

LEARNING TO LEAD: LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP



YOUth Lead: A Toolkit for Transformational Leadership to Support Gender Equality

by CIWiL and ParlAmericas



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INTRODUCTION



Youth voices are essential in decision-making and development processes at the community, local, national and international levels. Many brave and passionate young people around the globe and the Caribbean, including young women, have been active in responding to some of our current crises and structural inequalities. We have seen them at the forefront of movements advocating for climate justice, sexual and reproductive health and rights, mental health, and ending violence against women, among other issues.

However, despite these strides, and the increasing recognition of the necessity of their insights for shaping our collective futures, young people still face multiple barriers to their full inclusion, participation and leadership in social, economic and political processes. Many are unable to fulfil their highest potential as a result of living in conditions of violence and poverty,¹ inadequate access to education, employment, digital technologies, healthcare and other social services, as well as

1. [Child Poverty in the Eastern Caribbean Area](#). UNICEF, webpage.

direct discrimination in the form of adultcentrism, where the perspectives of adults or older, mature persons are viewed as superior to that of a child, adolescent, or teenager.² For young women, these challenges are often compounded, as sexism creates unique obstacles on their paths to leadership.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), in the [agreed conclusions](#) of its sixty-fifth session, noted the underrepresentation of young women in public life and their disproportionate exclusion from consultations on issues that affect them. The Commission further recognised some ways in which, despite the impediments, we can sustain young women’s motivation to use their voices for social change and support their growth in leadership in public and private spheres – from broadening their networks to improving their access to education, leadership and mentorship programmes, ensuring early exposure to women leaders as role models, and increasing their access to legislative and policymaking spaces.³ This toolkit was designed with such recommendations in mind. It is intended to serve as a grounding for youth, particularly young women leaders, in transformational, feminist leadership.

This toolkit will cover:

- The value of women leaders or feminist leaders
- The history and impact of women’s leadership, including major milestones in the Caribbean feminist movement
- The qualities and principles of transformational leadership

2. [Discrimination Against Youth](#), Freechild Institute for Youth Engagement, Toolkit.

3. [CSW65 Agreed Conclusions](#)



WHY WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IS IMPORTANT



Advancing women's opportunities and access to leadership roles is not only a necessary path to a more just society but also a justified end in and of itself. This is because women's full and equal participation and leadership is one aspect and indicator of gender equality, and gender equality itself is a human right. Many universal agreements and frameworks reinforce this fact.

WOMEN'S FULL AND EQUAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP

AN OVERVIEW OF HUMAN RIGHTS TREATIES

1948

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Recognises that everyone has the right to take part in the government of their country, directly or through freely chosen representatives (Article 21)

1953

CONVENTION ON THE POLITICAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN

Asserts that women shall be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies, established by national law, on equal terms with men, without any discrimination.

1966

INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS (ICCPR)

Obliges States parties to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights.

1976

CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)

Obliges States parties to take measures to ensure that women have the right to vote, run for and hold political office, participate in the formulation and implementation of government policy, perform all public functions at all levels of government and participate in non-governmental organisations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country. (Article 7)

1992

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN RIO DE JANEIRO

Reaffirms the commitments of States to women's equal rights, access and opportunities for participation and leadership in the economy, society and political decision-making ([The future we want](#))



1994

THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION ON THE PREVENTION, PUNISHMENT, AND ERADICATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, KNOWN AS THE CONVENTION OF BELÉM DO PARÁ

Reinforces that every woman is entitled to the free and full exercise of her civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The States Parties recognize that violence against women prevents and nullifies the exercise of these rights.

1995

THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION (BPFA)

Outlines that the global standard for women's representation should be at least one-third in order to ensure a critical mass of women leaders. This allows for increased representation that is more than numbers; it is about systems and people that are transformational, inclusive and equitable.

2015

THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS) AND SDG 5, GENDER EQUALITY

Establishes a framework for peace and prosperity, including a plan of action for women and girls to enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political participation as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision-making at all levels.



The belief that women do not make good leaders persists in many spaces despite the fact that traditionally ‘feminine’ qualities and ‘softer’ people-oriented leadership skills such as sensitivity and open, transparent communication, which are associated with women, are valuable in leadership. To add, often when this fact is acknowledged, it is implied that women leaders are only effective in situations which require those qualities and skills. Women are also indisputably competent at the ‘hard’ skills, but, in instances where they apply such skills, they are less favourably received than men demonstrating the same skillset.⁴ The reality is that myths about who can lead and why stem from our patriarchal culture (which devalues women, femaleness, and the feminine) and are sustained by rigid gender norms and expectations (about how women and men should behave).

