

*THE* **NATIONBUILDER**  
*REVIEW*

**2017**

**WOMEN'S**

**CONFERENCE**

*L.B. CALLAIR • OLIVIA FISHER-SMITH*

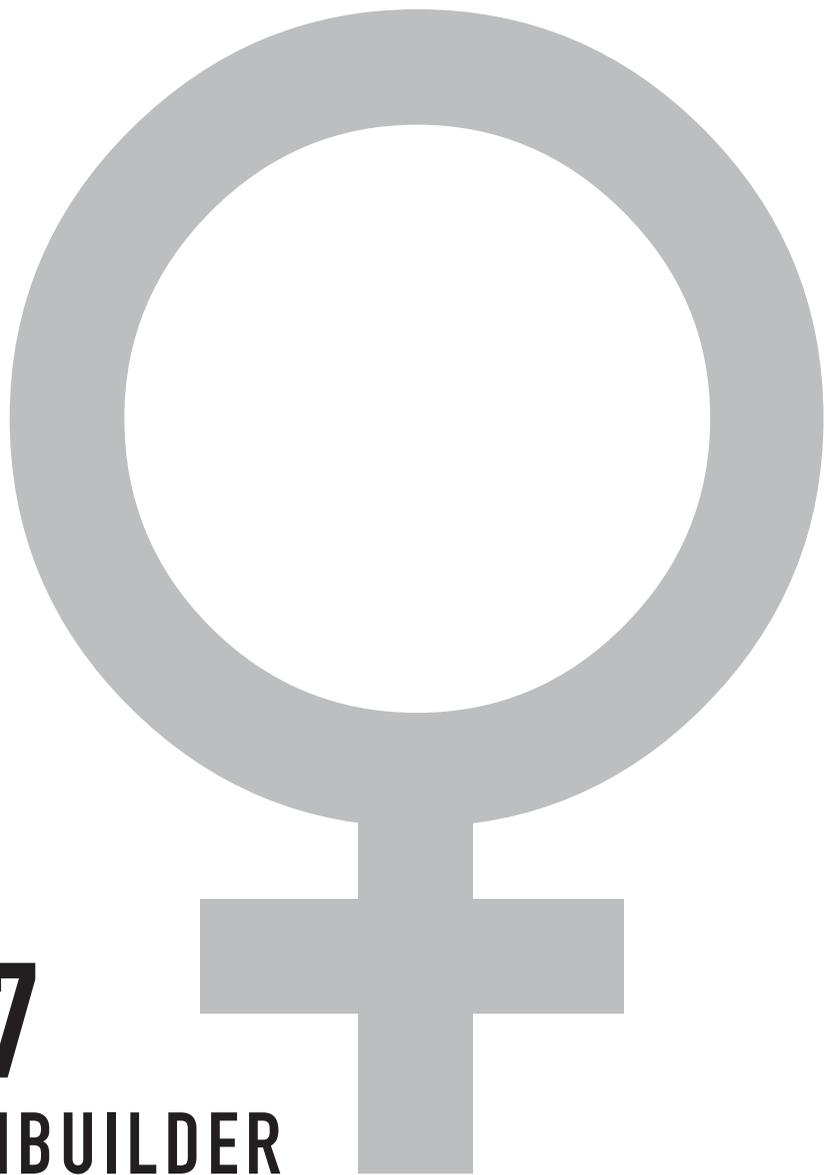
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*SARAH SHANLEY HOPE*

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# THE NATIONBUILDER REVIEW

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# A LETTER OF WELCOME

On the morning of the Women's March, I was in a doctor's office. I had many conflicting feelings about this, including being kind of proud of myself for finally keeping the appointment. As I'd left my house earlier that morning, my dear friend Pat Callair texted me the question: *What about a NationBuilder women's conference?* I was running out the door when it came through and didn't really stop to read it. And then, while lying on a table at the doctor's office talking about immune systems and how to make sure mine functions for the long haul, the most amazing thing happened. A women's gathering—in full, vivid detail—just sort of appeared in my mind. Our team had been talking for a while about creating a conference for leaders sometime in the fall of 2017, but in this vision the participants were clearly all women and it was spring. Names of the most phenomenal women I know started popping off in my mind: Mona Tavakoli, Nikki Silvestri, Amy Henderson, Dena Jones Trujillo, Lisa Koven Lee, Pat Callair and on and on.

The second I walked out of the office, I grabbed my phone and began spouting names and words into a voice memo on my phone. *We are leading movements, nonprofits, companies, political parties, communities. We are artists, musicians, singers, dancers. We are mothers, we are CEOs, we are activists, we are doctors. We are women. We are leaders. This is our conference.*

Jacqueline Jennings, Rosa Gonzalez, Sarah Starpoli, Emma Campbell Webster, Ayelet Cohen, Cynthia Ong. The names kept coming.

A day later at least half of these women had said they would come, would facilitate, would do whatever was needed.

And here we are today.

I'm so grateful you came. I know it took a whole lot to show up, to actually get into this room on this day at this time. Thank you. I can't accurately capture in words how excited I am that we're all in one place to be with each other and have the conversations that need having.

Over the next few days we're going to get into it with each other. We're

going to share our stories, our frustrations, our hopes, our fears and undoubtedly a lot more. We're going to listen and hear and see each other. We're going to build community—and in that space start something that can sustain us for longer than just these three days. The women who contributed to this journal have given us a great gift in jumping right in, sharing their stories, and catapulting us to a place of depth even before we've begun.

My hope for this time is that every single one of us walks away fortified, filled up, nourished. In this together, for the long haul.

*Lea Endres*

NationBuilder Co-founder

# AWAKENING

*L. B. Callair*

I grew up in a simple southern community where equality, for black people, was still a utopian dream. The social mecca of my community was the corner drug store. It was the poor man's shopping mall. For seventy-five cents I could buy, what was for me, food fit for the gods, a big juicy hamburger with lettuce and tomato and a cherry coke to wash it down. A jukebox serenaded my friends and me with the soulful tunes of James Brown, Gladys Knight and the Pips, Marvin Gaye, and my personal favorite, the Supremes. We waded through the adolescent rituals of crushes, courtship, dating, breaking up, and making up, in the booths at the back of Doc's Drugstore.

Life in my community, never asked more of me than I could offer. I was shaded from the harsh light of reality beyond the borders of East Hampton and Park Ave. I didn't know there were such things as separate water fountains, and colored balconies in movie theaters. The world existed where I was. And my parents were its guardians.

But outside the sanctuary of Doc's Drugstore and my small segregated community, there existed a strange world of shades and hues where skin color was the marker of prosperity; The lighter the skin, the greater the prosperity.

I was nine years old when my brother and I first encountered this other world. It was time to go downtown. It seems my mother, in her infinite wisdom, had spared us this experience until she decided we were old enough to withstand its sting. So in her no nonsense voice, she said "When we get to town, stay close to me, do not touch anything and don't speak to anyone you don't know." But what if I saw a grown up, I thought? Being a child of the south, respect for elders was like Christian gospel. And respectful meant speaking politely to any adult.

But when we stepped off the bus and turned the corner on to Main Street, I understood. The strange, pale beings walking along the streets radiated a quiet hostility; their hard eyes darted away, avoiding mine, their heads perched like rigid ornaments on their robot-like bodies. I felt like an alien.

In a polite "yes ma'am, no ma'am" way, my mother bought what she

needed from a young clerk in the five and dime. It was strange and disturbing to see my mama humbling herself to a young person with a “yes ma’am.” I was happy to return to my small familiar community. I did not want to understand these new ways. And for the next little bit, life went on as usual. I would, on occasion, ponder that strange “downtown experience,” but decided they were adult matters, best left to adults.

But in the book of life, reality is often hidden in the fine print, and can lay waste to the best of plans. One day my carefree existence, my safe little community, crumbled. Adult matters scattered my childhood like refuse in a deserted alley.

*Jet Magazine* was prime time in my house. Small in size, no bigger than the *TV Guide*, but big on news about black folks. The lives of black movie stars, sports figures, and politicians paraded before me every week. It was encouragement to the people in my community. The weekly journal came on Mondays. So on almost every Monday afternoon, I would sit on the porch steps with my brother and we would excitedly pore over its pages, enjoying the smiling black faces that looked out at us.

But one Monday in September, when I went to get the magazine from its usual place on the mantel above the fireplace, it was not there. And at the same time, I noticed that almost all the adults I knew had gathered on our porch and were speaking with quiet and tense voices. These people who were so expansive in speech and gesture; who on hot and humid summer evenings would perch themselves on porches, the women in their bras, paper fans trailing a cooling arch around their heads; men sitting on the steps whittling. And they would in loud and expressive voices talk about the day’s events. Their unrestrained laughter the background for my life. They were strangers to secrets, and yet they hovered around something in that magazine like a bunch of conspirators on a deadly mission. I could feel the loud hush that had come down over my community.

Sensing the tension and concern of the grown folks, we children hovered. The adults shooed us off to play. But we knew how to get information when we needed to. We placed ourselves under the porch next to the cinderblock foundation that held up our wood framed house. We heard them reading from the magazine, talking about a young boy in Mississippi and how awful “it” was. They lamented that he was only a child and how mean some white folks could be . . . about the boy whistling and how he didn’t know what he was doing.

The next day, while our parents were at work, my brother and I began a careful search for the magazine. Eventually, we found it. Eagerly sarching its pages we found “it.” It was full-page and it was horrific. He looked like a monster. A big swollen head, eyes, ears, and nose that looked like hot melted wax that had

been twisted in some distorted parody of a face. Barbed wire had been pressed into his head and looked like a metal crown. Something had been imbedded in his neck. We threw the magazine across the room as if we had been stung. When we settled ourselves, we picked it up again and looked and read. We came to know him as Emmett Till, from Chicago, Illinois. He was fourteen years old and he had been visiting his uncle in Money, Mississippi. He had been accused of whistling at a white woman. Two white men, including the woman's husband and brother-in-law, had taken Emmett from his bed in the middle of the night. He had been beaten, tortured, and killed. His body was thrown into the Tallahatchee River.

The looks from those pale-skinned strangers that I had encountered on my downtown visit took on a new and grisly meaning. They were powerful, ferocious, and mean. They were out of control wild animals, monsters. White people became Frankenstein, the Werewolf, the Mummy, the Boogey Man, the stuff of childhood nightmares. And I knew, even in my young mind, that there was something deeply wrong if something so horrible could be done to someone so young.

The white men stood trial and were found not guilty by an all white male jury. They went on with their lives like nothing had happened. But I knew that something evil had been let loose, a force beyond any law I knew or any rule I followed. There was an evil that could not be tamed and its target was black people. It hated us. For my brother and me, and no doubt scores of other black children, our time of feeling safe was over.

