Kathrine Switzer:
Running Towards Women's Equality

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Word Count: 1,200 words
Media Time: 1:53 minutes
Process Paper Count: 500 words

Process Paper

When I first learned about this year's National History Day theme, "Rights and Responsibilities," I realized I had many topics to choose from. I faced an initial decision: should I focus on a more contemporary issue or a historical one? Since I had tackled older topics in the past three years, I chose to explore something more recent. Having run competitively for the past four years and continued running as a recreational hobby during the off-season, it felt natural to select this topic. Although I had heard of Kathrine Switzer before starting my project, I was unaware of the significant extent to which she contributed to advancing women's equality in long-distance running.

Researching for this project proved overwhelming. I recognized that there were numerous subjects related to women's long-distance running, but apart from Kathrine Switzer, I struggled to pinpoint my focus. Ultimately, I decided to address the myths that initially held women back in the sport. These harmful social stigmas were propagated by men who believed that if women could run, they would be too close in strength to men. Additionally, I included a background information page about the Boston Marathon to provide context on how the race was organized before Kathrine's involvement. Lastly, I discussed Title IX, which, while not directly linked to Kathrine herself, benefited from her influence in the passing of this amendment. Although there were more categories I could have explored, I wanted to ensure every aspect of my project was meticulously written and well-researched.

This is my fourth year at National History Day, so choosing which type of media to use for my project was one of the easier choices. Websites ultimately work best for me due to the absence of a strict limit on the number of visuals I can include. Moreover, having a word count allowance of 1200 words gives me ample space to delve into the complexities of my topic while maintaining an appealing narrative. Another major benefit of opting for a website is the convenience it provides. I can work on my project from virtually anywhere, whether I'm in the library doing research or using any spare moments during class. This constant accessibility means I can continuously refine and enhance my project, ensuring that my final presentation is as polished and comprehensive as possible.

Almost immediately after beginning my project, I recognized how I could connect my topic to the annual theme. Kathrine Switzer not only advanced women's rights in sports by making it legal for females to register for the Boston Marathon, but she was also active in the inclusion of the Women's Marathon in the Olympics. She took on the responsibility of advocating for female health and running by founding several organizations and utilizing social media to raise awareness about the challenges the topic presents. Overall, Kathrine has empowered millions of women to pursue running, both through the races she has organized and through the increased opportunities for women to register in races as a result of her advocacy.