My first boss said to me, 'I told them not to send me a woman but they sent you anyway'," she told the audience. But she interpreted that as a positive. "Somebody had confidence in me and sent me anyway. Someone took my competence over my gender."

Concluding, Darpino contrasted today's reality to 1976 advertisement copy that said: *The Army needs Girls, Not Just Generals*. Noting that four three-star females, and one two-star, sit at the Chief of Staff table in the inner circle, she said, "Girls are generals, by the way."