Future issues of *Jet* came to rest on our mantle, but Emmett's horrific portrait took up residence. Somewhere in the deep recesses of our minds where perception, belief and attitude are created, something had taken hold. And on occasion, in my dreams, the awful image of Emmett's face would intrude on me in vivid detail. I would wake in tremors thinking that those pale-skinned monsters were out there and could attack at any time.

My brother and I became very cautious of white people. My parents continued to work hard to make a life for us and we, eventually, returned to a kind of surface normality. But the brutal killing of Emmett Till had happened. Our Eden was lost. And something terrible had come to take its place.

## Leaving The Yard

The nightmares that had my brother and me waking in terror had subsided, and we were desperately trying to get back to our childhoods, wanting to reclaim that

sweet pure and carefree innocence that had been so much a part of our young lives. We were trying, however futilely, to hold on to the last remains of a time that had been so sweet to us, a time before we knew.

I was taking piano lessons, which I dreaded, and reading with a passion. I had acquired quite a collection of books and magazines: *National Geographic*, biographies, *True Love Stories*, and, of course, *Jet*. We built a tree house in our back yard. We acquired our first television, a true luxury item. I spent a fair amount of time flipping between the three available channels. We had heard something about the sit-in demonstrations for Civil Rights taking place across the south. But the protests and demonstrations had not come to our town. And I had no reason to believe that they ever would. We had achieved an unbroken racial truce, won by everybody staying in their place.

One warm summer evening as my mom and dad carried on their usual evening banter with our neighbors, I sat in the living room flipping through the channels. When I tuned to the Six O’Clock News, I saw the face of someone I knew. He was the teen-age son of one of our neighbors. I didn’t know him very well. We called him “Big Boy” Adams. His real name was George Adams. He got the name “Big Boy” not because of his size, but because of his attitude. He carried himself with a kind of pride and confidence that made him seem larger than he was.

He was being led away from the lunch counter at the local five and dime by the police with bloody tears streaming down his face. There were other young black people as well, sitting quietly and respectfully at the lunch counter. Something took hold in me.

I rushed out the door and called my brother. He heard the urgency in my voice and came running. I pointed at the TV set and said nothing. He sat on the couch and focused his attention on the young people at the lunch counter and the bloody face of George “Big Boy” Adams. People not much older than me acting with quiet courage, dignity, and determination introduced the Civil Rights Movement to my hometown—and to me.

The picture of Emmett Till; my mother calling a white girl “Ma’am”, white people stepping in my home as if they owned it and demanding payment for some bills; the white insurance man calling my mother by her first name. All of these images and memories came flooding back and I knew what I had to do.

“We have to go down there tomorrow,” I said to my brother. He looked at me as if I had suddenly been turned into some strange unknown being right in front of his eyes and said, “We can’t go down there, mama told us not to leave the yard!”

He was right. That was the rule. But it was clear to me that there were more important things going on; and they were bigger than the rules that we knew not to break for fear of mama's punishment.

It took me another day or two to convince him that we had to go. We made a plan: We would put on our Sunday outfits, a three piece black suit for my brother with white shirt and black tie and a dark blue taffeta dress with black patent leather shoes for me, catch the bus at the corner of Liberty and Hampton, get off at Main St., and walk to the five and dime to participate in the sit-ins.

On the day I left the yard, I was excited but not afraid. I felt determined to take this risk. I was not known for bravery. In fact, my brother enjoyed calling me "scardy" because I refused to make personal acquaintance with the squirrels, rabbits, rats and other assorted creatures he would drag home from his explorations. This was not about heroism. It was something more essential, something I did not at the time fully understand.

We got off at the corner and walked to the five and dime. We entered and headed back to the lunch counter. There were just two college students sitting at the counter. My brother and I stepped up and took a seat. It was the first time that we had ever sat at any restaurant in my hometown.

I felt powerful and free. I was asking to be treated as well as any other American citizen, and I was peacefully and respectfully demanding to be afforded all the rights and privileges due to me as a human being. I was fourteen years old.

The male and female college students were surprised to see these two unknown but well-dressed youngsters, joining them at the lunch counter. We sat there the entire day. There were some hateful looks and ugly comments, but they didn't bother me. It was a small price for freedom and dignity.

When my parents found out where we had been and what we had done, they were shocked and frightened. And I suspect proud. They were stern, and with the threat of severe punishment, forbade us from returning to the lunch counter. We faced our parents and for the first time, openly defied them. I think they knew we would.

Out of deep respect and admiration for what her children were doing, my mother became an active participant in the cause. She joined the Biracial Committee on Civil Rights and became our protector, keeping us safe as we demonstrated. Because of her activities, she lost her job and an income we could ill afford to lose. I will always have deep respect and love her for that.

This began our experience as young activists advocating for our rights and the rights of other Americans. My brother and I would subsequently become members of the Roy Wilkins Youth Chapter of the NAACP. I would spend most

of my summer marching and picketing and sitting in for civil rights. Doc Jackson's drugstore, the place where I could get my beloved hamburger and cherry coke, where I could sit and listen to music with my friends under the watchful eye of family and neighbors, would become the headquarters for the movement. It was still the same drugstore, still familiar and comfortable, but it had become much more.

It was no longer a place where life was simple and cherry coke sweet. We were worlds away, it seemed, from that safe existence. We were now engaged in adult matters in difficult and dangerous times. Our childhoods were over. And our lives as black people in America had begun.

Since that fateful September day, I have often asked myself this question: How can we humans live together in peace? How can we move beyond our differences? I trained and am educated as an activist, clinical social worker, and educator, all in service to finding an answer, maybe even creating one, to this question.

It led me as an activist to non-violent civil disobedience and the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King who taught that it is morally correct to resist an unjust law and that we must love our fellow humans even as we oppose them.

It led me as Clinical Social Worker to the methods of Virginia Satir, a pioneer in Marriage and Family Therapy who believed that growth and transformation is a life-long process, that people can access a spiritual life energy that influences their emotions and behavior and significant personal change is possible.

My question also led me to The Foundation for Community Encouragement. It's founding dream states: "There is a yearning in the heart for peace. Because of the wounds and rejections we have received in past relationships, we are frightened by the risk of disarming ourselves. In our fear, we discount the dream of authentic community as merely visionary. But there are rules by which people can come back together, and by which the old wounds can be healed." This eloquent and hopeful statement describes what I hope for all the world . . . to come back together.

Now some cynics might say, it can never happen. They may discount it as the fanciful dream of a "do-gooder bleeding heart." Perhaps; but how does that criticism address our current situation? What does that dismissal offer those of us who want such a world?

I am the mother and grandmother of five black males. They are the heart of my heart. I love them more than words can express. We are a good family. When my eldest grandson heads off to college, his parents and I know that we will need to have a difficult conversation with him. It will be deeply painful because he is so good—an accomplished scholar and a gifted athlete. And I know

that when we talk with him about what he can expect should he have the misfortune to encounter the wrong police officer, we will have to explain that, in Twenty-First Century America, there are far too many wrong police officers out there. It will dampen that lively, optimistic spirit that has always been such a big part of his personality.

I am sick of this. I tire of the conversations with other parents of black and brown children about how to protect them in a society where way too many people fail to even see their basic humanity. What was Dr. King's dream of the Beloved Community about? What does community building mean? Do we really believe in liberty and justice for all? Sometimes I want to forget about finding the answers to these questions. Sometimes I just want to run away and take those I love with me.

And then I remember the yearning of my heart. I think of my grandchildren and their children, and I know that this is not the time for despair or pessimism. As Dr. King once said "Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree."

I remember the strength of my family, my grandchildren's optimism and hope. I remember all those who have taught me. I remember that there have always been people in our society—of all races, rich and poor, male and female, gay and straight—who have fought and continue to fight for the America we believe in. And I know that I must keep on keeping on.

I believe coming together is essential for our moral and spiritual health and well-being. Our lives must be a reflection of the world we want. It may be our only hope for the lasting peace, justice and security we need. The one thing about which I believe the majority of us will agree on is that there is a yearning in the heart for peace.

(This essay is excerpted from *What's Going On?* to be published by NationBuilder Books in September, 2017)

# TRUTH, DISCOMFORT, AND THE WORLD WE WANT

*Sarah Shanley Hope*

*“The first step to healing is elevating the truth of what is.”*

*—Alicia Garza*

Last year, when my daughter was almost seven, we sat at the kitchen table talking about her day. “He kept hanging on me even after I said stop! It was so annoying.” “And did you remind him that you’re in charge of your body and he’s got to listen to you?” “Yes, mama. Why do you always remind me? I know!”

I finally said it out loud. I was nervous, but kept it simple and shared my truth.

“You know, love, when mama was a kid, about your age, I had a friend whose older brother did things to my body that were not OK. Unfortunately, it happens to a lot of girls and women. It even happens to some boys. I didn’t know how to talk about it without feeling bad about myself or scared about what people would think, so I just kept it inside. I don’t want you to feel badly inside like I did. I want you to know that we can always talk about the hard and confusing stuff.”

She paused, looked up at me and touched my leg. I looked into her eyes, held her hand, and smiled. “I understand, mama.” And then she moved on. I laughed a little at the lightness of our exchange and the countless hours I’d spent fearing it.

I was six years-old when a friend’s older brother molested me. For years, I held a knot in my stomach and block in my throat from those moments of harm. And I kept quiet. It took me decades to share my truth—with a few people I deep-

ly trusted and, eventually, with my daughter.

These conversations with my now eight-year-old were uncomfortable at first. They began when she was five and we had to talk through an incident at school, when a boy in her class was forcing kisses on girls. I sometime struggle with the right words to say, but I keep saying them. I want my daughter to be able to manage her own experience in a world that is threatening, and sometimes violent, especially for women. I want her to trust that I tell her my truth and can handle hearing hers. I never want our fear of discomfort to disconnect us, or worse yet, disconnect her from her dignity and that of others.

Reflecting on the thirty years it took me to acknowledge the harm done to me, to heal, and to ultimately gain strength from my experience, I wondered why I didn't talk it through sooner.

I wondered if what keeps us silent about surviving our own sexual assaults also keeps us from talking about other traumas in our culture. If we refuse to acknowledge our own pain, how can we see the pain of others? If we are unable to hold those we know and love—neighbors, fathers, brothers, and even husbands—accountable for the violence perpetrated on our bodies, how can we prevent the horror inflicted on others?

