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I Said NO

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Recommended Citation

Mary M. Penrose, *I Said NO*, 23 Harv. Women's L.J. 247 (2000).

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I SAID, “NO”

For those who would disallow me the freedom to love

MARY MARGARET PENROSE*

When I was born, my family was ecstatic.

“Another girl!” they said.

I said, “No.”

Mama told me to comb my hair and wear a dress.

I said, “No.”

I cut my hair and donned jeans, so that I might play with the other children.

Mama told me that girls don’t play with boys. Boys are too tough.

I said, “No.”

I learned to play football and kick a soccer-ball. I am not limited by gender.

Mama told me that Southern ladies speak proper and softly.

I said, “No.”

I learned to speak up so that others could hear my cries.

Mama told me that Southern ladies never sweat.

I said, “No.”

I learned that the ways to freedom come from the sweat of my brow.

Mama told me to learn piano and ballet.

I said, “No.”

I went to basketball camp during the summer. *This* is how I paid for college.

Mama told me to become a nurse and help people.

I said, “No.”

I became a lawyer to help those without voices.

Mama told me that I would marry a prince.

I said, “No.”

I chose to marry a woman.

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Mama told me that the Church didn't want me anymore.

I said, "No."

The Church *needs* me.

Mama told me that I could not take Communion anymore.

I said, "No."

No one can displace me from the table of the Lord.

Mama told me that I was no longer a part of her family.

I said, "No."

I am my mother's daughter.

Mama told me my actions embarrassed the family.

I said, "No."

More than 200 people attended my wedding.

Mama told me that people don't really like "my type."

I said, "No."

People simply don't know me.

Mama told me that I must be sick.

I said, "No."

My love is the most healthy part of my life.

Mama told me that I have caused her nothing but pain.

I said, "No."

Mama doesn't *know* pain.

Mama told me that I was a failure.

I said, "No."

I am determined to be a success.

Mama told me that I was weak.

I said, "No."

I am stronger than anyone could imagine.

Mama told me that I was born a woman for a reason.

Finally, we agree.

I celebrate my womanhood in a way Mama will never understand.