

# Who you calling a Lady?

*Putting a manners modifier in front of a mascot creates unnecessary gender separation*

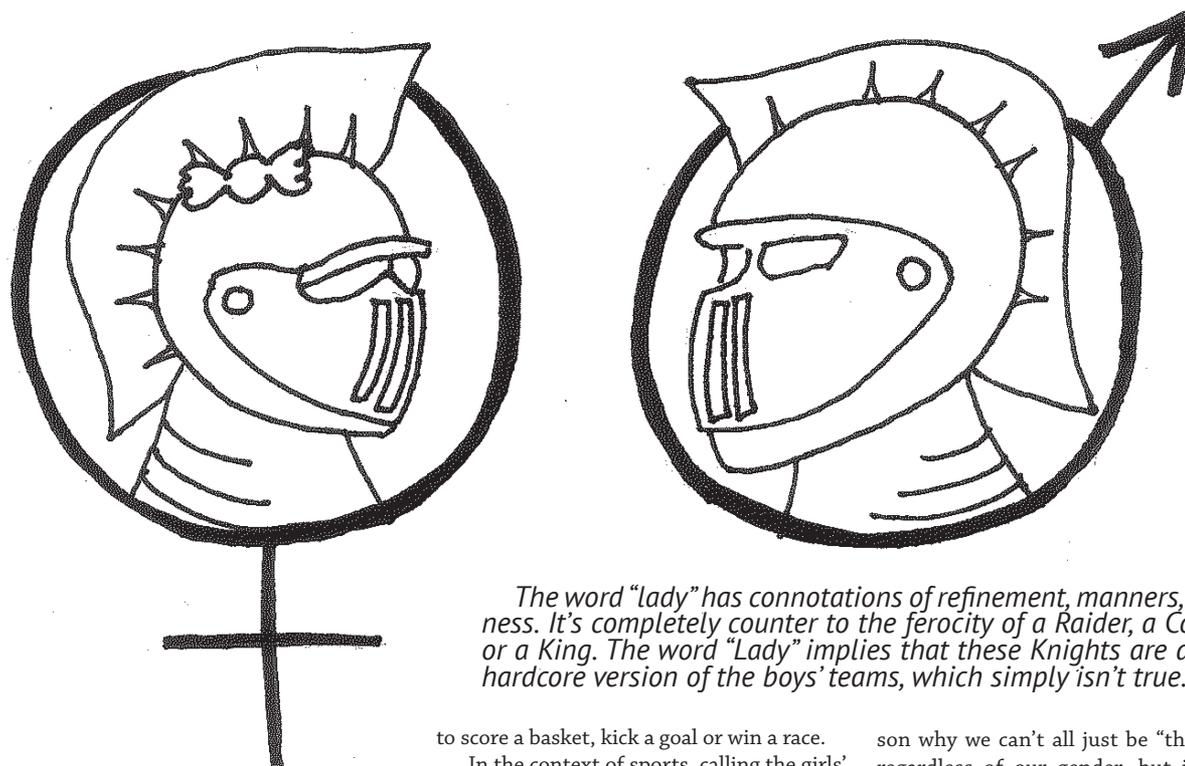
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McCallum is the second oldest high school in AISD, opened in 1953. Time for some basic arithmetic: if it's 2016 now, and our school was opened in '53, we Knights have been around for 63 years.

Now, let's rephrase: "We Knights and Lady Knights have been around for 63 years." Except we haven't. The Knights have been around for 63 years, but the Lady Knights have a shorter history. Title IX was passed in 1972, so the Lady Knights have been around for at least 19 fewer years than the Knights. We don't include the phrase "Lady Knights" when talking about McCallum as a whole—we're generally just the Knights. So, why do we create unnecessary gender separation by calling the girls' sports teams the "Lady" Knights, while the boys are simply the Knights? It's not necessary—we are all the Knights, and calling the girls the "Lady" Knights implies that the girls' teams are only an alternate version of the boys' teams.

Coming from the Title IX perspective, calling the girls' teams the "Lady" Knights makes sense. It's like a celebration of letting girls do the same thing as boys. Anything they can do, we can do, et cetera, et cetera. But it's been 44 years. Gender equality should be a given—it's no longer something novel to be celebrated; it's merely a fact.

Mascots are chosen to be strong: the Knights, the Jaguars, the Broncos, the Bulldogs, the Trojans—warriors and animals meant to evoke images of fierce competition. Mascots for schools and professional sports teams are meant, at some level, to strike fear in the hearts of the team's competition. They support the idea that our team is the best: the fastest, the strongest, the toughest. So when you hear "the McCallum Knights," you can picture an armored warrior on a horse, maybe, really sticking it to a Trojan with lance or a sword, maybe waving a shield around in triumph. Put the word "Lady" in front of "Knights," and it becomes much softer—even ridiculous image.



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Now what do you picture?

The word "lady" has connotations of refinement, manners, softness. It's completely counter to the ferocity of a Raider, a Comet or a King. The word "Lady" implies that these Knights are a less hardcore version of the boys' teams, which simply isn't true.

The phrase Lady Knights also makes little sense historically or semantically. Knights were chivalrous men—trained fighters in service of a king or feudal lord—there to protect the land and maybe rescue damsels in distress. Women couldn't even be Knights, and a "Lady" Knight has never existed. It's an oxymoron. Ladies are noble, put-together, beautiful, polite creatures. They suggest advanced age and refinement. They go to battle ... nowhere. On a sports team, no one's there to look beautiful, and manners don't matter much as you're trying

to score a basket, kick a goal or win a race.

In the context of sports, calling the girls' teams the Lady Knights just seems unnecessary. If it's for merchandise purposes, I can understand that it's giving the girls teams a unique title that provides them with a good way to make money through selling merch. But there's also an easier solution to that; give the boys' and girls' sports teams the same amount of funding. That way, girls teams don't have to have frequent fundraisers during the summer, when they could be enjoying a break from school, girls don't have to see boys teams get a ridiculous amount of new equipment, and then have to use that money they raised during the summer to repair damaged equipment or to get new uniforms.

The word "Lady" perpetuates the idea in our society that women have to be beautiful 24/7. That's 100 percent unrealistic and damaging for young women—and young men—to be exposed to. I don't see any rea-

son why we can't all just be "the Knights" regardless of our gender, but if we have to make distinctions then calling us the "Woman Knights" would be better. At least "Woman" is a more neutral gender identifier. But then the boys would still be the "Knights," while the girls are left to represent some other (less authentic) version of the team. So maybe if girls have to be the "Lady" Knights then the boys should be the "Gentleman" Knights. That way everyone gets a silly mannered modifier. Or we could abandon gender altogether with our modifiers, and girls could be the "Really-Cool Knights" and the boys could be the "Ready-to-Win Knights."

Too complicated, you say? Well, here's a radical proposition: Let girls and boys be equals. Talk about the teams as if we're equals. Let's all be fierce and fight hard to win, regardless of our gender. Let's all just be the Knights.