Our denial of harm is historic. The KKK lynchings of young black men in our past have become today's police shootings of black children. The land grabs from indigenous peoples have become the human rights abuses against prayerful Water Protectors. Wives as legal property have become the normalization of sexual assault on college campuses. We have chosen a rape, kill, and torture culture over one that speaks truth, rebuilds relationships, and heals. We chose this over the discomfort of difficult conversations. Yet even in our silence, we know the truth—we have experienced it. We can choose to look deep into ourselves and heal—or turn away from the pain.

Ultimately, our inability to move through the discomfort of honest, accountable relationship with one another destroys our families, poisons our communities, and corrupts our government.

How can we be silent when the harm we inflict on each other is so great? Today, fifty-three million American women have been sexually assaulted and twenty-two million raped in their lifetimes. More black people were killed by police in 2015 than at the height of Jim Crow. There are dozens of mass shootings each year—in elementary schools, movie theaters, and churches.

In the midst of this violence, I began to notice the invitations from brave survivors for each of us to choose truth. I started to see the potential everywhere, at all times, for healing and connection. Survivors' willingness to acknowledge

the pain was the first step—and I was readying myself to join them.

From the survivor of Brock Turner’s brutal assault, men are invited to learn how to respect a woman’s body, “If your plan was to stop only when I became unresponsive, then you still do not understand.” From Sandra Bland’s mother, who spoke clearly to members of Congress, other mothers are invited to stand together to protect our children’s lives, “I heard about Trayvon, I heard about all the shootings, and it did not bother me until it hit my daughter.” From Felicia Sanders whose son Tywanza was one of nine people in Emmanuel AME Church murdered by a complete stranger fueled by white supremacy, we are invited to love unconditionally even in the face of terror. “We welcomed you Wednesday night in our Bible study with open arms. You have killed some of the most beautiful people that I know. Every fiber in my body hurts and I’ll never be the same.” And as more than 4 Million marched in at least 500 cities and towns across the country on the President’s first day in office, we are invited to link our fates to those of other women, to other causes of harm and their solutions, and to each other. White women—53% of whom voted for Donald Trump, a known sexual assailant—can choose to be survivors and healers instead of victims and accomplices.

We can’t undo the harm. What we can do is choose discomfort over hiding from the pain—or worse, repeating it. What amount of love and courage do we need to have those difficult conversations once our bodies are out of harm’s way?

We can change our culture in the public sphere and the private one with conversations like the ones I have with my daughter. Imagine if you shared your truth with one person you loved and trusted, or stood up against aggression in your family or community. Imagine if in response to the survivor of Brock Turner’s rape, a groundswell of the women living with the pain of sexual assault posted a simple comment on the letter she published on BuzzFeed, “You survived a terrible thing. It was not OK and you are brave and strong. I am also here, a survivor, and we can heal.” Imagine if all of us survivors, across race and class divides, posted the same message in response to Sandra Bland’s mother. “We are here and demand the police stop killing our children.” Imagine, if Brock Turner himself, understanding that he had brutally harmed another human being, stopped denying that pain. Imagine if he chose the discomfort and let it sink in, “I did a terrible terrible thing. It was not OK. I cannot undo the harm, but I can witness your pain and accept the consequences. I will never do such a terrible thing again.” Imagine if our police unions at any point in the last few years stood tall with the few Police Chiefs that have shown such courage and said, “We are harming those we have sworn to protect and must do much much better.”

Imagine if when Brock Turner was a child and his parents were called because he had acted inappropriately towards a female classmate, his dad had sat him down, and through the discomfort, shared his own story of causing harm to another—by immaturity or outright aggression—and they healed, together.

# THE LEADERSHIP REVOLUTION WILL BE FEMINIZED

*Hilary Doe*

I'm one of the lucky ones. I graduated. I left a cushy job to build a small nonprofit, and it blossomed into a powerful force for social change. I've been trusted with big teams, major funding, serious responsibility, and I've been compensated well. But, when I look back on how I got here—I'm pissed.

I'm angry that I can't tell the story of becoming a nonprofit leader, or social entrepreneur, or executive without also remembering the deeply painful experiences I chose to ignore, or that I chalked up to the cost of doing business as a young woman. The things that I blamed myself for. The things that I let slide. When I think back on those situations, I imagine myself behaving differently—speaking truth to power, pushing back. But I didn't do either of those things. Mostly, I just took them out on myself.

When I first started working as a nonprofit leader, I was the twenty-three-year-old national director of a nonprofit network created by college students. The organization was growing tremendously, and accomplishing incredible things. I worked to keep people fired up and motivated to work, and fought to elevate the incredible achievements of people in our network throughout the country. And I was responsible for raising the money I needed to fund those programs, to pay people's salaries, to maintain the autonomy of an organization that I loved and had helped build. I used to jump out of the shower to write down ideas for fundraising pitches or programs. More frequently than I'd like to admit, I woke up in the middle of the night afraid I'd dropped the ball on an email chain with a foundation, or slipped up with a donor in some way that might jeopardize our funding for the following year. And, since the network was growing, we always needed more support—and I was always looking for more donors.

I remember hyping myself up on my walk to pitch a prospective donor. It

was a beautiful day in New York City and I was running through all the exciting network updates I was going to highlight. One of my colleagues—also a young woman—joined me for the meeting to help with follow up. It’s always a little awkward to ask for money, but there’s a kind of high that you get from really doing justice to an organization or a cause that you believe in. And I was pumped.

Every donor is different, of course, but when we sat down for this meeting, I knew it was going to be a challenge. He was in his mid-seventies, sitting in a big leather chair behind a huge desk, while we sat together on a sofa across from him. And he immediately barked at me, “So, what do you want.” I reminded myself to remain self-possessed, and I skipped the pleasantries to jump straight into pitching the work we were doing on college campuses. Just as I was hitting my stride, he shouted me down, “What do you want from me.”

I smiled politely, nodded calmly, and tried to project gratitude. “I’d love to apply for a gift from your foundation.” But he already knew that. He’d asked for the meeting. He immediately said, “Sure.” An unusually abrupt ‘yes’, but when you get the answer you want, it’s generally a great time to stop talking, so I said, “Great! I’ll get all the application materials together and get them over to you . . .” when he cut me off again. “You don’t have to go through all that formal stuff. I don’t need a big grant proposal or anything. I can get you the funding. What can you get me?”

This was where things got strange. I was still smiling, nodding knowingly, projecting confidence while submitting to his authority, which he seemed to want me to do. Internally, though, I was completely confused. What the hell was he talking about? I can generally connect with what people are thinking or feeling and what they need to know in these meetings—but I was completely lost. I had been pitching him on what ‘I can get him’ in terms of impact via our program, and he had interrupted me. So it wasn’t that. I explained the value of our work in advancing his fund’s mission, and he didn’t seem to care. So, what was he talking about?

Then I realized “What can you get me,” meant him personally. Seriously? What the fuck? Unsure of how to respond to his request for a personal reward, I broke from my nodding and smiling and said, “Well you’re going to be the guy that discovered the star organization in your grant portfolio!” When in doubt, tell truly lame, unfunny jokes, right?

He ignored me and then said what he had wanted to say all along, “I mean are you going to come and visit me some weekend. Come up to my house upstate. Spend some time. Heh, heh, heh.” Yes. His solicitous come-on really ended with a satisfied chuckle, his head nodding in self-assurance, lips smacking with spit piled

up in the corners of his mouth. Hot.

I was in shock. I think I placed a hand on my colleague's arm in the hope of keeping her from darting out of the room. I was, somehow, still smiling. And I was literally calculating how much we needed this money and who was depending on this support—trying to imagine the good work it could fund. I wasn't some strong feminist hero in the face of the oppressor. Even confronted with this craziness, feeling like I should run screaming, I was calmly calculating how much I needed his gift, and desperately searching for a response that wouldn't offend him, so I could potentially salvage this meeting. He had continued talking. I don't know what he said, but then I heard it . . .

"It's good to have young women in my office, sitting on my couch. Do you guys masturbate?" One of us audibly gasped. "Do you two do that?"

He leaned back in his chair, smacking his lips again, sort of rocking, smiling in anticipation of our answer, dreaming of something I didn't want to imagine.

I was panicked. I had never been more uncomfortable. But I also remember explicitly thinking 'be cool.' Just. Keep. Smiling.

Somehow we got out of that meeting. I think I said, "Well, we're definitely not here to talk about that!" then laughed and coyly recapped what I'd be sending his office. Something. But I know I said "Thank you! Great to see you! We'll talk soon."

Maybe he didn't even know we were both mortified. Or maybe he knew he had power over me, so he just didn't care. He certainly didn't know that I'd still think about that day sometimes. I didn't realize that I would either. But I still do.

Obviously, what happened was inappropriate and awful, and perhaps it is a particularly egregious example of what women deal with every day. But, the truth is, throughout my leadership experiences, I was being judged all the time—for my skills and experience, sure—but also based on the way that I looked and the way that my womanhood was perceived by other people. The comments about my outfits, the lewd propositioning, the backhanded compliments. The critiques of my voice, the comments about my 'giggle,' the surprise at my intelligence. Despite all the incredible support I had from people who believed in me, the ways that I took those judgments out on myself were devastating. I was young and I really wasn't prepared to deal with that part of my experience. I even subconsciously connected whether the world would view me as a successful leader with whether I was fit and pretty. I wrote down every calorie, every carb, and tried to outrun my insecurity, until I ended up with my face in a toilet bowl. The dark side of my leadership experience left me feeling lonely, and a little . . . less.

But I really did feel like all of this was my personal problem, brought on by me alone. I didn't want it to affect my leadership of a network I loved. I just kept going. Mainstream wisdom for women leading says if you just lean in to the system, put your head down and do the work, despite everything, you'll be alright. But a large part of my job throughout my career has been to call other young people into leadership. And leadership—for me—also came with real costs. I never named that. More than anything, I regret recruiting an incredibly talented woman to be my successor, with whom I didn't spend one minute among countless hours we talked about the ins and outs of the job, sharing the things that were hard about it on me. Because sharing those experiences seemed like whining about my personal problems instead of doing the work.

But that is not fair—and it is just not true. Too many of us believing that lie will prevent us from coming together to transform a broken system. The barriers to leadership for women are real, they are many, and they are systemic. Despite all the progress we have made, especially in the last century, women are still constantly denied the chance to do the work they want to do because of cultural perceptions and misconceptions about our gender. And the hundreds of incredible, brave young women I've had the honor to work with and meet will continue to butt up against artificial ceilings to their leadership that are the product of implicit (and explicit) bias.