Even beyond the importance of promoting women’s leadership as part of human rights commitments, women’s leadership is also a precondition for preserving and promoting many of the principles held by democratic nations and has multiple substantiated benefits to all of society that are demonstrable in actual outcomes. A few of these are outlined in the next table.

| DEMOCRACY | PEACE |
|--|--|
| <p>The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by consensus by governments participating in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, reaffirmed that women’s persistent exclusion from formal politics undermines the concept of democracy – which assumes an equal right by all to vote and be elected – as well as fairness and equality in policy agenda setting.</p> <p>Women’s political participation results in tangible gains for democracy, including greater responsiveness to citizen needs and increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines.^{5,6}</p> | <p>A 2021 Secretary-General’s report to the Security Council called women’s leadership and participation in peacebuilding a prerequisite for the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.</p> <p>A global study on the implementation of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security shows that a peace agreement which includes women, is 35% more likely to last at least 15 years.</p> |

4. In Anne Statham’s 1987 study it was found that women were both more task- and people-oriented and thus revealed a false dichotomy between the two. There was less tolerance for women who deviated from what was deemed a traditional sex-appropriate model.

5. Sandra Pepera, “Why Women in Politics?” Women Deliver, web page, February 28, 2018 <https://womendeliver.org/why-women-in-politics/>

6. United Nations Economic and Social Council, Commission on the Status of Women, Sixty-fifth session 15–26 March 2021, Agreed Conclusions, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/079/07/PDF/N2107907.pdf?OpenElement>

BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Women leaders demonstrate high competence, which translates into high-performing teams. According to [McKinsey's Women Matter research](#), it is estimated that companies with three or more women in senior management functions score higher in all dimensions of organizational performance. [A 2019 Harvard Business Review study](#) using 360-degree reviews to determine perceived effectiveness amongst peers, shows that women are thought to be more effective in 17 of the 19 competencies measured, including taking initiative, possessing resilience, high integrity and honesty, practising self-development, driving for results, inspiring and motivating others, and inspiring change.

Gender diversity has also been shown to increase an organisation's performance as well as improve morale, recruiting, and external image, as found in [this Harvard Business Review research study](#).

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Having women in top decision-making roles in an organization leads to increased revenue and profitability. [A 2018 Ernst and Young survey](#) on middle-market companies across the globe found that 30% percent of women-led companies are targeting growth rates of more than 15% in the next 12 months, compared with just 5% of firms led by men.

McKinsey's Women Matter research has found that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are 15 percent more likely to have financial returns above the average in their national industry.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Communities have been found to do better in climate resilience and capacity building strategies when women are also involved in planning. This is due in part to a tendency by women to share information about community wellbeing and their greater willingness to adapt to environmental changes since their family lives are impacted.

Not only is gender equality one of the seventeen [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG 5\)](#), but gender has also been recognised as a key cross-cutting aspect of the Sustainable Development Agenda. Further, target 5.5 under Goal 5 seeks to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

A [2020 Harvard Business Review](#) research study, based on assessments of 454 men & 366 women, compared overall leadership effectiveness ratings of women and men. Even prior to COVID-19, women were rated as more effective leaders overall, but the gap widened during the pandemic, possibly indicating that women tend to perform better in a crisis.

Women have also been at the forefront of the battle against COVID-19 in various roles – as political leaders, health-care workers, caregivers in the home, heads of households, and scientists, among many others. Countries with women heads of state, such as Denmark, Finland, Iceland, New Zealand, and Germany, have been found to have more effectively managed the pandemic response. [This New York Times article](#) offers an analysis.

REFLECTION PROMPTS

- ✔ How would you emphasise the importance of women's leadership? What examples can you think of from your own life of women leaders who have positively impacted a group or outcome?
- ✔ As a young woman in a leadership role or aspiring to one, why do you think it is important that your voice, and those of other young women, are included at decision-making tables?
- ✔ What, if any, are some of the assumptions you encounter about women's leadership (or more specifically, your leadership role or aspirations) and what would you say in response to those assumptions?

TAKE ACTION

- ✔ Find out which of the aforementioned human rights conventions or treaties have been signed and ratified by your country and use the links to the full documents to learn more about what these instruments say about women's political rights.

RESOURCES

Women's Political Leadership in the Caribbean (UN Women Caribbean)

Publication which provides data from a study in the Caribbean on what people look for in leaders.

Making the Case for Gender Equality (ParlAmericas)

This is a factsheet by ParlAmericas which outlines how gender equality and women's leadership creates positive outcomes across multiple dimensions of society.

THE HISTORY AND IMPACT OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP



Whilst history books often do not share the stories of women's roles as leaders and agents of change, this section reminds us of their significant contributions throughout every period in time.

Caribbean women's contributions have been shaped by the complex histories of the region, particularly the effects of colonialism and its legacy. Long before women had access to formal leadership roles in government and public life, their power was evident in their grassroots resistance, activism, and academic scholarship. Through these avenues and others, Caribbean women were actively involved in the public domain – in their communities and countries – alongside men, in pre- and post- Independence endeavours for freedom, human and civil rights, restorative justice, and citizenship, which were characterised by political, class, ethnic, and national identity concerns. It is in the course of stepping up to address this broad variety

of concerns affecting everyone that Caribbean women emerged as leaders and were later able, through alliance-building with women from across the region and world, to bring the cross-cutting issue of women's rights and gender equality to the forefront of both global agendas and, consequently, into their own national discourses. Some of the major ways in which Caribbean women's leadership advanced both gender equality and regional development as a whole in the Caribbean are summarised next.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CARIBBEAN FEMINIST MOVEMENT

