The three women pictured in this incredible photograph from 1885 -- Anandibai Joshi of India, Keiko Okami of Japan, and Sabat Islambouli of Syria -- each became the first licensed female doctors in their respective countries. The three were students at the Women’s Medical College of Pennsylvania; one of the only places in the world at the time where women could study medicine.

As Mallika Rao writes in HuffPost, "If the timing doesn't seem quite right, that's understandable. In 1885, women in the U.S. still couldn't vote, nor were they encouraged to learn very much. Popular wisdom decreed that studying was a threat to motherhood." Given this, how did three women from around the world end up studying there to become doctors? The credit, according to Christopher Woolf of PRI's The World, goes to the Quakers who "believed in women’s rights enough to set up the WMCP way back in 1850 in Germantown.”

Woolf added, "It was the first women’s medical college in the world, and immediately began attracting foreign students unable to study medicine in their home countries. First they came from elsewhere in North America and Europe, and then from further afield. Women, like Joshi in India and Keiko Okami in Japan, heard about WMCP, and defied expectations of society and family to travel independently to America to apply, then figure out how to pay for their tuition and board... Besides the international students, it also produced the nation’s first Native American woman doctor, Susan LeFlesche, while African Americans were often students as well. Some of whom, like Eliza Grier, were former slaves."

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ALTERNATIVE ASSIGNMENT or OPTIONAL EXTRA CREDIT: Write a ½ to 1 page paper about when and/or how the University of Michigan first allowed women to attend. Give background on when other U.S. colleges/universities admitted women. If you wish, you can also describe when, how, and where other groups—African Americans, Jews, Asians, Hispanics, etc.—were accepted at such institutions. Compare with what this reading said, if it helps to have that further topic to discuss.

This should be typed, double spaced, with 12 point plain Times/ Times New Roman font, and 1” margins. List your sources on the back and be sure to properly identify any/all quotes.

As extra credit, this could be worth 5 points and if you wanted to present it to the class and answer questions about it, you could get 8 points for this. As a regular assignment it takes the place of reading the about the CD Acts and completing the worksheet.

- To read more about these women’s stories, listen to the PRI story at http://bit.ly/Q6TjLA
- To learn about more trailblazing women of medicine and science from around the world, we highly recommend the new book “Headstrong: 52 Women Who Changed Science -- And The World,” for ages 13 and up at http://www.amightygirl.com/headstrong-52-women
- For pretend play toys for budding doctors and nurses, visit our “Pretend Play Occupations” section and choose your occupation of interest on the left menu: http://www.amightygirl.com/t.../imaginative-play/pretend-play...
- And, to encourage your Mighty Girl's interest in science, check out STEM toy section at http://www.amightygirl.com/toys/toys-games/science-math