The best-case scenario should not be that women do everything they can to lean in to the system that is stacked against them. We've done enough apologizing for the way we are perceived. Enough appealing to fairness and parity. Enough conforming to a model of leadership that was never designed to fit—and that can't even effectively tackle the challenges leaders face today. Committing to doing whatever it takes to make it (whatever that means), does not mean that you won't get blocked from reaching your full potential or that you won't be held to a different standard or that you won't be objectified. Most importantly, just because some women have made it does not mean that the world isn't missing out on the brilliance and innovation and leadership of your friends, colleagues, and other women around the world because of their gender—at a time when we need good leadership more acutely than ever.

Maybe this is my chance to make up for not saying the things that I should have said, or for not being as brave as I wish I had been. Like I said, I'm one of the lucky ones, and I'm going to use that privilege to call out the fact that this problem is systemic: all women face real cultural, social, financial, and political barriers to leading. The leadership gap is real. And the first step to closing it is disproving the prevalent myths that promulgate the idea that the leadership gap is

nonexistent, insignificant, unimportant, or the result of the personal choices women make.

## The Leadership Gap

Let's start with the facts: Women are consistently underrepresented in leadership roles and positions across all sectors of the economy. The problem is systemic. Women are primed, prepared, and showing up to lead, yet the barriers to their assuming those positions are numerous. People are constantly trying to explain away the leadership gap—offering that perhaps the gap between men and women being selected for leadership positions is a product of women's choices or their preferences for lowering paying, less “difficult” jobs. That is, they say the problem isn't systemic but rather the result of a lack of ambition or a lack of skill on the part of women in the workforce. These “explanations” are not only insulting to women, they are insufficient to explain the problem. They're myths that obscure the real, substantial cost—economically and emotionally—of suppressing women's leadership when people try to minimize the problem.

Let's systematically prove them wrong.

## The Myths

One way people commonly discuss the ceiling placed on the recognition and validation given to women and their potential to lead is via the pay, or wage, gap. This reflects only a portion of the true leadership gap—the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, across all sectors. But I'll get into that later. Regardless, the same myths are used to justify or explain away the systemic disadvantages facing women in the workplace—both in their compensation and in their pursuit of leadership.

Before we dive into those myths, let's tell the truth about the pay gap. It is pretty simple: women are paid less than men for the same work. Across all sectors, women working full-time make less than men doing the same job, despite women being more educated overall and more likely to hold managerial positions. Today, women working full-time make about eighty cents for every dollar earned by a man. That's twenty cents less for every dollar—and that's a best-case scenario. The gap is larger for women of color, larger still for mothers, and largest for

single mothers (disproportionately women of color themselves), who bring in only about fifty-nine cents for every dollar earned by a man. This wage gap becomes even more pronounced the more education is required for a position. That is, women aren't compensated for their leadership and leadership potential at higher levels of institutional responsibility and higher levels of pay. The higher the pay for a position, the larger the gap is between men's pay and that of women who are doing the same job.

Despite the amount of attention and coverage given to the pay gap—even earning top billing on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign platform—a lot of that air time is spent responding to misleading frames and myths that don't address the real pay and leadership gaps that carry real costs to the women they disadvantage, to our country, and to the world.

**Bullshit Myth #1: Women choose to work in lower-paying jobs.** It's true that, on average, women work in lower paying fields than men. But, this does not explain away the pay gap. Women earn less than men across every single job category for which there's enough data to measure the difference. Every one. Just 'choosing higher paying jobs' does not close the pay gap for women. A sizeable and statistically significant gap still exists, even after adjusting for different occupations. Encouraging women to take on STEM fields and code might be an important piece of the puzzle. But women choosing higher paying fields don't automatically earn more money than they would have otherwise. Average pay actually decreases in the field itself, as companies choose to compensate women less than the male employees they'd previously been hiring to do the same work.

It is also extremely misleading to attribute the extent to which women are working in lower paying fields to women's choices alone. That leap assumes a level playing field—that women are making those 'choices' with all other things being equal. As if women are just think, "Money? Tee-hee, giggle! No, thanks! (wink, hair flip)." No. The choices women make to enter lower paying fields are informed by their circumstances. Women often take lower paying jobs in lower paying fields, because they disproportionately bear the burden of childcare and home management. We have decided as a country not to support families that need childcare, and, without affordable options, women often end up needing to work jobs with flexible hours to be with their children at home and, as a result, they get stuck cobbling together part-time gigs that don't even provide essential benefits like health-care. Wow, sounds like a great "choice" to me. We're not talking about the people that make the valid choice to stay at home because they want to. We're talking about the women forced out of better jobs (or out of the

workforce entirely). And it isn't always a choice.

And while we're at it, let's discuss why those "higher paying" industries are higher paying in the first place. Are construction workers and factory workers inherently or intrinsically more valuable than health workers or child-care professionals? No. Generally, those 'higher paying' industries have unionized at higher rates, so workers get a larger percent of the profits. And those fields are also more likely to be the subject of traditional gender stereotyping with unequal access based on false assumptions about the correlation between gender and the ability to perform specific tasks. Any given field's concept of its "ideal worker" is an important and understudied schema when considering how women are denied opportunities and influenced or tracked in their career paths. So, this isn't exactly a "choice."

**Baseless Myth #2: Men are more qualified for good jobs. Women need to focus on training.** Women cannot "educate themselves" out of the pay gap. The idea that they can is pure myth. Women earn more degrees than men. Period. This has been true for a while. The fact that women are more educated, yet the pay gap is larger as the education required for a position increases is pretty clear evidence that the gap has nothing to do with education or proficiency. Too often, demands for gender parity in the workplace are placated by companies offering a training program for women in the company. But training opportunities in and of themselves won't close that gap, and we can't write off the problem as if that's all that's required.

In fact, the skills required to achieve results at the highest levels in leadership are largely misunderstood. The most successful leaders today need facilitative skills, the ability to listen well, to respond to the needs of others, to remain responsive and adaptable, to build community and let that community be self-directed, and to actually distribute leadership. And of all workers, women have been more frequently tracked into positions that build these skills, meaning they're arguably even more prepared, on average, to deliver results as leaders than men are. Plus, women know how to adapt their leadership approach. We are frequently told to adjust our style to get ahead, so we're more likely to pursue and respond to what's required of us as leaders, than men are, who haven't been so frequently asked to change.

But the qualities selection committees and boards look for in prospective leaders largely don't track with what's required for leaders to be successful. The most correlated characteristic of a leader chosen by a board is someone that looks like they do—mostly older, white men. Charismatic risk-takers, or high-perform-

ers in important senior leadership positions internally are also top picks, though their skills might have nothing at all to do with the kind of skills required for the job at hand. We select people we think look and act like we imagine leaders should—like the caricature of a leader in our heads—even if the best leaders, in reality, “look” very different.

Companies can’t train women to lead when they largely don’t recognize what good leadership requires today. In reality, women are likely already among their most well-equipped. The bottom line: just training women won’t close the gap. Women are already more educated, and arguably more equipped than anyone for leadership in this moment. We should probably be training you.

**Misleading Myth #3: There’s only a pay gap at the top, so it only matters to rich women.** Nice try. Divide and conquer. Too bad this argument is bunk. It is completely, 100%, the case that the pay gap is biggest at the top of the pay scale, with women making up only 26% of people paid 100K or more (only 4% of whom are women of color). And yes, the pay gap remains relatively small at the lower end of the pay scale.

There’s a floor on the pay gap because of the federal minimum wage, meaning at the lowest end of the pay scale, employers can’t pay women less than men doing the same job, even if they want to. But, recent estimates suggest that closing the pay gap would actually lift more than half of poor women and their families out of poverty. Half. That’s pretty m-f’ing consequential. And the lower the wages, the more valuable each dollar is to the earner. So even though the gap might be smaller, it’s also felt most severely for lower wage earners. Those women aren’t just missing out on building their nest egg; the pay gap might be the difference between putting food on the table or not.

**Unconscionable, Fear-mongering, Misogynistic Myth #4: Of course men should be paid more. Men are breadwinners. If women get paid more, men will get paid less. Plus men are bigger, stronger, and more intelligent.** In case you don’t believe that this is a real argument anyone would make in 2017, I submit these gems for your consideration:

*“If businesses are forced to pay women the same as male earnings, then men will have an even more difficult time earning enough [as primary breadwinners.]” —James Green, Vice Chair Wasatch Republican Party*

Need more convincing?

*“Of course, women must earn less than men because they are weaker, they are smaller, they are less intelligent. They must earn less. That’s all!” —Janusz Korwin-Mikkey, Member of European Parliament, Poland*

Oh, and we can’t forget our current President.

*“[P]utting a wife to work is a very dangerous thing...” —Donald Trump*

Obviously, this myth needs to be addressed, but it’s so cuckoo bananas it’s hard to even know where to start. First, discrimination isn’t okay, even if you’re the white man in power benefitting from it. Just saying I need to make less so that there’s no risk you won’t is not a justification for discrimination. Are people just supposed to hear your argument and say, “You’re feeling threatened? Oh, ok. I had no idea! In that case, I totally assent to be discriminated against.” I guess maybe these guys are relying on the fact that most people in power are men? Well, we’re not buying it.

Second, men aren’t necessarily the “breadwinners” anymore. They are in some families. And more power to them; families should be able to choose how they’d like to provide, and have the option to become one income households supported by male earners if that’s what they prefer. But, in reality, women are just as likely to work as men: women make up half of the workforce, are the sole breadwinner in 50% of all U.S. households with children, and are sole breadwinners in 80% of all single parent households, while single mothers continue to be disadvantaged by the pay gap more than anyone else.

And a quick note for those that claim men are the breadwinners even in households where two incomes are required, because the man often makes more money. That argument is tautological. There’s a pay gap, therefore men make more money than women in every job where there’s data to measure it. So, just because men in two-earner households might make more money, you can’t just deem them the de facto breadwinners, and use that as a justification for saying they should continue to make more money than women who are doing the exact same job. Nope! Nice try, but we aren’t buying that either.

Lastly, an extra dollar paid to a woman is not the same as an extra dollar paid to a man. Until the pay gap is closed, women are making less, so each dollar is, in an economic sense, more valuable when it’s paid to them. That is, it means more because that woman is otherwise making less. Women are more likely to

spend that extra dollar, which stimulates the economy. More people, with more spending power, buying more goods is good for the economy; it causes businesses to grow, and when they're growing, they hire more people—both men and women.

And if you can't get behind that, how about this: women spend a larger portion of their money on their children and families than men do. That is not to say that men don't spend money on their families; it's just a fact. The data show that women are more likely to spend their money to improve the quality of life for their children, which has serious positive consequences for the economy and for society as a whole—it leads to less dependency on social programs and improved educational attainment for children, which, in turn, increases kids' future earning potential, decreasing intergenerational poverty. Investing in women pays some pretty nice dividends.

