



THE TOP 10 MYTHS

ABOUT WOMEN : & THE HEROES
: WHO BUST THEM

**REALITY
CHECK** on the 100th ANNIVERSARY of
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



During the first modern Olympics, held in Athens in 1896, a woman ran the marathon course but wasn't allowed into the stadium for the final lap. She was the only runner to circle Panathinaiko Stadium — from the outside. Her nickname became "Melpomene," the Greek muse of Tragedy. And her barrier had Greek roots, too.

Melpomene had run headlong into a myth.

"Women can't do sports." "Women are frail." "Women aren't as smart as men." The myths about girls and women are too numerous to list. Together they begin to look like bars on the stadium gates. Unfortunately, generations of Melpomenes have known the pain of gender barring full participation.

But what follows in these pages is no Greek Tragedy. On this, the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day, CARE and its partners are celebrating some of the women — and men — who have worked to dispel 10 prominent myths about girls and women. Each piece of female folklore comes with two mythbusters. The first is someone who has knocked giant holes in the myth during the past 100 years and, in some cases, continues doing so today. The second person is in their myth-busting prime and positioned to shoulder the heavy demolition work moving into the future.

Busting myths isn't some meaningless exercise. In many places around the world, myths hold back half of society. Myths yank girls out of school. Myths cause hunger. Myths mean women don't get the health care they need. Myths kill.

That's what makes mythbusters heroes and heroines in my book. They share much with our marathoner Melpomene, who didn't give up in the face of resistance. Because she kept running that day in Athens — making a point of completing that final lap — no one could honestly say women can't run marathons.

The beginnings of a day to recognize such achievements came 15 years later. On March 19, 1911, the world marked the first International Women's Day. And it's no surprise that the celebration grew not out of an individual endeavor such as marathon running but rather a place where large groups of women worked together: the labor movement. In countries such as Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, more than one million women and men attended rallies spearheaded by labor leaders demanding greater equality. They wanted women to have the right to vote, to hold public office and to work without discrimination. The celebration itself was a myth-busting endeavor. It put a long, sharp needle to the inflated notion that women couldn't organize or lead a movement.

Two years later, International Women's Day moved to its current date, March 8. Over the years, its meaning has changed, too. Now people around the world take this day to recognize both the accomplishments of women and the challenges that remain. In that spirit, at the end of this list, we have outlined ways you can help today's mythbusters and join the global movement to empower girls and women to create worldwide change.

One last important point about these myths: they're not a laundry list of victories in some battle of women versus men. Consider that Marie Curie shared her first Nobel Prize with her husband who worked alongside her in France; Emmeline Pankhurst's husband was an important part of the fight for women's rights in the United Kingdom; and King Amanullah Khan of Afghanistan opened Afghanistan's first high school for girls with the help of his wife, Queen Soraya.

Often progress comes not from women alone, or from men, but from the two joining hands together. Don't get me wrong. The road has never been easy. The pursuit of gender equality does feel at times like a marathon.

But at least today, women and girls have made it into the stadium with men and boys. As you read through the following pages, please stand with me. Let's cheer on a few.

Helene D. Gayle, MD, MPH
President and CEO, CARE

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“A WOMAN’S PLACE IS IN THE HOME”

MYTHBUSTER

LOOKING BACK

Clara Lemlich Shavelson Ukraine & the United States



Clara Lemlich had grown tired of wish-washy speeches as she and other garment factory workers crammed inside a windowless auditorium in New York’s Cooper Union in November of 1909. The topic: unsafe working conditions and low pay. The 23-year-old, Yiddish-speaking immigrant from Ukraine strode down the aisle, interrupted the proceedings and demanded to be heard. “I have listened to all the speakers. I would not have further patience for talk,” Lemlich said. “... I move that we go on a general strike!”¹

It was a pivotal moment for a firebrand labor organizer who would blaze new trails for women in the workplace, help inspire International Women’s Day and grow into a celebrated figure in the U.S. women’s suffrage movement. Lemlich knew that women had so much to offer society — outside their homes.

Lemlich launched the “Uprising of 20,000,” one of the largest strikes by a female workforce in American history. It led to a successful

settlement, changing attitudes about women in the labor movement and improving conditions in much of the garment industry. Tragically, a March 1911 fire at a factory whose owners refused to sign the settlement killed more than 100 workers, most of them young women trapped behind locked doors.² In the mind of Lemlich and others, the fire underscored the need for women to have a louder voice not just inside factories but outside them too.

Resistance to the incipient women’s movement was great, however. Just a few years earlier, in 1905, U.S. President Grover Cleveland had said, “The relative positions to be assumed by man and woman in the working out of our civilization were assigned long ago, by a higher intelligence than ours.”

Cleveland hadn’t counted on women such as Lemlich, who refused to accept assigned positions and, instead, carved out new ones of their own.

“They used to say you couldn’t even organize women. They wouldn’t come to union meetings. They were ‘temporary workers.’ Well, we showed them!”³

REALITY CHECK

Women do two-thirds of the work globally, according to the United Nations.⁴ In the U.S., women now account for nearly half the labor force.⁵

MYTHBUSTER

LOOKING FORWARD

Anasuyamma Ianusuya India



Anasuyamma Ianusuya’s husband doused her with kerosene, lit a match and held it close. She had drawn his wrath for refusing to accept a dowry for their daughter. Now, faced with death, Ianusuya refused to relent. No dowry, she said.

Ianusuya ran and sought shelter from a women’s group in Dharmajipet, a rural village in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. Accepting 10,000 rupees for her daughter, she said, would reinforce the very mindset that had led her husband to believe he had the right to abuse her for disobeying him. “Dowries degrade women,” she said.

Ianusuya’s group was small but determined. Together the dozen women confronted Ianusuya’s husband and the family that wanted to pay a dowry for her daughter, scuttling the plan for the time being. Then they joined a microfinance program, took out loans and purchased several cows. Milk sales soon had them turning a profit. They were united in the belief that women had much to offer — outside the home.

Banding together with other women’s groups in 20 nearby villages, they formed a wider federation. Ianusuya was elected president. Under her leadership, the federation launched a soap-making business. Before long, “Uttam” brand soap was the most popular in their community. By 2008, the Uttam factory had 19 employees producing 3,200 bars per day. Now each woman in Ianusuya’s group makes enough money to send her children — including girls — to school. Recently, one daughter became the first in the village to attend college.

“You can easily break a single matchstick, but not 12 together,” Ianusuya says. “Unity is our strength.”

Recently the women showed their influence is growing in other ways. They successfully pushed for a local ordinance banning alcohol, which they believe fuels violence against women. As for Ianusuya’s daughter, she did get married in the end. Without a dowry.

“We used to depend on our husbands for everything. Now we support our households.”

