

The Moment of Lift by Melinda French-Gates

Chapter 1 – The Lift of a Great Idea

- The ability to PLAN a family is one of the most important things for empowering a woman.
 - When women in developing countries can space their birth, the survival rate of the child goes way up.
 - ◆ Women have more time to advance themselves and raise healthy children.
 - Contraceptives!!
- Make small investments that will spark massive improvements.
- There are NO isolated problems!
- Countries that exclude women aren't just problematic because they don't treat women with respect, but because they have a need to exclude.

Being a feminist means believing that every woman should be able to use her voice and pursue her potential, and that women and men should all work together to take down the barriers and end the biases that still hold women back.

Millions of children were dying because they were poor, and we weren't hearing about it because they were poor.

When children reach their potential, they don't end up poor. This is how families and countries get out of poverty.

I saw that it all begins when women start talking to each other.

Whenever you include a group that's been excluded, you benefit everyone.

If you want to lift up humanity, empower women.

Wisdom isn't about accumulating more facts; it's about understanding big truths in a deeper way.

Chapter 2 – Maternal and Newborn Health

- Learn from locals and TALK TO THEM!
 - Show them respect.
- Extreme poverty means that no matter how hard one works, they're trapped and get left behind

by those can lift them up.

- Help mothers protect their children if you want to attack poverty and empower women.
- Sometimes it's just a matter of changing the behavior of those less educated.
- Delivery systems for solutions matter just as much as the solutions themselves.
 - Requires listening to local and understanding the barriers they face.
- If you want to help a community, the best way is to become a part of that community and respect their ways.
- Poverty is created by barriers; the challenge of delivery reveals the causes of poverty.
 - Learn /why/ people are poor!
- The remedy for poverty is to include the excluded.

I purposely didn't go into these visits with fixed views; I tried to go with curiosity and a desire to learn.

Their cup is not empty; you can't just pour your ideas into it. Their cup is already full, so you have to understand what is in their cup.

When you begin to understand the daily lives of the poor, it does more than give you the desire to help; it can often show you how.

Overcoming the need to create outsiders is our greatest challenge as human beings. It is the key to ending deep inequality.

Chapter 3 — Family Planning

- Unplanned pregnancies are one of the biggest barriers to women.
- Opposition to contraceptives is extremely harmful to women.
- Women do not make decisions in a vacuum; there are often intrusive husbands in the mix.
 - Listen to the stories of the women, because data systems may be biased by the husband.
- Male allies, especially those who are religious leaders, are really important in this effort, for they can easily convince their community to change bad behaviors.
- Stigma is one of the biggest barrier's to women's health.

When one person tells me a harsh truth, I can be sure that she's speaking for others who aren't as bold.

Majorities don't matter on issues of conscience.

There's something empowering about being asked. It sends a message that your life matters.

Sometimes the best thing a woman can do for her child is not to have another child.

The best way to fight back is to speak up — to say openly the very thing that others stigmatize. It's a direct attack on the self-censorship that stigma needs to survive.

Chapter 4 — Girls in Schools

- Have the courage to defy tradition, but also the wisdom to make it work in your favor.
- Let girls know their rights and show them that their ill treatment is due to defects in society, not flaws inherent to them.

It takes courage to ask for what you want — especially when it's more than people think you should have.

Give me a chance to show you what you can do!

If a girl's self-image doesn't change, then going to school will not change the culture, because she she will be using her skills to serve the social norms that keep her down.

The secret of an empowering education: a girl a learns she is not who she's been told she is.

This how the great movements of social change get traction: when outsiders reject the low self-image society has imposed on them and begin to author a self-image of their own.

The first defense against a culture that hates you is a person who loves you.

Love is the most powerful and underused force for change in the world.

Chapter 5 — Unpaid Work

- On average, women do seven years more of unpaid work than men over their lifetimes.
 - This keeps them from spending more time on paid work and fleshing out their own passions.
- Paid work elevates women towards equality with men and gives them power and

independence.

- If you hired workers at the market rate to do all the unpaid work women do, unpaid work would be the biggest sector of the global economy.
 - Men won't easily give up a system in which half the world's population works for next to nothing.
- Recognize the burdens of unpaid work, reduce the number of hours that unpaid work takes through technologies, and then redistribute the work that can't be reduced so that men and women share it equitably.
- Experiment: have husbands and wives in a community switch places to show how men how much work the women do.
- Breaking the domestic norms actually leads to men's empowerment as well, because it allows men to discover the power of partnership and lets them develop their caring side.

In the universal human desire to be happy, to develop our gifts, to contribute to others, to love and be loved — we're all the same. Nobody is any better than anybody else, and no one's happiness or human dignity matters more than anyone else's.

It is the heat and friction of two people's differences that propel them to explore new ways of beginning.

All lives have equal value.

Bill knows he is not special; he knows his circumstances were special — and a man who can see that can see through hierarchy, honor equality, and express his tender heart.

