



How to Be Called Up to Leadership

Taking a cue from Joe Biden's public announcement that he will select a woman as a VP candidate if he is his party's nominee, Gloria takes a closer look at how someone might get herself ready to be selected for a major leadership role in any organization. She invites us to consider: how does one position oneself to be tapped by others who see your talent and want to help you move forward? How does one break through the barrier of otherness, of not being like or looking like the people that we have always seen in that seat? Gloria's guidance on these and other foundational questions will help us all normalize women's leadership at the highest levels.

Gloria Feldt: Like I always say, the world turns on human connection.

Hello, and welcome to Power to You. I'm Gloria Feldt. I've spent my entire career advancing women's rights and equality from the boardroom to the bedroom. 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, and now I want to give you all those secrets and tools to prepare and propel you with training and coaching to harness your incredible power to in your professional lives.

Homophily is the strongest predictor of what happens to any of us. In other words, who you're standing next to, who you look like, who you went to school with, is more likely than anything else to determine whether you get noticed or promoted. It's certainly true in politics, and it's true in business, and it's true everywhere else in life. I mean, who would have imagined that after starting with the most diverse presidential candidate lineup ever, the Democrats would wind up with an old white man as the probable standard bearer in November?

It's not like there aren't plenty of highly qualified female candidates. Biden is just being a smart politician in [saying he'll pick a woman as his running mate](#). I mean, do the numbers. The [majority of democratic voters are women](#), and people of color, including the [most reliable voters, African American women](#). And in the end, any candidate's agenda is more important than her or his gender, or race for that matter, and I think that's why African American voters have overwhelmingly gone for Joe Biden. And I think it's partly because he feels safe. He's more like what we're used to. More like the presidents we have seen in the past.

But given the opportunity to rectify a longstanding injustice, that there has never yet been a woman president or vice president, and given the fact that, you know, many women voters are still nursing some pretty raw feelings from Hillary Clinton's

defeat, even though she did win the popular vote, Biden's pledge is a political necessity, in addition to simply being the right thing to do. And let me repeat, it's not like there aren't dozens of highly qualified women out there who would not only help bring the voters to Biden, but also who are fully prepared to step into the presidency, should that become necessary.

Now, this isn't a partisan statement I'm giving you. I'm just speaking to you from the long history that I have of being involved, and observing politics, and I think this is the way things happen.

So, then the question becomes how does one position oneself to be chosen as the running mate for a presidential candidate? How does one position oneself to become the CEO of a corporation? How does one position oneself to be tapped by others who see your talent and want to help you move forward? How does one break through the barrier of otherness, of not being like or looking like the people that we have always seen in that seat?

That's a really big question.

The world turns on human connections. I know if you've been listening to these podcasts you have heard me say that over and over and over. The other 10% or so is timing and luck. I use a [power map](#) exercise that I will put into the show notes that you can use if you want to try to figure this out for yourself. I use this power map exercise to demonstrate these principles to participants in my leadership programs, and I think you'll find it very helpful. It allows you to make some assessments about the relationships that you have, and which of those relationships can actually help you move forward to your highest and best career intentions, to your aspirations.

It also allows you to identify who is the person who can have the most impact on your future, and where do you stand in relation to that person? Are you close to that person? Do you need to make sure that you build that relationship? Do you know one or two or three other people who can speak on your behalf to that other person? Will any of those people do what [Carla Harris](#), who is one of my personal heroes, executive with Morgan Stanley. Carla Harris asks, "Who carries your papers when you're not in the room?" That's what you're looking for, is who do you know who understands the value that you bring to the work that you do, and the characteristics that you bring that make you successful or can make you successful in a role that you aspire to? Who is it that will speak on your behalf even when you're not there to speak for yourself?

So, taking this back to politics, one might ask, "Who would want to be vice president, anyway?" I remember that [Stacey Abrams](#), who ran for governor of Georgia and did not prevail, many people asked her if she would be interested in being vice president. She just said, "Well, nobody runs for vice president." One of the most famous political sayings of all time is from former vice president, John [Nance Garner, who famously said](#), "The vice presidency isn't worth a bucket of

warm spit.” Probably he said another word other than spit, but I’ll let you figure that one out.

You might also wonder who would want to bash their head against that brick wall. I mean, you know, if you remember what a trouncing the two women who have been vice presidential candidates had to endure, you might even question whether you wanted to be in that role, and that would be perfectly understandable if you remember how Sarah Palin was treated, if you remember how [Geraldine Ferraro](#) was treated, they were asked questions that no male candidate has ever had to answer. About their families, about their capabilities. It was pretty demeaning.

But on the other hand, it’s worth it to set the intention of taking a leadership role within your organization, and I’ll tell you why. It’s worth it because whatever we do today as women to take on greater leadership responsibilities opens the door and makes it easier for the next woman who comes along. And that might be your daughter. It might be your granddaughter. We are all in the position of being able to be role models for the next woman. We are in the position of being able to enable other women to see a female leader in an executive or a leadership position. And that means everything, because as they say, if you can’t see it, you can’t be it. And on the other hand, if you can see it, then you have an idea that perhaps you too can become that person. You too can become the vice president, or even the president, or the CEO of a company, or whatever it is that you aspire to. If you can see another woman in that role, then you can figure out what your path might be to achieving that goal.

Because what is happening right now is that female leadership is being normalized, and every time we see a woman in a leadership role, it becomes more normal for everyone to imagine a woman in that leadership role. It becomes possible for people to understand that leaders can come with a higher-pitched voice, and perhaps wear a turquoise pantsuit. It just normalizes leadership by women, and the more normal it feels for a woman to be in a leadership position, the more likely it is that barriers to that leadership role will go away.

So, here’s what I want you to do to use your power to. I want you to first of all envision yourself in the seat that you want to hold. What is your leadership intention? Just visualize yourself already holding that position. And then I want you to go to the show notes and download the exercise that I mentioned earlier. It’s called [Your Power Map](#). Take some time and fill out that power map. In fact, I would suggest that you keep a clean copy of it, because you’ll probably want to do this several times over the course of your career, or as you think about it, I often find that as people think about this power map, they may shift and change some of their strategies.

Do let me know how it goes for you. Email me at powertoyou@taketheleadwomen.com. Until next week, Power to You.

Power to You is produced by Lantigua Williams & Co. Cedric Wilson is our sound designer. Emma Forbes is our assistant producer. 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 on your favorite listening app, and please leave a review on Apple Podcasts, as those really help us know what you like about the show. Thanks.

CITATION:

Feldt, Gloria, host. “*How to Be Called Up to Leadership.*” *Power to You*, [Take the Lead Women](http://www.taketheleadwomen.com), April 6, 2020. <https://www.taketheleadwomen.com/podcast>

Produced by:

