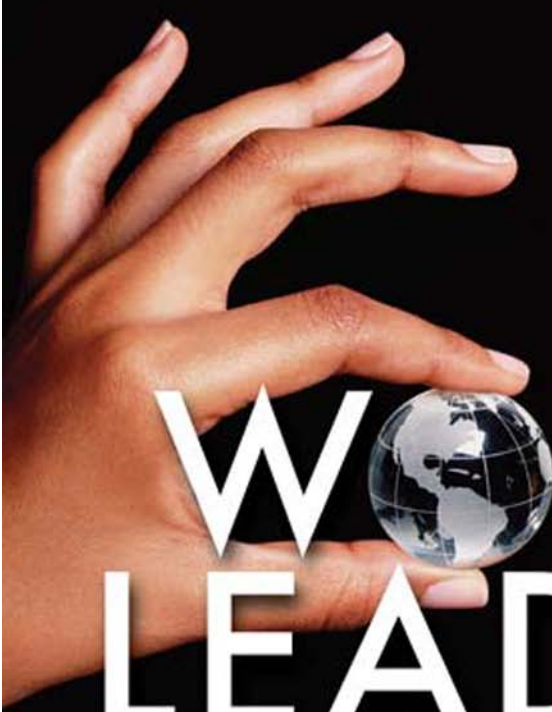


LINDA TARR-WHELAN

Foreword by MARIE WILSON



WOMEN
LEAD THE
WAY

Your Guide to
Stepping Up to
Leadership and
Changing the
World

An Excerpt From

***Women Lead the Way:
Your Guide to Stepping Up to Leadership
And Changing the World***

by Linda Tarr-Whelan
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Foreword

Marie Wilson, Founder and President, The White House Project

Picture this: A problem of vital importance emerges in your community, and you are asked to gather a team you deem essential to its solution. Then you are told you can't use half of the collected intelligence. That is basically the problem we face in politics and boardrooms across America—we systemically neglect one of our nation's most vital resources: women.

Women are more than half of the U.S. population, yet we still occupy between 16% and 20% of the leadership positions across major sectors of society. Research consistently shows that when women lead side by side with men, more alternatives are offered, more skill sets are used, and more out-of-the-box thinking occurs from both genders. Linda Tarr-Whelan, in *Women Lead the Way: Your Guide to Stepping Up to Leadership and Changing the World*, understands this resource crisis from decades of observation and personal experience, and she wants women like you (and those you know) to solve it, once and for all.

Linda's "30% Solution" advocates for truly balanced leadership, with women holding at least 30% of the seats at any power table. This percentage keeps the focus off gender and on the agenda. It is this critical mass of numbers, as I too have preached through the years, which will

create a more productive work environment, a revitalized society, increased economic growth, and reinvigorated democratic participation.

What most people don't know (Americans often think women already run the world) is that we fall further behind every year. When I started The White House Project a decade ago to bring more women into leadership across sectors, our country was thirty-seventh in the world in women's political participation. We are now a pathetic sixty-ninth. Norway, as an example, is far ahead of us; that country passed a law requiring that publicly traded companies have at least 40% women on their boards, and if these firms failed to do so by the deadline, they were fined. Guess what? They met the deadline. Corporate boards in the United States, by comparison, are 17% female, with no structural change on tap to alter that.

Women Lead the Way is an optimistic book focused on adding women's strengths to decision making precisely at a time when these very strengths are most required. Collaboration, consensus building, a focus on relationships and partnerships, and a deep commitment to both family and work are badly needed; women are known to consistently bring these values to the table. Linda builds the case for balanced leadership based on credible business and political data from around the globe, showing clearly the bottom-line benefits. Women are catalysts for change, but the results are a win-win for everyone.

My book, *Closing the Leadership Gap: Why Women Can and Must Help Run the World*, like Linda's, deals with the importance of women's leadership and the cultural challenges to it before we can be fully accepted. Linda's inspiring and engaging work adds compelling research, international experience, and personal stories, and then provides you with practical tips to help you climb the ladder and wedge the door open for other women to follow. As the old spiritual says, "Lift as you rise."