In short, all the arguments that the wage gap can be chalked up to women's choices or otherwise diminished are distractions from the real problem—the pay gap is holding all of us back. It's real, and closing it can provide real benefits: eliminating the pay gap would lift people out of poverty and stimulate the economy for everyone. Perhaps most importantly, the pay gap is reflective of a broader leadership gap that's suppressing women's contributions to solving the pressing challenges we're up against, and exacerbating a leadership crisis we face as a global community.

## The Big One

The leadership gap for women is a lot larger than even the pay gap would suggest. And it's perpetuated by the most damaging myth of all: that for a woman to get more, she does so only at the expense of men and other women. That is, there are a limited amount of leadership opportunities, and we're all—men and women alike—fighting over them. It is as if, on the first day, God created the heavens and earth, then, on the second day, he designated a set number of leadership positions and associated compensation, and on the third day, he gave them all to men. And if we want them back, we have to fight over them. It's just not true. And bucking that illusion of scarcity—refusing to accept that premise—is a key to finally closing the gap.

First, let's get a real picture of how vast the leadership gap for women actually is. Despite making up more than half the workforce and more than half of all college graduates, only 4% of S&P 500 CEOs are women, down one point from last year. Women hold only 22% of senior management roles, only 17%

of corporate board seats, and only one in five seats in Congress. 39% of firms in G7 countries have no women in senior management roles whatsoever. In film and television, women made up only 26% of all show-running, producing, writing, and editing jobs between 2015 and 2016. Only 3% of boards of directors at Fortune 500 companies are women of color, and women of color make up fewer than 4% of managers and executive official in S&P companies. Among the most successful leaders in business, entertainment, and politics, only forty-six of the four hundred super rich (\$1.7B+) were women—and only one of those women was a woman of color.

How, in 2017, is that possible? There is no evidence to suggest that men are more effective leaders. In fact, women who are in managerial positions are proven to improve performance outcomes—productivity and achievement—in the teams they manage. But the leadership gap persists. It even holds across academia, unions, and religious institutions. And even in the “woman-friendly” nonprofit sector, women make up only 18% of CEOs at the largest nonprofits.

And, the gap is even larger than these statistics suggest. By citing studies that measure how many women occupy any “senior management role,” we ignore the bigger gap in executive and positional power. After all, though women make up 20% of members of Congress, only 6 states have female governors. And though 22% of senior management roles are filled by women, we still only have women in 4% of CEO position in the S&P 500. And positional power matters. It comes with respect, recognition, and higher compensation. It affords leaders the tools needed to change the organizations they run. Without positional power, women leading are kept behind the scenes, spending as much time facilitating the work of “real” leaders as they spend doing their own. It also means they are less likely to be recognized or see themselves as leaders, and, more likely to become demoralized or burn out.

In closing the leadership gap for women and addressing the real leadership crisis we’re all up against, it’s important to broaden our definition of what titles or positions a leader holds, and recognize the leadership qualities in people who aren’t in traditional leadership roles. But attaining positional power makes it simpler for women to change company culture and internal policies to recognize other leaders in their organizations, promote other leadership styles, and elevate the other people in an organization leading alongside them. And positional power offers women a platform for the rest of the world to recognize them, which can help to change a society’s image of what a leader can look like and their conception of who is capable of leading to one that is much more diverse.

Can we teach women to “lead from behind?” Sure. Can we acknowledge

and lift up the acts of leadership that occur behind the scenes? Definitely. Should we broaden our definition of leadership to acknowledge women who are doing incredible, important work in non-traditional roles, at home, through their volunteerism, or in positions that are often overlooked? Yes.

But we should not ask women to give up on positional leadership either, or to be the silent partner standing behind the man. We need to acknowledge women leaders in all positions. But we also need to promote them, and close the gap between the talented female leaders that are perfect for roles with positional power, and the leaders that are ultimately chosen to fill them.

This is where the mother of all myths comes in: probably the greatest barrier to leadership for women is belief in the theory of scarcity, that shows up so often in public dialogue around the seriousness of the leadership gap. It is the justification for the ways in which women are pitted against one another to secure a top spot. It is used to encourage women to lean in as hard as possible to the system as it is, in hopes that, despite everything, they just might make it to the top. The theory of scarcity implies that there is only so much opportunity; only so much money to be made or so many leadership positions to be filled. According to the myth of scarcity, we can't all make it. And so women are in competition with one another to earn what little is available. And if women manage to earn more than they have in the past, the myth of scarcity tells us, they will do so at the expense of men.

So instead of being about the cost of suppressing women's leadership, the conversation turns into one about who loses when a women gains, and who falls behind when women get ahead. This "scarcity" argument shows up in almost every arena where the question of women's equality is on the table.

But it is fundamentally flawed and obscures an important truth: unlocking the leadership of women that have been held back by oppressive practices, stereotypes, violence, disrespectful work environments, social pressure, financial burden, and biased selection processes isn't a threatening appropriation of opportunity to women at the expense of anyone. It's an incredible opportunity for all of us. An opportunity to see what kind of growth women can create, and what ideas they've been denied the opportunity to bring into the world. It's an opportunity to identify the best leaders, regardless of gender, that can grow our organizations and companies and institutions, and tackle the unprecedented problems that we're facing worldwide. It's an opportunity to discover new leaders, when our current ones are largely underperforming. It's an opportunity to address what the World Economic Forum has called a crisis of leadership in the world, by ceasing to hold women back from the leadership they'd like to claim. Refuting scarcity and em-

bracing leadership diversity presents us with an opportunity to grow the economy for everybody.

There just isn't a set amount of opportunity in the world. We can make new opportunities, create new jobs, come up with new solutions to real problems that can make peoples' lives better. And that's a hell of a lot more inspiring than continuing to oppress people because we are afraid of what might happen if we stop. Holding on to a corrupt and unfair system because you're scared does a disservice to all of us. Not ever knowing what's truly possible is the real risk of not closing the leadership gap.

## The Future

My first child is a boy. His name is Jett. He's beautiful and fearless and very opinionated. He has more than a few t-shirts that say, "Future World Leader." Or "Brave." And since I've started talking about this work and insisting now is the moment to close the leadership gap and women are uniquely equipped to lead, numerous people have smiled uncomfortably, some grabbed my hand sweetly, and said something like, "Well you can't really mean that. After all, Jett is going to be a great leader too."

My son is only one-and-a-half. He hasn't been spoiled by the world yet. He loves me and worships women, not because we're beautiful, but because we're strong, smart, and courageous. Women are guiding him through the world. And he is evidence that women having more does not equal men having less. When I have more, I give it to him. And when his caretakers have more, they give it to him. And when women have more, all of us benefit.

It shouldn't be radical to say this, but suggesting that women are at the forefront of a leadership revolution doesn't imply that I don't want the best for my son. I think closing the leadership gap is a prerequisite to a better future for him, and for the rest of us. When women aren't leading, they aren't growing and creating the world that will be a blessing to my son, who gets to live in it.

Jett is proof that there is not a pre-determined amount of anything that we have to fight over. Women can make new life. We can also create more wealth, fuel economic growth, and drive innovation. The fear that there isn't enough opportunity for all of us to be leaders is a myth that keeps us in competition with each other instead of directing our focus toward creating more for everyone. We can be scared and hold women back at a cost to all of us; or, we can embrace the opportunity for Jett and the rest of us to see what's truly possible in a world where

all women can lead.

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# PARENTHOOD'S POWER

*Amy Henderson*

In mid-2015, I was more than eight months pregnant and down on my knees picking up the peas that my three-year-old daughter, Clare, and my nearly two-year-old son, Aidan, had spilled all over our kitchen floor. It was lunchtime, and I was still in my pajamas and hadn't yet brushed my teeth. And while the kids above me banged their fists on the table and continued to spill food onto the floor, I became viscerally aware of the taunting voices in my own head. They were telling me that no matter what I did, I was a failure. I was going to fail my kids if I continued my career, and I was going to fail them if I didn't. And, because of my kids, I was definitely going to fail in my career. I'd been hearing these voices since my first pregnancy. But on this particular day, I'd had enough. I resolved to no longer let the voices have their way with me. It was time to find my own voice.

As a resident of California, one of only three states in the United States that offers paid maternity leave, I had twelve weeks away from work during which I could begin this process. So, in between round-the-clock feedings and diaper changes, I talked with mothers who had good relationships with their kids as well as thriving careers. I paced the house with my sleeping infant in my arms, my neck kinked to hold the phone between my cheek and shoulder while I whispered into the receiver: *How are you doing it? Please, tell me.*

I had a shocking revelation during these conversations. The vast majority of the women I called—senior vice presidents at tech companies, CEO's, computer programmers, partners at law firms, nurses, doctors, and more—realized that they were performing better in their careers because they had kids, not in spite of them.

A senior level computer programmer who built and managed the teams at several successful tech companies shared this anecdote with me, "Since becoming a mom, I no longer tolerate when a coder does a half-ass job and then fights when I tell him that I'm not going to merge his code into the system. Before, I would

hesitate and worry about it escalating into a team conflict. Now, I don't want to waste everyone's time fixing the problems brought about by his shitty code."

When I asked her if it was her experience that allowed her to have the confidence to be more assertive at work, she replied, "No, it wasn't. Because my daughter is a higher priority to me than my work, I now glean more of my value from my role as a mom, and whether I'm doing right by her." And this, she realized when she was talking with me, allows her to be more effective at work.

Before talking with me, however, the majority of the moms I interviewed had been, like me, too inundated with negative messaging to even consider the potential positive impact motherhood could have had on their careers. And the voices telling us that motherhood would cause us to underperform at work weren't just in our own heads.

Donald Trump said in an October 2004 NBC Dateline Segment, "Pregnancy is inconvenient for business." And it's not just Trump, many of the CEO's I know, while unwilling to say it publicly, feel the same way. Shelley Correll and her colleagues, then at Cornell University, found that mothers in the workforce are rated as significantly less competent, less intelligent, and less committed than women without children; and a mother is 79% less likely to be hired, and half as likely to get promoted, when compared to an equally qualified woman without a child.

What was happening? Why did there seem to be such a huge gap between the perception and the reality of motherhood's impact on career performance?

Enthralled, I kept going, continuing the interviews and looking into other fields of research—including neuroscience, evolutionary biology, game theory, primate patterns, leadership studies, and more—to help me understand what I was hearing. Eventually, I also began to include dads in my research.