REALITY CHECK

Knowledge of opportunities for women outside the home can lead to greater investments in girls. When researchers at the National Bureau of Economic Research led a study that actively recruited young women in randomly selected villages to work in India’s flourishing outsourcing industry, they found that young girls in those villages were more likely to be kept in school and have better nutrition.¹



To learn more about Anasuyamma Ianusuya, go to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgZDnV26Skk>

SOURCES: ¹ Shavelson, Clara Lemlich, “Remembering the Waistmakers General Strike, 1909,” *Jewish Currents*, November, 1982. ² Von Drehle, David, “Triangle: The Fire that Changed America,” Thorndyke Press 2003. ³ *Socialist Review*, “Red Letter Days: International Women’s Day,” Issue 239, March 2000. ⁴ “Gender Equality: The Big Picture,” UNICEF. ⁵ U.S. Department of Labor, *Statistics & Data*, 2009. Photo Credit: International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union Archives, Kheel Center, Cornell University.

SOURCES: ¹ Jensen, Robert, National Bureau of Economic Research, “Economic Opportunities and Gender Differences in Human Capital: Experimental Evidence for India,” May, 2010. Photo Credit: Brendan Bannon/CARE.

“GIRLS CAN'T DO MATH OR SCIENCE”

MYTHBUSTER

LOOKING BACK

Marie Curie France & Poland



Marie Curie, the first woman to win a Nobel Prize and the first person to win two, used her award money to replace the faulty plumbing and peeling wallpaper in her Paris home.¹ For Curie, spending money from the world's most laudable prize on the most banal of repairs only reinforced the bittersweet dichotomy of her life. She is arguably the most famous woman scientist in history — but she was also a wife and, later, a cash-strapped single mother struggling to find that elusive work-family balance. “I have frequently been questioned, especially by women, of how I could reconcile family life with a scientific career. Well, it has not been easy.”² But there is no question that her trailblazing work did much to lower one stubborn barrier: the mindset that girls and numbers don't mix.

The daughter of two teachers, Curie was taught to explore and excel, playing with her father's test tubes and crucibles as a child.³ But the untimely deaths of her mother and sister, along with the financial ruin of her family tied to Polish uprisings, drove

her to Paris, where she earned degrees in physics and mathematics at the Sorbonne University. She also met and married Pierre Curie, and the couple collaborated on studies in radiation and radioactivity. The Curies discovered polonium and then radium. In 1903, they received the Nobel Prize for Physics — the same year they lost a child, born prematurely. More heartache followed: in 1906, a carriage ran over Pierre, killing him and leaving Marie with two young daughters. Curie buried her sorrow in her work, exploring the medical uses of radiation in the treatment of cancer and lupus. And in 1911 she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry.

Like many explorers, Curie died because of her journey. She succumbed to pernicious anemia, an effect of her work with radioactivity, in 1934. The library she left behind speaks to a pioneering path that wasn't limited to science. Today Curie's notebooks are still too radioactive to be handled. So, too, are her cookbooks.

“Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that? We must have perseverance and above all confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we are gifted for something ... and this thing must be attained.”

REALITY CHECK

40 women have been awarded the Nobel Prize between 1901 and 2009. They include 16 women in the scientific categories of Physics, Chemistry, Economics and Medicine or Physiology.

MYTHBUSTER

LOOKING FORWARD

Cordelia Fine United Kingdom & Australia



Talking Teen Barbie might have said, “Math class is hard,” but that's coming from a doll with very little brain. What's more disturbing, says Cordelia Fine, an academic psychologist and author of “Delusions of Gender,” are intellectuals who reinforce that same message.¹

The debate about women's brains and their biological proclivities has gone through a revival — bolstered by 21st century imaging and molecular technology. A bevy of new books has hit the market in recent years advocating “hardwired” differences between women and men.

Fine, 35 and the mother of two boys, acknowledges there are differences — male brains tend to be larger, for example. However, she is wary of neuroscientists who seem to be deciding that nature plays a far more important role than nurture in determining a person's interests and aptitudes.

“Avid readers of popular science books and articles about gender may well have formed the impression that science has shown that the path to a male or a female brain is set in

utero, and that these differently structured brains create essentially different minds,” says Fine, a senior research associate at Macquarie University and an honorary research fellow at University of Melbourne. “These cultural lores, which in popular hands can become nothing short of monstrous fiction, are standing in the way of greater sex equality — just as measures of skull volume, brain weight and neuron delicacy did in the past.”²

Fine's own inquisitive nature might be a case in point. She is the daughter of Anne Fine, a former children's laureate in Britain who penned “Madam Doubtfire,” and Kit Fine, a professor of philosophy at New York University specializing in metaphysics, logic and philosophy of language. Discussions around the Fine family dinner table were a lively, intellectual affair, with members pointing to book passages to reinforce their point.

So in the future, when scientists see a certain response in the brain on an MRI, expect Cordelia Fine to be that voice urging them to look not just at the DNA but the dinner table, too.

“If you want the answer to persisting gender inequalities... take a look right over here, please, at this brain scan. If only it were that simple.”³

REALITY CHECK

Data from 1990 to 2005 show that U.S. girls slightly outperform boys in math and science.⁴ By eighth grade, however, girls show less interest and report less confidence in math and science than boys according to a 2010 study from the American Association of University Women.⁵

SOURCES: ¹ The People's Almanac: David Wallechinsky and Irving Wallace, 1975; Doubleday and Company. ² Jone Johnson Lewis, other collaboration. ³ “Mme. Curie is Dead; Martyr to Science,” New York Times, July 5, 1934. ⁴ Manning, “The Society: Race, Gender and Science.” History of Science Society. Photo Credit: © Bettmann/Corbis.

SOURCES: ¹ Hill, Amelia, “Gender Gap A Scientific Myth,” The Guardian, Sept. 10, 2010. ² Freeman-Greene, Suzy, “A Brain Strained by Sexism” The Age, Sept. 25, 2010. ³ Fine, Cordelia, “Delusions of Gender,” W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2010. ⁴ National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2000). Trends in Educational Equity for Girls and Women. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics. ⁵ American Association of University Women (AAUW, 2010). Why so few? Women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Washington, D.C.: American Association of University Women. Photo Credit: © Dean Cambray.

“IT’S A MAN’S WORLD”

MYTHBUSTER

LOOKING BACK

Myriam Merlet Haiti



On the afternoon of Jan. 12, 2010, Myriam Merlet was working on her latest project: a documentary about gender stereotypes in Haiti. She was to host a group of young women she had mentored over the years, ones who could share their experiences and help shape the film.¹

But the gathering never happened. A now-infamous earthquake shattered Haiti’s capital, turning homes to rubble and leveling government buildings, including the Haiti Ministry of Women’s Affairs, where Merlet served as chief of staff from 2006 to 2008. More than 300,000 people died. Tragically, Merlet was among them.

Merlet, who fled Haiti’s turmoil in the 1970s to study in Canada, died in the land that had pulled her back with a sense of purpose. “While I was abroad I felt the need to find out who I was and where my soul was. I chose to be a Haitian woman,” she wrote. “We’re a country in which three-fourths of the people can’t read and don’t eat properly ... I don’t mean to say that I am responsible for the problems. But still, as a Haitian woman, I must make an effort so

that all together we can extricate ourselves from them.”

Merlet founded Enfofam, an organization that raises awareness about the challenges facing women in Haiti. She worked to expose rape as a political weapon, along with fellow activists Magalie Marcelin and Anne Marie Coriolan, who also died in the earthquake. The three women leaders were part of a successful movement to change Haitian laws that treated rape as a “crime of passion.”² When domestic violence cases went to trial, they would lead large groups of women into the courtroom, applying the pressure of a hundred eyes on often-lenient judges.

Merlet also deepened the dictionary of the Haitian streets, translating terms such as “gender-based violence” and “gender-equity” into Creole. So it’s no surprise that, in the hour of her death, Merlet was preparing to give voice to another generation.

The earthquake hit before the young women helping with the documentary could reach her house. They survived. And, in them, so does part of Merlet.

“I look at things through the eyes of women, very conscious of the roles, limitations, and stereotypes imposed on us. The idea is to give women the opportunity to grow so that we may end up more complete human beings who can really change things.”

REALITY CHECK

A recent survey in Brazil, Chile, Croatia, India, Mexico and Rwanda found that both men and women benefit from greater gender equity. Men with gender-equitable attitudes were more likely to be happy, talk to their partners and have better sex lives. Women with partners who participate in daily care work report higher levels of relationship and sexual satisfaction.³

MYTHBUSTER

LOOKING FORWARD

Peninah Nthenya Musyimi Kenya



Peninah Nthenya Musyimi grew up surrounded by prostitution, violence against women and low expectations in the Muthare slums of Nairobi, Kenya. She and her sister used to wonder why the world was so unkind to girls. “We would ask ourselves, ‘Do you think we’ll end up like these women, selling illicit brew, becoming prostitutes to make our life better?’”¹

Instead, Nthenya willed her way into school. “I started primary [school] without a uniform, without shoes, without a school bag, without anything,” she says. But she graduated at the top of her class — all while washing clothes and dishes for neighbors to help her family put food on the table.

Nthenya recalls her father’s harsh reaction to her success and request to continue on with secondary school: “So what? You’re still going to get married and take the ‘wellness’ to the husband.”

With no money, Nthenya went from school to school, pleading her case. She said, “I want to be a lawyer for the slum people because no one takes care of any injustices in the slums. If someone violates you, no one takes care of you.”

Finally, one school gave her a scholarship. The problem: it was nine miles away. “The

ball was on my side now. But what was I to do?” Nthenya wondered. “Well, I have my feet.”

And so she walked.

Nthenya graduated, something no one could remember any girl from the Mathare slums ever doing. But she wasn’t done. Nthenya discovered athletic scholarships were available at a local college. So with her eyes on that law degree, she set out to master another kind of court. “I had to learn basketball within one month,” she says. As usual, Nthenya didn’t just learn — she excelled. By 2000, she made Kenya’s national basketball team.

Today Nthenya has that law degree. She’s the founder of Safe Spaces, a girls’ sports and leadership organization in some of Nairobi’s poorest neighborhoods. The program offers basketball, yoga, dance and artistic expression, giving girls a place to play and move freely — a new feeling for many. They empower each other, building leadership and decision-making skills.

This is your space, Nthenya tells the girls. And this is your world, too.

“Tough times never last but tough people do. I am back again in the slum empowering my fellow girls.”

REALITY CHECK

A 2009 study by the Girl Scout Research Institute found that a strong majority (82% girls, 72% boys) of teens agree that girls and boys are equally good at being leaders.² A separate 2008 study by the institute found that girls prefer a social-change oriented definition of leadership. Many girls emphasize what leadership should be used for, rather than focus on specific roles or positions.³

SOURCES: ¹ Interview with Mildrede Beliard, CARE Haiti media officer, February 2011. ² Ravitz, Jessica, “Women’s movement mourns death of three Haitian leaders,” CNN.com, Jan. 20, 2010. ³ “Evolving Men,” International Men and Gender Equality Survey, 2010. Photo Credit: © Paula Allen/ V-Day.

SOURCES: ¹ “Peninah’s Story,” Women Win, 2010. ² Girl Scout Research Institute (2009): The New Leadership Landscape: What Girls Say About Election 2008. New York: Girl Scouts of the USA. ³ Girl Scout Research Institute (2008). Change it Up: What Girls Say About Redefining Leadership. New York: Girl Scouts of the USA. Photo Credit: Juliette Otieno/CARE.

“WOMEN CRACK UNDER PRESSURE”

MYTHBUSTER

LOOKING BACK

Billie Jean King The United States



“When an oppressed people are given an opportunity, they will make the best of it and you must never, ever, underestimate the human spirit.”

It’s hard to imagine the pressure Billie Jean King felt that day in 1973, as four muscle-bound men in togas carried her atop a gold litter, a la Cleopatra, into the Houston Astrodome. Already established as one of the greatest players in women’s tennis, King was about to play a retired male tennis champion nearly twice her age. Uber-chauvinist Bobby Riggs, who was ushered in on a rickshaw by scantily clad women, had bragged about certain victory and even bet large amounts of money on his sure win.

Before she played Riggs in the notorious 1973 match, King had done much to advance women’s rights, on and off the court. A fireman’s daughter who had won Wimbledon, she chafed at having to moonlight as a playground instructor.¹ She led boycotts of tournaments whose purses for women were a fraction of those for men, even walking off the court with her opponent in one final. She formed a lucrative women’s circuit and became the first female athlete to earn more than \$100,000 in a year. The top prizes for men and women equalized at the 1973 U.S. Open, the same season her crusade carried her into the match with Riggs, billed as the “Battle of the Sexes.”

Riggs had beaten another top-ranked women’s tennis star, Margaret Court, only months earlier. And his rhetoric raised the stakes: “I’ll put Billie Jean King and all the other women’s libbers back where they belong — in the kitchen and the bedroom.”

In the new book “Clutch: Why Some People Excel Under Pressure and Others Don’t,” author Paul Sullivan notes that a loss would have been doubly devastating for King, who just a year earlier had pushed for the passage of Title IX, which requires colleges to fund men’s and women’s sports equally: “If she then went down to Bobby Riggs, as Margaret Court had, the one-two punch would have been disastrous for the equality movement she had associated herself with.”²

But King didn’t choke. Not even close. She won 6-4, 6-3, 6-3. “A straight-sets victory, which more than anything dispelled myths about women as mentally frail under pressure, couldn’t exist as a simple feminist flash,” wrote King biographer Selena Roberts.³ “It had to be a spectacle to be remembered forever ... In front of a worldwide TV audience of 90 million, Billie knew social change needed witnesses to move people.”

REALITY CHECK

The debut of women’s boxing in the 2012 London Olympics may finally close the gender gap on one of the world’s brightest stages. Women are expected to account for roughly half of the 10,500 athletes.⁴ That’s a huge leap from the 1908 London Olympics, when a mere 37 women took part alongside 1,971 men (1.8 percent).⁵

MYTHBUSTER

LOOKING FORWARD

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Liberia



“Every time I got into trouble it became a challenge for me to survive that, and every challenge became an opportunity for me to move higher and to take a better position and to take a leadership role ... that’s been the story of a long life.”

Liberia President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf earned the nickname “Iron Lady” as an opposition leader who didn’t flinch in one of the world’s most treacherous political landscapes. She fearlessly criticized Liberia’s fiscal management, even when that meant house arrest and, in one case, prison.

But Johnson Sirleaf could not be broken. In 2005 the people of Liberia made her Africa’s first elected female head of state. She inherited a country ravaged by civil wars that left 250,000 people dead.

The 71-year-old, Harvard-educated grandmother said she was most concerned with being a “mother” who could heal the nation’s deep wounds. But Johnson Sirleaf — who had held financial positions with the UN, the World Bank and Citibank — also promised to get Liberia’s financial house in order. “We know expectations are going to be high,” she said at the time. “The Liberian people have voted for their confidence in my ability to deliver ... very quickly.”¹

More than five years later, Johnson Sirleaf has increased Liberia’s annual budget from \$80 million in 2006 to \$350 million

and wiped clean a \$4.9 billion debt. Girls’ school enrollment has shot up, as has the proportion of women in legislative seats, making Liberia the 2010 winner of the Millennium Development Goal award for gender equity. In naming Johnson Sirleaf one of the world’s top leaders last year, Newsweek wrote: “The country has boosted school enrollment by 40 percent, restored power and running water to urban centers, and turned its timber and diamond industries into thriving — and legitimate — trades ... Under her leadership, Liberia is a country rebuilt and reborn.”²

Of course it will be the Liberian people who determine whether Johnson Sirleaf wins a second term. Johnson Sirleaf, who promised to tackle corruption, has admitted those reforms have been slower to come. She recently fired her information minister, who was charged with pocketing fake salaries. And she forced out her own brother — the internal-affairs minister — after he was accused of embezzlement.³

Once again, the pressure is on. And so is Africa’s “Iron Lady.”

REALITY CHECK

People who thrive under high-pressure situations share certain qualities and backgrounds — none of which directly relate to gender. Psychologists suggest that how an individual functions under stress can be attributed to a mix of genetics, personality and upbringing. Some people dive deeper into their work when things get challenging rather than crumbling under the added strain.⁴

SOURCES: ¹ “Billie Jean won for all women,” Larry Schwartz, undated archives, ESPN.com. ² Sullivan, Paul, “Clutch: Why Some People Excel Under Pressure and Others Don’t,” Portfolio/Penguin, 2010. ³ Roberts, Selena, “A ray of progress for women as Battle of the Sexes turns 35,” Sports Illustrated, Sept. 20, 2008. ⁴ “A Woman’s Place is Here,” Mei Fong and Rebecca Blumenstein, Wall Street Journal, Aug 22, 2008. Link: ⁵ London Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) website archives. Photo Credit: © Bettmann/Corbis.

SOURCES: ¹ “Liberia’s Iron Lady,” BBC News, Nov. 23, 2005. ² McLure, Jason, “The Rebuilder: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf,” Newsweek, Aug. 16, 2010. ³ “Another Round for Africa’s Iron Lady,” The Economist, May 22, 2010. ⁴ O’Connor, Anahad, “Cracking Under Pressure? It’s Just the Opposite, for Some,” New York Times, Sept. 10, 2004. Photo Credit: Antonio Cruz/ABr.

“SHE ASKED FOR IT”

MYTHBUSTER

LOOKING BACK

Asma Jahangir Pakistan



When a blind, 20-year-old servant was raped by members of the family that employed her in 1982, Pakistani law dictated that only one thing could save her from being jailed for adultery: four male eyewitnesses to corroborate her story. But the servant — and the wider world — soon found there was another route to justice: Asma Jahangir.

An attorney by training, Jahangir has devoted her career — and repeatedly risked her life — to successfully champion human rights in her native Pakistan, particularly in cases involving women and girls.¹ She has chaired the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan since 1987 and in 2010 became the first woman to head the country’s Supreme Court Bar Association. She is also her country’s best-known and most successful opponent of the so-called Hudood Ordinance, laws enacted in 1979 by Pakistan’s then military ruler Gen. Zia-ul-Haq.

The Hudood has resulted in thousands of Pakistani women being imprisoned for so-called “honor” crimes. Additionally,

it effectively made women criminally responsible for being victims of sexual assault. Without those male eyewitnesses, a rape complaint was instead treated as a confession of adulterous sex punishable by fines, beatings, jail and even death.²

A turning point was the case of that domestic servant, Safia Bibi. When Bibi’s father told police that two men in the family that employed Bibi had raped her, it was Bibi who was arrested, charged and convicted of adultery. Her rapists went free.³ Jahangir took up Bibi’s appeal, ultimately helping free her. The case galvanized Pakistani civil society against the Hudood.

Jahangir had been jailed, harassed, threatened and even attacked at her home by would-be assassins. And her refusal to back down finally paid off in 2006, when reforms meant women could present accusations of rape in civil — not religious — courts. The deck was no longer overwhelmingly stacked against them.

“Look, crime takes place in every country. But it becomes abuse when the state is unwilling and unable to protect the life and honor of its citizens.”

REALITY CHECK

Violence against women is not confined to a specific culture, region or country. The United Nations estimates one in five women worldwide will be a victim of rape or attempted rape during their lifetimes.⁴ Women age 15 to 44 are more at risk from rape and domestic violence than cancer, car accidents, war and malaria.

MYTHBUSTER

LOOKING FORWARD

Marcos Nascimento Brazil



Marcos Nascimento’s work has taken him to some of Rio’s toughest neighborhoods, where he meets with and counsels violent gang members. His mission: to create agents of gender equality and peaceful coexistence from these seemingly unlikeliest of young men.

“We have worked with women to promote gender equality for the past 30 years,” he says. “But that is not enough.”¹

Nascimento is a psychologist and former executive director of Instituto Promundo, a Rio De Janeiro-based organization seeking to end violence against women and children. He also runs MenEngage Alliance, a network of 400 global non-governmental organizations trying to bring men into the struggle for gender equality.

Recruiting men to work for gender equality was not Nascimento’s original career ambition, however. His first degree was in engineering. It was while working at a construction site that his interest in gender relations was piqued. “The way they interacted and spoke to women, as if they were objects of consumption, it bothered me a lot.” He quit his job and went back to school to study psychology.²

Aggressive or violent behavior isn’t innate, Nascimento says. It’s learned behavior. Boys who are treated violently, exposed to violence in their homes and communities or have strained relationships with their families tend to be more violent.

Nascimento’s work shows that, because violence is learned, it can also be unlearned. A landmark 2007 report, published jointly by Promundo and the World Health Organization, concluded that men and boys will modify their attitudes about violence if given a chance to reflect on the meaning of their actions. The most effective programs, according to the study, are expert-moderated forums where boys and men are asked to confront the effect their behavior has on their loved ones, as well as their overall definitions of masculinity and manhood.³

“In the past, all discussions [about gender violence] were directed at women,” Nascimento says. “Our goal is to show how men can be allies in promoting a new culture.”

“If men are part of the problem, they must also be part of the solution.”

REALITY CHECK

Research shows aggression and propensity for violence are not immutable male traits. They are learned behaviors. And a 2007 analysis of data from 58 separate studies show men and boys change their attitudes and behavior related to violence given the right type of interventions.⁴

SOURCES: ¹ Walsh, Declan, “Blood and guts,” *The Guardian*, July 21, 2007. ² “Pakistan: Reform Hudood Laws Now,” Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Nov. 14, 2006. ³ Emerton, Robyn, et al., ed., *International Women’s Rights Cases* (London: Cavendish Publishing, 2005), 707. ⁴ “Violence against Women: The Situation,” United Nations Secretary-General’s Campaign: UNite to End Violence Against Women. Photo Credit: Courtesy Wikimedia Commons/Lymantria.

SOURCES: ¹ United Nations Population Fund, 2009 Annual Report. ² Solange Azevedo, “Marcos Nascimento,” *Época*, October 4, 2009. ³ United Nations Population Fund, Promundo and MenEngage, *Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality and Health*, 2010. ⁴ Promundo, *From Violence To Peaceful Coexistence*, 2010. Photo Credit: Courtesy of Marcos Nascimento.

“WOMEN CAN'T BE TRUSTED WITH MONEY”

MYTHBUSTER

LOOKING BACK

Ela Bhatt India



When asked what drove her to help poor women find economic autonomy, Ela Bhatt credits the society that shaped her early years. “I grew up in a time around India’s independence,” she said. “It was a heady and idealistic time, and we were all infected with a spirit of optimism.”¹

That newfound energy helped Bhatt break barriers — first becoming a lawyer, defending textile union workers, and then becoming the founder of several groups that have uplifted poor women’s economic standing. They include the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) — India’s largest trade union with more than 1.2 million members — as well as the All India Association of Micro Finance Institutions and the Women’s World Bank.

“From social work to factories, agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, dairies, hand looms, health care, childcare, handicrafts, providing shelter — all the employment sectors of any society — that is where women are ...” she said.²

Yet Bhatt, a mother of two, understood how too many of the world’s women were destitute — and often unable to shape their own financial destiny. As she practiced law — a rarity for women at the time — she saw the desperation and hopelessness of her clients.

“The injustice was flagrant, and that was what hurt the most. That was why and how the working poor remained poor, how they had no recognition, no vote, no policies ... no budgets to provide support,” she said. “That tugged at my heart.”

It also drove her to create SEWA, which helps women in three key realms: negotiating with employers, contractors and police; organizing strikes and filing court cases; and forming alliances and partnerships. Now a member of The Elders, an elite group founded by Nelson Mandela to support the shared interests of humanity, Bhatt has continued to strengthen her mission to help women help themselves.

“The spider climbs, falls but does not lose hope,” Bhatt once wrote. “She is not alone.”³

“There are risks in every action. Every success has the seed of some failure. But it doesn’t matter. It is how you go about it. That is the real challenge.”

REALITY CHECK

CARE’s microsavings groups in Africa have nearly 1.9 million members, 74 percent of whom are women. Loan repayment rates are extremely high. In Uganda, for example, 98 percent of loans are paid back on time and default rates are near zero.

MYTHBUSTER

LOOKING FORWARD

Maria Landa Peru



Maria Landa built her career with iron; the iron she holds in her hand and the iron will that has helped her triumph over tired stereotypes and steep odds.

Landa is CEO of a busy welding company on the outskirts of Peru’s capital, Lima. She started on the path to becoming Peru’s first-known woman welder at, of all places, an all-girls Catholic school where she was taught how to fix cars. The nuns who ran the school refused to accept the notion that auto-mechanics was for boys. Maria’s interest in metal and machines was nurtured by her father and mother, who enrolled her in a free welding course for disadvantaged youth.

When Maria graduated from the welding course, she decided to start a business. There were hardly any welders on her side of town. She tried to get loans to start a business but was turned down.

“We were in a profession not held by women,” Landa says. “Banks couldn’t believe women would weld.”

Unbowed, Landa kept searching until she found a \$10,000 small business loan through a CARE microfinance program. Her business took off quickly. She paid off the loan in a year and hasn’t looked back. Soon Santa Maria Industries was a growing metal work business so successful that Fortune and McKinsey & Company invited her to global seminars to talk about her business.

As impressive as Landa’s business savvy is, even more remarkable is her generous determination to share the fruits of her success. When an 8.0 earthquake in August 2007 left 40,000 homeless in Pisco, Peru, Landa built more than 1,000 tents for homeless families and 100 large school tents so kids could have a place to learn while their schools were rebuilt.

“I have the physical abilities and mind to think and realize my dreams,” she says. “We can make big things happen with a lot of little things.”

“Once when I was working, a father walked by with his children, and he stopped to tell them, ‘Look at this woman. She can do it, and so can you!’”

REALITY CHECK

Women-owned businesses contribute nearly \$3 trillion to the US economy and create or maintain 23 million jobs, according to a 2009 study by the Center for Women’s Business Research.¹



To learn more about Maria Landa, go to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IcIHvquiMbQ>

SOURCES: ¹ “A Discussion with Ela Bhatt,” May 27, 2010, Katherine Marshall of the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs. ² “The Elders,” www.theelders.org. ³ Bhatt, Ela, We Are Poor But So Many – The Story of Self-Employed Women In India; Nov. 2005. Credit Photo: © 2006 The Associated Press/David Karp.

SOURCES: ¹ Center for Women’s Business Research, “The Economic Impact of Women-Owned Businesses in the United States,” October 2009. Photo Credit: © 2007 Ami Vitale/CARE.

“GIRLS BELONG IN MARRIAGE, NOT SCHOOL”

MYTHBUSTER

LOOKING BACK

Amanullah Khan Afghanistan



When challenging the notion that the oppression of girls is embedded in their culture, Afghans need but say three words: King Amanullah Khan.