Linda and I have been professional colleagues and friends for twenty years. We found ourselves in national leadership positions in the '80s when I became president of the Ms. Foundation for Women and Linda was president of the Center for Policy Alternatives. With unusual career paths, both of us were somewhat unlikely candidates for these jobs. We

began to collaborate on breakthrough projects and to share stories of our dreams and our children.

The book is packed with personal insights from Linda's long, fruitful career as an ambassador, nurse, union organizer, policy expert, business-woman, and consultant. Her diverse career allows her to dispel the myths and stereotypes that stand in our way, and to build confidence as you move toward bigger dreams.

Linda's dream, and mine, is having more and more women realize the world needs them in leadership. Research by The White House Project and so many other organizations supports the knowledge that Americans are comfortable with women leaders in the majority of sectors, and they even see women as better at most aspects of leadership. Take confidence in these findings as you explore the possibilities in your own life.

Finally, don't miss this book's "how to" strategies, straight from a woman who's been there and done that. Give this book to yourself or to another woman you think should be a leader. And make sure the men in your life read it, too, so they clearly see the advantages to them, their companies, and the country when more smart, savvy women are seated in their rightful spots at the tables of power.

Preface

The Story behind the Book

This book is the result of my personal leadership journey over more than four decades, much of it devoted to advancing and empowering women. I started writing the book with the belief that having more women leaders can make a big difference. Working on it for the past two years has convinced me more than ever that this is true. New leaders—women leaders—are needed to bring fresh air and creative ideas to meet the challenges of dramatic shifts in the world economy, communities, and companies.

Wherever decisions are made, you and women like you as leaders will add value and balance. As the humanitarian organization CARE says, “Women are the most underutilized natural resource in the world.” As women, we bring great strength, talent, and experience but are underused as leaders. Here you will find a practical guide to make it easier for you and other women to confidently step up and be the transformational leaders we need in the numbers needed to modernize and improve outmoded ways of doing business while wedging the door open for more women.

Living a Change Agent Life

My quest started a long time ago on the first day of my first job as a registered nurse in the old days, when nurses wore a starched uniform and an organdy cupcake nurse’s cap. The first day didn’t go well for me. I was

summarily fired. Why? I hadn't stood up when a male doctor came into the room. It didn't make any difference to the nursing director whether I was taking care of a patient's needs or not. Over the years I learned the ropes in quite different settings and met dynamic women wherever my career took me. After eight years as a nurse, I moved to grassroots organizing; to state government; to national policy positions in unions, as a think-tank CEO and senior fellow, in the White House, and as an ambassador; and then in the private sector as an international management consultant in a business partnership with my husband. Like most women, I have had a full life including more than a career. Being a wife and mother, a daughter (and daughter-in-law), a sister, and a grandmother have all given me great pleasure. Family life and surviving cancer have deepened and broadened my sense of the importance of living an integrated life with many layers, not simply a work-centric one.

The common thread in my life is being a change agent. I seem to have a constitutional unwillingness to accept the status quo when it seems unfair and a determination to try to find a better way. My family background began the process: my father was a national union leader and especially talented as a communicator. As children, my brother and I were taught our responsibility was to leave the world a bit better, a bit more just. Lots of problems need solutions, but over and over, in each of my career incarnations, I've been drawn to the cause of women's advancement and empowerment.

I've often wondered why this was the case. My best guess is this: I've seen the courage, energy, tenacity, determination, and sheer talent of women both as individuals and as friends and colleagues working together to improve the status quo. At the same time I've had a nagging aversion to repeatedly seeing such talented people take a backseat to someone else, just because of gender. I've witnessed women's creativity and energy bottled up by unproductive thinking and practices, and at the same time I've seen an unfulfilled need for better leadership.

One of the big lessons of my career has been this: who makes the decisions matters. Changing who decides changes what is decided. I started to watch carefully how very slowly women were moving up into decision-

making positions. The top layer of politics and business remains much the same as it was generations ago.

