

## *A Short Woman's Legacy: Anything But Short*

*by: Veronica Cardillo, '25*

**“Fight for the things that you care about, but do it  
in a way that will lead others to join you.”  
–Ruth Bader Ginsburg**

This fall has marked the two-year anniversary of the passing of an influential woman and person in history. Where would we be without her influence? Well, a *short* way to answer that is a very different place. I'll start off at the beginning of her journey, at Cornell University, and then at Harvard Law School.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg was one of very few women in her law class at Harvard: one of nine, to be precise. Imagine the sexism she must've faced. I, for one, cannot imagine what she must have dealt with, but, as we know, she succeeded in her journey through law school. And, may I add, when her husband, Martin, was being treated for testicular cancer, she took on his work as well. In the end, Ruth Bader Ginsburg was the first person (person, not woman!) to be a member of both the Harvard and Columbia Reviews. She also tied for first in her class.

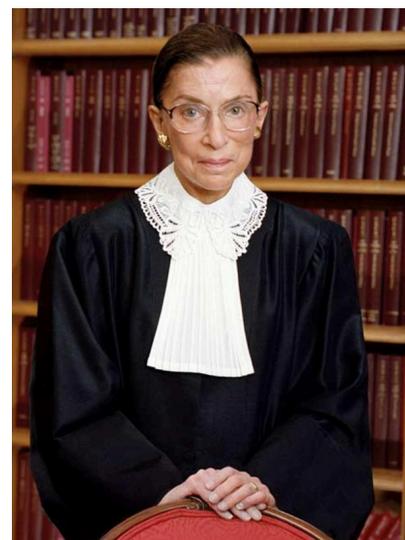
Yet, what's puzzling is that when she graduated, she still had trouble finding a job. I wonder why? Oh, wait, I have an idea! It might be that one tiny thing about her that people were prejudiced or opinionated about: her being a woman.

There was no reason to deny her the job of being a lawyer. Yet, people did: and for what? Her sex? It was a long time until she got her first court case, and, when she did, it would take a big step towards equality for all.

In fact, her first case didn't involve sexism against a woman at all. In this case, it was sexism against a man. After all, sexism doesn't just affect women, but men too! Charles Moritz, who was never married and taking care of his elderly mother, was denied the tax deduction for the money he'd pay a caregiver. This was due to the fact of his not being married, while a single woman in the same situation likely would've been given the tax deduction.

After presenting the lengthy case, the verdict was decided in favor of Moritz. It was ruled that the code was unfair due to its gender bias and that it was a violation of the Fifth Amendment, which protects all citizens regardless of sex. This also made it the first time the IRS had a condition that was considered unconstitutional. So that was the *Mortiz v. Commissioner* case— a case with sex-based discrimination against a man.

Throughout the 1970s, Ruth Bader Ginsburg testified in many Supreme Court cases dealing with gender discrimination, and she won most of them. Then, in the 1990s, she was



nominated to the position of Supreme Court Justice by President Clinton and served up until her passing.

Yes, Ruth Bader Ginsburg was a short, feminist woman. Being a woman can make you more prone to sexism and being short can have people think of you as weak, but Ruth Bader Ginsburg didn't let anyone take her power away or make her feel small. She fought for what she believed in, which was equality amongst the genders. That's what being a feminist is— ensuring equality not just for women or men, but everyone. And that's what she did. So thank you, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, for everything. As a young woman, looking back on all that you did inspired me and I'm so grateful for that. Thank you for giving young women a voice— short, tall, whatever you may be. Just remember, to anybody reading this: you have a voice, and you always will. Don't forget that.

**Author's Note:**

The court case and biography details are taken from Smithsonian Magazine's December 24, 2018 article "The True Story of the Case Ruth Bader Ginsburg Argues in 'On the Basis of Sex'" by Lila Thulin. Read more at:

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/true-story-case-center-basis-sex-180971110/>.