Khan, who won Afghanistan independence from the British in 1919, pushed for reforms to benefit girls and women throughout the 1920s. He raised the minimum age for marriage to 18, resisted polygamy and took aim at forced marriage. During his decade-long rule, education became compulsory for every Afghan citizen — including girls.

In leading Afghanistan, Khan treated his wife, Queen Soraya, as a true partner. Together they established the country's first school for girls in 1924.¹ “Do you think ... that our nation ... needs only men to serve it?” the queen asked at the 7th anniversary of Afghanistan independence. “Women should also take their part as women did in the early years of our nation and Islam. From their examples we must learn that we must all contribute toward the development of our nation and that this cannot be done without being equipped with knowledge.”

In that spirit, Khan started sending Afghan girls to Turkey for higher learning, without requiring them to wear a hijab or have a male relative serve as chaperone. Soon hundreds of Afghan girls were pursuing education in Germany, France and other parts of Europe.

But Khan's push to end forced marriage enraged many fathers, who saw the end of bride prices as a loss of financial security and social standing. By 1928, Khan faced revolt from rural tribal leaders. They fanned their agenda by distributing international photos of Queen Soraya unveiled and dining with foreign men. This led to charges that Khan was violating Islamic law.²

Khan was forced to abdicate in 1929 and, later, died in exile in Switzerland. Afghanistan returned to tribal law and largely shut down education for girls.

Today, even in the face of stubborn forces trying to deny girls an education, many Afghan communities are building and expanding classrooms for them. They gain inspiration not just from their mothers and daughters but their founding father, too.

“ Tribal custom must not impose itself on the free will of the individual.”³

REALITY CHECK

In Mozambique, nearly 60 percent of girls with no education are married by age 18, compared to 10 percent of girls with secondary education and less than 1 percent with higher education.⁴

MYTHBUSTER

LOOKING FORWARD

Nujood Ali Yemen



Today Nujood Ali passes her time the way every 13-year-old girl should. She goes to school each day and spends each night at home with her parents and siblings. But having a childhood isn't something Nujood takes for granted. It's a right she fought hard for.

Three years ago, Nujood was forced by her parents to marry a man in his 30s. The man took her far away from her village in Yemen, far away from her beloved sisters. He promised Nujood's father that he would not try to have sexual relations with her until one year after she had reached puberty. He broke the promise immediately and forced himself on her on their wedding night. Nujood was 10.¹

Her agony was compounded when her husband began beating her. Nujood pleaded with her mother-in-law, but she offered no help. In fact, she urged him to hit her even harder.

But Nujood would not surrender to what others fated for her. In an act of extraordinary courage, Nujood spent her

bread money on a taxi ride to a courthouse in Yemen's capital, Sana'a. She waited at the courthouse until she found a judge who would hear her plea for a divorce. Though child marriage is illegal in Yemen, no one could recall a young girl standing up for her own rights like Nujood did.

When word of her courageous defiance spread, a prominent Yemeni lawyer took her case and prevailed in court. That led to the simple but shocking title of Nujood's 2010 memoir: “I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced.”

In the wake of international publicity generated by Nujood's plight, Yemen's legal system has stepped up enforcement of its child labor laws. The case has had a ripple effect throughout the Middle East, too. In Saudi Arabia, an eight-year-old girl married to a man in his 50s was granted a divorce thanks to the awareness prompted by Nujood's case.²

Nujood, as it turns out, didn't just rescue herself. She inspired countless others to do the same.

“ I'm a simple village girl who has always obeyed the orders of my father and brothers. Since forever, I have learned to say yes to everything. Today I have decided to say no.”

REALITY CHECK

A 2010 study of women age 20 to 24 in five Indian states found that those who married before the age of 18 were more likely to have had a stillbirth or miscarriage and experience violence at the hands of their husbands. They were less likely to have delayed birth using contraception or give birth in a medical facility.³

SOURCES: ¹ Joya, Malalai, “A Woman Among Warlords,” Simon and Schuster, 2009. ² European University Center for Peace Studies (EPU), “Women in Afghanistan: Lack of Educational Opportunities,” 2008. ³ Afghanistan online. ⁴ “How to End Child Marriage,” International Center for Research on Women, 2007. Photo Credit: © 1928 The Associated Press.

SOURCES: ¹ Ali, Nujood, “I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced,” Random House, 2010. ² Kristof, Nick, New York Times, March 4, 2010. ³ Santha, K.G., et al, “Associations between Early Marriage and Young Women's Marital and Reproductive Health Outcomes: Evidence from India,” International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, Vol. 36 No. 3, September 2010. Photo Credit: © Adam Reynolds/Corbis.

“WOMEN CAN'T LEAD”

MYTHBUSTER

LOOKING BACK

Emmeline Pankhurst United Kingdom



Emmeline Pankhurst, a leader of the British suffragette movement, believed the power of persuasion did not always reside in polite debate. Unlike other women who have taken the reins of power through diplomacy, Pankhurst brought a more militant attitude to bustling Victorian women — along with protests, vandalism, arson and hunger strikes. She was jailed more than a dozen times.

“Deeds, not words,” she wrote, “was to be our permanent motto.”¹ Driving Pankhurst was the unwavering belief that societies would be better off if women had an equal hand in choosing leaders and serving in those roles themselves. Although her leadership style was controversial, there is no doubt that she was able to rally the forces and promote her cause with the same fervor of any man. As the Daily Mail reported, her funeral procession was “like a dead general in the midst of a mourning army.”²

Pankhurst married lawyer Richard Pankhurst, who had authored laws allowing women to

keep their earnings and property acquired before and after marriage. Tragically, he died of a perforated ulcer in 1889, leaving Emmeline Pankhurst to rear her children alone.

By then, Pankhurst had started the Women’s Franchise League, which fought to allow married women to vote in local elections. She followed, in October 1903, with the radical Women’s Social and Political Union — bringing along her two daughters, Christabel and Sylvia. Together the three became known as a “versatile tactical machine.”³ They took their furious and passionate protests to the street, capturing worldwide attention.

Her efforts were rewarded in 1918. The Representation of the People Act gave voting rights to women over 30. And a decade later, just weeks before her death, Pankhurst was able to witness a life’s work come to fruition — women were granted full voting rights equal to those of men.

“We are here, not because we are law-breakers; we are here in our efforts to become law-makers.”

REALITY CHECK

In a 2006-2007 study of 495 villages in India, affiliated professors from MIT’s Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab found that in villages where the chief village councilor seat had never been reserved for a woman, both men and women exhibited bias against female leadership. But in places where chief councilor seats were reserved for women under Indian law, bias towards female leaders was reduced within just two election cycles, and voters were more likely to support women candidates in the future.⁴

MYTHBUSTER

LOOKING FORWARD

Michelle Bachelet Chile



Michelle Bachelet had the markings of a doomed political package. “I was a woman, separated, a socialist, an agnostic,” she said. “All possible sins together.”