Women have made great progress in many areas, but changing the agenda has been elusive. Despite all the hard work on important issues that have been at the top of women's to-do lists for decades—issues like family leave and economic security, early care and education for young children, and equal pay—little has changed. To me—and most women—these are necessities for an acceptable quality of life for American families. As you know from your own experience, they remain out of reach. Our daughter and other women of her generation are dealing with many of the same problems I faced as a single mom when our children were young.

I kept expecting more women to break through and bring their talents and vision to making the big decisions. In 1995, as a U.S. delegate to a United Nations world conference on women in China, I heard exciting ideas. For the first time I heard national leaders from all corners of the globe—mostly men—talk about the positive differences it makes for their entire societies when women are fully empowered to lead along with men. They focused on how change accelerated with one-third women at the table. The tipping point was not one or even two women in decision-making groups but what I introduce in the book as the 30% Solution. In the United States, though, there was silence: no public debate on why more balanced leadership was better, and very little action to reach the goal.

So I took matters into my own hands and began to work on this book. My goal is to see you—my reader—seated at one of those power tables and wedging the door open for more and more women to join you. We have much to do. Balanced leadership with a critical mass of women—that 30% Solution—will lead to different outcomes that are better for you, for us, for everyone.

Women Lead the Way **Will Help You Be a Transformational Leader**

When we look at where we are now, I am reminded of the little but demanding voices from the backseat on family road trips, asking, “Are we

there yet?” The statistics show we are not even close to the tipping point in most places. Statistics are important, but I wanted to know what women think about where we are. In a series of twelve informal focus groups across the country,¹ women across the board told me we are only halfway to tapping women’s full talents. Almost without exception, early in these conversations a woman would say, “Our potential remains untapped,” and others around the table would agree. Women I met share the belief underlying all the statistics. We have much more to offer.

I have seen the talent and commitment of women in worlds very different from my own and learned about the important, but often unrecognized, difference women make. Women’s many-layered lives—mine and those of the women I have spoken with across this country—have a seamless character. Women see the significance of being both caregivers and effective and responsible economic and public actors. The world doesn’t work this way now, but this perspective helps show us what solutions are needed.

This practical guide is my response to make it easier and smoother for you to be a transformational leader and affect the outcomes when issues are decided. As you—my reader—take your seat at power tables, you can create a ripple effect by bringing other qualified women along to join you. The spreading ripples will create opportunities for more and more women. When you take action, we all move forward.

This book gets you started on a women-led strategy to make positive change—working with like-minded men—to close the leadership gap and add our solutions. The idea is a simple one: Leadership balance brings greater progress. It is good for you, helps level the playing field for the women and girls who come behind you, and brings needed societal change. To help us get further, I’ve brought you some of the stories from women I’ve met along the way as well as from my own journey as a change agent. The stories and resources will introduce you to ideas that have the potential to change where you work, your community, and the wider society to reflect our values and vision.

Women Lead the Way Will Guide Your Journey

You will find a road map and tested tools here. The win-win plan can help you climb the ladder—whatever your field—and bring your passion, brains, and background to those offices where decisions are made. Strategic guidance will help you build energy and momentum by working together with others. You will have the business case, research data, how-to tips, and stories. Each chapter includes a “Takeaways” section or a quiz for you to assess where you are and a box called “This Week I Will. . .” to give you immediate action steps to get started. More resources are at the end of the book.

The Introduction: More Women Leaders, Better Leadership gives you the basics on becoming one of the new leaders we need and explains why it matters for a busy woman like you to engage. The bottom-line importance of balanced leadership reached through the 30% Solution is explained. You will discover how an Inside-Outside strategy of women Insiders at power tables working with Outsider advocates can create movement on long-stalled priorities.

I’ve written the book in two major sections. Part I: *Women Lead the Way* starts you off on your journey with the facts you need. Part II: *Stepping Up to Leadership* provides the tools you need as one woman, and we need as women together, to maximize our leadership potential. Resources follow the text to help you find additional information.

Part I: Women Lead the Way

Chapter 1: *The 30% Solution* explores how this proven and realistic catalyst for a wave of change works. Having at least one-third women making decisions has powerful positive outcomes, while having only one or a few women won’t have the same effect. You will see why and how this concept brings about positive bottom-line results in contrast to current practice.