18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES

- The Caribbean's colonial history saw women leaders emerge through their participation in rebellions or their advocacy for freedom and the abolition of slavery. Although men are often the protagonists of these historical accounts, women also devised strategies and engaged in several modes of resistance to destabilise the slavery system and demand their freedom. A few of these women were Nanny Grigg from Barbados, Queen Nanny of the Maroons from Jamaica, and Flore Bois Gaillard of Saint Lucia.
 - The 1816 rebellion against British sugar cane planters in Barbados was named after the African-born enslaved man called Bussa, but it is well-known amongst Barbadians that Nanny Grigg, an enslaved African woman, was also one of the major leaders who planned the uprising.
- The contributions made by these early women freedom-defenders were instrumental to Emancipation in the Caribbean in the mid-1800s.⁶ While the issue of women's rights as a separate cause was not yet on the table, the anti-slavery politics and consciousness about ending racial discrimination helped advance the feminist movement. Free women recognised parallels in enslavement to their own oppressed conditions on the basis of gender and developed arguments for women's emancipation.
 - In Antigua and Barbuda, sisters Elizabeth Hart Thwaites and Anne Hart Gilbert were free coloured and anti-slavery activists who defiantly wrote about the inhumanity and injustices of slavery, developed schools dedicated to educating enslaved people, and founded charities committed to the social mobility of Black women and children.

6. For further information, read Lucille Mathurin Mair's 'Rebel Women in the British West Indies during Slavery'

- Immediately following Emancipation and the end of Indian Indentureship in the Caribbean, most women still had limited access to the public sphere or higher education. Barriers to education also existed along the lines of race and class. Some of the women who had the privilege and resources to surpass this barrier later used their knowledge and power to transform conditions for wider society.
 - Dame Georgiana Ellen Robinson of Antigua and Barbuda attained her education abroad and returned home to discover that children of colour and those born out of wedlock in her country were still being denied an education. She then opened a school that welcomed all children regardless of their backgrounds and offered scholarships to those from poor families.
- Limited job options, exploitation of labour, and poverty were further characteristics of the early part of the 20th century for many Caribbean people. Women especially were boxed into domestic roles at home or the lowest-waged jobs in the labour force. This period saw the emergence of women social workers and community activists who took it upon themselves to improve the social welfare of poor women and children, the disabled, elderly and working-class people through their volunteerism and community engagement in church, charity organisations and other NGOs.
 - Amy Bailey of Jamaica was invested in strengthening women's earning power and self-reliance and in the 1940s, opened a training centre to impart essential skills to underprivileged girls. In Trinidad and Tobago, Audrey Jeffers established the Coterie of Social Workers to support the poor and empower women and later her passion for serving people saw her make her way into politics, and eventually become the first woman elected to the Port of Spain City Council in the 1930s.
- Several women – concerned with the equal rights of people to decent work, living wages, safe and healthy working conditions – joined trade unions and were active in labour movements.
 - Elma Francois, a St. Vincentian-born woman who migrated to Trinidad and Tobago, co-founded an association which organised hunger marches for sugar workers' rights and was committed to the economic empowerment of African people as well as other people of colour in the country. Trailblazing women like Francois set an example for future women activists and trade unionists to similarly stand up for workers' rights. For example, Clotil Walcott of Trinidad and Tobago, co-founded the National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE) and advocated for the rights of domestic workers in the 1960s and 70s when she became aware that they were not recognised or protected by the existing labour laws in the country.

- The 1950s ushered in universal adult suffrage for most Caribbean countries and in the 1960s many of them gained Independence from colonial clutches. While women did not assume governing positions until several decades after the Independence of nations, women were politically conscious and involved in the Black Power movement and Independence movements in the Caribbean. By the 1960s, women's presence as political activists was more recognized.
 - Guyanese political activist, Christina Ramjattan narrowly escaped racial violence between warring political groups, and in 1965 became a senator within the sitting administration at the time. She was the first woman in Guyana to hold that post.
- The 1970s and 1980s was a pivotal period for gender equality across the globe, not least because 1975 to 1985 was designated as the UN decade for women – the first UN decade that focused on women's economic and political wellbeing. It was a significant time of growth for women's leadership in the Caribbean and global South and it saw the expansion of more structured, politicised women's organisations led by groups of dynamic women. NGOs focused on women's rights and empowerment and crisis centres and shelters for survivors of domestic violence were established across the region in the 1980s.
 - Red Thread Women in Guyana was founded by feminist leader, Andaiye, as an effort to offer greater opportunities for working-class women in Guyana. Women scholar-activists like Dr. Peggy Antrobus, Prof. Rhoda Reddock, Dr. Rawwida Baksh and Joan French formed an NGO called Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action which today still serves as an umbrella organisation for a network of women across the region to work collaboratively on advancing research and advocacy on key areas.
- The major milestone for gender equality and women's leadership in the 1990s was the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women and the resultant Beijing Platform for Action which, among other things, called on all state and non-state actors to increase women's participation in public leadership through gender mainstreaming. The UN Women (then UNIFEM) Caribbean Office put forth the idea of engendering a different kind of leadership in the region that would position women as agents of change in every sphere and level of society. The assumption underlying these discussions was that if more women were involved in high-level decision-making, in particular in politics, States would be governed more fairly and efficiently, and make better progress towards achieving the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action.
 - Caribbean women's contribution to the Beijing conference included articulation of the need to recognise and value women's contribution to social production and reproduction. They advocated for the inclusion of unwaged labour in the calculation of the GDP of national economies and presented the advocacy measures and outcomes adopted in Trinidad and Tobago as best practices to recognise care labour as productive work.

