



INTERVIEW
Gloria Feldt

Tell us about *No Excuses* and where the idea for the book came from?

I've been thrilled to see women break open so many doors during my decades of activism. But when I discovered while writing an article on women's political participation for *Elle* magazine during the 2008 U.S. elections that at the rate women are going, it'll take 70 years to get to parity in elective office, I decided I had to speed the process! Then I found that these numbers are not just true in politics. Women hold only 18% of top leadership roles at work too--and that's not fair, or good for men, women, a balanced family life, or even companies' return on investment according to McKenzie and Company studies.

Yet in spite of the cultural barriers that remain, from the boardroom to the bedroom no law or structural barrier is holding us women back now, except ourselves. The power is in our hands if we choose to use it to change the system. We buy 85% of consumer goods, we are 60% of college graduates, we make up half the paid workforce. In politics, women can raise money as proficiently as men now and voters often trust us more. There are many reasons for the continuing disparities, but I came to see that there are no excuses any more.

That's when I knew I had to write the book that became *No Excuses: 9 Ways Women Can Change How We*

Think About Power. The subtitle is important. I didn't want to write another one of those books that talks about what's wrong with women. I set out to give the historical and social context, and then to answer my favorite question: "So what are we going to do about it?" My intent was not to blame but to inspire. To give women concrete ways--I call them "power tools" to redefine power in positive terms and embrace it. To reach their goals authentically as women, not as women trying to be men. The result, I believe, will not just be gender parity and greater fairness for women at work, in the home, and in politics, but also a world in which both women and men are more likely to thrive.

How would you describe the modern woman's relationship with power?

Ambivalent. We want the benefits but not always the responsibility. It is easier to become co-opted by a little success and not hold out for the whole package. Sometimes it's even easier not to have choices--hence the so-called "op out generation." But is "easy" the same as fulfilling? I don't think so, at least not over the long haul of life. Such thinking often leaves women without economic power later in life, by the way, if they have depended on men to support them and then something goes awry (divorce, death, loss of employment).

Can you explain the roots of women's sometime ambivalence towards power?

First there is good reason. We have been discriminated against, raped, abused. We have borne the negative impact of people having power OVER us. That's why I say we must redefine power on our terms--the power TO: to accomplish great things for ourselves, our families, our companies, our communities. To innovate. to understand that power isn't a finite pie, but rather an infinite resource. We can share it and still have plenty for ourselves. Power over is oppression but power to is leadership. Power over is from Mars; power to is from Venus. I find that when I talk with women about this in my speeches and workshops, their expression changes completely, their faces open up and they say, "Oh yes, I want that kind of power!"

What tips do you have for women wanting to embrace their power?

First grasp that it's up to us as women now. The doors were opened by many brave women who came before us, but we have to have the courage to stand in our power and walk through those open doors with intention--and by the way bring other women through with us. The simple fact is that those in power don't relinquish it voluntarily, and we must walk ourselves through those open doors.

Second, I created the 9 Ways power tools to give women specific, usable tips and techniques. These can be downloaded from my website here: <http://gloriafeldt.com/about-no-excuses/> in short form or as a discussion guide and self-directed journal women can use to identify their own power demons and think through how to reach their goals and lead unlimited lives. ■



**the 9 ways
to embrace
your power**

1. know your history.
2. define your own terms.
3. use what you've got.
4. embrace controversy.
5. carpe the chaos.
6. wear the shirt.
7. create a movement.
8. employ every medium.
9. tell your story.



Ruthie Collins is Deputy Editor of Inspirational Woman Magazine and writes features on contemporary culture and modern women. Her first book, co-written with Lisa Mundembe-Chuma, A Modern Day Sisterhood (published by Inspirational Woman Magazine) is launched in 2012. Ruthie makes art out of recycled media and glittery things, likes to throw paint at canvases and is also working on a novel - Doing up Cleopatra. Ruthie also works as an art and enterprise coach/consultant for creatives and entrepreneurial women. She is Creative Director of the Cambridge Art Salon.