While the 30% Solution is practical and workable, some hurdles remain to getting there. Chapter 2: *Modern Myths and Stereotypes* confronts and dispels overhanging and self-reinforcing negative social and cultural

attitudes. Chapter 3: The Everywoman Quiz gives you and your friends a way to check out real-world progress on women's leadership.

As women, we sometimes have preconceptions that gain the strength of myths and can cloud our recognition of systemic barriers to be addressed. Chapter 4: Breaking out of the Box gives you an opportunity to assess your Personal Confidence Factor, to face up to some "double-bind dilemmas" women find on the way up, and to resist personalization.

Hope is on the horizon. Chapter 5: Today's Transformational Leader helps you confidently promote and embody the leadership attributes, styles, and skills that fit many women naturally and are needed to meet the future head-on. Leaving old, outdated leadership models behind will strengthen your resolve.

Part II: Stepping Up to Leadership

The first practical tool is presented in Chapter 6: Starting Right Here, Right Now. Learn from the experience of other women and start where you are to make a difference every day. You can meet the leadership challenge with confidence knowing that change starts with the Power of One.

Chapter 7: Making Women's Power Visible presents the second tool, helping you create a buzz by highlighting women's differences and strengths as employees, customers, or clients. This changes the dynamics of determining the problems to be addressed and who can best solve them.

We move on to the next step in Chapter 8: Lifting as We Climb. You will learn more about how reaching a hand out to help other women and girls starts a chain reaction and increases your own leadership capacity and energy. When we join together, the effect doubles.

Next we take up how to magnify this approach. Chapter 9: Wedging the Door Open gives you an amazingly easy technique that really works to fast-track change in existing practices. The "women in every pool" plan makes sure at least one woman is a finalist for every opening to accelerate progress.

Chapter 10: Together, We Rise puts all of this together by helping you strengthen your networks to give you the undergirding of support and mentoring every leader needs. Shared action through networking by

starting small and continuing to widen the circle of impact and sustenance brings you—and all of us—further.

Now is the time to dream a little about where we should be in 2020—one hundred years after women won the right to vote. What will our legacy be when the glass ceiling has smashed to the ground and women are full partners with men in determining our destiny? The Conclusion: *Dreaming Bigger Dreams* challenges you and all of us to act as transformational leaders and change the world.

A Personal Note to My Readers

I hope the women you meet in this book will inspire you as they have inspired me. Beyond that, I trust you will be motivated to try some of the tools in this book to help you advance in your own leadership and be sure more and more other women have an opportunity to be leaders, too. The potential of balanced leadership is tremendous. Companies, communities, and this country can't afford to continue to pass up the full utilization of one of our greatest natural resources—women. You and other women and like-minded men can lead us to a different future by making sure we don't.

—*Linda Tarr-Whelan*
July 2009

Introduction

More Women Leaders, Better Leadership

On my desk is a campaign button reading, “Women will make the difference.” I’ve had it since 1984, when Geraldine Ferraro was the first woman vice presidential candidate. And I’m sure it’s right. Women have already made a huge difference as a force for change, and we continue to make critical contributions just about everywhere. Women’s efforts have been invaluable, even though we have often been invisible.

There is one crucial place, however, where our talent is still largely untapped: the power tables where the course for the future is charted. A robust out-front role in setting priorities and allocating resources wherever the tough choices are made is essential to maximizing the contributions women can make. Some of us have been complacent, assuming women are naturally moving up to take our seats around the power tables. The reality is that we have a long way left to go.

A Compelling Need for New Thinking

In 2009, when *Women Lead the Way* went to press, a severe economic crisis gripped the United States and countries across the globe. Experts dissected the causes as whole industries collapsed. The leaders of major banks, corporations, and entire sectors of the economy were called to task. One very

important factor became evident: Virtually none of the captains of industry were women. Women were not the leaders who had made the bad decisions that led, or at least added, to our economic miseries. Nicholas Kristof, columnist for the *New York Times*, asked, “Would we be in the same mess if Lehman Brothers [an investment house that failed] was Lehman Brothers and Sisters?”¹ My answer is, “Probably not.”