- The latter decades of the 20th century that followed the First World Conference on Women brought with an upsurge in the number of women taking up positions of influence within the State, academic institutions, politics, and intergovernmental systems. Many of these women both implicitly and explicitly took a human rights or feminist approach to their roles and, in doing so, were able to advocate for social change on several fronts, which resulted in a spate of social legislation that was favourable to women and children.
 - This included the introduction of maternity leave laws, equal pay for women and men, equal recognition of the rights of children to inherit their parents' property regardless of whether they were born in or outside of wedlock, legislation aimed at reducing domestic violence, and increased access to education, health, and waged work, which all contributed to increasing women's autonomy during this period.

21ST CENTURY

- The impacts of women's leadership in previous decades have paved the way for more women to break through into leadership positions in the previously male-dominated domains of politics and public office. According to the IPU's Women in Parliament report, women's participation in parliament has increased. Technological advancements have expanded our ways of communicating, organizing, and mobilizing, and enabled new regional and transnational activism.
 - Today, Caribbean feminist discourse and activism have expanded to address continuing and emerging issues affecting women and girls. These areas include sexual and reproductive health and rights, LGBTQI+ rights, gender equality in paid and unpaid care work, and gender-responsive approaches to climate change, and innovation and technology.

REFLECTION PROMPTS

- ✓ How have women leaders before you shaped the Caribbean society you live in and some of the freedoms you enjoy today?
- ✓ Which woman leaders from the Caribbean have most inspired you on your leadership journey? Why?

BECOMING A TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADER



By the most basic definition, leaders are persons with a level of power and influence to make decisions on behalf of others. They are people with some authority in a given context who take a plan of action to produce an intended set of outcomes. Throughout most of history, leadership has been predominantly associated with stereotypically masculine qualities which are given higher status than typically feminine qualities.

Society has tended to have specific expectations of women leaders based on assumed characteristics associated with their gender and process of socialisation. Women leaders are often assumed to be more process-oriented, caring, nurturing and

more likely to make sacrifices in favour of the wellbeing of their family, community and wider society. Indeed, in the preceding section, we learnt about the history and impact of women’s leadership on advancing gender equality and human rights, and on driving the development of their communities and countries. However, there are important distinctions that must be noted. The mere fact alone that a leader is a woman does not provide any indication of the nature, motivations, principles, purpose and content of the leadership. While it is critical that more women are leaders in politics, public life and civil society, this alone does not ensure transformational leadership will be practised in those spaces. The leaders mentioned earlier in this toolkit had a just cause and took human-rights based approaches to their work, and that is what made them transformational in their impact – not that they were women. So what then does transformational leadership really mean?



DEFINING FEMINIST TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The concept of transformational leadership has existed since the 1970s and was first outlined by American historian and political scientist, James McGregor Burns,⁷ as an approach to leadership that countervailed the transactional style of leadership that was predominant at the time.

7. James MacGregor Burns, “Leadership” (1978).

Transformational leaders were thus seen as visionary, innovative and masterful communicators, who are able to define complex ideas and concepts. They were interested in not just meeting basic needs of those they serve, but also satisfying higher level needs of people.

This understanding of transformational leadership has since been widely used in management studies and research and adopted in the corporate world. Qualities such as selflessness, patience, sensitivity, sincerity, nurturing, and trustworthiness are becoming more recognised as valuable qualities in the public sphere. Leaders who deploy these qualities in their roles are sometimes described as practising a 'feminine style' of leadership as well as 'transformational leadership.' While there are areas of overlap between the two, these terms are not equivalent or interchangeable within a feminist context.

While early concepts of transformational leadership refer to the capacity to produce change, transformational leadership within the context of women's rights and gender equality is specifically about change in a particular direction. It is not a management trick, tactic, style or technique, but an approach to leadership that is informed by a feminist consciousness – by an awareness of sexism and other related and intersecting systems of inequality – and a desire to take action for change.

Let's consider a few definitions of transformational leadership from a feminist perspective:

“

Transformative leadership is leadership for sustainable change and **addresses the root causes of inequalities**. It is deeply intertwined with feminist leadership and **intersectionality**, and these combined, aim to **challenge and shift power to dismantle systems of inequality and oppression** holistically. A transformative design is complex, and it considers different dimensions. Societal transformation is built on institutional and organisational transformation, which is built on relational transformation, which is built on individual transformation. A transformative design hence addresses all these different dimensions for change.”

- From the Young Feminist Manifesto developed by young people who took part in the 2021 Generation Equality Forum (GEF)

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Transformational leadership is a visionary process that starts at the level of individual transformation and transcends the personal to express itself at the group and institutional levels. This process leads to the **redefinition of gender and power relations** and the strengthening of leadership that is bold and innovative and builds on the skills of women and men in society. Transformational leadership is grounded in the principles and values of **equity, equality, democracy, justice, caring and non-violence and cooperation**.

