



Shout Out: Female Mayors Take The Lead

Across the country women mayors are rising to the challenges of addressing COVID-19 and doing right by their communities, even when it means facing opposition from state and federal governments. Inspired by their commitment and leadership, Gloria offers practical advice—and sound words of encouragement—for anyone aspiring to a career in public service.

Gloria Feldt: Like I always say, a leader is someone who gets stuff done. Hello, and welcome to Power to You. I'm Gloria Feldt, here with secrets and tools to prepare and propel you with training and coaching to harness your incredible power to in your professional lives. I cofounded Take the Lead because I figured out how to crack the code that has been holding women back from equal leadership and pay. My mission is for women and men to hold equal power, pay, and leadership positions by 2025. At the end of each podcast, I'll share specific tips that will help you lead and succeed.

I dedicate this podcast to a particular group of women who get exactly the stuff done that we most need right now: female mayors. I mean, they are kicking butt and taking names, and they are leading their cities to flatten the pandemic curve. Many of them are moving forward well before those in higher office take the initiative to do so, and sometimes standing up to enormous pressure that would have them ignore the best advice of public health officials.

While there are certainly also many exemplary male mayors doing this work, women seem to be particularly adept at handling the crisis, as we've seen similarly in those [countries led by women](#), leading the world in addressing COVID-19. I'm not saying that women are by nature better leaders or better handlers of crises. You know, doing the proverbial, "[I'm a woman, W-O-M-A-N](#)," thing. You know, "I can rub and scrub this old house till it's shining like a dime, feed the baby, grease the car, and powder my nose at the same time." Because women tend to be socialized to multitask and collaborate. It's all in our socialization. That behavior can come in very handy in government.

[Kate Gallego is the mayor of Phoenix](#), the fifth largest and fastest-growing US city. Gallego is the city's second elected female mayor. At a recent event where I heard

her speak, she referred to the growing prevalence of what she called mom politics because of the increase in the number of young mothers in political office. Her point was that it's important to include multiple perspectives when creating public policies. She's often seen including her preschool-age son, Michael, in her events.

You might have seen the [38-year-old Mayor Gallego recently](#) on any number of national news and public policy talk shows, such as Face the Nation and [Washington Post Live](#). Gallego joined early in the pandemic with other female mayors in Arizona, including [Mayor Coral Evans of Flagstaff](#) and [Mayor Regina Romero of Tucson](#), to pressure Arizona governor Doug Ducey to allow mayors to implement public health procedures at the local level. All three mayors were instrumental in closing down non-essential businesses and getting people to wear masks in public across the state. Romero is the first woman and first Latina to be elected mayor of Tucson, as well as the only Latina mayor in the top-50 cities. Evans is finishing her second term as mayor of Flagstaff and is currently running for Arizona state legislature. She is Flagstaff's first Black mayor.

All three women began their political careers as members of their city councils. Evans decided to run for mayor of Flagstaff the same year she was diagnosed with breast cancer, and then a few years later, when she decided to run for state legislature, she was diagnosed with a recurrence of the cancer. That wasn't stopping her. Again, not to stereotype and say that women run in packs that are more collaborative than men. There are, however, several examples of women mayors working together, sharing information, and supporting each other during difficult times.

San Francisco Mayor London Breed notably [helped Mayor Gallego to formulate a plan for housing the homeless persons in hotels](#), which San Francisco had led the way in doing. Washington, D.C., Mayor Muriel Bowser told ABC News, "[Female politicians are attacked more frequently and more wrongly than anyone else, but I think the difference that you're seeing now is that there's a critical mass of us, and we are sticking together and working together.](#)"

As Arizona zoomed to number one in the increase in COVID-19 after Ducey reopened the state too quickly and with too few restrictions, Mayor Gallego increasingly used her media savvy and bully pulpit to keep the pressure on him to follow public health advice. Because of the flow of resources from the federal government, the mayors have also challenged President Trump to influence national policy, as well, emphasizing that it should be based on the science, rather than on partisan politics, and that lives and livelihoods can be simultaneously protected.

Women are rising in local politics that are not always as visible as those at the state and national level, but women who are running and winning seats on local school boards, county offices, city councils, and as mayors, often have more impact on your daily life than those who get the most media attention. Of the 50 largest US cities, 13 have women currently serving as their mayors, [including a](#)

[record number of Black women](#). Mayors are close to the daily lives of citizens. They deal with everything from whether your garbage gets picked up, to managing traffic lights, to economic development and urban design. But mayors also play an important role in many other significant issues in residents' daily lives.