To take another example, if the nation of Rwanda had had balanced leadership, would it have descended into the terrible genocide of 1994? We’ll never know for sure, but we can make an educated guess: Rwanda now has a majority of women leaders, and it is a transformed nation.

Changing the Deciders Changes the Decisions

Tough economic times, dramatically shifting world events, unmet needs in the country—all call for looking beyond the current composition of leadership for different answers. To achieve sustainable long-term economic growth and well-being, leadership must become more balanced—and that means it must include more women.

Women’s full participation in leadership improves outcomes. This is seemingly a well-kept secret in this country, although numerous books and studies have been published on it.² Extensive international experience in politics and current business and political research tell a powerful story of the correlation between balanced leadership and better results. When women (that means you!) step into leadership roles, you make life better—for yourself, your company or organization, and global society. *Women Lead the Way* shows how and why balanced leadership matters and helps you be part of creating a different future, one with enough women at the top to have a positive impact. We must move beyond having women appear “one-at-a-time performers,” as identified by Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg when she spoke in the Rose Garden next to President Bill Clinton, who had just appointed her to the Court.³

The 30% Solution

A sprinkling of women at the top, however inspirational, is not enough to change how companies or governments operate. The weight of cultural inertia is too great. But when that sprinkling grows until the leadership group is about one-third women, important things happen. Different decisions are made, and the move toward true parity in leadership gains momentum. If we can get to at least 30% women as partners at the power tables, we have a chance to change the world. I call this the 30% Solution.

Why 30%? This has proved to be the critical mass in any group of decision makers, the tipping point at which women's voices resonate fully to add the affirmative difference of our experiences and values. When your ideas, solutions, and approaches and those of other women are amplified enough to be heard and heeded, different options become possible. Customary and often outmoded or even counterproductive ways of doing business can be replaced by fresh ideas. Few women in top positions are likely to argue, "We've always done it this way." And with enough women in the mix, the hypercompetitiveness seemingly rampant in a homogeneous leadership structure is leavened.

With just a token woman or two at the table, the added strengths we bring simply don't carry the day. Lone women often feel like "fish out of water" or feel they must "go along to get along." A small number of women certainly can and do make a difference by bringing more women into power. Indeed, having even a few women at power tables as role models is vital. However, it is seldom enough to change outcomes. It is tough for one or a few women to lead the way on solving nagging problems, especially anything labeled a "women's issue," such as the need for family-friendly workplaces. More women are needed to gain the advantage of what law professor Deborah Rhode has called "the difference [that] 'difference' makes."⁴

On the other end of the spectrum, while true parity in leadership—50% women—is an ultimate goal mirroring society, 30% is where real change begins to happen. Also, parity becomes easier to accomplish after the tipping

point is reached, because women can change long-standing practices to create more opportunity for others who come behind them. The 30% Solution acts as a floor for women moving up, not a ceiling.

Sometimes the best ideas are hidden in plain view. More than thirty years ago, Harvard Business School Professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter⁵ first identified the importance of having a critical mass of about one-third women in corporate decision-making roles to positively affect outcomes. Regardless of the strategic importance of these findings, little attention was paid to the idea until 1995, when it gained prominence on the international stage. That year, almost two hundred nations attending a United Nations conference agreed on a goal of at least 30% women in decision making. These countries saw a need to establish genuine partnerships to determine their destinies. Since then more than one hundred nations have embarked on modernizing their leadership composition in line with the 30% Solution. Country after country has moved away from the historical model of totally or mostly male leadership to actively balance the scales with more women. The experiences that have validated their decisions are included throughout *Women Lead the Way*.

The 30% Solution is good business as well as smart politics. Catalyst, an independent research organization with deep ties to Fortune 500 companies, has undertaken a long line of important studies about the impact of having more women at the top. The findings build a strong case for predicting outcomes. Firms with one-third or more women as corporate officers and directors reap rich rewards: higher financial performance and better bottom lines, as well as more opportunity for upward mobility and improved policies for women and families. Best-practice companies (which are unfortunately few in number) are following a women-friendly model of leadership development as part of their business plan for success.