- UN Women Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean (previously UNIFEM), 2000.

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Transformational leadership is leadership concerned with causing social change; feminist transformational leadership is concerned with achieving gender justice. For any kind of feminist transformational leadership, leaders need to undergo a process of personal transformation, consciousness-raising, and internalization of feminism.

Dr. Peggy Antrobus in her article, 'Transformational leadership: advancing the agenda for gender justice', in *Gender and Development* 8(3)

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CORE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

There are common core values or principles that are the driving forces of transformational leadership and should be prioritised by anyone working on building their transformational leadership capacities. While these are familiar words that are ubiquitous in activism, politics, and public life, let us not take for granted the full meanings and implications of these values for leadership.

As you read, we encourage you to pause for a few moments to consider what they represent for you, your thoughts and experiences around them, and to what extent you may already be integrating (implicitly or explicitly) these values in your life. Also remember that we cannot only consider these values when we put on our leadership hats. The potency of these values is manifested when we truly appreciate and adopt these values as our own and practise them consistently in both our personal and professional lives.

EQUITY/EQUALITY: All people, regardless of differences, have the same status, rights, and opportunities. It takes into account that there are some populations that have been historically underserved, underrepresented, or socially disadvantaged, and thus require redistributive action to ensure equality of outcomes.

DEMOCRACY: A form of governance with power vested in the will of the people, and which provides an environment that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms. This principle promotes responsibility, accountability and transparency in leadership and governance and inhibits corruption.

JUSTICE: The condition where each person receives their due in accordance with human rights standards and principles of equity and fairness.

CARING: Encompasses kindness, compassion, and concern felt or demonstrated in support of others, ourselves, or the earth. It can emerge from a place of empathy or emotional and spiritual intelligence.

NON-VIOLENCE: The principle and practice of not causing harm and instead favouring peaceful means in the work towards bringing about social and political change.

COOPERATION: Working with others towards shared goals, in a manner that seeks to optimise the strengths of each person at the table and value each person's contributions equally. It prioritises consensus-building, collective decision-making and working in solidarity with other women and feminists over individualism and individual interests. It involves encouraging engagements among women and feminists who are working from different positions or standpoints, but who are committed to the same goals of transforming unequal power relations.

INCLUSIVITY: Recognising the marginalisation and exclusion of some groups of people, seeking to understand their perspectives, and taking action to ensure that they are equally included, and feel safe, seen, heard, respected, and valued.



QUALITIES

Not only do transformational leaders hold steadfast to the above-mentioned core values in pursuit of the stated intended outcomes, but they are also often distinguishable by the following characteristics. They:

- **Work with or towards a vision of a just, democratic, equitable society:** Transformational leaders have a vision of new practices and processes to be put in place to transform power relations, especially gendered power relations.
- **Have a passion for justice:** A sense of fairness and justice is a core quality that drives and mobilises action. Our human rights and gender equality legal and policy frameworks, as well as our own feminist agendas, provide us with a picture of what a just society should look like for people as well as social justice as it concerns issues such as reproductive health, climate and the environment. Feminist transformational leaders are able to identify the gaps between our current status and are driven by a passion for justice to close those gaps.
- **Are conscious of the inequalities experienced by women:** Being informed, knowledgeable and up-to-date on key issues in gender equality is vital to effective, evidence-based advocacy.
- **Model the behaviour they desire from others:** Transformational leaders continually evaluate their behaviour and actions against the principles and values of justice and democracy.
- **Challenge the status quo:** Transformational leaders are not just concerned with performing their expected job duties satisfactorily, nor are they content with merely improving their efficiency in the delivery of those duties. They are interested in altogether positively transforming the nature and content of what is delivered, with a view to creating more just and equitable outcomes.
- **Deconstruct gender hierarchies:** Understanding the nature and role of patriarchal ideology, how it permeates all aspects of society and reproduce gender hierarchies, are essential precursors to redressing gender inequalities. Transformational leaders engage gendered relations of power and promote practices that challenge gender inequities.
- **Take risks:** Despite the threat of losing power, transformational leaders take the risks involved with challenging the status quo despite the threat of losing power. Transformational leaders are committed to creating changes that radically alter existing practices and processes, and introduce new strategies and outcomes at the local, national, regional and global levels.
- **Act in the interest of the collective, especially the most marginalised:** A commitment to transformational leadership means making ongoing attempts to end non-democratic, exclusionary practices in everyday life and transforming institutional structures to better serve the disenfranchised.
- **Are guided by compassion:** Compassionate authority⁸ facilitates leadership with authority that can be exercised with justice, cooperation and without domination.

8. The concept of compassionate leadership was first coined and theorized by Kathleen B. Jones, Kathleen B. Jones, professor emerita of women's studies at San Diego State University.

OUTCOMES

While the details of a transformational leader's envisioned outcomes will vary according to their specific context, the nature of those outcomes are fundamentally the same because they are guided by the core principles and values of feminist transformational leadership – equity/equality, democracy, justice, caring, non-violence, cooperation and inclusivity. While these values can be seen as elusive or difficult-to-attain ideals, they remain very necessary ones that transformational leaders must continue to apply in the pursuit of their intended outcomes.