But I'll be honest, I didn't want to include dads.

My husband was a more engaged partner and father than many of the men I knew. When my son was two and we saw a vacuum by the side of the road, he pointed to it and said, "Dada," because in our house, my husband is the one who wields the vacuum. But, despite the fact that my husband handled many of the domestic tasks, since becoming a mom, I had started to resent him.

And I wasn't alone. Many of the moms I interviewed told me that they also resented their husbands. As accomplished career women, we'd had to not only meet but exceed the bar for excellence in the workplace in order to get ahead or advance in our careers. And this bar had risen even higher after we had kids. But for our husbands, fatherhood automatically boosted their careers. On average, a father earns \$5,000 more than a childless man. But, with each child, a mother

earns 4-15% less than a childless woman. And when you dig deeper into these numbers, you'll see that women fare pretty well in the workforce before they become moms: a childless woman earns ninety-three cents of a childless man's dollar. But a mother earns only seventy-six cents to a father's dollar. These findings, published in a 2014 report and presented to congress by Michelle Budig, a sociologist at the University of Massachusetts, are attributed to what gender scholars call the "fatherhood bonus" and the "motherhood penalty."

Why do fathers earn so much more and mothers earn so much less than everyone else? Because our economy is still organized around the concept of what gender scholars call the "ideal worker" father married to a stay-at-home mother. In this model, the mother takes responsibility for the house and children, and the father is expected to devote himself to his job, free from any caregiving responsibilities, because the family depends on his income.

The majority of American families, however, no longer exist in this model. According to a 2015 Pew Center research survey, only 25% of families with children under eighteen have an ideal worker father and a stay-at-home mom. A 2016 study by Ernst and Young found that the fastest growing segment of the U.S. workforce is moms, 56% of whom have children under the age of three. And in her book *The Richer Sex*, Liza Mundy claims that within a generation more households will be financially supported by women than by men. But, the expectations of the workplace have not yet caught up to reality.

And then there's the home front, where the majority of us encounter the implicit assumption that mothers are better suited than fathers to care for their children. I unconsciously believed this was true. I had carried Clare in my womb, birthed her, and was nursing her. In the role of nurturer, I was biologically superior to my husband. And, as much as I loved being the primary caretaker for our daughter, I resented my husband for not matching my level of responsibility.

But when I began interviewing mothers who had experienced meteoric success in their careers and they talked about their relationships with their mates, I began to question my own.

One of the women I spoke with during my research was Shellye Archambeau, the CEO of MetricStream, a Silicon Valley tech company with over 1,000 employees. The daughter of a stay-at-home mom and a dad without a college degree, Shellye was recently named "the second most influential African American in technology" by *Business Insider* magazine. Shellye told me that her husband deserved much of the credit for her success because he carried the bulk of the responsibility for caring for their home and children.

She talked about how women often set expectations for how things are

done at home, and try to control it; we want it done our way, or a certain way, and this tells our husbands that a certain domain is off limits and that they should stay away. But then we get mad when they don't step in.

“At first,” Shellye told me, “there were times when I tried to micromanage the way my husband did things at home, and he had to stop me and say, ‘Look, I’m going to do it the way I want to do it.’ And initially that was hard for me, because his way was not my way.”

In one of her class pictures, Shellye’s daughter was wearing two braids that were supposed to be pinned up on her head, but one had fallen down. “While my husband was doing her hair, I could’ve stepped in and done it better,” Shellye said, “but that would’ve disempowered him.”

After I interviewed Shellye, I asked my husband if I blocked him from stepping in at home. My husband looked at me sideways. “You never even let me hold our first child until she was six months old,” he said.

Exasperated, I told him: “I would’ve been happy to let you hold her, especially when she woke up every two hours at night. But you never got up to get her.”

“I never heard her cry,” he said.

And this was true. Part of the reason I begrudged him was because he happily snored through her crying, while I, a previously sound sleeper, sat bolt upright in bed the second she began to whimper.

“You could’ve woken me up,” my husband told me. “I would’ve been happy to go and get her.”

Around this time, I found a study detailing the effect of parenting on the brains of both men and women. Apparently, regardless of your sex, engaging in parenting releases the hormone oxytocin. For nearly a century, oxytocin, also known as the ‘bonding hormone,’ was associated only with mothers because it’s released during childbirth and when a child is breastfeeding. However, a 2014 study, led by Ruth Feldman, a psychologist and neuroscientist at Bar-Ilan University in Israel, found that dads also produce oxytocin in direct proportion to the amount of time they are engaged in caretaking. And, in most cases, primary caretaking dads produce the same amount of oxytocin as primary caretaking mothers. As Professor Feldman explained, “Evolution created other pathways for adaptation to the parental role in human fathers, and these alternative pathways come with practice, attunement, and day-to-day caregiving.”

All men—including my husband—are neurologically primed to care for our children, but the only way they can develop these capacities is by engaging in caretaking activities.

There's nothing I can do about the past. But I can change the present moment. Now, when our third child cries at night, I shake my snoring husband awake. True to his word, he gets up to hold her and soothe her back to sleep.

And this has far reaching implications. Kids do better with engaged dads. According to research by Scott Coltrane from the University of Oregon, preschoolers with engaged fathers show higher levels of cognitive competence, self-control, and empathy. Researchers at Penn State have found that as adolescents, the children of actively caretaking dads have more self-esteem, especially the girls.

Wives do better with husbands who play an active role in caring for their children. In 2010, a Swedish study found mothers' future earnings increased 7% for every month of parental leave that her partner took. And in countries where men take paternity leave, women are significantly more likely to serve in leadership positions, according to a recent joint study by the Peterson Institute for International Economics and EY (formerly Ernst & Young) of nearly 22,000 companies across ninety-one countries. The study also found, relative to companies with little gender diversity in leadership positions, more women in senior positions yields an increased profitability of 15%.

And then I discovered that moms aren't the only ones facing discrimination in the workforce. Dads who are seen to have caregiving responsibilities are also stigmatized. A 2013 Rutgers university study found that men who take leave to care for a child or a parent are less likely to be recommended for promotions, raises, or high-profile assignments. Another study, conducted in 2013 by Long Island University, found that caregiving fathers face significantly more harassment, such as being teased, put down, or excluded.

A few months after my husband started tending to our little one at night, we were having breakfast in the kitchen when he mentioned that he'd gotten up with her the night before.

"What?!" I said. "You heard her cry and I didn't."

"Yep," he said with a wink.

So, I included dads in my research.

And, now, after conducting ninety-three interviews with moms and twenty-seven interviews with dads and pouring over thousands of pages of related research from other fields, I believe that parenting makes us better at work.

But before I go any further, I need you need you to understand that parenting is difficult. If you're an engaged parent, you already know this. But if you haven't spent much time around kids, you may not know about the daily gauntlet

of challenges faced by parents. A millennial without kids recently told me that he thought parenting was easier than work done outside the home because, “there’s no risk involved in caring for children.” Before I had kids, I would have agreed with him. Parenting looked easy. When people I knew went out on leave, I wondered what they would do with their time. What new hobbies would they master in all their free time?

But then I became a parent. And, like over 90% of the engaged parents I interviewed, I was blindsided by the challenges. My first child, Clare, came into the world as a slight wiggling in my belly. She eventually grew into thumping fists and full-footed kicks, into clearly articulated flashes of individual toes and fingers visible just beneath the blue-veined surface of my nearly translucent skin. When she was born, I felt my chest crack open with a love more powerful than I’d ever imagined. All of the affection I’d ever known—for other people, places, and dreams—swarmed through the opening her presence created. And I discovered a new way of being in the world. One that was infinitely more tender, expansive, and miraculous. I had created life.

The vast majority of the parents I interviewed experienced a similar transformation with the birth of their first child. Bzur Haun, the CEO of Visage Mobile, told me, “The first time I made eye-contact with a small human that looked like me, I melted. And the melting never stops. I was never the type to tear-up in the past. Since kids, simple thoughts can turn on the water works for me.”

The shadow side of this euphoric experience revealed itself to me about six weeks after Clare was born. Because having the power to create life also meant that I was responsible for safeguarding that life. Aided by a lack of high quality, consistent sleep and shocked by the many demands of caring for my new baby, I found myself operating in an altered state of hyper-vigilance. For several nights, when I should’ve been sleeping, I sat up watching Clare sleep, cycling through a list of fears: Is she breathing? Should I pick her up to make sure she’s breathing? What if I don’t pick her up and she dies of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome? What if I do pick her up and I can’t get her back to sleep and I go without any sleep tonight? Will I produce enough milk for her if I don’t get any sleep tonight? What if I don’t get any sleep and I fall down while carrying her tomorrow? Will she injure her brain because her soft spot hasn’t yet melded together in her skull? Is she breathing . . . ?

The diligence required to raise a newborn and toddler can be overwhelming. Especially when done alone, or mostly alone. And, I discovered during my interviews, this is also true for dads and non-birth parents who carry the bulk of the responsibility for raising their children. Griffin Caprio, now the director of

engineering at Enova, served as the primary caretaker for the first sixteen months of his son's life, an experience which he described as incredibly stressful. "It was 100% dependent on me to not let him get killed," he told me.

When Clare was six weeks old, I learned that I couldn't do it all by myself. Our health care practitioner stepped in when she saw that I had an elevated heart rate and that I was operating in an altered state of mental functioning. And a community of mothers—my mom, my mother-in-law, and friends who were moms—intervened to help me. They shared their hard-earned wisdom, took turns holding Clare, and showed me how to develop a healthy level of vigilance, one that allowed me to care for both my baby and myself.

More than 80% of the parents I interviewed said that they'd encountered at least one painful time of reckoning, when they were forced to face difficult things about themselves and/or their relationships with others. Parenthood teaches us where we need to grow, and gives us the opportunity to stretch past what we think are our limits to meet the challenge of raising our kids.

It's important to note that I interviewed a very select group of parents. I started with the working moms I admired, and then I asked them to connect me with working parents they admired. Which means that the vast majority of the parents I interviewed were self-selecting in a very particular way: they were choosing to grow through the challenges they faced. And while they had a range of unique and specific areas where they further developed themselves, when I coded the interviews I'd conducted, I found one common theme: nearly all of them had developed more and better relationships with the people around them.

Earlier in this piece, I detailed how active parenting releases the hormone oxytocin in both men and women. When oxytocin is present, according to Shelley E. Taylor at UCLA, people are more likely to respond to stress with the impulse to "tend and befriend," rather than to fight or flight. "When it is operating during times of low stress, oxytocin physiologically rewards those who maintain good social bonds with feelings of well-being. But," Taylor told *Science Watch*, "when it comes on board during times of high social stress or pain, it may lead people to seek out more and better social contacts."

