

Three “voices:”

Women’s Empowerment – the Journey to Full Partnership

Women ARE leaders, already.

While sometimes more is accomplished by “behind the scenes influence,” than by “out front” leadership, women’s voices and leadership are needed in every part of our society – in the family and in the community, in our organizations and corporations, in our government at every level, and in our educational systems.

The time has come for women to step fully into their power, authorize themselves and one another as leaders, seize opportunities and use the skill and wisdom they bring to ANY arena of life – from the kitchen to the Board Room, from child care to care for the planet and the global community.

If survival of life on our planet is to be an option, the partnership of feminine and masculine energies is necessary. No longer are “women’s rights” a matter of “Maybe, someday” **Someday is now!**

Three “voices” have articulated this necessity in clear and compelling ways:

Michelle Obama’s message in her book, ***Becoming***, (2018) reveals deep insight and a vivid example of how one can fully support her partner, AND, continue on her own path to meaningful leadership. “Authentic” is a word that springs to mind over and over again as she owns and values her own roots – appreciation for her parents for their sacrifices and continued support, her vulnerability as she faces new situations, and her courage as she engages those situations that challenge her the most. She is a role model who confronts and inspires readers.

Abby Wambach, in ***Wolfpack***, (2019) clearly names the informal norms, or rules, that she identifies as reflecting current assumptions about how women should engage in organizational roles, and redefines those as she believes they should be. Co-captain of the 2015 Women’s World Cup Champion Soccer Team, Wambach challenges women to not allow outdated, trite platitudes to define us or dictate our behavior. Instead, she emboldens us to honor our own knowing and values as we collaborate to create the kind of world we want. Wambach challenges women in a most compelling way both to “lead **where you are**” and to **champion each other.**”

Finally, and most recently published, Melinda Gates names the current time as ***The Moment of Lift***, (of women). Through the lens of her own experience of seeing the “Bigger Picture,” and then realizing there was a “Bigger Picture” than that – and even a “Bigger Picture,” than that, she normalizes the ongoing

journey in which many thoughtful women and men are engaged as we both deepen AND expand our understanding of life on this planet. She challenges and inspires us to acknowledge our own power, and the power we create as we connect. She highlights who the “teachers” of leadership are in this current time. It is the farmer who missed the Christmas celebration because she was in her field planting a new crop -- - because she had realized the rains were coming at a different time of the year. It may be a 10 year old girl who lives on a garbage dump whose questions, and refusal to be silenced prompt changes that had defied both scientists and community organizers.

Her stories of one-to-one conversations with some of the poorest women in the world, are riveting and often hard to imagine. However, the way she embraces what she hears, internalizes the messages, and opens to learn what is often “uncomfortable truths” is even more compelling. She absorbs these experiences not only intellectually, as perhaps how these messages are needed to guide financial Foundation decisions, but wholistically in terms of how they inform her internal growth. As with Michelle Obama and Abby Wambach, Gates shares her own inner journey of examining the assumptions beneath her actions and of working to create in her personal relationships the values and practices she is seeing as essential on the larger social level. The integrity she seeks to achieve, and the “truth to self” she seeks to nurture, amplify her impact.

Each of these authors are women writing out of the wisdom they’ve gained from their own experience. They are visionaries, courageously sharing stories of their own personal, internal growth that is the basis of our power as leaders.