The intended outcomes of a transformational leader are their **social change goals** that stem from their broader **vision of the kind of world they wish to create** and their **purpose or just cause** – the reason they are doing what they are doing. Transformational leaders are thus not satisfied with reactive, temporary, or ad hoc solutions, but are interested in looking at the 'big picture' and addressing issues in ways that get to the root causes. **A feminist vision for a better social order seeks to transform unequal relations of power** – sexism, racism, classism, ableism – with the understanding that these axes of oppression are often intersecting. This often means seeking to produce outcomes that involve major shifts or reorientations in political and economic systems, governance approaches, and social and cultural norms. Such outcomes can involve:

Redefining gender and power relations: Society is currently socially structured in such a way that privileges men, masculinity and the traditionally male perspective. This gender hierarchy creates a systemic power imbalance and inequality between the sexes and drives women's subordination. This unequal system based on gender is referred to as the patriarchy. Transformational leaders must address the issue of patriarchy.

Gender justice: Grenadian-born Caribbean feminist scholar, Professor Eudine Barriteau cites a set of conditions to describe gender justice, including equal opportunities by women, men, boys and girls to access and control of society's resources.⁹ This condition recognises that a gender just society is one where gender equality is not merely an ideal or objective but a material state that is lived, experienced and evidenced by the removal of barriers to women's economic autonomy and empowerment. Another condition of gender justice mentioned by Professor Barriteau is that masculinity and femininity are ascribed equal status. In other words, the transforming of underlying social and cultural biases that privilege the masculine over the feminine.

Empowerment of women and girls: The empowerment of women and girls refers to improvement of their political, social, economic status, health and wellbeing, through having the freedoms and opportunities to exercise their human and civil rights and make autonomous decisions about issues which affect their lives.

9. See, for example, Barriteau, V. E. Confronting Power and Politics: A Feminist Theorizing of Gender in Commonwealth Caribbean Societies. *Meridians* (2003), 3 (2): 57–92. <https://doi.org/10.1215/15366936-3.2.57>. or Barriteau, V.E. 30 Years Towards Equality: How Many More? The Mandate of the Bureau of Gender Affairs in Promoting Gender Justice in the Barbadian State. *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies* (2007), 1. https://sta.uwi.edu/crgs/april2007/journals/Eudine_Barriteau_Gender_Justice.pdf

A TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADER'S RELATIONSHIP TO POWER

In traditional conceptions of leadership, authority, legitimacy and power are central. Western political philosophers theorised authority as masculinist, hierarchical and insular. This traditional conceptualisation of authority is rooted in patriarchal systems and is one of the reasons exercising authority and power has been problematic for women. Authority was constructed as authority over women. Thus, women originally only experienced authority as objects of its practice and were not allowed to fully participate as citizens in civic life. On the other hand, a transformational leadership approach expunges the traditional understanding of women as only subjects of authority and power.

As growing leaders of the school of thought of transformational leadership, it is our onus to continually reflect on and be aware of power structures and dynamics – where power exists, how it is used, for what purposes and who benefits. The proximity of women to power can be uncomfortable for both men and women. Women leaders in state and civic life themselves tend to be quick to dismiss or minimise the power they hold. This is often the result of the history of women's disempowerment and exclusion from leadership, the long-held view of 'power' as a male preoccupation and its association with violence, danger and corruption. However, what women leaders should understand is that the exercise of power and authority forms the nucleus of leadership, and in the right hands (or heart) it can be creative and life-affirming. It is up to transformational leaders to separate authority from authoritarianism and redefine power and authority to match the ethics and outcomes of transformational leadership. Power is not an inherently negative thing. It is up to transformational leaders to separate and redefine power and authority to match the ethics and outcomes of transformational leadership. Thus, as part of this reflective process on power, it is paramount that we first come to an awareness of what our sources of power are and how we are using our power.



Sources of power – personal, legitimate, expert: Feminist transformational leaders usually locate their power in three sources – from their self-assuredness (personal power within), their roles in their formal professional occupation or their advocacy work (legitimate power) and their awareness, insight and knowledge on various subjects, issues or populations (expert power). They remain true to their feminist values and principles of caring and non-violence in the practice of their power to ensure they do not abuse or push the boundaries of their legitimate or expert power.

Modes of deploying power – power-sharing: Feminist transformational leaders deploy power in ways that are consistent with feminist values and principles of democracy, cooperation and inclusivity. They employ governance styles and decision-making processes that are characteristic of a ‘power with’ approach which is consultative, relational and horizontal, rather than a ‘power over’ approach which is top-down, autocratic, uses a ‘command and control’ style and may rely on tactics of coercion, deceit and manipulation. Women leaders in male-dominated spaces can feel constrained by patriarchal structures which tokenise them and retain ‘power over’ ways of doing things. In such cases, women leaders must remember that feminist outcomes cannot genuinely be achieved through non-feminist, power-over approaches. They must find ways to challenge the status quo within their immediate spaces through mechanisms like coalitions, caucuses and allyship and by asserting their own power to change things.¹⁰ There is also the possibility of power under where marginalised groups with little visible or direct power rise up to challenge oppressive, unequal power structures.