Building a community of support, I heard from almost every parent I interviewed, was essential. Julie Miller-Phipps, the regional president for Southern California Kaiser, told me, "When you become a parent, it's not doable to have everything fall on you. I quickly discovered that I couldn't do it all myself, and I didn't need to. Others couldn't do it by themselves either, and I could help them. I built a network of people in my child's life and in my work life who help me ebb and flow and be resilient."

Building a community of support is step one. Step two is learning to deepen and sustain those relationships.

Clare was three the first time she told me she hated me. I reacted by running out of the room in tears and huddling in the fetal position on the bathroom floor. At the time, working a full-time job and still nursing Clare's eight-month-old brother, I felt more than stretched. I was working many late nights so that I could be present with my children in the mornings and evenings, and I regularly took Clare on "mommy-daughter dates" to give her some of the attention she desperately craved from me. But when Clare told me that she hated me because I wanted her to finish her vegetables, it reinforced the voices in my head that told me I was failing her. And I wanted to sit on the bathroom floor and surrender to them. They were right, I couldn't parent well and have a career. I should give up. But then Clare knocked. And when I let her in, she climbed into my lap, wrapped her arms around my neck, and told me that she loved me more than anything and could I read her *Pinkalicious*. Pretty please?! This, and many other similar instances, taught me that my daughter is resilient; I am resilient; we are all more resilient than we realize. And so are our bonds with each other.

And this definitely translates to how we show up at work. In Feldman's lab, they found that oxytocin positively impacted the regions of the brain associated with emotional processing, social understanding, and cognitive empathy. In other words, showing up for parenting allows us to become more emotionally intelligent. It also teaches us the value of moving through emotionally charged situations. Dave Hoover, a software engineer and key contributor at several successful startups, said that being a parent has helped him be a better leader. "Through parenting, I learned that sometimes you need to be able to give negative feedback to help someone grow. My experiences as a dad helped me get through these anxiety-filled experiences because I could see the bigger picture: That this is really best for everybody, even if it's uncomfortable right now."

Having broader, stronger, more durable social networks allows us to amplify our efforts. Motivated to succeed in our careers and at home, parents want to accomplish more in less time. Working with others makes this possible. Collaboration, says game theorist Martin Nowak, is the most successful form of engagement. According to Nowak, Darwin was wrong: collaboration, not competition, is the key to survival. In the long run, cooperators, those who work well with others, are the ones most likely to win anywhere—the animal kingdom, in computer simulations, and even in corporate environments.

Wharton management professor Adam Grant studied three different behavioral styles that people adopt when pursuing success: matchers, takers, and givers.

Matchers expect all exchanges with others to be fair and equal. Takers exploit the people around, taking what they want without reciprocating. And givers are defined as those who will help others even when it might seem to go against their own best interests. Of these three behavioral styles, givers are overrepresented at the top levels of leadership. And when givers succeed it creates a ripple effect, lifting up those that surround them, rather than excluding them, which often leads to more sustainable, long-term, success. Or, as Amy Pressman, the President of Medallia, a 1,000-employee company she co-founded with her husband while raising three small children put it, “You can’t fire your kids, so you must grow and evolve as a person to adapt to their needs and wants. As a result, parenthood has increased my capacity to nurture the best in others, a skill I strive to integrate into our company.”

In order to effectively work with others, focus is essential. Nearly every parent I interviewed talked about their increased capacity to focus and their clarity of purpose. Many mothers I interviewed, and several dads, attributed this to the anguish of leaving their child behind to return to work. “One thing I am struggling with is ‘why’ and ‘how’ to stay in the workforce after becoming a mom,” said a senior manager at a global consulting firm, “I face this every day. Before I step out of my door I ask myself, ‘Is this worth it?’ Some days it’s ‘yes’ and some days it’s ‘no.’”

Some parents, who may have even been eager to return to work when their children were newborns, want to be more present with their kids later in their lives. Ultimately, any parent who leaves their child to go to work—whether it’s a choice or a financial necessity; whether it’s when their child is a baby or when they are older—must grapple with the distance it creates. There are times when we want to be with them and we can’t be. And this forces us to question what we are doing, and how we are doing it.

“Holding life in your arms gives you the perspective to sort out what matters and what doesn’t,” said Liz Wiseman, who is president of the Wiseman Group, the author of three best-selling books, and who had four children while working as an executive at Oracle. “It gave me a filter to get through all of the fluff and the chaos so that I could be laser-focused on what really mattered.”

Being honest with ourselves, and taking action from this deeper level of insight, enables us to be more courageous. Over 90% of the parents I interviewed said they became more assertive at work after having kids. Take Josh Levs, a former NPR journalist, who was working at CNN when his wife gave birth to their child prematurely. Time Warner, his parent company, denied him access to the ten weeks of paid leave that was available to any parent except a biological father.

Even though Josh knew it could harm his career, he decided to take legal action.

“It was the right thing to do,” he told me. “As a parent, I realize that the choices I make will be reflected in someone else’s eyes. “

Josh’s case received major national and international attention. He was flooded with support from other fathers who wanted the right to be engaged dads, and from mothers who knew that families thrived with engaged dads. He wrote a book on the topic, *All In*, and has become one of our most outspoken and necessary voices in the national conversation about gender equality.

To sum up my research, which would take an entire book to detail, working while parenting mandates that we develop broader, better relationships with others. Successfully sustaining these relationships requires a greater level of honesty with ourselves, and with others, and this allows us to operate at a higher level of trust, and ultimately, effectiveness. And this lies at the heart of parenthood’s capacity for career transformation. Especially in the workplace of the future. Because technology is ushering us into a new era of work.

The internet is changing the way we operate. We are moving away from the old model of leadership—which is hierarchical, directive, top-down, and transactional—to a type of leadership which is collective, distributed, bottom-up, facilitative, and emergent. In other words, we are entering an era where relationships—and the ability to create, deepen, and sustain them—matter. Leaders of the future will be those who can build and influence the most engaged, active, and broadest communities. And, as Eric Schmidt, the CEO of Google, says, “In a networked world, trust is the most important currency.” Parents are primed to succeed in this new model, because showing up for parenting while building a career requires us to become masters of deep honesty and trust-building. We are entering a time where those who collaborate well with others are even more likely to succeed. Which is why Janet Van Huysse, the former VP of HR and then Diversity at Twitter—who implemented programs at Twitter designed to support new moms, new dads, and the managers who worked with them—believes that “the companies who will succeed in the Twenty-first century will be the ones who encourage and foster the development of skills acquired in parenting.”

To find my own response to the voices that told me I couldn’t both have a successful career and be a good mom, I’ve spent the past two years dismantling inaccurate assumptions about myself and the world around me. And what’s emerged in the process is a blueprint for how we can all evolve towards a future of greater equality and success.

Our next generation of leaders have the opportunity to look beyond the

bias of previous generations, to see that an engaged parent isn't a less productive employee; to build a society that encourages us to play an active role in caring for our families because doing so will allow us to become more relevant in the workplace of the future.

Erin Wilson, the co-founder of Tech startup hirepool.io, recently told me that the election had changed his relationship to his family. "Previously," he said, "I'd considered myself more of an employee of my wife's, and she was the CEO of our home, especially when it came to childcare. But after Trump was elected, I began to question my assumptions around gender roles. And I decided to change the way I looked at my role in our family. Now I consider myself a co-founder of our family, and I've stepped up my level of responsibility and ownership. I've seen this have a significantly positive impact on my wife's career, and on our marriage."

My research indicates that Erin's career will also flourish.

Here's to Erin's success.

Here's to our collective success.

May we all learn to work well together. The future depends on it.

# LEARNING HOW TO RUN BACKWARDS ON A CONVEYOR BELT

*Olivia Fisher-Smith*

I spent January 21, 2017 surrounded by the joyous echoes of empowering chants, thousands of moving bodies on crowded streets, endless swaths of pink fabric, crying and smiling faces of all ages, and enormous, fuchsia-colored, celebratory vulvas plastered on every placard and baby's onesie in sight.

Since the march, however, I have spent much time trying to reconcile the conflict between both the power and the injury that this day carried. Because despite its beauty, the merit of this worldwide demonstration must be challenged. Ignored by the signs, chants, and cheers were entire communities of black women pushed aside by the white dominance of the movement; trans women excluded by the use of female genitalia as a symbol of universal womanhood; and thousands of undocumented women, indigenous women, and poor women whose communities' needs and struggles went unaddressed by the marches.

Some feel that the women's march perpetuated more harm than it did good, while others feel the exact opposite. For me, it brought forward a necessary reflection on my role as a white woman within social justice spaces.

I am growing up as a woman in a world which has whispered in my ear for as long as I can remember, commanding me to be smaller, to lower my voice to a hush, to relinquish ownership of my needs. These incessant and oppressive whispers have taught me to contort my mind and body so that, whenever it might become necessary, I can slip unnoticed into a corner or crack in the sidewalk in order to make way for others. They have worked to ensure that I expect to be stepped on, and that when I am stepped on, I will not resist. It has taken a huge amount of pain, processing, resilience, and support to escape the power of these whispers and entrust my words and wounds with the value they deserve. Overcoming the trauma of learning that I do not have ownership of my own body, has

been one painful struggle among others. And at nineteen, that process is still very much ongoing.

This narrative is the centerpiece of my identity and personal growth. So, it is challenging to walk into a space like this one as a white person and feel like the voice it has taken me so long to build is unwelcome or could be harmful. I'm writing this to remind myself, and other white women attending this conference, that here, this discomfort is okay.

As white women entering a larger conversation about intersectional justice, it is important for us to hold our stories close and let them influence us in genuine ways; but to remember, despite our very real pain, we hold a vast amount of privilege. And that privilege keeps us distant from the experience of people most affected by societal oppression.

Dismantling harmful power dynamics involves people like me allowing the voices of the communities which are most affected by systemic injustice to be at the center of the conversation, and at the forefront of the movement. Which also involves us *decentering ourselves*.

When we speak and take up space, we are usually silencing a voice that isn't handed the mic as often as we are by society. While this is almost never our intention, this simple action carries with it a long history of erasure. And though we might feel innocent on a personal level, we are definitely responsible for reversing the harm we cause by doing this.

The psychologist and educator Beverly Daniel Tatum makes the point that racism functions like one of those moving walkways that you see at the airport and that to walk forward on the conveyor belt is to be actively racist. But many of us, myself included, often stand still on the walkway. We don't profess racist ideologies or intend to commit hate crimes. Yet, by not acting, we're letting the walkway carry us forward. By standing still in our positions of privilege, we allow the system of racism to continue to exist and cause harm. To be productive in spaces like this one, we need to walk against the current—we need to work actively to reject the extra benefits that we are granted by society because of our whiteness.