I haven't found studies about the 30% Solution in the nonprofit sector. Based on personal experience with the CEOs and boards of directors of a wide range of foundations and organizations, I would expect that these groups too would do better with balanced leadership. This is an area for more research.

Progress around the World, Paralysis at Home

The many countries working toward balanced leadership seem to realize that they can't afford to underutilize half their population. They see that moving ahead will take all the talent, energy, and ingenuity they have available. Old customs and ways of doing business that artificially limit the pool of potential leaders are increasingly seen as shortsighted. The men who run countries and companies have come to realize that having enough women at the top to speak up and be heard produces better results. It is not a zero-sum game of women vs. men or a discussion of rights. Instead, balanced leadership is a route to improving democracy and competitiveness.

The United States is used to leading the world in gender equality and women's advancement, but it no longer does. Other countries that started considerably behind the United States on this front are now moving faster. Despite the growing body of evidence supporting more diverse leadership, and despite major problems signaling a clear need to do things differently, changes in the status quo to reflect women's shared values and experience have been slow in coming to this country. In fact, as you will see in later chapters, progress toward balanced leadership has essentially stalled. Women are seldom playing a big role in determining what problems are critical enough to be solved or in suggesting different ways of doing things.

Women as a group, the "we" of this book, have certainly not stood idly by. Women have moved forward in impressive numbers to get further education, start businesses, lead community groups, raise families, advocate for change, and go to work. Over the years I have met incredible, dynamic women in every walk of life and at every level. Women are ready to fill new roles as the major talent pipeline for the future. Yet many more educated, experienced, qualified, savvy, and smart women are poised to lead than we find at the top rungs of career ladders.

In fact, the composition of the groups of people with the authority and power to define the landscape of problems and solutions in universities, law firms, major companies, and legislatures hasn't changed much

overall. The higher up you go, the more men and fewer women are creating strategic plans to address problems. Even in the nonprofit world, where a vast number of women are at the top, the bigger the organization, the more likely it is to be run by men. In all too many places, women's opinions and expertise are not sought. Women's accomplishments are not on show. Times have changed, and so have women—but the paradigm of who leads remains virtually the same. Although it is seldom discussed in the United States, the 30% Solution can help.

History confirms the power of women as a force for change when we lead the way and are joined in the effort by like-minded men. Courageous women have seen problems in our society and acted. To cite only a few examples, women's leadership ended child labor and changed the law to protect girls and women from abuse and violence. Women sought and won the right to vote and the opportunities to go to school, participate in sports, work without sexual harassment, and gain credit in their own names. Taking the next steps to make the world a better place will require closing the leadership gap.

What Women Share

Like men, women are diverse in political position, occupation, age, family relationships, race, ethnicity, and economic status. However, women have found ways to cross these fault lines, share experiences, and act to improve our society. While much is made of the differences between and among women, these are definitely not the whole story.

I learned this powerful lesson from spearheading a series of extensive polls and focus groups over almost a decade to listen to women about their concerns, hopes, dreams, and priorities for public policy. We found strong similarities across all of the divisions where we expected differences—age, political party, race, generation, even region of the country. Most women shared some critical values and visions that, on balance, diverged from those of most men in the control samples. We will discuss women's values and visions in detail in Chapter 5. They include a preference for collaboration, a longer and wider time horizon, greater apprecia-

tion of the importance of relationships, and a focus on preventing crises. Other research about the gender gap (the difference between the views of men and women) has reconfirmed these findings many times.⁶

Numerous studies have tried to quantify what causes these gender-related similarities and differences; theories range from brain biology to social conditioning of girls and boys. As a nurse, I am pretty practical and results-oriented. I can accept that we don't know all the causal factors and still work with what we do know about women and men.

Abilities women bring from our life experience, such as networking—building relationships, collaborations, and partnerships—are powerful ways to trump traditional power. As Insiders and partners rather than competitors, we can change systems and institutions to reflect our views, values, and experience. A winning consensus agenda built on shared values will promote progress on long-neglected issues.