Because police departments are typically city entities, mayors are the key players in addressing police brutality in their cities, in working with local organizers in the Black Lives Matter movement, and they will be the key to implementing sustainable solutions. The City Mayors Society notes that [cities are in the forefront of fighting poverty](#), as well, an underlying cause of the schisms between police and citizens, and of the healthcare disparities that disproportionately affect communities of color. The latter has been laid bare by the equally disproportionate rate of illness and deaths from COVID-19. So, even though many cities don't have their own health departments, city's economic health impacts the overall health of its population.

When leaders don't lead, or when the lead in a direction that you think is harmful, then it falls to us as individuals and as a people collectively, to take the lead. That's what's happening in the streets right now. Each of us plays a part by our actions or by our inactions. Leadership is never easy, and leadership in elective office can be especially challenging, yet with that challenge comes many rewards. Just before coronavirus took over our lives, Take the Lead's February 28th and 29th Power Up Conference, held in Scottsdale, Arizona, was keynoted by Mayors Evans and Gallego, discussing the rise of women mayors and why that's important.

As Gallego said, [recounting her own journey](#), "Leadership comes in different forms and sometimes at the most difficult times in your life, but you've got to step up and take the lead." If you are interested in public service, and I hope you are, here are my tips:

1. Number one, start by knowing your purpose and your power. Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, who has been spoken of as a potential vice presidential candidate, observed to ABC News, "I think often we," meaning women, "are the last ones to see the power within ourselves. We don't always even know the name of that is leadership. You see us leading and organizing our communities. You see us in our churches and in our workplace, and you see us doing it in our sororities. We're doing it each and every day, not always recognizing that those same qualities are the qualities that allowed you to lead cities, and states, and on a national level." As I said, a leader is someone who gets stuff done.
2. Number two. If you're interested in politics, learn the ropes. [There are many organizations](#) whose specific purpose is to help, and encourage, and prepare women to run for office. They range from nonpartisan ones, such as [VoteRunLead](#) and the [Yale Campaign School](#), to Republican ones, such as the [Republican Women for Progress](#) and the [National Federation of Republican Women](#), to Democratic ones, such as [Emerge](#) and [EMILY's List](#). There are

groups like [Higher Heights for Women](#) that support Black women who want to run, and groups that focus on younger women. Whatever it is that you're looking for, you can probably find a group that will help you to prepare to run for office if that's what you want to do.

3. Number three, start local and build. School boards and city councils are often great springboards to higher office, while they are also rewarding in and of themselves. You can also build your networks and base of support by participating in the political party of your choice's organizational structure. These will vary state to state, but all of them have many roles where you can have an impact. [Kerry Giangobbe tells a story of how she decided to run for city council](#) while taking my 9 Leadership Power Tools to Advance Your Career online course several years ago. She didn't win, but it led her to become involved in her local and state Republican Party, and she says she will eventually run again.
4. Number four, don't just do the work, take credit for the work you do. Where there are no obvious leaders and a job to be done, step right up. Don't hesitate. That's your opportunity to lead. Don't wait for someone else to take the issue on. If you are passionate about it and willing to do the work, you have every right to put your own hat into the ring. I mean, why not you? After all, a leader isn't some magical being, she's someone who gets stuff done.

So, join me in appreciating women mayors who are getting such important stuff done for people all over the country right now. Perhaps one day, you will become one. And here's a bonus resource: [Follow the free documentary And She Could Be the Next](#). It's streaming on [AndSheCouldBeNext.com](#) until August 29th, 2020, and you can check out their companion power pack, which includes a discussion guide, even signature drink recipes and coloring pages, Spotify playlists, and a lot more. And what you'll follow is the inspiring stories of a number of women of color who ran for Congress in 2018. Some won, some didn't, but that's part of the process. Ava DuVernay is the executive producer and Jyoti Sarda, I proudly say, is a graduate of Take the Lead's 50 Women Can Change the World in Media and Entertainment, and she's the producer. But you'll find the information in the show notes.

Let me know how it goes for you. Until next week, Power to You.

Power to You is produced by Lantigua Williams & Co. Virginia Lora is our producer. Cedric Wilson is our sound designer. For more about my work, please visit [gloriafeldt.com](#), and follow me on social media [@gloriafeldt](#). To learn about Take the Lead and our courses and coaching services, go to [taketheleadwomen.com](#) and follow us on social media. You can also send me comments about the show and questions on leadership and power to [powertoyou@taketheleadwomen.com](#). I might even use them on future episodes. Be sure to subscribe or follow Power to You on your favorite listening app, and you'd make me so happy if you would leave a review on Apple Podcasts, as those really help us get to know what you like about the show. Thanks.

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