

Philippa Marrack Honored at National Women's Hall of Fame

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DENVER, CO — [Philippa "Pippa" Marrack, PhD](#), Chair of the Department of Biomedical Research, was one of an illustrious group of women who were inducted into the [National Women's Hall of Fame](#) October 3 in Seneca Falls, New York. Dr. Marrack was recognized for her many achievements in science and discovery. She was one of 10 who received the 2015 award in a group of honorees that included Carlotta Walls NaNier, the youngest of nine African American students, known as the Little Rock Nine, who integrated Little Rock Central High School in 1957; Nancy Brinker, founder of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation; and Eleanor Smeal, founder of the Feminist Majority Foundation and considered one of the iconic leaders of the women's movement. Others included in the group were pioneers in dance, athletics, law, policy and mass media.

Most of the brief speeches these pioneering women gave focused on overcoming social and political obstacles in the battle for women's equality. Chants of "ERA Now," for a proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, repeatedly broke out among the hundreds of people in attendance.

Dr. Marrack took a decidedly different tack, which her husband, John Kappler, PhD, called, "Pippa being Pippa." She punctuated the stately procession of honorees entering the hall with an impish hop, skip and a wave. Her humorous, generous and self-deprecating talk credited both men and women who have helped her in her 45-year research journey. She portrayed herself less as a warrior in the fight for women's equality than as an example of professional behavior and steadfast commitment that demonstrates the equality of women, which can lead to great achievements.

Dr. Marrack, in partnership with Dr. Kappler, has indeed achieved great things, which have garnered the couple some of the world's most prestigious scientific honors and awards. For more than four decades they have unraveled the mysteries of the immune system; how it protects us from external threats when it is working and can lead to autoimmunity and allergies when it malfunctions. They identified and isolated the T-cell receptor, a primary sentinel for the immune response. They learned how the body makes and selects an effective array of T cells that recognize and attack potentially harmful foreign proteins while leaving the body's own tissues alone. They discovered superantigens, virulent toxins that cause an overwhelming and disastrous immune response that occurs in maladies such as toxic shock syndrome and food poisoning. She continues an active research laboratory today, seeking, among other things, to understand why and how autoimmune diseases strike women so much more frequently than men.



Philippa Marrack, PhD, speaks at induction ceremony for National Women's Hall of Fame, Oct. 2015

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