Why This Matters to You

You are a busy person. Why should you care about wedging the door open for women and changing the status quo? Stop for a minute and look around at who is making the big decisions where you work or in your town. Are they doing a good job, or do you find some issues continually ignored? Do you ever think your leaders are pretty unconnected to the world as it looks to you?

Even if you have concerns in these areas, you might be saying, “What difference does it make whether it is men, women, or both determining the business plan for a company, the budget for an organization, or the agenda for the city council?” The answer may surprise you. It matters a lot.

With almost fifty years in the workforce, I am often struck by how many times, and in how many settings, I have heard the same series of issues needing resolution. For example, do you and your friends worry about the level of stress in your lives and how it affects you and your family? Do you want to see work and family continue to be two separate worlds or intertwined parts of the lives of all adults? Are you looking for more respect for your contributions (and maybe those of other women as

well), whether at home or at work? Do you feel we are missing the boat on meeting the needs of children and families as important priorities? Are you tired of feeling you have to be twice as good or do twice as much work as your male colleagues to get ahead? Do you want to work for a company (or be the CEO of one) that “walks the walk” on sustainability and the importance of the workforce? If so, you are not alone. Business publications are full of stories about how both male and female employees in the new workforce want to help achieve a greater purpose, to advance their careers while being engaged in the community, and to participate actively in the lives of families and friends.

The decisions of business and political leaders on whether and how these issues are addressed are influenced by many factors, and one of those factors is the life experience of men and women. Our current leaders, who continue to be overwhelmingly male, generally have not spent and are not spending much time or energy to create the kind of world many of us wish to see. Lots of women are working at it, allied with men, especially younger men. But the women are often pressing for change as outside advocates or activists. We are still far from having enough Insiders who share our ideas and are charged with formulating and implementing solutions.

To provide fresh ideas and new approaches, we need a significant group of women who are equals in decision making and who can and will make things happen. When a critical mass of women and men decide together how to move companies, communities, or the country, our ideas will flourish. Women will lead the way. As we become full partners in leadership, we will open up frozen systems, provide access and opportunity, change agendas, and see bottom-line improvements for business, society, families—and women. The 30% Solution is a way to bring about this partnership. It will lead to results that are better for you, your family, and your community.

Moving In from the Outside

The women’s movement has concentrated on “Outsider” work: advocating, marching, challenging discrimination, and banging on the door for

entry to change the way business is done, one company or one law at a time. This approach has brought us a long, long way toward equality. How dramatically women's lives and rights have changed since the days of the suffragettes who achieved women's right to vote in 1920! But with the hundredth anniversary of this landmark coming up in 2020, we need a new road map that adds an Insider strategy.

One of the best descriptions of the impact of women's change-oriented leadership as we move from Outside to Inside is by Anna Quindlen, best-selling author and Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist, who has laid out the importance of "Inside Outsiders" stepping up as managers and executives. Her thesis is, "By its very nature, women's leadership is about redefinition, while men's leadership has been about maintaining the status quo. . . . It's difficult to see that clearly from inside the endless loop of accepted custom." My experience is consistent with her description of how Insiders come with "deeply ingrained assumptions and the inevitable sense of business as usual," and how Outsiders joining the discussions bring "a fire in the belly that breeds a willingness to step off the treadmill of custom."⁷ Women—especially when there are enough of us to press ideas collectively—bring a value-added benefit that follows from our differing experiences, generally outside the power structure, and our passion for workable solutions.

The Leadership We Need

Simply put, diverse leadership that looks like America will be better. Balanced leadership will waste less talent. It will take full advantage of the rapidly increasing pool of talented women who are as accomplished in their fields as their male counterparts, and whose management skill set and techniques match the 21st-century realities of a knowledge-based economy and a diverse global workforce. As recent Outsiders, women will also bring a fresh outlook, a willingness to move beyond stale thinking and adapt tactics to find badly needed answers to old problems as well as new ones. We will cast a more critical eye on policies and practices that have passed their shelf life. So far we seem to have underestimated

our strength as Insiders—and so has our country. But we have reached another crossroads in the advancement of women.