10. This framework is based on Professor Eudine Barriteau's typology of power as well as Dr. Peggy Antrobus' conceptualization of power over, with and within.

TRANSFORMATION AT THE INDIVIDUAL AND INSTITUTIONAL LEVELS

THE INDIVIDUAL/PERSONAL LEVEL OF TRANSFORMATION

Being a transformational leader is not some fixed, enlightened state that you immediately attain after attending a course or workshop. Rather, it is a process that begins with reflective, evaluative dialogue within oneself. Becoming a transformational leader involves experiencing a paradigm shift at the personal level that manifests in self-confidence and identification with the values and principles of leadership. It then involves taking responsibility for the existing reality, forming a vision of the world you want to see, and a mission for effecting change at the personal, community and society levels.

One of the very first steps in this process of continuous critical reflection and renewal, should be to unpack your sense of personal power and strengthen your power within. Your internal feelings of self influence your practices of power. You cannot share power unless you yourself feel empowered and believe that everyone has their own power.

REFLECTION PROMPTS/ TAKE ACTION

Strengthen your Power Within/ Personal Power

- ✓ Take a look back at your life as far into the past as you can remember. When was the first time ever that you became aware of power between people – that some people have more power than others. What was the scenario and who were the people involved? What is your earliest or most pivotal experience of feeling powerless? How did you feel/react and who held the power in that situation? When and how did you first become aware of your own power?
- ✓ How powerful or powerless do you feel today? Do you have innate self-assurance, confidence and inner security or is your personal power mostly situational? Locate yourself within relationships, organisations and social, political and economic structures. Do so with a view to understanding your challenges but also, importantly, to recognising, claiming (or reclaiming) and defining your personal power.
- ✓ How do your personal historical experiences with power and powerlessness affect your personal power or power within today?
- ✓ Take some time to develop your self-awareness of the factors influencing your personal power. Young people can come into consciousness of their intrinsic 'power within' progressively over time through introspection, spiritual practice or other avenues which help them to recognise their own value and self-worth as a human (and as a woman), to build their confidence and autonomy, and find their voice.

THE GROUP/ORGANISATIONAL AND SOCIETAL LEVELS OF TRANSFORMATION

While transformational leaders in public life are the most visible and easily recognised for their leadership, they only arrive at this place and have the capacity to lead transformatively in broader society after having underwent their own process of personal transformation and after implementing change within their organisations. Pay attention to, reflect on, and monitor how authority and power are exercised across the processes and structures of your own organisation. Consider what the mechanisms or internal processes are that can facilitate feedback, consensus-building and reflection on the organisation's activities and output. You have the power to alter the conventional practices and experiences of authority and power in the spaces where you live, work and recreate.

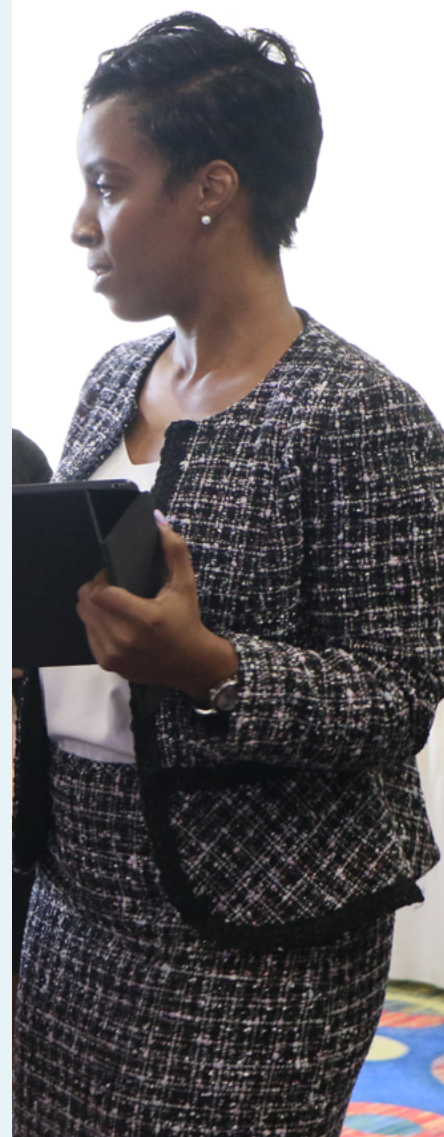
REFLECTION PROMPTS

In your ideal group/organisation ...

- ✓ How do people working there relate to and treat one another?
- ✓ What are the qualities and behaviours of persons in leadership positions?

How is power actually deployed in your group/organisation and community?

- ✓ How do people across various job descriptions in your organisation relate to one another? What are the organisational values and are they being put into practice at an interpersonal level?
- ✓ Do you ever use 'power over' when working with your internal groups/organisation or in the communities you serve?
- ✓ How do you use your expert power when engaging different stakeholders in the course of your advocacy? For example, how does your expert power come to bear when you are engaging government officials, allies, oppositional forces against gender equality, and the communities you serve? Do you assert your expertise differently in various scenarios?
- ✓ Are there forms of hidden and/or invisible power that are operating in your organisation? (i.e., ways in which indirect power is being exercised)
- ✓ How have these dynamics affected you? (have they benefitted you, made you feel empowered or disempowered?)