And yet, the determined doctor became the president of Chile — Catholic, conservative and patriarchal — in 2006. Chileans simply gravitated to the woman who could lead them away from a violent past.

In 1973 Bachelet’s father was imprisoned under charges of treason after General August Pinochet overthrew the democratically elected government to begin a 16-year dictatorship. Her father died of a heart attack in his prison cell in 1974. Bachelet and her mother were also interrogated, beaten and tortured.

“Violence entered my life, destroying what I loved,” Bachelet said during her Presidential victory speech: “Because I was a victim of hate, I have dedicated my life to turn that hate into understanding, into tolerance and, why not say it, into love.”

“Who could have thought 20, ten or five years ago that Chile would elect a woman to be president?”

This tender, forgiving persona won over voters. Being brilliant didn’t hurt either. Bachelet, who speaks five languages, was a surgeon, pediatrician and epidemiologist before joining the Chilean Ministry of Health. A graduate of the War Academy of the Chilean Army, Bachelet served as Defense Minister, too.

As president, her leadership produced results: the government built 3,500 daycare centers for poorer children,¹ giving mothers more freedom to enter the labor market. She extended free health care to cover many serious conditions and pushed through a law designed to bridge the wage gap between men and women.² Those accomplishments helped propel Bachelet into a global role — the first head of UN Women — last year. Her newest campaign: raise the profile of challenges facing women and girls around the globe. Bachelet’s leadership in Chile should give them hope. When Bachelet’s term ended in 2010, not even an 8.8 magnitude earthquake that displaced more than 2 million people could put a dint in her approval ratings.³ They continued to hover at 80 percent.

REALITY CHECK

Eighteen women are now either presidents or prime ministers in the world, a new record. A dozen were elected. Three were appointed. Two were appointed and then elected. One — President Rosa Otunbayeva of Kyrgyzstan — reached the presidency through a coup.⁴

SOURCES: ¹ Pankhurst, Emmeline, *My Own Story*, 1914. ² Purvis, June, *Emmeline Pankhurst: A Biography*. London: Routledge, 2002. ³ Warner, Marina, “The Agitator: Emmeline Pankhurst,” *Back In Time*, Time Magazine. ⁴ “Perceptions of Female Leaders in India,” MIT’s Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, 2010. Lori Beaman, Raghavendra Chattopadhyay, Esther Dufo, Rohini Pande, and Petia Topalova. “Powerful Women: Does Exposure Reduce Bias?” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* (2009) 124(4): 1497-1540. Photo Credit: Edward Gooch/Getty Images.

SOURCES: ¹ Hillary Clinton, Tribute, Time Magazine, 2008. ² Estrada, Daniela, IPS Inter Press Service, Sept. 14, 2010. ³ Franklin, Jonathan, “Chile reels in the aftermath of quake,” Washington Post, March 1, 2010. ⁴ Planet Rulers, www.planetrulers.com. Photo Credit: UN Photo/Paulo Filgueiras.

“A WOMAN’S HEALTH IS NOT A MAN’S CONCERN”

MYTHBUSTER **LOOKING BACK**

Stephen Lewis Canada



Stephen Lewis is a self-described feminist. The Canadian politician turned global human-rights activist says he lives in a feminist family. His adult children are also feminists. “They know if they weren’t, they’d be disinherited,” he says.¹

For Lewis, the ideals of the women’s rights movement are inseparable from the larger mission of social justice. “One can’t marginalize more than half of the world’s population,” he says, “and pretend to approximate social justice.”

A former leader of the Ontario New Democratic Party, Lewis was appointed Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations in 1984, the first of several senior UN roles. From 2001 to 2006, as the UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, Lewis drew world attention to the devastation the pandemic disproportionately inflicted upon the continent’s women and girls. Lewis then assumed — and today remains — a blunt, gutsy voice for all victims, especially women with the disease. Part of his message is that

support from fathers, sons, brothers and male friends is key to staunching the pandemic.

“I have never in all my adult life imagined that gender inequality should wreak such damage on women,” Lewis said in 2006. “I have never imagined that one communicable disease would exhibit such a ferocious assault on one sex. What is happening to the women of the continent of Africa is perhaps the most distressing dimension of the entire pandemic.”²

Men, Lewis says, hold inordinate power to reverse cultural patterns of sexual violence and entitlement and undo misogynistic property and inheritance laws.

Today Lewis, 73, runs his own Toronto-based foundation to help community-based groups battling HIV/AIDS in Africa. He recognizes that the behavior of men and boys can be changed, but few HIV programs reach out to them.³ With that in mind, Lewis continues to target male leaders with his message: Helping women live is helping everyone live better.

“The single most important struggle on the face of the planet is the struggle for gender equality. If schools can do nothing more than get young boys to understand and respect young girls, you will have made an immense contribution.”⁴

REALITY CHECK

Men can change their gender-related attitudes and behaviors in a relatively short period, according to a 2007 World Health Organization review of 57 intervention programs with men in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, maternal and child health, gender-based violence, fatherhood and HIV/AIDS. The most effective programs relied on positive and affirmative messages.⁵

MYTHBUSTER **LOOKING FORWARD**

Goma Acharya Nepal



Goma Acharya is fighting one of the most discriminatory, degrading practices faced by women and girls around the world. It’s known as chaupadi.

Chaupadi forces women to be isolated in small, unventilated mud sheds during menstruation or after child birth. The custom, common in western Nepal, is based on the belief that menstruating women and girls are unclean and could spread the impurity to others.¹

Acharya has experienced chaupadi’s cruelty — and deadliness — first hand. When her first menstrual cycle began at 13, she was forced to stay outside her home for 22 days. “It was scary and painful,” she says. She also watched a 12-year-old friend die after being bitten by a snake in a chaupadi shed.²

It was only after learning about reproductive health in school, Acharya says, that she developed the confidence to challenge chaupadi. Now, as regional coordinator for the National Forum for Women’s Rights Concern in Nepal, she says her challenge isn’t simply to educate women but to inform men.

“Society here is still patriarchal,” she says. “You cannot improve the situation without men’s involvement.”

Acharya tries to change social norms by helping men understand that menstruation is a natural cycle in a woman’s life. She also emphasizes that chaupadi harms not just women but the men, children and community around them. When a woman dies, her whole family often breaks apart. Her children are less likely to go to school, get immunized against diseases and eat well.

Nepal has declared chaupadi illegal, but many communities still believe halting the practice will bring divine retribution, poor harvests and trees that won’t bear fruit. Some say ignoring chaupadi causes infertility. In fact, the opposite is true. Areas of Nepal where chaupadi is common have a higher rate of uterine prolapse, a condition that can lead to severe infections.

