

Smart & Savvy Leadership

Every woman has to play her own game

Lucinda Douglas

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Publisher: Lucinda Douglas

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About Lucinda Douglas

Lucinda Douglas is an international speaker and women advocate. She speaks on personal leadership, empowerment and confidence and teaches women how to be the best version of themselves. In 2018, she spoke at the Nigerian Summit “She Speaks.” Lucinda was born in South Africa at a time when apartheid was at its peak. As a colored woman, she had been taught to survive and overcome.

She currently lives in Europe where she advises and inspires women to optimize their capabilities. She leads ELLE, an elite and innovative mastermind for women. Lucinda has written several books and has several nominations allocated to her name. In 2016, she was nominated for Ethnic Businesswoman of the Year and for VIVA 400 as one of the most inspiring women in the Netherlands. Lucinda is a member of the European Advisory Board of Women in Exhibitions Network and she is an honorary lecturer at the most international university in the Netherlands. Lucinda worked her way to the top of the corporate ladder and knows better than anyone else how to play the game of success.

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Fifty Reasons

According to textbooks, statistics—which are certainly not my favourite reading—and certain opinions, I live in a developed country, a First World country. But when I look around me, I wonder about the “developed state” of women in this country. Let alone certain other countries. For some reason, the world is not built for women (not yet!) even though women form 50% of the population. Let that sink in. Fifty reasons for me to write “Smart & Savvy Leadership.”

And fifty reasons why we need to change our own minds about ourselves and see ourselves as special. We need to change women’s minds about men and men’s minds about women. We have to find our way to the top. One way is by showing leadership. By leading by example as a role model: By being role models for other women who struggle and are without direction, and by being role models for our children. We have to show them that we all matter. That living the best version of yourself, using your talents, and reaching the top are realities. Necessities. You matter and you can make a difference. Yes, you can.

You determine your value, not someone else. That means you have to be critical and when someone blocks your way by saying “no,” or telling you what to do or not to do, it

challenges you even more. “No” is not a fact. Never feel framed. Always ask yourself the question: “Is that a fact?” and you will find a way to your goal.

Marjory’s story was the catalyst for writing this book (you’ll read about her in the next chapters). I heard lots of similar stories and the idea of writing about it lingered in my mind, but her story was the deciding one. I had to start with “Smart & Savvy Leadership” and tell women how to get ready to make an impact and expand their influence. I simply refuse to stand by and see women treated as though they should be happy just being there, happy with a consolation prize handed out by men. I want to raise the value of women by writing this book. I want you to challenge the status quo and realize your dreams and potential. It’s there for you.

Leadership. It's All About You

We often seem to think that when we hear the word “leadership,” it’s about how we have to lead others. At least, I always used to think so until I came to understand that leadership is not about the other person. Not at first. Leadership starts with me. Leadership is all about me. Because who am I to lead you if I am not able to lead myself? How can I lead you if I don’t have a grip on my own life? Personal leadership is what I want to share with you.

Ok, it might seem like a cliché and all very obvious, but the truth is that life is complicated. There are issues and when you think you’ve solved one, the next one pops up. Sometimes, you may experience life as a whirlpool where you struggle not to lose your head. But when we want to get ahead in life, we need to understand ourselves in the most varied circumstances. Because when we are in those circumstances, when the heat is on, it actually shapes who we become. That’s why leadership and leading others require self-knowledge and responsibility. We lead by example.

My message in this book is that if you learn to lead yourself, you can actually lead others and the conditions to do so are really simple. And believe me, I had my fair share

of issues. That's why I share my story with you and that of other women. My basic thought is this: everything in your life is about you! You decide, you make your own choices, and you pave your way. Whatever happens in your life, you are responsible for and not anyone else. I often see people pointing at others and blaming them for what has gone wrong. But that's because they have not yet learned to take responsibility, to take ownership of their lives, and are not yet accountable for their actions.

"Smart & Savvy Leadership" is dedicated to you. Because I full-heartedly care for you and other women. Are you one of those women who has to work five times harder than men to get somewhere? A lot of women experience this. The woman is the object of scrutiny and, because of tradition, she is not believed unless she first proves herself. And I know.

I have travelled through all these phases and now I am rewarded and blessed to treat you with tips, stories, and advice. I give it to you to invest in yourself and if you are ready, I want you to pass it on as well. This is our way to get ahead and to be successful. I am a Christian girl and I believe that my insights are worth sharing with you. I believe that I am special because He has told me so. I believe that I am the salt of the earth.

This is my message to you: Be the best version of yourself. "Smart & Savvy Leadership" will lead the way to a life in which you can take the lead. So that you can lead yourself and you can lead others. So that you can fulfil your own

purpose and that of others. And have fun along the way. It is then that you carry true leadership. Let's go.

Playing The Game

One day, Marjory walked into my office and told me a story. Now I hear lots of stories, but this one hit me. This one underlined so clearly that women have to endure so much more than men.

“Lucinda,” she said. “Listen to the business proposal I was just offered.”

Marjory is a dedicated independent interim human resource partner for companies that are just not big enough for a full-time and fully paid HR manager. An entrepreneur that had been her client for ten years on and off asked her to help him out again. She cleared her throat and carefully picked her words as if she couldn't believe it herself.

“We were drawing up the contract and he was ready to sign when he turned his head to me and casually said: ‘I want you to consider having sex with me as part of your contract as well.’ You know, Lucinda, I was baffled. I froze and just smiled.”

Marjory frowned at me. She had been divorced for just a year and her client knew that. He knew that she had two

children to take care of and he could suggest this to her without twitching.

Marjory continued: "I didn't react to his request. I wanted to say no but somehow, I didn't. I just left it. How could I? I needed the job."

Who on earth was going to help her at that moment? Marjory came to me the day after this happened. I spoke to her about a couple of aspects that I will be sharing with you in this book as well.

The guy eventually sent her a message saying that he found her incompetent for the job.

Whether they work for a boss or are independent, this is what women are up against and they have to know how to handle these situations. Okay, I must admit that this one is right in your face, but there are lots of situations in which women need to become smart and savvy and be really direct about what they do and do not want. Right? I'm not only talking about forces in business relationships. The same forces are also active in personal relationships. And, unfortunately, they often pass unnoticed.

So we women have to play a different ball game. First let's understand what's happening in the game men play, explore the traditional rules, and then modernize them and bend them to our advantage. Because this is a game two can play.