Let's face it. We need all the good new leadership talent we can get. Bill George, Harvard professor of management practice and former head of Medtronic, has written extensively about "authentic leadership," which he describes as based on inspiring leaders who can bring people together to get things done. Calling for redefining leadership for the 21st century, George says, "People are too well informed to adhere to a set of rules or to simply follow a leader over a distant hill. They want to be inspired by a greater purpose."⁸ Authentic leadership isn't and shouldn't be reserved for an elite few or for one gender; George gives examples of leaders such as Ann Fudge, former CEO of the big public relations firm Young & Rubicam Brands; Marilyn Carlson Nelson, who turned around Carlson's, the family travel firm; and Anne Mulcahy, CEO of Xerox, who took over the company in bad times and made it profitable.

Over the years I have worried about where to find the values-based and future-oriented leaders society needs in these fast-changing times and this interconnected world. I have kept coming back to an important fact hidden in front of me: these leaders are more likely to be women than men. You probably know more women than men who listen first before deciding, move toward teamwork and horizontal management and away from top-down hierarchical structures, and focus on diplomacy first rather than using force and power. These traits are all hallmarks of a different type of leadership, one that fits the times.

An example of how this can work occurred when Congress was in gridlock on what stimulus package would help the country in a deep recession. Despite the dire times, the usual partisan warfare prevailed until two moderate Republican women, Senators Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe, stepped forward to forge a bipartisan consensus. We need more of this kind of leadership, which can end stalemates. Obviously men in Congress have reached many a compromise over the years, but women's leadership style is likelier to achieve solutions with less posturing and wasted time.

More Women at the Table Equals More Progress for All

We will get further by reframing the debate on women's advancement from an argument about rights and justice to one promoting positive results-oriented progress for everyone. "Progress," like "success," can be defined in many different ways. I would define it as including increased attention to giving all children a healthy start and stronger focuses on education, health, and meeting the needs of working families. Many of the women—and men—I have met in a long career see a similar need to define "success" as more than status and wealth. Truly successful companies are not just financially viable in the current quarter; they have good long-term returns for both shareholders and stakeholders.

Marie Wilson, founder of The White House Project, puts it beautifully in her book *Closing the Leadership Gap: Add Women, Change Everything*. She says, "To trust a woman is to trust in a different future awash with ideas and lit by the energy of *all* people. It means more options. It means a fairer equation."⁹

A Vision of the Future

Here's what I see in the crystal ball: With balanced leadership, the United States reinvestigates a commitment to both individual and societal responsibility. It has healthier businesses and happier families, with strong supports for working families. Working couples and single moms can begin to replace stressful juggling with an integrated career and family life (even without a full-time partner at home). At work, women's skills, ideas, approaches, and styles are respected—even sought after—because they add to the bottom line instead of being seen as a problem to be tamed. The workplace, regardless of sector or size, has flexibility and equal pay as customary practices.

We can achieve these goals by turning the following dreams into reality. Let's aim to do it by our hundredth anniversary as full citizens in 2020:

We have reached the tipping point and are moving rapidly toward equal representation of women in political leadership.

“Womenomics”—economics as if women really matter—is widely supported as a mainstream strategy to grow a productive economy and eliminate poverty.

A revitalized social compact places a premium on social and personal responsibility, caring and compassion, families and community.

A recognized accountability framework with benchmarks and measurements exists to continue to open opportunity and avoid sliding backward.

Women at the top are expected, not seen as unusual. Young women grow up expecting to be leaders, just like young men.

To accomplish changes like these, women must lead the way from strength. Having more women leaders matters—a lot. Together, as transformational leaders, we can assure more equality, opportunity, and empowerment for all women and girls, not just white middle-class women. A winning consensus agenda built on shared values will promote progress on long-neglected issues. Along the way, women can do better for ourselves and our families.

Our dreams can come true. Step up to leadership. Bring more women up with you. Together we can achieve the 30% Solution and make life better for you, your family, your community, and society. Shared decision making—with balanced leadership—will change the world.

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Your Guide to Stepping Up to Leadership
And Changing the World***

by Linda Tarr-Whelan

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