While getting men to care about a perceived woman’s issue can be a daunting task, Acharya continues to arm herself with facts and travel the countryside. Her goal is to isolate chaupadi — in history books.

“One or two cases of women dying are reported every year in this district because of chaupadi. Many are bitten by snakes or suffer infections due to unhygienic conditions. Some are raped.”

REALITY CHECK

Over her lifetime, a woman in Nepal can spend a total of eight years in chaupadi sheds.

SOURCES: ¹ Lewis, Stephen, speech to Christian Aid. ² Lewis, Stephen, speech at Carnegie Council’s “Public Affairs Program,” March 23, 2006. ³ UNAIDS report on the Global AIDS Epidemic, 2010, p. 121. ⁴ McMahon, Tamsin, “Most important struggle is gender equality,” The Record, Feb. 23, 2008. ⁵ “Policy approaches to engaging men and boys in achieving gender equality and health equity,” World Health Organization, Department of Gender, Women and Health, 2010, p. 12. Photo Credit: © Cameron MacLennan.

SOURCES: ¹ “Chaupadi: pushing women into isolation – Nepal,” CARE UK, December 6, 2010. ² “Pratibimba: CARE Nepal Newsletter 2009-2010,” CARE Nepal. Photo Credit: Courtesy of Goma Acharya.

“WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT COMES AT THE EXPENSE OF MEN”

MYTHBUSTER LOOKING BACK

Kang Tongbi China



Kang Tongbi’s mission to empower Chinese women began before she realized. When her father, Kang Youwei, a reformist advisor to Emperor Guangxu, chose to defy Chinese tradition by refusing to bind her feet, he ensured Kang could lead an active life free of the literal and figurative constraints that confined so many women of her era.

Foot-binding was the centuries-old, upper-class Chinese practice of breaking a young girl’s toes and folding them under her feet with tight bandages. The resulting tiny feet, venerated in the literature of the era as “three-inch golden lotuses” were signifiers of class, wealth and sex appeal. But bound feet also left women permanently disfigured and hobbled.

Kang’s passion to end this mutilation — and to liberate Chinese women — flourished after her family was exiled. Kang moved to the United States where she immediately began organizing Chinese immigrants and fellow exiles into women’s branches of her father’s organization, the Chinese Empire Reform Society.

A New York Tribune reporter present when Kang, only 15 or 16 years old, opened the first New York branch of the group in 1903 quotes her explaining to the gathering’s English speakers what she hoped to accomplish for Chinese women: “I want them to read papers. I want them to know things. I want them to help to make things go right and to have a grand education.”¹

Kang then attended Barnard College, where a special arrangement with the school allowed her to travel extensively on behalf of the reform society while staying enrolled.

After college, Kang returned to Shanghai, where she edited one of China’s first women’s journals, worked to end foot binding and supported the Shanghai Women’s Association, whose slogan translated as “down with the warlords and up with the equality of men and women.” China banned foot binding in 1911. Before her death in 1969, Kang also published a biography of her father — the man who left her with the feet she used to walk China forward.

“Cats stand by cats, and dogs help dogs. Why should not we women stand together and help each other?”

REALITY CHECK

China’s rapid economic growth coincides with the mass entry of Chinese women into the workplace. In China, 70 percent of women have paying jobs. The global average is 53 percent.²

MYTHBUSTER LOOKING FORWARD

Mamata Tinou Niger



During Niger’s drought of 2005, people in the village of Genki walked for hours in the blazing heat, searching for food to feed themselves and their children.

Yet last year, when even worse conditions beset Niger, villagers in Genki stayed put. They were well-fed and so was their livestock. The village’s cereal bank was full. Amid one of the world’s worst hunger crises — at its peak more than 7 million Nigerians were without adequate food — people from nearby villages traveled to Genki for its excess grain.

The difference: a women’s savings and loan network led by Mamata Tinou.

Under Tinou’s guidance, several of the savings and loan groups started a cereal bank that prevented spoilage and left them excess grain. Proceeds from the sale of that disaster-resistant millet led to construction of a commercial bakery that cranks out bread sticks. The women’s financial transactions grew so frequent that they built a small bank so members could deposit and withdraw money outside of their regular meetings.

At first glance, Tinou is an unlikely leader. She’s widowed, childless, walks with a heavy limp because of polio, and supports her mother and eight grand nieces and nephews. For most of her life she has been poor — even by the standards of an impoverished millet-farming village in one of the world’s poorest countries.

Tinou’s popularity among the women of Genki is no surprise. In a village with no doctor, she has acted as a de facto midwife for many of Genki’s mothers. But the village’s male elders support her as well. And that backing has only widened as nearby villages, impressed with the results in Genki, have adopted the same savings concept and formed a regional federation — headed by Tinou — to finance large community projects.

Last year, Tinou decided to run in local elections. She didn’t care that no woman had ever been elected to serve on the regional government council. Neither, it turns out, did the people in and around Genki. They elected the woman who had proven, time and time again, that she could lift the entire community.

“Even with the drought, we have enough grain to eat, enough to sell and still some leftover.”

REALITY CHECK

Nations with small gender gaps tend to have higher overall economic competitiveness.¹ In fact, the 10 nations with the highest gender inequality rank at the bottom of the United Nations Development Programme’s overall Human Development Index survey. The 10 nations with the lowest gender inequality rank at the top.²



To learn more about Mamata Tinou, go to: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_93uFI0a-8

SOURCES: ¹ “Notable Alumnae,” Barnard College Archives. ² “Gender Inequity Persists in China,” United Nations in China, March 9, 2010. Photo Credit: Kang Tung Pih ‘09, circa 1908. From the Mortarboard 1909. Photo Credit: Courtesy of the Barnard College Archives.

SOURCES: ¹ “Forumblog,” World Economic Forum, Oct. 12, 2010. ² “International Human Development Indicators,” United Nations Development Program, 2010 rankings. Photo Credit: Josh Estey/CARE.

Founded in 1945, CARE is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty. CARE places special focus on working alongside poor women and girls because, equipped with the proper resources, they have the power to help whole families and entire communities escape poverty. Women and girls are at the heart of CARE's community-based efforts to improve education, health and economic opportunity.

To learn more, visit www.care.org.

“A WOMAN’S PLACE IS IN THE HOME.”

“GIRLS CAN’T DO MATH OR SCIENCE.”

“IT’S A MAN’S WORLD.”

“WOMEN CRACK UNDER PRESSURE.”

“SHE ASKED FOR IT.”

“WOMEN CAN’T BE TRUSTED WITH MONEY.”

“GIRLS BELONG IN MARRIAGE, NOT SCHOOL.”

“WOMEN CAN’T LEAD.”

“A WOMAN’S HEALTH IS NOT A MAN’S CONCERN.”

**“WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT
COMES AT THE EXPENSE OF MEN.”**

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MAMATA TINOU**

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