

Karisa Beatty

Women of the Mountains: Women as Leaders and Leadership Development

There are a lot of poor women of mountainous areas in the world that have lost hope of ever fulfilling their dreams. Some haven't a clue that they could change the outcome of their lives and the lives of those around them. We need to reach out to those women and give them the opportunities they deserve to live a better life, to better the lives of those around them, and maybe even change the world.

For centuries, women have been leading others and changing lives. Anne Hutchinson (1591-1643), for example, lived as far back as the 1600s and was one the first known women of this nation to lead others. Through her ideas and beliefs, she did what she could to make the lives of women around her better. She wanted to give all women the same rights and opportunities as men had. She believed that all people were created equal and should be treated as such. Hutchinson preached these beliefs and others as well to those around her. She held unauthorized biblical study groups and meetings in her home for those willing and wanting to listen. I believe that with these ideas put into the minds of the women at that time, Hutchinson gave birth to the seed of equality of men and women alike that has brought us so far in this day and age.

One reason why poor women have a hard time creating the life they want for themselves is sometimes they are treated as a lower class of people. They have always, in the past as well as the present, been mistreated and thought lowly of. Women who live in

areas and cultures that treat their women as such are less likely to become leaders because they have been put down and abused their entire lives. With the thoughts and actions of others in their minds, women are most likely to believe the many lies they are told about themselves and that they have nothing to offer the rest of the world. These lies could include statements saying they are as menial as dirt, they are worth nothing, etc. Its no wonder a good portion of these mistreated women don't have any self-confidence. Others keep telling them they can't do anything. Really, the only reason they don't anything about their situations is they are never encouraged, but are almost always discouraged instead.

If we teach women of poor mountainous areas about other women leaders of the past and present, we may be able to encourage them enough to understand and realize that they aren't hopeless. We can help them to know that they aren't the only ones and others like them have done what others have said they couldn't do. Women in leadership positions don't always start out rich and well educated. In fact, there are quite a few that were never very wealthy or educated at all.

An example of an important woman leader who never had much money or a good education is Harriet Tubman. She began her life as a slave in Maryland. At the age of 15, while trying to stop a runaway slave from being beaten, Tubman was injured critically from a blow by an iron weight. The weight crushed her skull and left her with the after affects of fainting spells, narcoleptic episodes, and more. Although her master kept her in the fields when she was in no condition to work, Harriet Tubman never lost hope of a future filled with freedom. She kept up her hard labor in the fields, which improved her stamina, muscle strength, and endurance. When her master died in 1849, she ran away to

the north where she could become a free person and live happily. Tubman reported to her first biographer Sarah Bradford,

“I reasoned dis out in my mind: there was one of two things I had a *right* to, liberty or death. If I could not have one, I would have de oder, for no man should take me alive. I should fight for my liberty as my strength laste and when de time came for me to go, de Lord would let dem take me.” (qtd. in Klenke 47)

As you can see, Tubman was strong willed and never lost hope. She knew what she wanted and she went after it. She fulfilled her dream of becoming free. She stayed strong, even in times of hardship.

Women who are having troubles with achieving their goals and dreams can learn through Harriet Tubman’s example that just because there doesn’t seem to be any trace or hope of success, doesn’t mean there isn’t any. There is an old proverb that says, “Where there’s a will, there’s a way.” I believe this to be completely true. If someone has the will to do something, they can find a way to do it. This includes the possibility of poor women in mountainous areas, living in terrible conditions becoming leaders in the hearts and minds of the community they live in and in the rest of the world. Women of all different races, cultures, and ages can make a change on this earth and nothing can or should stop them from doing so.

Not all changes have to be big ones. Even the small, seemingly insignificant, acts can bring the biggest change to one’s life. Women don’t have to become known throughout the world to be leaders in their own homes and communities. By simply being kind to others and offering advice when needed, a woman can drastically change one’s views and therefore, the rest of that person’s life. That person could then pass on that

knowledge to his/her family and friends, possibly changing some of their views as well. This process would then continue, possibly, from generation to generation.

Another way women could change lives is through getting the attention of the rest of the world in a dramatic way. This would be an example of something bigger and usually more effective than helping others one at a time through advice, a smile, or a quick hello. Ways like this usually require more than a single person though. However, a single person could form a group of people wanting to make an important point. Something like this could grab the attention of the news and people in this world that have the same point of view or are interested in it. This could impact several nations and therefore, changing the world. For example, the revolution that recently occurred in Egypt started out with just a small group of people that decided they didn't want former President Mubarak to be their leader anymore. They formed rallies and alliances with their families and friends. This caused an attention-grabbing situation that led to the success of their group. A majority of Egypt participated in this revolution against the government and proved that they could get the freedom they desired to have. Through their example, other countries of the Middle East have started to rebel against their governments as well. By this recent and continuous event, women of mountainous areas around the world can figure out a way to create an uprising against the views of those who say that they are worth nothing and can do nothing. These women can prove to the others that they are stronger than they believe them to be. . Poor women can prove that they aren't scared or weak, but are courageous and have minds of their own. If a single small group begins this, it can, and most likely will, spread throughout the world.

However, one woman could be a leader to those around her without a group to

support her. There are many financial programs that would be willing to help them. Microfinance, for example, is a program that loans small portions of money to the poor in order to help them in such things as investment opportunities. These opportunities could include expanding a business, buying land or equipment, securing a job, and more. If women from poor mountainous areas are being held back from lack of money, they can simply get a small loan from a company or program such as Microfinance to start or expand a business. By taking a loan from this program and starting a business, women can make more money and create a better life for themselves. If one person in a community does this, others could follow that person's lead and do the same thing. This is another way a woman can change the lives of those around her. If she creates a life for herself through a business, others may get interested in the idea and do something similar.

Carol Bartz, a woman who created a life for herself through business, didn't have a great life growing up. She and her little brother were left to live with their slightly abusive father after their mother died of a disease when she was eight years old. They were sent to live with their loving grandmother when she was twelve. Through her grandmother's guidance and encouragement, she graduated high school with good grades. She worked as a bank secretary while in school and as she worked hard, she gained the respect of her managers. They later helped her to get a scholarship to the all-girls school of William Woods in Missouri. There she earned her BA in Computer Science and went on to work as the only woman professional at 3M (Minnesota Mining & Manufacturing Company Limited). After suffering from discrimination for being the only woman in the company, she quit her job and later became CEO of Yahoo. Bartz can stand as another example to women in dangerous and poor situations. She was led by her

grandmother to a great and successful life, and she can no lead others to do the same.

I believe that if we encourage women in bad situations, they can find the will to stand for themselves against the views of the world. They can ignore the things the world says about them and move on with their lives. These women can create and discover a new life for themselves and the people around them. They can be the leaders that others need to spark that interest and desire to becoming a person that has the life they want for themselves. I believe that anyone can be the person they want to be if they only try. If, at first, they don't succeed, they should try until they do.

Works Cited

Klenke, Karin. *Women and Leadership*. New York: Springer, 1996. Print.

Barksdale, Karl. "American History: Anne Hutchinson." 2010. Lecture.

Wolfe, Lahle. "Carol Bartz - Biography of Carol Bartz - CEO of Yahoo." *Women in*

Business - Women Owned Businesses. Web. 25 Feb. 2011.

<<http://womeninbusiness.about.com/od/successfulbusinesswomen/p/carol-bartz.htm>>.

"Microfinance." *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. Web. 25 Feb. 2011.

<<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Microfinance>>.