I've never held the view that women are better than men, or that the best way to improve the world is for women to gain more power than men. I think male dominance is harmful to society because /any/ dominance is harmful.

Chapter 6 — Child Marriage

- The percentage of women using contraceptives is lowest where the prevalence of child marriage is highest.
- For girls age 15 to 19 around the world, the leading cause of death is childbirth.
- Families marry off their daughters at a young age because:
 - One fewer mouth to feed and more resources to help everyone else's.
 - The younger the girl, the less her family pays in dowry.

- Every year a girl doesn't marry, there's a greater chance that she will be sexually assaulted.
- The best way to stop child marriage is to change the culture that makes child marriage a smart option for the poorest families.
- *Empathy Barrier* – outsiders showing little skill in projecting themselves into the lives of the people they want to help, and little interest in trying to understand why something was being done a certain way.
 - Outrage can save one girl or two; only empathy can change the system.
- People won't listen to you if you're judging them.
- Have communities reflect on their deepest values so they may question if current attitudes and behaviors were violating those values.
- Work with the community to ensure sustainability.
- If locals cite religion – “God would be happier if the children were healthier.”
- Rich people giving away money can mess things up –
 - If a major funder enters an area and picks one approach over others, people working in the area might abandon their own ideas to pursue the funder's because that's where the money is.
 - It can be hard to know what's working in a philanthropy as opposed to a business.
 - Wealthy people can think that their success in one thing makes them an expert in everything.
 - The work of insiders can be opposed by other insiders, and they may choose to back one group over another.
 - ◆ The arrogance of a wealthy, Western-educated outsider.

What a heartbreaking reality it is that girls are forced into the abusive situation of child marriage to protect them from other abusive situations.

What gives me the right, as an outsider, to support efforts to change the culture of communities I'm not part of?

Empathy helps end our bias about who deserves the benefits of science.

Tradition without discussion kills moral progress.

Identifying and removing moral blind spots is a conversation that can be /facilitated/ by outsiders, but it cannot be manipulated by them.

Chapter 7 – Women in Agriculture

- In villages, men may be the ones controlling the technology.
- 70% of the world's poorest people get most of their income and food by farming.
 - Helping the poorest farmers grow more food and get it to market could be the world's most powerful lever in reducing hunger and poverty.
- Almost every poor farmer is a woman.
 - They are heavily disadvantaged because they can't get access to the same resources male farmers have (seeds, land, tools, time).
 - Men still speak for them and as a result, development orgs work based on their needs.
 - ◆ Often, most researchers are men, and only talk to male farmers because female farmers aren't allowed to speak with male professionals.
- Once women learned how to farm, they became empowered to fight against other inequalities as well.
 - They also carried themselves differently – more confidence!
- Brilliant experiment – switch the roles of the wife and husband and see how the husbands fare.
- There needs to be a call to action for laws that support women too, not just calls to abolish discriminatory policies.
- Disrespect for women grows in male-dominated interpretations of religion.

A whole lot of time and money and research has been wasted that could have been saved if only someone had talked to the women.

Empowerment never confines itself to categories.

It's not a standard political debate when an argument for equality is called blasphemy.

Chapter 8 – Women in the Workplace

- If the workplace is toxic but gets things done, take the good qualities and make your own style of work – people will follow.
- Men blame biology for women not getting opportunities, but that's just justification for their behaviors.
- Tech is the most powerful industry in the world and it creates the ways we live our lives. If women aren't a part of that, women will not have power.
- Even the best of us are blinded by our own interests, which is why we need diversity in the groups in charge.

- Algorithms are biased against race because mostly white males wrote the code and didn't consider the people who didn't look like them.
 - /Amplification of the bias of programmers./
- Studies prove that groups with greater gender diversity are strongly correlated with group intelligence, more so than the individual IQs of the team members.
- Women are less self-confident and have more self-doubt than men because of how society marginalizes women.
- Because the most powerful positions in society are occupied by men with wives who only work at home, we don't have paid paternal (or sick) leave.
 - We don't prioritize family care - it's a battle between your family (or health) and your work.

You can get away with eccentric if you're great at what you do.

What I realized much later, paradoxically, is that by trying to fit in, I was strengthening the culture that made me feel like I didn't fit in.

You never actually meet a great friend; you /recognize/ her.

We need to do more than identify the abusers; we have to *heal* the unhealthy culture that supports them.

Opportunities have to be equal before you can know if abilities are equal.

when people see the effects of poor nurture and call it nature


Diversity is the best way to defend equality.

No group should have to trust another to protect their interests; all should be able to speak for themselves.

If we want a society that reflects the values of empathy, unity, and diversity, it matters who writes the code.

I do believe it's crucial to gather friends and colleagues and create a community with a new culture.

I realized that maybe my best self is not my polished self. Maybe my best self is when I'm open



enough to say more about my doubts or anxieties, admit my mistakes, confess when I'm feeling down.