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内容概要

Insightful and inspiring, *Closing the Leadership Gap* is a call to action for the increased presence of women in powerful leadership positions in our country. A leading women's advocate and cofounder of the White House Project, Marie C. Wilson argues that while our nation sits on a world spinning with crises from terrorism and weapons of mass destruction to a fragile economy and corporate greed, half of its natural resources—women—have not been tapped for their uniquely valuable contribution to solving these problems that only they can provide.

Rich with historical context and supported by a wealth of current data and innovative research, this book explains chapter by chapter the leadership gap between women and men and the deeply ingrained cultural factors that continue to create resistance to women at the top. It also explores the new insights and strategies women are using to leverage their power of authority, ambition, ability, and authenticity—have been denied women and how they are claiming these vital qualities for themselves. Written with passion and documented with lively behind-the-scenes stories from the trenches, *Closing the Leadership Gap* argues for women's leadership in all spheres and offers steps to get us there.

Ms. Foundation President Marie Wilson is looking for some good women and men to become "post heroic" leaders. In *Closing the Leadership Gap*, Wilson focuses on the virtues of sharing power by skewering culture bound male leadership styles and celebrating the arguable premise that women use a similar "recipe" of leadership values such as inclusion and cooperation.

As co-founder of the White House project on women's leadership, Wilson is passionate in her belief that women's voices at the table offer an opportunity to shape policy around the marginalized issues of violence, education and healthcare. Making room for women at the top also gives men permission to bring their soft side to work." As she explains, "Both men and women must be in power to moderate the influence of masculinity in all of us." Such polemic does not prevent Wilson from making a persuasive case for role expansion rather than role reversal. Her practical approach to developing women as leaders is two pronged. First, individual women must confront four "Scarlett A's" (authority, ambition, ability, authenticity) that create barriers to leadership. Then, she describes the cultural and institutional changes that would involve men and women in sharing domestic leadership.

Her examples are fascinating and eclectic--including anecdotes about A-list leaders such as Hilary Clinton and Paramount Chair Sherry Lansing; research about hairstyles, husbands, and hemlines of female candidates; and tales from her election to the Des Moines City Council. Wilson puts on gender glasses to examine the "celluloid ceiling" in Hollywood. In all of her examples, the goal is nothing less than changing expectations of both sexes. Even those readers who may not agree that women share similar--even superior--leadership values, will applaud her goal: The opportunity for women and men to integrate the satisfactions of leadership and family life.

--Barbara Mackoff

Women comprise half of the U.S. population and workforce, yet they hold only 14% of seats in the U.S. Congress and 12.4% of Fortune 500 board positions. More embarrassingly, the United States ranks 60th in women's participation in government, behind India and tied with Andorra. Wilson, president of the Ms. Foundation for Women and founder of the "Take Our Daughters to Work" day, argues that the future could be a brighter place for all by "changing society from a system built on the labor of women to one led equally by their vision." To do this requires nothing short of a cultural revolution, according to the former beauty queen, mother of five and corporate culture pioneer. With so-called women's issues like health, education and senior care at the forefront of everyone's agenda, women more than ever have a substantial contribution to make in shaping government policy and leading in both the workplace and home. Infusing the workplace with women's values-"inclusion, communication across lines of authority, the work of caring, relationship building"-would integrate professional and personal life for everyone's benefit, Wilson argues. She points to progressive law firms that allow law partnerships for part-time lawyers, hold working-parent lunches and offer gender-neutral flex-time, as examples of creating win-win workplaces for both men and women. She also advocates unorthodox measures, like President Barbie, to set

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ambitious role models for girls. Although sometimes prone to over-generalize female values, this is a persuasive and logical text that is less about women running the world than allowing them to have a meaningful role in its custody. This is a polemic on women's issues, but a polemic communicated with passion. Ever since the appearance of Bella Abzug and Gloria Steinem, the media and business have been filled with break-the-glass-ceiling cries. Unfortunately, those demands are still not met, as Wilson, president of the White House Project and the Ms. Foundation for Women, so eloquently points out. She discusses five characteristics (authority, ambition, ability, authenticity, and culture); compares male and female versions; then selects a few role models to define the next generation. How to begin? Texas law firm Vinson & Elkins began its transformation by picturing some of its major clients: executive women. Old and new change agents such as Eleanor Roosevelt and Hilary Rodham Clinton are liberally quoted and advice is given, from specific leadership-promoting films (e.g., *Whale Rider*, *Real Women Have Curves*) to interviews about obstacles and solutions. A thoughtful compilation with some not-so-specific guidelines for change.

Barbara Jacobs

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