TRANSFORMATIONAL CARIBBEAN WOMEN LEADERS

In 1995 UNIFEM commissioned CGDS, Cave Hill to undertake an exploratory study of the experiences and ideas of four women, Dame Nita Barrow, Dr. Peggy Antrobus, Nesta Patrick, Magda Pollard, officially recognised by CARICOM as exceptional leaders in the Caribbean.⁹ CARICOM had recognised their public leadership roles by conferring the Triennial Award for Women. These transformational women leaders were considered as such for embodying, exercising and engendering many of the values/principles, qualities and outcomes described above. They used their power to develop and pioneer progressive policies, programmes, practices with transformative outcomes that included enhancing the quality of life and wellbeing for women, children and men, increasing women's autonomy, and preventing violence against women.



Lessons from the lives of 4 Caribbean women transformational women leaders

Dame Nita Barrow, Dr. Peggy Antrobus, Nesta Patrick and Magda Pollard

Transformational leadership involves:

- ✓ Having a clear vision in the conceptualisation and delivery of outputs.
- ✓ Setting achievable goals.
- ✓ Learning from difficult situations and conflict.
- ✓ Dedication to advancing women's equality and women's full and equal participation in decision-making.
- ✓ Having a curiosity and willingness to challenge the status quo.
- ✓ Developing Caribbean knowledge, methods, strategies and practices.
- ✓ Decisiveness and consensus-building in decision-making.
- ✓ Acceptance of the power (legitimate, expert) one holds in various roles and embracing the idea of being powerful. Feminist transformational leaders are not afraid of acquiring power because they are self-assured and know how to use it for the greater good.
- ✓ Developing one's personal power – power within through self-reflection, inner work, continuous development and commitment to a feminist ethic.

9. Professor Eudine Barriteau later analysed interviews that were conducted with these four women in an endeavour to map out what made these women 'transformational leaders.' Her findings and theories can be found in her paper, *Constructing a Conceptual Framework for Developing Women's Transformational Leadership in the Caribbean*, in *Social and Economic Studies* 52:4 (2003).

- **Dame Nita Barrow** sometimes took unpopular measures that transformed the operations and image of the World YWCA. Her actions were driven by mission, values, strategic goals rather than subjective biases. She is known for pioneering, institutionalising and streamlining advanced nursing education across the Caribbean.
- **Dr. Peggy Antrobus** created community development programmes focused on women's lives and established the programming of the Women and Development Unit (WAND) UWI.
- **Nesta Patrick** pioneered programmes for the mentally handicapped as well as public education programmes on mental health.
- **Magda Pollard** established programmes at the Women's Desk within the CARICOM Secretariat, conducted an assessment of discrimination against women in CARICOM legislation, and developed new curricula focussed on girls' education which would later form the basis of a policy by the Guyana Ministry of Education.

The feminists and transformational women leaders mentioned in this publication are but a few of the women across the Caribbean who can be deemed transformational leaders. You can continue to research the lives and impact of these women as well as that of transformational women leaders such as Andaiye, Anne and Marcella Liburd, Prof. Barbara Bailey, Dame Billie Miller, Carla Bakboord, Dr. Carla Barnett, Cristina and Monica Coc, Dr. Erna Brodber, Dr. Gabrielle Hosein, Gema Ramkeesoon, Dr. Halimah Deshong, Gertrude Protain, Gwendolyn Lizarraga, Hazel Brown, Dr. Hilda Rosemarie Husbands-Mathurin, Ione Erlinger-Ford, Dame Janet Bostwick, Jean La Rose, Linnette Vassell, Dame Maizie Barker-Welch, Marion Bethel, Mia Mottley, Prof. Paloma Mohamed-Martin, Prof. Patricia Mohammed, Rene Baptiste, Dr. Rosina Wiltshire, Dr. Sandra Patterson, Sheila Roseau, Shirley Price, and Tina Alexander.

Young women have also increasingly stepped up to the plate and proven themselves to be growing transformational leaders. From across the globe, we may be familiar with names like Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg, but some lesser-known women who continue to work towards social change include climate activists such as American Ugandan, Vanessa Nakate and Bolivian Paola Flores Carvajal. From the Caribbean, some of the young women whose approaches to advocacy align with that of a transformational leader are Ashlee Burnett, Ayesha Constable, Chelsea Foster, Christine Samwaroo, Lakeyia Joseph, and Sapphire Alexander.

REFLECTION PROMPTS

- ✓ What other women leaders, including young women leaders (not mentioned in this publication), would you consider to be a transformational leader? (think of someone from public life as well as someone from your personal life experience)
- ✓ How would you describe them? What are their values, qualities and impact? How do they use their power?

This tool, *“Learning to Lead: Laying the Foundations for Transformational Leadership”* was one module of the toolkit, *“YOUth Lead: A Toolkit for Transformational Leadership to Support Gender Equality.”*

Find the other modules here:

- [Leading by Doing: Taking up Space and Driving Change](#)
- [Gender Equality 101: Unpacking Key Concepts and Issues](#)
- [Being Your Best Self: Protecting your Mental Wealth](#)