For me, the first feelings that are brought forward when dissecting the impact of my whiteness are shame and guilt. I feel my shame and guilt most strongly when I learn of new ways in which I'm complicit in racism. Getting called out on this by someone I love or respect can feel like the most devastating thing—but dwelling on these feelings beyond what is necessary to process and learn from them is harmful. Shame and guilt are paralyzing. After seeing that these feelings were getting me nowhere but deeper inside a never-ending abyss of insecurity, I've stopped dwelling on my guilt and unproductive self-loathing. Instead, I now

expect my actions to be harmful. This puts me in a growth mindset, where receiving criticism feels less like a blow to my ego and my conscience, and more like an opportunity for improvement that I can seek out and embrace.

I want to call myself and other white women forward. Who do I want to or need to be? Who do I think we need to be together?

We need to be open to—and seek out—criticism, but we should not expect feedback or education from people who do not offer it. It is our responsibility to educate ourselves, but it's important that we don't become a burden while doing so.

We need to make sure that we are not claiming a struggle that isn't ours. We need to defer to the leadership of individuals and communities most affected by institutionalized oppression. We need to enter spaces with the intention to listen and learn, instead of the intention to speak or lead. We need to embrace discomfort.

I want this conference to be a space where we can practice this together. Where we challenge, and don't repeat, the mistakes and exclusions that surfaced on January 21. Until we can unlearn our reliance on a system that furthers oppression, we need to always question the impact of our actions; if we are perpetuating the very things we claim to protest while we are protesting them, then we're not really making progress.

# THE FEMININE (R)EVOLUTION OF HOLLYWOOD: A (SORT OF) MANIFESTO

*Emma Campbell Webster*

I believe that women have a critical role to play in the impending evolution of Hollywood.

As it exists today, the entertainment industry is an institution run and populated predominantly by men, using a system of power that is inherently masculine.

It is an industry built on the values of achievement, success, competition, and profit; one that is frequently not only unwelcoming, but often even openly hostile to women and the feminine system of creating.

Of the top two hundred grossing films in 2015, only 9% were directed by women. Male characters received twice the amount of screen time as female characters, and spoke for twice the amount of time.

What usually gets blamed for this gross imbalance is the systemic and deeply enculturated sexism and unconscious bias that keeps women from being hired, and female voices from being heard.

While this is undeniably a large part of the problem, I believe there is a deeper reason for the gaping gender gap in Hollywood.

I believe that many women drop out of, or never even step up into, the industry because its fundamental operating system—the structures by which the work gets

made and the system of power used to do it—is something that a growing number of us feel allergic to.

To succeed in this industry, we've had to suppress, hide, or simply never develop the unique gifts, forms of power, and aspects of ourselves that it has deemed too feminine. Many of us are no longer willing to pay this price. Rather than continue to sacrifice our authenticity, we have dropped out of the industry altogether; only to find that when we do, the irrepressible call to be a part of it persists.

This has left us left confused, frustrated, and caught in a double bind: either we betray ourselves in order to fit in; or we stray true to ourselves, but pay the price of no longer getting to participate.

As challenging as this problem is, at the heart of it is an opportunity.

Up until now, most of the efforts to reduce the gender gap in Hollywood have been devoted to a fight for parity within the existing system. There is value in this, but parity within a masculine system can only take us so far. I believe what's needed now is a transformation and evolution of the system itself.

The question we must ask ourselves is this: do we want an equal share of a dysfunctional system, or do we want to create something better, something aligned with our principles and values?

I believe we can do better; I believe we can change the game.

I believe that we can create structures that allow us to contribute high-level, mainstream work without sacrificing authenticity or our commitment to serve a creative impulse that is greater than ourselves.

I believe we can create a framework that allows us to be authentic.

I believe we have the power to create the industry we want to work in—and while we're at it, let's come up with a better word than “industry.”

I believe that we can create work in a new way that is in alignment with our feminine values, one that draws power from qualities such as relatedness, receptivity, intuition, and—critically—connection with other women. I believe that when we

do, more women will step into the industry, and it will be transformed beyond anything we could have imagined.

The media is one of the most powerful forces in our world. It shapes and controls how we feel about ourselves, it creates and perpetuates our social norms. When we step up and participate in that process, we have the power to actively shape what our society looks like through the choices and decisions that we, as artists, make.

With our pens and our cameras, we can dream a new world into being. One that we get to live in, the one that we want to see.

All that's required for us to bring this new reality into being, is for you to follow the impulse that's arising within you.

All the ways that you don't fit into the current system are the exact qualities needed to create its replacement.

That sense of discomfort you've felt trying to work in the pre-existing system—honor it, listen to it, follow it where it wants to go.

You were born to do this work.

That feeling you have is real.

You are the natural born leader of the transformation that wants to happen in this industry, and all you need to do is answer the call.

The time for silence is over; the time for waiting has passed.

We must awaken our power to lead, and we must do it, now.

No one else is coming, this duty falls to us.

I am ready, willing, and able.

Are you?

# CLEANING HOUSE

*Rosa Gonzalez*

On November 9th, 2016, a real estate tycoon endorsed by the KKK became president of the United States, and all I could do, besides obsess over news articles and Facebook posts, was clean my house. Cleaning is not my typical way of coping with things. I'd like to think it was my intuition—or maybe even some ancestral wisdom?—telling me that what we need to do right now as a country, is to get our house in order.

The election revealed just how divided this country has become. Everywhere I go, people are talking about how little they understand the “other side.” There are even mumblings of a civil war.

But something else is happening, too. I recently facilitated a theater-based workshop for an interfaith alliance to practice non-violent deportation defense strategies. Almost one hundred people of different faiths came together in one Presbyterian church in solidarity with Mexican and Central American families under threat of deportation. Undocumented parishioners practiced exercising their rights, and allies practiced leveraging their own privilege to create sanctuary. In one interactive scene, a Guatemalan mother of three was accosted by an ICE agent on her way to work. A tall white man from the audience intervened by asking the woman if he could hold her hands. He sat down in front of her and they locked hands. The men playing the ICE agents decided to “come back later.” Tears streamed down the woman’s cheeks. She said she realized for the first time that the threat of deportation wasn’t just “her problem.” She felt she was not alone. The group wasn’t sure this intervention represented a realistic scenario, but it signaled for all of us, on a visceral level, who we need to be in this moment. How will we break old patterns of “Us vs. Them” politics? What depth of love and trust does it take to show up for each other?

There I was, processing the election results and vacuuming up dust bunnies from behind the furniture, when my comadre texted me this: “In true Chicano time, 2012 is finally here.” I let go of the vacuum and fell onto the couch laughing, the text was just the comic relief I needed. It helped me see a wider-angle

view of what was happening. I'm sure at least some of the people reading this are aware of the Mayan calendar and the significance of the date December 21, 2012. It was largely misinterpreted by Western media as a kind of Mayan Y2K. The strange and misguided hype around the 2012 "prophecy" revealed just how much the mainstream world ignores indigenous peoples and is disconnected from a more integrated sense of time, space, and consciousness. Modern-day Mayan day-keepers were not concerned with an apocalypse. There would be no meteor crashing into the planet or demons emerging from the center of the earth. Indigenous leaders from many nations including the Maya do, however, call attention to the current political, economic, and ecological crises throwing the planet out of balance, reminding all of us that life is sacred.

December 2012 marked the end of one *baktun*, or major era, and the start of another. Times of transition can be chaotic. Everything can feel upside down, like when a billionaire reality TV icon becomes the perceived savior of the (white) working man. We are living in confusing times. And the forty-fifth president has an archetypal role to play in this still unfolding narrative: with his fake tan and bad hair, his obsession with sex and dominance, and his compulsive finger pointing, he is a symbol of the collective demons (or dust bunnies) we all must grapple with if we are to get our house in order. Vanity, materialism, spending too much time on social media . . . these are not the character flaws of just one man. Clearing my own clutter means having the courage to see my own habits, tendencies, and desires. It means becoming aware of the ways in which my worldview limits my capacity to be human.

I think our ancestors would remind us that being human takes practice. Consistent, conscious practice. This political moment represents an opportunity for deep practice. Practice comes in many forms, from meditation and sacred ceremony, to restorative justice and Beloved Community. It is through consistent, conscious practice that we become the authors of this epic narrative. I hope ours will be the story of how through recognizing the way time turns, we re-turned to the knowledge embedded in our DNA, and how through finding ourselves in each other, we found what was needed to get our house in order.

# A POEM

*Nikki Hainstock*

All the world is,  
Is a multitude of perspectives.  
It is literally a kaleidoscope of billions  
Of locations on the globe  
That is a wheel.  
We all stand somewhere different.  
Sometimes there is dissonance  
And we cannot understand where someone else is standing.  
But where I stand,  
Does not make wrong  
Where anyone else stands.  
It just makes different.  
And when we get into notions of value  
We are trapped in the confines of ego,  
Trapped in the place where the who of how we identify  
Comes out of what we do.  
And stance is action.  
However, I am so deeply concerned with being-ness.  
And each of our rights to it.  
And as we point the fingers at those  
Who feel like they take ours,  
I want to look at where I steal,  
Peoples rights to being where they are at,  
People's words thru interruption or misinterpretation.  
People's time, consumed in defending the place and how I stand where I stand.  
I think we all want to be stoic as stone, feeling if we are, we are somehow safer.  
I crave water. I crave fluidity.  
I cultivate it each and every moment in this swirl of a world,  
As it seems to be the only place of defenselessness.

And according to the teachings,  
It is ONLY in defenselessness that there is safety.  
And so when the world feels unsafe,  
And we feel so unsafe as to contort our personality and story to support the  
wound, not the whole or holy or healed,  
I want to understand,  
That the reason people want money,  
Is to feel safe.  
And the reason people hate other,  
Is because they feel unsafe.  
And the reason I sometime behave the way I do, is because I feel unsafe.  
And that if I do not live a defenseless life,  
Then I will always be shielding and wielding  
And sharing my story  
To convince the world or myself or my opponent or ally,  
That my perspective is valid.  
That where I stand has a place in the wheel of life.  
Instead of just standing where I stand,  
Being myself.  
Which is what god asks of me,  
Of each of us.  
To represent  
The piece of the universe that is our soul.  
And so on this chilly day,  
I stand,  
I be,  
And I honour the teaching  
That in defenselessness  
I am free.

# CONTRIBUTORS

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